



MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY

May 2025



Eradicating poverty

Everyone is equal in the sight of God

For almost 80 years, this truth has inspired us to stand together in solidarity with our most marginalised global neighbours, of all faiths and none.

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of their dignity and lets injustice thrive.

We seek to eradicate extreme poverty by tackling its root causes. Together with people living in poverty, we amplify our voices to speak truth to power and create lasting change.

**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)

JUNE 2025 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the June 2025 edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D by 13th May at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 25th May.

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 **Methodist** Church 



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

LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

Dear Friends

We are now through the Easter festivities and, as far as the New Testament is concerned, we are in the period of Jesus' resurrection appearances, culminating at the end of the month with Ascension Day. On Easter Sunday, I drew attention to what must have been the state of mind of the disciples after the events of Good Friday. An apparently absent God who had deserted his son leaving him to the powers of evil, giving them the ultimate victory over goodness and love. The Resurrection changed all that, showing that far from being absent, God was completely present in the suffering and death, transcending it and giving an insight into the underlying reality of the human condition.

Nevertheless, there was still a provisionally, a 'What now?'. Jesus appeared and disappeared: in the upper room, by the Sea of Galilee, on the Emmaus Road. And he challenged them both collectively and individually, especially Peter and Thomas. They must still have been pinching themselves to make sure they weren't dreaming. Only when it was clear that they were ready to, so to speak, go it alone, did Jesus finally leave them. And this is the meaning of the Ascension story, whether in Jerusalem or in Galilee. Only when Jesus was no longer with them could the Holy Spirit be effective.

When my son Paul was little, he had a small two-wheel bike with stabilisers to stop it falling over – though he used, rather endearingly (and he was a VERY endearing little monster), to call them 'sterilisers', which conjured up for me Boadicea's chariots charging into the Roman enemy with whirling blades. Only when he was able to balance without the need of those stabilisers did we remove them; and then he was away!

It seems to me that God deals with us in a similar way. The early days of faith can be quite exhilarating, and all the answers seem so simple. Over time we are challenged by our circumstances or by other people and our own understanding is stretched. There is an interesting book, 'The Post Evangelical', by Dave Tomlinson (published in the 1990s), which reflected how many people had come into the church as Christian converts but had grown 'out the other side' when they started questioning simplistic teaching.

I mentioned in Faith and Fellowship the other week that what I believe now is not the same as I believed when I was in my 20s, but that I don't think I was wrong then; I just believed according to what I knew at that time. And I have had the benefit, as have we all, of the guidance of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus, if you like, or the Mind of Christ. The disciples were still waiting, but that comes next month.

Blessings

John

WORSHIP SERVICES IN MAY

May	4	Revd Noel Davies (Communion) 6.00 Easter Offering Service in Mumbles
	11	Revd John Atkinson
	18	Revd Linda Woollacott (Christian Aid Sunday)
	22	Revd Linda Woollacott (Thursday Communion)
	25	Heather Coleman

All services are at 10.30am unless otherwise indicated.

Evening Prayer from 7.00pm to 7.30pm, using the UCS link (see Weekly Notices) will be led in turn by the Revds John Atkinson, Noel Davies and Linda Woollacott. Everyone welcome.

A note of appreciation from Joyce J: I would like to thank all the people who sent me good wishes during my stay in hospital. A special thanks to those who visited me. It is good to be part of such a caring church. Thank you too for the good wishes for my 95th birthday!!

The readers of the Magazine wish you well, Joyce, as you continue your recovery at home (ed.)

COFFEE MORNINGS

Saturday 3rd May, 10am-12noon Coffee Morning. Proceeds for Christian Aid

Saturday 7th June, 10am-12noon Coffee Morning. Proceeds for Marie Curie

OUR COMMUNION COLLECTION FOR MAY will be for Christian Aid.

Christian Aid
We believe in life before death

Christian Aid describe themselves as: “a global movement of people, churches and local organisations. We are the

changemakers, the peacemakers, the mighty of heart”

As well as their regular development work in the world’s poorest countries they are currently fundraising for four emergencies – Myanmar, Sudan, Middle East and Ukraine.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2025 : 11TH – 18TH MAY



This year Christian Aid is 80 years old. I guess that it is impossible to even estimate the contribution it has made to tackling poverty and injustice in those years.

Working with so many countries, CA has brought not simply supplies but education and learning which in turn has brought life

and hope to so many countries and communities. One such country is Guatemala, where CA has been involved for 48 years, supporting the indigenous people to use their knowledge, alongside training in new and sustainable farming methods and thus increase their communities' resilience and self-reliance. However, sadly today, so much that has been achieved is under threat, not by wars and fighting, not by a lack of effort from its communities, but by **climate change**.

Imagine planting a seed with tender care, watching it start to grow and then seeing it wither and die because climate change has meant that the once predictable dry and rainy seasons have both intensified and become



completely erratic.

Look at the picture of Amelia, and her 4 year old daughter, seeing their banana trees dying in the heat. See the cacao pod, usually so drought resistant, dead on the branch. Imagine how we would feel if all our food supplies, whether bought at the

supermarket or grown in our gardens, failed AND these supplies are how we feed our families. How would we cope? How would I cope and how would you? But the families who rely on support from CA have not given up hope. CA have not given up hope. They are ever ready to start again,



but they need us. **They need us** so that they can bring aid to the people who are battling intense heat waves, deadly droughts and savage storms so that they're able to continue to build their resistance.

Every contribution you make. I make, we make, will be used to make a difference. CA tell us that "together, we can bring hope and lasting change to communities in need". They are reaching out to us. Please reach out to them.

Let us together echo one of the CA prayers:

Jesus, you love us beyond measure. Help us to grow in your likeness, showing love to one another. May we work together for the healing of creation and sustain us as we put our faith into action. Amen.

Jan C

DEC Myanmar Earthquake Emergency Appeal

Powerful earthquakes in Myanmar have caused catastrophic devastation. Survivors urgently need critical support. Please donate now. 'We know from the news that getting help into Myanmar is difficult, but the various charities who make up the DEC have links into the country, including, as we read last week, the Methodist Church in Upper Myanmar, which includes Mandalay where the main earthquake damage occurred.



NOTES ON THIS YEAR'S UCS CHURCH PROJECT: DEMENTIA - WHAT IT IS AND WHAT WE CAN DO (from Susan G)

The following information from Alzheimer's Research UK was read in our recent dementia service:

1 – Dementia itself is not a disease.

It's actually caused by lots of different diseases. The word 'dementia' is just an umbrella term for the symptoms caused by these diseases – such as memory loss, confusion and personality change. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause, but other dementias include vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies and frontotemporal dementia.

2 – Dementia is not an inevitable part of getting older.

While it's true that the majority of people with dementia are over 65, the condition is not a normal part of getting older. The likelihood of developing dementia rises with age, but it's not a given that an older person will develop it. In the UK over 40,000 people under 65 have dementia.

3 – Dementia is more than just memory loss.

Most people associate dementia with memory loss, but the condition affects people in a wide variety of ways. That might include changes in behaviour, confusion and disorientation, delusions and hallucinations, difficulty communicating, problems judging speeds and distances and even cravings for particular foods. Everyone's experience of dementia is different.

4 – It is possible to live an independent and active life with dementia

There are many people in the UK and across the world who are facing dementia head on and developing support mechanisms and strategies to live well with the condition. That includes anything from taking up new hobbies to making new friends or taking part in research.

5 – Dementia has a bigger impact on women.

With more and more women living well into their 80s, half a million women in the UK are now living with dementia. The condition is the leading cause of death of women in the UK. Women are more likely to take on unpaid caring roles for other people with dementia and are more than twice as likely as men to provide intensive, 24-hour care.

6 – Dementia is a global issue

It's a common myth that dementia is only an issue in the western world. The largest increases in dementia expected over the next 20 years are actually in places like China, India and Sub-Saharan Africa. Dementia is a truly global health issue, affecting 46.8 million people worldwide.

7 – Dementia doesn't discriminate.

Dementia is a condition that can affect anyone regardless of background, education, lifestyle or status.

8 – There are no treatments to stop diseases that cause dementia

While there are some treatments that can help people to live with their symptoms a little better, there are no treatments that slow or stop diseases like Alzheimer's. This means that the diseases will continue to get worse over time unless new treatments can be found quickly.

9 – Investment in dementia research is still low

Despite a welcome government focus on dementia over the past three years, research into the condition still only receives around three per cent of the government's medical research budget.

10 – You can help

Dementia research desperately needs volunteers. Lack of volunteers is slowing efforts to help find new preventions and treatments. A new service called 'join dementia research' has launched to help people with and without dementia register their interest in taking part in studies in their area.

IONA – AN ISLAND WHICH WILL LIVE LONG IN THE MEMORY

Janet N reflects on her recent retreat and visit

What comes to mind when the name IONA is mentioned? A woman's name, an island in Scotland, the Iona Community, John Bell, Rev George MacLeod, a thin place... or none of these?

A few years ago, I spent half a day on Iona, and since then I have wanted to visit for a longer time.

The retreat was organised by McCabe Pilgrimages (who lost nearly all their business overnight because of the conflict in Israel/Gaza). They had “to think outside the box”. This year they have included holidays in the UK and other parts of the world.

McCabe booked one of the hotels on Iona (which is preferable for me than sleeping in a dormitory in the Abbey!) for a retreat led by Amy Boucher-Pye. Amy lives in London, is a vicar's wife, an author, speaker, retreat leader and spiritual director.



But, for a moment, let's return to the Iona Community, which was founded in 1938 by Rev George MacLeod, a minister in the Church of Scotland. The community began as a project to close the gap which he perceived between the church and working people. A group of

ministers and artisans rebuilt the ruined mediaeval abbey. The community eventually became ecumenical, allowing the community more scope.

Some members of the Iona Community live on the island, for different periods of time, but the Community is dispersed throughout the world. There are 270+ members, about 1,800 associate members and 1,600

Friends of the Community, including Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Quakers and people of no denominational allegiance.

The community has a strong commitment to ecumenism and to peace and justice issues. The community has its own ecumenical liturgy, which is used daily. There are morning, afternoon and evening prayers.

Every day we (a group of 28 from all over the UK) started our devotions with Celtic Prayer based on the liturgy of the Northumbria Community.

This was followed by morning sessions based on “Seven Ways to Pray” – Praying with the Bible; Practising the presence of God; Hearing God; Praying with lament; Gospel imaginative prayer and looking back in prayer – the examen.



After studying Bible passages, discussion and prayer in the morning, we were free to use the booklet provided or spend time in quiet contemplation. This time, of course, could be spent walking around the island, especially as the weather was absolutely glorious. Bird song was abundant (using the Merlin App to identify their songs). I saw lambs which were literally a few hours old, goldfinches, oystercatchers and a twite.

Amongst the most well-known aspects of Iona are its music and liturgies, which you can purchase through Wild Goose Publications. Some of you may know the poetry and prayers of Ruth Burgess. Although she no longer lives on the island, she is still a member of the Community.

Many worship songs/hymns have been written by John Bell e.g. “Heaven shall not wait”; “Will you come and follow me?” and “Jesus Christ is waiting”.

The early Christian Community, founded by St Columba, on Iona, sent members out to evangelise. This continues to this day, but perhaps in different ways.

PS On the last night some of us saw the Northern Lights!!!!



God our maker, bless us with wonder.

Jesus our friend, bless us with curiosity.

Holy Spirit of wisdom, bless us with common sense.

Bless us and keep us on our way.

Ruth Burgess

PASTORAL UPDATE (from Gwen)

- Remembering those who are no longer able to come to church, we ask you to pray for friends who are now in care homes, Esme, Judith, Barbara and Graham.
- It's wonderful to be able to say that Heather & Jeff's grandson James is making progress and is gradually returning to school; his brother Ben is doing well.
- Belated congratulations to Heather and Jeff who recently celebrated their Golden Wedding. We send them our love.
- Also good to hear that David P is making progress and Joyce J is now home from hospital and doing well.
- Congratulations also to Clare K, who has recently completed the Sea to Sea (C2C) Cycle Ride travelling from Sunderland to Whitehaven in 4 days, cycling approximately 35 miles a day. What an achievement, well done Clare.



**MADCAPS – Murder
Mystery Evening
Saturday 5th July**



Madcaps invite you to use your imagination and detective skills:

Picture our UCS building as a manor, in fact “Fishcake Manor”, hosting a team-building weekend for employees of “Gertie and Bertie's Bags of Sweeties and Surprises”. For one night only, a limited number of you can become an employee and join them in a fun murder mystery evening, entitled “Sweet Revenge at Fishcake Hall” written by Mr Paul Evans.

Tickets are priced at £12 per person, and include supper and hot drinks. These must be purchased in advance from Mr John Dumelow, secretary to the company. (Because of the catering, tickets are non-refundable.) Please ensure you advise Mr. Dumelow if you have any dietary requirements.



We look forward to seeing you at this exciting new event and wonder....will you be able to identify the killer?

WE ARE 10!

On the following day, Sunday, July 6th, there will be a special service to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Uniting Church Sketty. It will be led by our minister, the Revd Louise Gough, and the Revd Simon Walkling, minister of Christ Well URC and regional minister for the Swansea Region. More information next month. Reserve the date in your diary!

Two memories – two perspectives

VE DAY IN THE UK

My home was in Neath, and I had been a pupil of Neath Girls' Grammar School. But in May 1945 I was just 19 and a student at Newnham College, Cambridge. On the evening of VEDay, I joined the crowds who had gathered in Parker's Piece, one of the large green areas of the city. There was the miracle of light after the years of dense darkness during the blackout. The bonfires lit up the horse chestnut trees in full bloom, so that they looked like giant candle trees, and everyone was dancing, laughing together, with many nationalities, since the young people from the airfields near Cambridge came into town – Polish, French, Czech, American. In that joy was the glimpse of how life in the world could be. It was a never to be forgotten event – the sense of freedom from war, light after darkness, was indeed powerful and exciting.

Alice R

VE DAY ON THE OTHER SIDE

The events of this day are firmly etched in my memory. May 8th was a warm spring day in Leipzig. I was 10 years old. My family were sitting in our sunny veranda listening to the evening news.

My family consisted of my parents, my mother's mother who lived with us and myself. But it was augmented by my father's mother, his sister and her children, who had come to us as refugees from further east, fleeing from the advancing Russian army.

When it was announced that Germany had surrendered, and all fighting had stopped my mother said 'Thank God' expressing what my parents and her mother felt. There was silence from the other half of the family.

Grandmother and aunt sat tight-lipped and made no comment. The surrender not only meant defeat of the German army but also the end of the Third Reich. That part of the family were ardent believers in Hitler's ideology and had hoped against all the evidence for a German victory. As

a ten year old, I was acutely aware of what was happening because in our nuclear family the events were discussed within our own four walls. German news bulletins were broadcasting unadulterated propaganda, but we heard news about the outside world from the BBC broadcasts to Germany to which my parents listened every evening under a blanket, including the radio! I was sworn to secrecy. While the end of the war meant a shameful defeat for some Germans at the time, now May 8th is recognised as a day of liberation from Germany's heinous totalitarian regime. The following day, American jeeps made their peaceful entrance, and I saw my first ever black GI. For us it meant the end of sleepless or disrupted nights, the end of incessant air raids and the chance of going to our allotment again. The fruit and vegetables kept us fed and nourished in the chaotic weeks that followed. No celebrations, then, but a feeling of relief and freedom. Surviving was everything.

Gabriella S

MARATHON THRU' MAY

Gwen and John's Grandson, Rhys (age 9) is planning to run a 'Marathon



Thru' May' to raise funds for Maggie's.

This is entirely his own initiative and is supported by the fundraising team at

Maggie's. His 'Marathon' will commence at the beginning of May when he will set off from school, cheered on by his classmates.

He hopes to conclude his 'Marathon' at Gnoll Park, Park Run at the end of May. If you would like to support Rhys, and Maggie's, please speak to Gwen or John.

FASHION – MAKING AN IMPACT (from Jude T. on behalf of Green Friends)



With spring finally sprung, and summer just around the corner our thoughts may be turning to our wardrobes. We Brits love our clothes. In the UK in recent years more clothes per person were bought than in any other country in Europe, with the average spend of £980 per year. I wonder if we ever consider what our love for new clothes does to the environment or consider how and by whom our

clothes are made.

Here are some things I've found out.

Fashion is big business. Fashion and Textiles contributed £62 billion to the UK economy, 1.3 million jobs and £23 billion tax revenues.

Fast fashion is dominant in the clothing industry. What is it? It's characterised by fast production of cheap, trendy clothes. It is often of poor quality, results in excess materials and defective products which are discarded before even making it to market, and uses exploitative work practices. It encourages the consumer to make many purchases, to buy, wear and discard. The number of times a garment is worn has declined by approximately 36% in 15 years. According to Earth.Org and Oxfam, fast fashion brands now produce twice as much clothing today than in 2000 and by 2030 global apparel consumption will be 102 million tonnes with 100 billion garments produced.

This comes at a cost.

In 2019, The House of Commons Audit Committee reported that textile production contributes more to climate change than international aviation and shipping combined.

Morgan McFall Johnsen found in 2020 that the fashion industry was responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions. Globally, textile production releases 2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere annually. This is set to rise by 50% by 2030.

It takes a lot of water to produce our clothing. It takes 200,000 litres to produce 1kg cotton, that's 2,700 litres per T-Shirt. The fashion industry is responsible for 20% of global water waste, 79 billion cubic metres of waste water every year.

According to Earth.Org, producing textiles creates 42 million tonnes of plastic waste annually. 10% of microplastics that enter the oceans comes from textiles.

Where does it all go?

In the UK, there is 206,456 tonnes of textile waste annually. On average, 3.1 kg of textile per person is thrown away with 1.7 kg going to landfill.

350,000 tonnes of clothing waste are sent to landfill in the UK.



At the moment, 12% of material used for clothing is recycled. Less than 1% is recycled into new clothing. This is in part due to the complexities of recycling blended materials.

What can we do?

Earth Day has come up with 5 R's to help mitigate this impact of the fashion industry: Reduce, Resale, Rent, Recycle, and Redesign

Reduce: buy fewer clothes. Only buy what you really like. Carefully chosen pieces can be mixed and matched to create different looks. Well made, well fitted clothes look better and last longer. Consider buying second hand from charity shops or online sites.

Take some time to seek out natural materials, materials which may be certified as being sustainably sourced and ethically made,

Resale: why not try selling on that item that just sits at the back of your wardrobe? Even better, **donate** to our **clothing bank** or a charity shop.

Rent: if you have a special event or interview coming up, why not rent at a fraction of the cost?

Recycle: the easiest way is to donate your unwanted items to a clothing bank or charity shop. If your item is no longer fit for purpose, you can repurpose it. An old sock makes a great duster. Reclaim some materials and use to make something new. Craft groups may be grateful for salvaged materials.

Redesign: the creative among us can work wonders with a pair of scissors, needle, thread and embellishments.

The good news is that we can make a difference and change is being sought. Spring fair, a fashion industry event at NEC, Birmingham, states that “The demand for sustainable and ethically produced clothing is reshaping the industry. Consumers are increasingly seeking out brands that prioritise eco-friendly materials and ethical labour practices. This trend aligns with global movements towards sustainability, with many brands stepping up to meet these expectations.”

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR?

These *Guardian* headlines caught my eye the other day.

Loathe thy neighbor: Elon Musk and the Christian right are waging war on empathy

Julia Carrie
Wong

Tue 8 Apr 2025 12.00
BST

Trump's actions are irreconcilable with Christian compassion. But an unholy alliance seeks to cast empathy as a parasitic plague

They appeared alongside an image of a family enjoying a barbecue, interwoven with what looks like a mediaeval depiction of plague, hell and punishment. The article went on to quote Elon Musk as saying in an interview: “The fundamental **weakness** of western

civilization is empathy” (that is, having a sympathy with and an understanding of the situation and suffering of other people). But even more worrying for me was an observation that “The idea that empathy is actually bad has also been gaining traction among white evangelical Christians in the US.” It goes on to comment that “the right-wing movement against empathy seeks to dismantle and discredit one of the essential tools for any society – our capacity to recognize and respond to suffering. We should see the campaign against empathy as a flashing red-light warning of a fascist intent.”

These are very powerful and scary warnings! Do you remember the Right Rev Mariann Budde’s message from the pulpit of Washington National Episcopal (Anglican) Cathedral on January 2nd, to a newly inaugurated President Trump. “Immigrants and LGBTQ+ children are living in fear,” the Episcopal bishop of Washington said. “In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now.”



Two responses to her sermon are quoted in ***The Guardian***. Ben Garrett wrote in his blog alongside a photo of Bishop Budde: “This snake is God’s enemy and yours too.” Another Christian podcaster, Allie Beth Stuckey, tweeted: “This is to be expected from a female Episcopalian priest: toxic empathy that is in complete opposition to God’s Word and in support of the most satanic, destructive ideas ever conjured up.”

All this sent me back to check up what Jesus said, in case I’d missed something! Was Jesus against empathy, compassion and love?

- Jesus said. “The most important commandment is this, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (*Mark 12.30-31 NIV, quoting from Deuteronomy*).
- At the end of his parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asks the young lawyer who challenged him, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (*Luke 10.36 & 37*)
- “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour, and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (*Matthew 5.43-48*)

‘Love your neighbour’ or ‘Loathe your neighbour’? I think the answer is very clear! Don’t you?