



MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY APRIL 2024



**WORLD
MISSION FUND**

The **Methodist Church**
Living generously



Urgency, Theology and Disability – Reshaping the Conversation and Ethos

**This month we remember our
global partners**

“Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos)

After the resurrection, Jesus said, “Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. And behold, I am with you always until the end of time.”

**Uniting together - Caring for all -
Seeking God**

Minister: The Revd Louise Gough

Senior Elder: Pat D

Senior Steward: Jan C

Church-Related Community Worker: Adella P
(Swansea Region of URC Churches)

MAY 2024 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the May 2024 edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D by 16 April at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 28 April.

NB We have stopped producing audio recordings of this church magazine due to a lack of demand. This is under continuous appraisal and if you think such recordings could benefit you, please let Les W know if you would like to receive the weekly notices and/or monthly magazine via email (.pdf file) please contact Lynne W.

Contacting us: Uniting Church Sketty, Dillwyn Road, Sketty, Swansea SA2 9AH. Website: www.unitingchurchsketty.org.uk

The building development was funded by the following



The refurbished hall was funded from the sale of the Bethel building

LETTER FROM THE MANSE

Dear friends

It's not often an article from the BBC news website fills me with an absurd sense of joy. Earlier this month I spotted the following headline

“Sycamore Gap: New life springs from rescued tree”, and my heart (tight from the daily barrage of bad news) breathed a sigh of relief and smiled!



You may remember the shock and horror (last September) that followed the mysterious felling of the magnificent (and much photographed) tree that nestled proudly between the hills in Northumberland National Park. *(Photo above by Gordon Leggett, free to use from Wiki Commons)*

According to the report, “young twigs and seeds thrown to the ground when the tree toppled were salvaged by the National Trust”. These were then carried to a high security greenhouse in a race against time to save the remnants of the great tree – remnants that were already dying. Twenty pieces of the Sycamore Gap tree were painstakingly grafted onto fresh roots, which was the only way to preserve the original tree. The good news: five months later, there are nine surviving grafted plants and forty to fifty seedlings.

As the authors of the report, Harriet Bradshaw and Georgina Rannard, put it, “Nothing can bring back the tree exactly as it was. It was planted in the natural dip of Hadrian’s Wall in the late 1800s – time and the weather moulded it into its famous silhouette. That shape is gone but what is born from its ruins will have its own story. It will be three years before horticulturalists know if the stump is healthy enough to produce the next tree. Until then, these seedlings hundreds of miles away, will be primed – each one waiting to see if it could be the next Sycamore Gap tree.”

By the time you read these words, it may be Palm Sunday, or Holy Week, or

even Easter Day. We will be contemplating another senseless and cruel death – the crucifixion of Jesus, who was nailed to a tree.

It is not easy to travel the road to Good Friday – to witness the terrible things human beings can do. It is not easy to hear seemingly endless contemporary reports of cruelty and torture, killings, war and climate catastrophe. But the story of the resurrection tells us that new life can emerge from crosses and stumps – Jesus' resurrection is God's final word, one of hope, life and love.

It's worth remembering that the resurrection was discovered by the women who carried spices to the tomb, who wanted to honour and preserve what was left of Jesus' mangled body. They remind me of the conservationists who visited the felled Sycamore Gap tree and lovingly tended to its remains, searching for signs of life. The women who went, broken-hearted, to take care of what they had left of Jesus weren't expecting to find life, but they did!

I see a beautiful image of Easter here, and a calling. Can we be like the women that first Easter Day, who were unafraid to go to the places of suffering to minister to what was broken? Can we be like the conservationists who care for the fragile signs of life and nurture them into health?

In these times of great uncertainty and change, can we be bold enough to cultivate seeds in the hope and expectation that in years from now, there will be a new church and a new world – with its own distinctive shape, its own story, but grown from God's love and our own response of faithfulness?

May God bless us with courage, patience and wisdom as we hold onto our hope and believe in Life and Love despite the senseless vandalism and destruction often around us. May we know resurrection joy that sustains us despite our pain.

God of the seed and the greening twig
bearing the fragile thread of life
and spanning the gap,

when all around is chaos
and the weight of the world crushes our hope,
help us to trust in your resurrection love,
that refuses to let go.

Graft us into the living vine of Christ,
and as we recognise each other's scars,
may we tend the bruised and wounded.
Amen.

With blessings and love

Louise

WORSHIP SERVICES IN APRIL

(All services start at 10.30am unless otherwise indicated)

April	7	Revd Linda Woollacott
	14	Revd Louise Gough (Communion)
	21	Revd Louise Gough
	25	Revd Louise Gough (Thursday Communion)
	28	Heather Coleman
	6.00pm	Circuit Easter Offering Service at Mumbles Methodist Church

EASTER OFFERING

Our charity this month will be the Methodist Fund for World Mission as Methodists traditionally give an Easter Offering for mission. You will see Easter Offering envelopes in the pews if you are in church, though we don't mind how you give! (*See notice overleaf*)



You can read more about the World Mission Fund here:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/global-relationships/> It includes work with partners overseas including those

working in Bangladesh and many other places to deal with emergencies and to aid growth.

[Flower box in photo made in the Men's Shed in Ogof Adullam ed.]

PASTORAL CONCERNS FOR APRIL 2024

We send our love and prayers to Bill and his family, following the death of our friend Kath, a member at Sketty Methodist/UCS for many years, a former member of 8 O'Clock Club (Young Wives), and later Wesley Club, and a Communion Steward. Kath will especially be remembered for her creative talent and her contribution to the Craft Group, especially the design and making of many of the beautiful banners and pulpit falls which are displayed in our church. Her funeral will be held at UCS on Friday, 22nd March at 3.00pm. A tribute will appear in the May magazine.

Our friends who are unable to attend church in person, some who are at home and some who are in residential care homes, continue to be remembered as a part of our UCS fellowship. We send our love and prayers to them.

Congratulations to Shirley and Anne who have recently celebrated their 90th birthday with their family.

Gwen D

UCS QUIET DAY ON SATURDAY, 20TH APRIL

"Space to Re-Connect ...a Time to find God in the Quiet"

Please visit the church anytime between 10.30 and 12.00 to have an opportunity for personal reflection and prayer in God's presence. There will be a series of prayer stations for you to visit, set out in the church and other rooms, offering you resources for personal prayer time. This time of prayer has been planned and will be led by Revd Louise and Adella.

"Daily life is full of choices and challenges. Sometimes it's good to just go somewhere quiet, switch off the mobile phone and reconnect with the God who loves you and created you." Taken from 'Retreat in my Pocket' by Mary Fleeson, Lindisfarne Scriptorium

CIRCUIT EASTER OFFERING SERVICE

AT MUMBLES METHODIST CHURCH AT 6.00PM ON SUNDAY,
APRIL 28TH



**LET
JUSTICE
ROLL**

**Easter Offering
Service 2024**

**“The support has
really helped me
and I thank God...”**

**Take a fresh stand for
justice by giving an Easter
Offering to support the
World Mission Fund.**

Elizabeth suffered injustice and exclusion because she is disabled. But thanks to the **World Mission Fund**, Elizabeth's local church in Tanzania supported her. Now she earns enough to buy food – and she's included in her community.



**Methodist Women
in Britain**

for women, for justice, for Christ

By supporting the **World Mission Fund**, you'll help the Methodist Church to stand alongside churches like Elizabeth's so more people are treated with justice.

Scan the **QR code**
or visit
**methodist.org.uk/
EasterOffering**



The Methodist Church 

BENEVOLENCE PAYMENTS MADE SINCE LAST MAGAZINE

Sketty Foodbank	£295.57	Reverse Advent Proceeds and Coffee Tin monies
Stepping Stones	£445.60	Communion Collection
Maggie's	£394.95	Communion Collection
Alzheimer's Research UK	£752.55	Coffee Morning
Pettifor Trust	£524.00	Coffee morning proceeds collected and taken by the Trust

Extract from thank you letter and acknowledgement from the **Regional Managing Pilot of Wales Air Ambulance** on behalf of their Pilots, Medical Team, and Staff, thanking all at UCS for our donation (£390.00). With our support Wales Air Ambulance can continue to save lives locally, 24 Hours a day, "Serving Wales, Saving Lives".

Jon D

MISSION IN OUR COMMUNITY: BEING DEMENTIA-AWARE

Wesley Club recently had a talk about dementia, which prompted thoughts as to how UCS could be more aware of being a dementia friendly congregation and embrace other disabilities about which we may or may not be aware.



The charity Dementia UK estimates that by 2025 over 1,000,000 people in the UK will have dementia, and almost all of us will know someone living with the condition. This is why it is becoming increasingly important for churches to be properly prepared to support people with dementia, and their families.

Facilities for people suffering with dementia in Swansea include a Musical Memories Choir, meeting at Christ Well URC Church (SA5 8PW) and Linden Church, West Cross (SA3 4EA), or you can join on Zoom or watch later, on YouTube (DementiaFriendlySwansea.org is the website with more details).

There are Forget Me Not Clubs at Siloam Church, Gower Rd, Killay (SA2 7AL) and Sketty Community Church, Carnglas Rd (SA2 9BJ).

There is also Dementia Hwb in the Quadrant Shopping Centre (Open 11am-3pm, 7 days a week).

You can also become a Dementia Friend or a volunteer. Perhaps some people in UCS may be interested in visiting one of the Clubs to learn more?

A recent initiative is the HERBERT PROTOCOL form. It can be accessed online to print out – www.ageuk.org.uk or www.south-wales.police.uk

If you don't have access to the internet, please ask a family member, friend or a techno wizard from UCS for help. The form includes name, address, hobbies, habits etc. The point of the form (and it must be updated regularly), which is kept at home, is in case a family member goes missing and you have to contact the police to help find him/her. The police will look at the form for clues as to where to start looking.

Janet N

SUNFLOWERS AND HIDDEN DISABILITIES

Have you ever seen anyone wearing a sunflower lanyard and wondered what it is for? The Sunflower symbol does not focus on the invisible, but is designed to trigger the simple question... "How can I help you?" People wearing the lanyard are letting people know that they may need extra help, understanding or just more time. Church officers and members don't need to feel that they are intruding by asking a person wearing a lanyard what help

they need. They may need gluten free bread in a communion service, to know where the toilets are situated etc. Would it be a good idea for churches to have some lanyards available for people to borrow if needed? Lanyards can be purchased online at <https://hdsunflower.com>. You can purchase a blank card with your lanyard and complete it yourself or there are cards available for a

range of disabilities e.g. Coeliac Disease, Crohn's, Dementia, Alzheimer's, MS,



hearing loss, diabetes, cancer etc. There are also other Sunflower products e.g. luggage tags and luggage straps.

TOP TIPS TO BOOST INCLUSIVITY IN ANY CHURCH

1. If you have a loop system, make sure that posters are displayed to let worshippers know.
2. If your website includes images, make sure a description of the image is added to “alt text”. Alt Text is read aloud by a screen reader.
3. Don’t touch someone without asking them first. Don’t grab a person who is blind or pet a guide dog without asking permission.
4. Think about identifying a quiet space, where someone could go if they feel overloaded during the service. Normalize being able to get up and go outside if necessary.
5. Avoid fluorescent or compact-flourescent bulbs and bright spot lights.

As I read the TEN TOP TIPS, I thought that we are doing most of these already at UCS. If you read the 5 tips above, are we also doing those?

Above articles adapted by Janet N from *Cymuned*, the magazine of the Swansea and Brecon Diocese of the Church in Wales

WALKING GROUP – walk and talk

Singleton Park and its history. Meet at the entrance to Singleton Park on De la Beche Road (next to the Parish Centre) at 2pm on Friday 19th April for a walk and talk. Visit UCS’s tree, the Botanical Gardens with their beautiful gate, the Gorsedd Stones etc. Refreshments should be available at the Swiss Chalet.



Janet N

MESSAGE FROM TOM O

Former members of Bethel will remember Tom O as a very faithful member and serving elder, who now lives in Scotland being cared for by his family. Pat and Tom write to each other every two months or so. In her last letter Pat

told Tom about the sad death of Rena G before Christmas. In Tom's recent reply he shared this story about Rena's late husband, Jasper:

"I always enjoyed meeting with Rena – she was on my 'elders' list' and lived just round the corner. Jasper was also a friend as well as a workmate in BP. You mentioned the Black Watch Tartan (that Pat wore for Rena's funeral). Did I ever tell you that, on conscription in 1951, I did my army training with Black Watch in Queen's Barracks, Perth? My time in the army was spent in Hong Kong. My journey there in the troopship Empire Orwell was fascinating – a trip to all the countries and maritime garrisons. Jasper G was in the crew of that ship although we did not know each other then!!"

What a fantastic story! On the same ship but not aware of each other and ending up as close friends and fellow-workers, and members in the same church! Tom, as always, sends his best wishes to all his good friends in Bethel.

Christian Aid Week, 12 – 18



Christian Aid Week

Start fundraising today

From community events to individual challenges, Christian Aid Week is seven days of action – your way, to fund lasting change.

With your help, we can work towards a world where families can escape the trap of poverty and fulfil their ambitions. Seven days, so many ways to fund lasting change.

REFLECTION ON PALESTINE

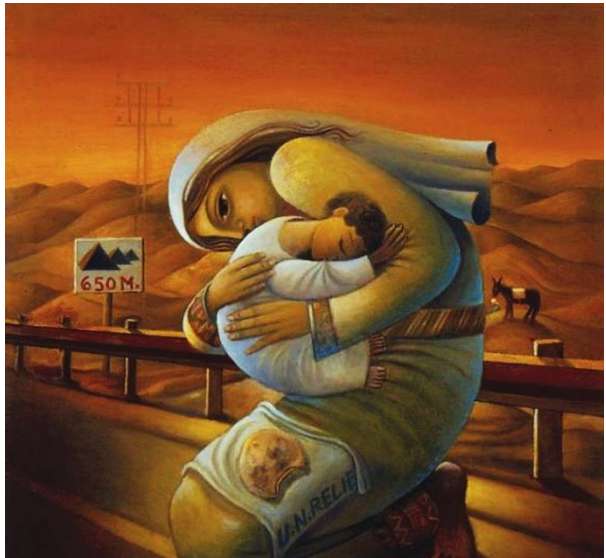


The Hamas attack on Israel was horrendous. 1200 people were killed and 240 people were taken hostage and ‘imprisoned’. A number – but far from all – have been released. Their families are campaigning to persuade the Israeli government to declare a ceasefire and to release the remaining hostages. In response

to the attack, Israel launched a military attack on Gaza, with the aim of destroy Hamas. Since October 7th, 30,000 Palestinians have been killed and Israel is threatening to attack Rafah, where the people fleeing from the north of Gaza were sent ‘for safety.’ This is the context for the following reflection, taken with permission from the URC website.

“Flight into Egypt” by Andy Braunston

This painting was created by Sliman Mansour, an artist in Palestine. His style which has come to symbolise Palestinian national identity has inspired generations of Palestinian and international artists. Using symbols derived from Palestinian life, culture, history, and tradition, Mansour illustrates Palestinians’ resolve and their connection with their land.



Sliman Mansour (Palestinian, 1947–), *The Flight to Egypt*, 1984. Oil on canvas. Used with the artist’s permission.

The Holy Family, when facing danger and death, was able to find sanctuary in Egypt. Today Palestinians wait to see if the Israeli

Defence Forces will continue their relentless military action and move them from Rafah – where they were sent for safety. The border is sealed but there is speculation the Egyptians are building a pen in the desert, with no facilities, to “house” displaced Palestinians. Safety is tantalisingly close yet impossible to get to. The Palestinian mother and child try, in vain, to get to the safety of Egypt; in this picture we also see the plight of displaced, bombed, and starved Palestinians. The woman and child are fed by the UN Relief agency – now condemned and hampered in its mission by Israel which maintains it has been used by Hamas.

Around the world ordinary people react with horror to the treatment of the Palestinians; anger, rage, and grief at the atrocities in October are now held alongside desperate emotions at the plight of the Palestinians – bombed, starved, displaced and condemned by a superior military force, possibly eager for more of their land aided and abetted by many of the world’s great powers. Dissent is demonised as anti-Semitic. Games are played in Parliament to spare the blushes of politicians who should know better; vetoes are wielded in the UN to stop even the mildest criticism. A weak archbishop won’t meet a Palestinian pastor because he doesn’t like the company the pastor keeps. Meanwhile mothers and their children are left to their plight.

Palestinian artists who depict Jesus as Palestinian have been sharply criticized, yet art, like theology, pushes boundaries and offers new understanding. Jesus can be authentically depicted in many ways; he identifies with Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free, Israeli, and Palestinian. Yet depiction is not enough; art, like theology, must lead to action. Jesus, told us, after all, to recognise him in the least.

Jesus personifies the poor, forsaken, homeless, hungry, thirsty, and naked. In today’s world Jesus is to be found in many places but not least with the millions of Palestinian refugees seeking to find shelter and safety – as once his parents found refuge in Egypt.

POWERPOINT TRAINING

From a couple of sheets of paper in your inside pocket or handbag to a full Powerpoint presentation with video, audio and images, and all in one ministerial lifetime! I did my training for ministry in the mid-sixties. Who would have thought then that we'd be using computers in any aspect of the life of the church, never mind in worship? When Pat worked in the Education Department in the University (1968-72), if she had data to be analyzed, she had to carry a box-full of punch cards to the computer room, where Alan Gilmour, a beloved and faithful elder and treasurer in Bethel over many years, was Director of Computing. Now your mobile is vastly more powerful than Alan Gilmour's computer and fits in your pocket or handbag!

So now those of us leading worship in UCS needed training, and on Monday, March 4th, it was provided for us by Jeff C. How do we upload hymns, check the texts, access audio and video files of hymns being sung by other congregations in the UK and around the world, find images and photos that are freely available to us, and all with a few key-clicks? Since the Covid outbreak began, Jeff has prepared countless files of hymns, readings, videos etc., for use during our worship each Sunday, which can then be used by Les and his tech team for those of us in church and on zoom. All we need now is to be sure to use our new skills!

Jeff is a natural teacher – he's had a lifetime's experience, of course. Clear, to the point and no waffle. We owe him (and the tech team) an enormous debt of gratitude, since he and others have enabled us all, wherever we are when we join services at UCS, to share fully in our worship.

Part of the reason for this training session, of course, is that Jeff is expecting to go into hospital for heart surgery in the next few weeks. We wish him and Heather well during the time of waiting, for the surgery itself and in the period of demanding convalescence. Many thanks, Jeff, for all the Powerpoint preparation and zoom hosting you do for us – not to mention co-ordinating lettings!

Noel

THIS MONTH WE CELEBRATE, REMEMBER AND PRAY FOR OUR CHRISTIAN PARTNERS AROUND THE WORLD especially those (illustrated on the front cover) that the Methodist Church and the URC are involved with:

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE – which we're supporting this year by remembering and donating to its work in Bangladesh, alongside Methodist work there (see the February magazine and the article overleaf for more information) – is the URC's global justice programme. Its goal is to enable us to make global justice a core foundation of our mission by facilitating prayer, advocacy, and effective action for the most vulnerable people.

THE COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION – is the world mission partnership of which the URC is a member, along with 31 other churches around the world. Member churches are committed to sharing their resources of money, people, skills and insights globally to carry out God's mission locally.

THE METHODIST CHURCH WORLD MISSION FUND – working in partnership with the Methodist Church in Ireland, supports 107 partner churches and organisations around the world in their mission and ministry to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. They do this through evangelism, mission work, schools, hospitals, environmental projects, in emergency situations, through administration, training and much more.

METHODIST WOMEN IN BRITAIN has the following aims:

- to bring women together, encouraging one another to know Christ and to make him known;
- to encourage, resource and train women members of the Methodist Church, equipping them to participate more fully in the wider church and in society;
- to connect women in Britain with women overseas to raise awareness of and act upon issues of social justice around the world.

ALL WE CAN is rooted in the Christian faith, and is an international development and relief organisation, working to see every person's potential fulfilled. It works through partnership alongside our global neighbours most impacted by disasters, poverty and injustice to enable flourishing and resilient communities.

Noel

BANGLADESH AND CLIMATE CHANGE



<https://pixabay.com/photos/bangladesh-flood-helpless-people-5939913/>

Free to use without attribution

This article for our church mission project looks at the effect of climate change on Bangladesh and also at some of the things Commitment for Life and the Methodist Church are doing to help.

Bangladesh is one of the countries that are most vulnerable to climate change. The Ganges River is liable to floods, and cyclones also hit the country. Two thirds of the country is less than 15 feet above sea level. So rising sea levels are a serious threat – Bangladesh is forecast to lose 11% of its land by 2050. A 2018 US government report found that 56% of the population, 90 million people, live in high climate exposure areas.

Other impacts of climate change are that summers are becoming hotter and the monsoon less predictable, there can be heavy rain over a short period of time causing landslides, and there is crop failure due to drought and also floods. Saltwater inundating the coast can lead to shortage of drinking water, and diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea have increased.

Bangladeshis are responsible for only 0.56% of the world's emissions but suffer the consequences of climate change out of all proportion to this.

Commitment for Life supports projects to help Bangladeshis adapt and respond to climate change. For example, they set up a human chain of communication to pass on flood forecasts. A housewife, Nazma Akter, reads a gauge in her local river 5 times a day and can notice river rises and pass details to Dhaka's Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre by text. Warnings are given when people need to evacuate. People are encouraged to work together to stay informed about things like saline resistant seeds, flood warnings and education.

Emergency Aid is also important in times of crisis such as after a flood. Packages including rice, pulses, salt, water purification tablets, soap, a jerry can and 6 candles are distributed.

The Methodist Church works in Bangladesh through partners such as the Church of Bangladesh. It also gives grants to an organisation called DanChurchAid, a Danish development organisation which has various projects, including providing safe water and helping communities to adapt to climate change.

A Prayer: Loving God, we pray for Bangladesh as it copes with climate change. We pray for those who are at risk of losing their homes or of going hungry and thirsty. We pray that richer countries will accept their responsibility towards poorer nations. Be with Commitment for Life and Methodist Mission as they try to help in this situation. Amen

Susan G

PETTIFOR TRUST COFFEE MORNING 2ND MARCH 2024



The Pettifor Trust
Devoted to the welfare of animals

Many thanks to all that were kind enough to support the Pettifor Trust's coffee morning at UCS, which raised a total of £524 from Cakes, Table Top,

Refreshments and Raffle sales The staff and volunteers of the Trust have asked me to pass on their thanks for the welcome and support they received. As always, they were made to feel so welcome, and always look forward to their visit to UCS.

Regards, Jon

THE BIG PLASTIC COUNT

GREENPEACE · EVERYDAY
PLASTIC



This is what **11 lbs (!)** of plastic bags etc looks like in Janet's car. Great!!

FLOWERS FOR EASTER



This Easter, March 31st, we shall be decorating the church with daffodils which will be given to members and friends who are unable to come to church. We invite you to bring daffodils to church on Saturday 30th March between 10am and 11am when the flower girls will be there to receive them and arrange them. If you would like to give daffodils and are unable to get them please contact Rosemary when she will be happy to purchase some for you. We look forward to a beautiful display.

On Easter Sunday we shall be decorating the cross with fresh flowers. If you are able, please bring some flowers from your garden to place on the cross during the service. There will also be flowers available to place on the cross making a bright and colourful display.

Many thanks, Rosemary

FAITH AL FRESCO

Instead of prioritizing attracting newcomers into their building, a Hampshire congregation is focusing on taking church out into their community. Martin Letts explains:

Bishop's Waltham United Free Church, a joint Methodist and United Reformed Church congregation, in Hampshire, came up with the idea of turning church 'inside out' a few years ago, and we haven't looked back! Mindful that most of the Bible stories about Jesus record him ministering and telling stories to people outside of the synagogues and temples, we decided to concentrate our resources for newcomers on an annual day of providing hospitality out in the community. With just 28 members, ours isn't a large church. However, by calling on our various talents and asking friends to help, our Faith al Fresco Day was born in 2013. It's been running ever since (with a break for the pandemic), and we're now seeing around 100 people at each event.

While our first Faith al Fresco was a modest affair, with a few children's games and crafts, a prayer tent and, of course, food, we've since significantly developed the event with all age groups in mind. The food element hasn't changed – we still offer bacon butties and cake – but we've put a lot of thought into running activities along a theme designed to be fun and of interest to everyone. For anyone who wants to wander into the free event, held on a grassy area in the grounds of Bishop's Waltham Jubilee Hall, we lay on hospitality with a capital 'H'. This means ensuring that people feel looked after, well fed and loved. Church members and stewards are around to chat with visitors, explore questions of faith and help in any way we can. Our superintendent minister, the Revd Phil Griffin, and local Church of England vicar, the Revd James Hunt, along with a few local Methodist preachers, also mingle with visitors.

Staging the event in the May half term holiday (when the weather tends to be good, and many people are available) really works for us, and we're hoping that this May's event – on the theme of *Who is My Neighbour?* – will be another bumper day. We're currently busy adding the finishing touches to our props. Last year's theme, *Remember the Rainbow*, required a large wooden Noah's Ark. This was designed and built at home, and then re-assembled on-site (watched by fascinated children), by church member Tom Banks. The structure was strong enough to withstand the combined weight of several children! Things got a bit chaotic at one point, but it was great fun as we

acted out the story of Noah and his family with the help of the Bible Society's Open the Book resources. The children pretended to be animals and



members of Noah's family, and, at the end, a dove flew over and the rainbow (painted onto cardboard) came out and fulfilled God's promise to us all.

Other attractions included an ever-popular bouncy castle, and a craft tent where children made animal masks which they were then able to wear for the story. For people who just wanted to relax, we provided plenty of chairs and blankets. We'd invited the local media and were blessed with a visit from a BBC Radio Solent reporter who recorded lots of interviews and featured them in her following Sunday's broadcast. Another theme that worked well back in 2022, was the Sower and the Seeds, based on the Bible story of the farmer whose scattered seeds (which represent the word of God) fall onto different types of ground (a metaphor for the different types of people who hear God's word). A lot of hard work goes into Faith al Fresco each year, but we feel it's a brilliant way of building community, encouraging others and talking about Jesus in a relevant way.

Article and photo reproduced with permission from *the connexion*, the free magazine of the Methodist Church, methodist.org.uk and Bishop's Waltham United Free Church. To receive a free copy, sign up at bit.ly/the-connexion

Is this an idea for UCS? We could even do it ecumenically: we have a big park, we have lots of modern buildings and quite a lot of people! There's been some initial talk about the possibility of combining this idea with a Christian Aid event in the summer. Watch this space. Ed.

the connexion is a free magazine whose main purpose is to share inspiring and informative stories about the impact of the work of the Methodist Church in Britain. If you'd like to see a copy, ask, look at the stand near the Wesley Room or download it at methodist.org.uk/theconnexion. (The URC magazine, **Reform**, is also available in a printed or electronic version. Ask Pat.)

Mirth and Merriment with MADCAPS (sent by Jan)

The minister was occupied with thoughts of how he was going to ask the congregation to give more money than they were expecting for repairs to the church building. He was also a little irritated that the regular organist was ill and a substitute had been brought in at the very last minute and had



no order of service. He gave the order of service to the organist with the words “can you come up with something appropriate to play for me after I make the announcement about our finances?” At the relevant point in the service the minister paused and said, “Brothers and sisters, we are in great difficulty. The roof repairs have cost twice as much as we expected, and we need an extra £4000. Anyone who can pledge a £100 or more please stand up.”

At precisely that moment the organist struck up with the National Anthem. And that is how the substitute organist became the regular organist.

(Louise, Alan, Eleanor and Ceri, listen and learn, and keep an eye open for Jon approaching you! Ed)

COFFEE MORNINGS

Saturday, 6th April 10 - 12 noon – proceeds for Old Mill Foundation (details were in last month’s Magazine).



Old Mill Foundation
HOLISTIC CANCER SUPPORT CENTRE

Saturday, 4th May 10 – 12 noon – proceeds for Christian Aid (Christian Aid Week, 12-18 May)



An important date for your diary - Sunday 30th June, UCS, 12 noon.

You are invited to join Mr Les Want and his family, on the occasion of his being presented with the British Empire Medal. The ceremony will be performed by the Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, acting on behalf of His Majesty The King.

WHY SHOULD WE WORRY ABOUT WORLD MISSION?

There's quite a lot in this edition of the magazine about world mission. So I thought it might be worth asking: What is world mission and why should we be involved in it?

In the past, world mission was about proclaiming the Gospel to those people that were then called 'the heathen' and encouraging – and sometimes forcing – their conversion to Christianity. It was a judgement on the religious beliefs of other people and, often, a criticism of their cultures and ways of life. Christians thought that we had the truth, and other people's beliefs were false. It was taking the light of Christ into the darkness of paganism.

There's a great deal in the Bible about world mission. Most missionary societies (such as the old Methodist Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society which many of us knew and supported) were motivated by the words of Jesus at the end of Mark's Gospel: "Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation" and at the end of Matthew's Gospel: "Go... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." This is the Great Commission to worldwide evangelism, and it still challenges us to share the good news of Jesus today.

However, over the last seventy-five years or so, perspectives have changed. Many Christians – perhaps the majority – no longer believe that we have a monopoly on the truth about God. We recognize now that we can learn from other faiths and they can learn from us. So world mission has come to be seen more as a partnership, both within the worldwide church and, in different ways, between Christians and people of other faiths.

There is also a much broader view of what mission is about. It's no longer seen as restricted to proclaiming the Gospel with a view to converting people to Christianity (though we are still called to make disciples) but rather being obedient to Jesus' own understanding of the mission to which he was called and which he entrusted to us. Jesus' words, quoting Isaiah, in the Synagogue in Nazareth, sum up this wider vision:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour (Luke 4.18 & 19)

This broader understanding of mission has been summed up in the Five Marks of Mission, originally formulated by the Anglican Communion, that are now recognized by many churches, including the URC and the Methodist Church, as a definition of contemporary Christian mission:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the wholeness of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

These are sometimes summed up as *Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure*. If you look again at the various articles in this magazine, you’ll see that all the agencies that UCS supports are involved in some way or other with one or more of these Marks of Mission. Taken together they represent, in a powerful way, God’s calling to us in Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A PRAYER: God of all-embracing love, inspire us again with your call to follow Jesus and to obey his commission to go and tell the good news, to teach and make new disciples, to tend the wounded in our world with compassion, to transform the injustice of the world in the power of your kingdom of justice and peace and to treasure the earth and those with whom we share it as our common home. As we seek to follow Jesus, unite us in partnership with sisters and brothers around the world, so that we may learn from one another, encourage one another in witness, and strengthen one another in faith, hope and love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Noel



It is resurrection time:
a time of blossoming,
of new life, new love,
new compassion
and new hope,
in and through Jesus,
our risen, living Companion
and Saviour.

Spring heralds in a New Creation.
Life awakes for us again.
Winter's deadness swiftly leaves us.
Birds' song's heard in bolder strain.

Lenten calm concludes in darkness
Of Good Friday's fatal day.
Easter Day breaks forth in gladness.
God's love for all has had its way.

Christians called to love each other.
Love the needy and the weak.
Love Creation all around us.
Love must act and Love must speak.

Love sparks off each New Creation;
Broken lives get loving care.
God's love in action through His people
Creating changes everywhere.
Jim Horsnell (a friend who joins us on zoom)

Now the green blade rises
From the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth
Many days has lain;
Love lives again,
That with the dead has been:
Love is come again
Like wheat that springs up
green. *[J.M.C. Crum]*



**And from the earth there blossoms red
life that shall endless be!**