



MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY

June 2025



**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the
Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified, who has
spoken through the prophets.**

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

Minister: The Revd Louise Gough

Senior Elder: Pat D

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

JULY/AUGUST 2025 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the **JULY/AUGUST 2025 edition of the Magazine** to be sent to Noel D) by 17th June at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 29th June.



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The **Methodist Church**



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

LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

Dear Friends

We're almost there!

At first glance, you might assume that the title of the Ministerial Letter refers to the return of Rev. Louise, in the middle of June, to her responsibilities after a three-month Sabbatical. You might also be sensing the sigh breathed by the 'gang of three' as we once more return, in football parlance, to the 'subs bench'. Written, as this letter is, for publication in the June magazine, you would be correct.

Such is the nature of deadlines and other time commitments that I am writing this letter in early May; not so much 'almost there' more 'half-way through'! With my weeks holiday in May just 2 days away my 'to do' list is getting shorter – almost there. The must do's have been done, and there is a growing sense of relief in this. (Why is it such a good idea to complete car insurance renewals 3 weeks before the policy expires? Especially, after a whole morning of mind-numbing comparisons and policy details later, you end up still renewing with the company you were with in the first place!). I am reminded that when we get so driven by thoughts of what we must do, what we must achieve, that we are in danger of crowding out the voice and blessings of God.

The Acts of the Apostles tells us the story of the early church and of the challenges they faced in their exploration of faith. Peter is called to see that God is not exclusive but calls all people, Jew or Gentile. "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10: 34). No tick off list of the rule of law or exclusive religion.

Paul's missionary journeys are long and detailed, nothing is going to get in the way of his proclaiming the Gospel, not even being imprisoned. I

suspect his packing list always included papyrus and ink! In Acts 16:7 we hear how the travellers were set to enter the province of Asia (North-West Turkey) but “we were prevented”. They end up being called to Macedonia (modern day Greece). Not on their ‘to do list’ at all.

Setbacks in plans can be frustrating, difficult and exhausting. After a shipwreck in Malta, being laid up for the winter, the journey continued. As they entered Rome they were met by brothers/friends who had heard they were coming and travelled with them for a while. Acts 28: 15 “At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged.”

In all our frustrations and difficulties let us never forget we are in God’s hands; his purposes are being worked out in ways we cannot always understand. To say ‘we’re almost there’ on our own faith journey, however long or short that may yet be, is short sighted. Who knows what adventures may yet be in store?

One of the blessings of covering for the various ministerial absences there have been in UCS, has been the delight of working together as a team, which not only comprises the ‘gang of three’ but Adella too. Adella will be writing the Ministerial Letter for the July/August magazine.

People have expressed thanks for the ministerial support that we have offered in these last months. I am sure that I speak for all of us when I thank you too, the people of UCS, for all your support of us.

Linda Woollacott

RECYCLING SPECTACLES (from Green Friends): We recently lost our long-term location for recycling spectacles, but, where one door closes another one opens. **Specsavers** collect unwanted spectacles, sunglasses, glasses cases and contact lenses (please put lenses in a sealed envelope or sealed plastic bag). This means we can expand our recycling of unwanted spectacles etc.

WORSHIP SERVICES IN JUNE

June	1	Revd Linda Woollacott (Communion)
	8	Pentecost Sunday: Revd Noel Davies
	15	Trinity Sunday, Bible Month begins: Sue Raad
	19	Thursday Communion: Revd John Atkinson
	22	Revd Louise Gough
	29	Heather Coleman

All the above services are at 10.30am.

Evening Prayer from 7.00pm to 7.30pm, on Zoom, using the UCS link (see Weekly Notices). Everyone welcome.

Please note:

On July 6th we will be celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the formation of Uniting Church Sketty (see page 8)

COFFEE MORNINGS AND STRAWBERRY TEA

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

Saturday 5th July, 10-12, Coffee Morning.

Proceeds for Action Aid

Saturday 26th July, 3pm, Strawberry Tea in Gaynor's Garden. If wet, in church. Tickets £6.

Proceeds for Church Funds

Saturday 2nd August, 10-12, Coffee Morning

The Mission and Outreach Team would like to thank all the bakers who contribute to our wonderful cakes' stalls at our coffee mornings ...and ... please keep baking! (Janet)



OUR COMMUNION COLLECTION FOR JUNE will be for Tŷ Laura, an



Action for Children project in Swansea. Tŷ Laura provides respite care for children and young people who have severe learning disabilities and complex needs. A recently developed sensory garden gives space for children to play and develop skills such as hand to eye coordination and social skills. Parents can have a break knowing their children are in safe hands.

The METHODIST PRAYER HANDBOOK 2025/26: Our Story, Our Song

will be available during August, in readiness for 1 September 2025. If you would like to purchase a copy of the handbook, please let Gwen know no later than the end of June 2025. The cost will be £5, including postage and packing, to be paid on receipt of the Handbook.

"O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day" **Psalm 96:1-2**

(NRSVue). From ancient times, communities have defined themselves by the stories they tell and the songs they sing about themselves. **Our Story, Our Song** calls upon people to join in a soul expedition deep into the heart of our calling, journeying afresh into the story of grace and the vocation that God has placed upon us – learning to live, work, pray and play in ways both true to our roots and open to the presence of God in the songs and stories of others.

Ideal for individual prayer, small groups or church devotions, this new-look Handbook offers:

- a broader variety of prayers
- greater accessibility
- easy-to-use prayer prompts
- guidance to form your own prayers
- QR codes and links to related online content.

Charitable payments and donations since April (from Jon Dyer):

Sketty Foodbank	£508.30
Dementia Uk	£507.28
Easter Offering	£1085.62
Alzheimer's Research	£65.00
Christian Aid	£1329.80 (figure at time of writing)
Marie Curie	£181.80 (which will be added to the June Coffee Morning proceeds)



UCS takes part in Great Big Green Week 2025 from 7th to 15th June

What is Great Big Green Week? Great Big Green Week is the UK's biggest celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature.

During the week, communities, schools, businesses, churches, mosques and more join together in a wave of support for action to protect the planet.

The first Great Big Green Week took place in September 2021, and was the largest event for climate and nature ever seen in the UK, with over 5,000 events taking place up and down the country.

Since then, Great Big Green Week has continued to grow and in 2024, 600,000 people took part.

Communities, national organisations, institutions, businesses and media outlets joined in, ultimately putting pressure on the government to up its game on climate change.

For this year's activity, Green Friends have decided to have a poster campaign on the railings in front of the church and the railings beside the church in Llewelyn Street, publicising information such as the church's fairtrade involvement and support, Green Christian posters etc.

There will be a prayer tree with green hearts on it in the prayer corner for people to add their prayers for climate change and green issues in general. These prayers will then be prayed for by Green Friends.

At the Swansea Environment Centre, Old Exchange Building, SA1 1RY, there will be the GBGW "Pier Street Party", on June 14, 10am till 1pm.

Adella on behalf of Green Friends.

PS A request from Janet: Does anyone have a willow tree in their garden or know where we can find some willow trees?

FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

I am being encouraged – is that the right word?! – by the Senior Elder(!) to lead some Bible Studies during this year's Bible Month. So... This year, we are, as the Methodist Church puts it, '...feasting on John's Gospel'. It is the last Gospel to be written and has a different style (and probably a different purpose) from the other three Gospels. It contains some of the most loved verses of the Bible as well as some of the most challenging texts. Bible Month will help us to explore the Gospel's riches. Come to reflect with us on what it means that 'God loved the world so much'. There will be four sessions, as follows (from 10.00 until 11.30 on Tuesday mornings in The Wesley Room):

Week 1 – June 17: Embracing God and all reality

Week 2 – June 24: Signs, conversations and controversy

Week 3 – July 1: Jesus' discipleship course

Week 4 – July 8: 'The hour', the resurrection and our drama

Noel

THE ELECTION OF HIS HOLINESS, POPE LEO XIV

The Roman Catholic Church has been very much in our thoughts and prayers over recent weeks: the death of the much-loved Pope Francis, his funeral mass in Rome, the conclave to elect his successor and the election of Cardinal Robert Prevost, a citizen of both the USA and Peru, as the 267th Pope.



He has taken the name Leo XIV, as a signal that justice for all, a deep concern for the poor and for human rights - values that were so fundamental to his ministry as a Bishop in Peru – will remain at the heart of his new ministry as spiritual leader of 1.4 billion Catholics around the world. These words from Pope Leo represent the heart of what he knows of God and the Gospel he seeks to proclaim and live:

Brothers, Sisters, I speak to you,
especially to those who no longer believe,
no longer hope
no longer pray
because they think God has left.
To those who are fed up with scandals,
with misused power, with the silence of a Church
that sometimes feels more like a palace than a home.
I, too, was angry with God,
I, too, saw good people die, children suffer,
grandparents cry without medicine.

And, Yes, there were days when I prayed
and only felt an echo.
But then I discovered something:
God doesn't shout, God whispers.
And sometimes God whispers
from the mud, from pain,
from a grandmother who feeds others
though she does not have anything.
I don't come to offer you perfect faith.
I come to tell you that faith is a walk with stones,
puddles and unexpected hugs.
I'm not asking you to believe in everything,
I'm asking you not to close the door.
Give a chance to the God who waits for you
without judgement.
I'm just a priest who saw God
in the smile of a woman who lost her son...
and yet she cooked for others.
That changed me.
So if you're broken,
if you don't believe,
if you're tired of the lies,
come anyway. With your anger, your doubt,
your dirty backpack.
No one here will ask you for a VIP card.
Because this Church, as long as I breathe,
will be a home for the homeless and a rest for the weary.
God doesn't need soldiers,
God needs brothers and sisters.
And you - yes, you -
are one of them.

A VIEW OF DEMENTIA (by Jeff C)

I was recently given a book by a relative, “Somebody I used to know” by Wendy Mitchell. The author was diagnosed with Dementia aged 59, and the structure of the book is a mixture of two types of writing - descriptions of events in the present tense as she discovers things that she can no longer do, or when something notable happens, and, in italics, messages addressed to her former self recalling things as they were earlier in her life.

Driving to work, she suddenly realises she no longer knows how to turn right. Her coping mechanism of multitudes of post-it notes of what she has to do gets to take so long before each day that she is not getting enough sleep. She goes to a conference about dementia and finds that she is the only person there with a diagnosis, as all the others are there because of relatives, or as experts. She finds herself lost in her home city and goes into a café to sit down until she recalls how to get to where she was going. She accidentally gets on the wrong bus and the annoyance of the bus driver is contrasted with the kind concern of a fellow-passenger. She discovers that she can no longer cope with the noise and bustle of the surroundings where she has lived happily. Each day can be different. Some days are really muddily and difficult, others are clear and just like old times, but she doesn't know what the next day will be like.

One thing she can remember how to do, and hangs on to, is fast typing on the computer, so she goes on recording the changes as her brain becomes more erratic and more and more everyday things become difficult. She is also determined to carry on sharing her experiences and her positive outlook. She doesn't want to be 'written off' or for others she meets to be 'written off'.

As we follow Dementia Support as our chosen Mission Project in UCS, and think about being a dementia-friendly church, this book has led me to think in terms of 'We/Us' rather than 'They' as we tend to do if seeking to reach out to support projects abroad, or people in particular situations locally. We are all getting older. We catch ourselves forgetting things, we see people around us no longer able to do what they used to do, or not do it so well. Some people recognise that things are getting harder to sustain, others cannot see the changes in themselves. We must be very careful not to continue piling things on 'willing workers' as if they still have the

skills and aptitudes they had ten years ago. We must also recognise that even people we are tempted to 'write off' still have a lot to contribute from personality and experience, if they are given the right opportunities.

Amy C has published some research in British Medical Journal Open - an open-access medical journal. Amy started this research as part of her training to become a Clinical Psychologist. It is a systematic review and meta-analysis, which gathers together all the research on a specific topic. (Having a paper published in the BMJ is quite an achievement – congratulations, Amy. Ed.) This is a summary of her findings:



Lots of people smoke to relieve stress or anxiety, but this is a misconception. We know that quitting smoking improves mental health and wellbeing, as well as improving physical health. People are now encouraged to quit smoking, the message from doctors is *If you quit, you'll feel better!*

This is true - there is solid research behind it. But we asked the question, "What if I fail?". Quitting is hard! On average, it takes about 30 attempts to quit. So, it's really important to know the risks of trying and failing. Failing at anything is unpleasant, and often leads to feelings of guilt and frustration. So, it would be understandable to think that a failed attempt to quit smoking would worsen mental health.

Reassuringly, we found that symptoms of depression and anxiety were either the same or better after an unsuccessful quit attempt. So, it is beneficial to attempt to quit smoking, whatever the outcome. If you succeed, the benefits are greater than if you fail. But failing is unlikely to make you feel worse. So our message is *Keep trying!*

If anyone is interested in reading the full paper, it is available online <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2024-091419> or ask Amy for a copy.



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. Reserve the date in your diary!

A CAMINO DE SANTIAGO WALK

On behalf of Chris, Jacky, Lowri, and Eve H (Margaret H's family), we just want to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported our family's Camino de Santiago walk, by donating to Alzheimer's Research UK.



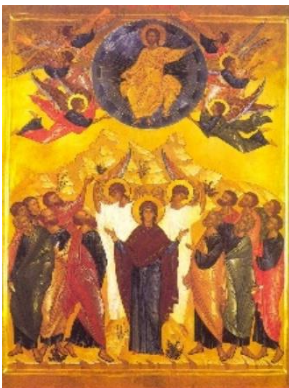
We completed the 120km walk (despite many blisters and questionable navigation skills!), and it was an unforgettable journey—but what made it even more special was knowing we had such a kind and supportive community behind us.

Thanks to your generosity, we managed to raise over £1,800 for a cause that's incredibly important to so many people and very close to our hearts.

We're truly grateful for all your support!
The H's "

ASCENSION, PENTECOST AND TRINITY

These three Christian festivals crammed into a 'packed' two-week period! So much theology in a short space! It's too much for us. So let's 'unpack' it a little...



It's Luke that most helps us to understand the Ascension of the Risen Jesus. At the end of his Gospel and at the beginning of his second book, The Acts of the Apostles, he recalls that the Risen Jesus was with his disciples. They had been through the horror and fear of the crucifixion. They had been amazed at the news of resurrection. 'Nonsense', they thought initially, but then they came to believe what the women told them. He stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you' and they recognized the scars and wounds of crucifixion. And he opened

their minds to understanding and faith. At this point they were told to stay in the city until they received power; but then he led them out to Bethany.

There he lifted up his hands and blessed them ‘and was taken up to heaven.’ This was ascension. Jesus goes out of their sight and beyond their physical grasp. But the disciples are equipped: they understand, they believe, Jesus has breathed his peace upon them, they await the power of the Spirit, they are blessed by the Lord they loved, the Lord who loved them until the end. They have become different people.



Ten days later, it is Pentecost. Now the disciples are in Jerusalem. They are enveloped by signs of the presence and power of the Spirit of God. Jesus’ promise is fulfilled (‘stay in the city until you have received power from on high’). The renewed people become empowered people, empowered by the

Spirit to be witnesses ‘to these things’ that Jesus opened up for them. ‘They were filled with the Holy Spirit.’



Then immediately afterwards we celebrate Trinity Sunday. The God who breathed light and life and love into the cosmos at the beginning of all beginnings, the God who was with us in the crucified and risen Jesus, and whose Word became fl in him, the God who empowers, challenges and sends through the Spirit at work in all times and places, among all peoples and nations, this God of amazing and wondrous love is within us, alongside us, behind us and ahead of us. This God is our companion on all our

journeying. In and through this God we are raised to newness, entrusted to bear witness, and empowered for service.

Have you noticed how all the above images glow with light and flame? They point us to God and the flame of God’s ‘cascading’ love. It is this God – Three in One and One in Three – that we praise and worship. **Noel**

THE NICENE CREED, 325-2025: WE BELIEVE...

AN ECUMENICAL SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND COMMITMENT



This year – as readers will remember – marks the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed. It has been the foundation for the Churches' ecumenical confession of their Biblically rooted faith over the centuries since. We had an opportunity to reflect

on the Creed during our Lent Faith and Fellowship sessions, celebrating the faith we share with Christians across the centuries and throughout the world. It is also an opportunity to make a new commitment to our shared faith and to think together about what we believe now as Christians in a very different time and with very different challenges.

With this in mind, we are planning **a Service of Celebration for churches in the Swansea area**. It will bring together Welsh and English churches, as well as the international Christian communities and congregations that worship and witness in the Swansea area. The service will celebrate the diversity of languages and words, traditions and music, that these communities of faith bring.



It will be held at Swansea Minster (formerly St Mary's) on Sunday, September 28th 2025 at 3.00pm.

The preacher will be The Revd Dr Susan Durber (a United Reformed Church minister who has retired to live in Pembrokeshire) who is currently President from Europe for the World Council of Churches and is formerly moderator of the WCC Faith and Order Commission.

All are very welcome!