



# MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY JULY & AUGUST 2025



**No theology – it's holiday time! But still, all this, and more, is God's world for us - to care for and enjoy!**

**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)

**SEPTEMBER 2025 MAGAZINE:** All items for inclusion in the **September 2025 edition of the Magazine** to be sent to Noel D by 19<sup>th</sup> August at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> August.



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## LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

### Dear Friends

As Linda said in her letter in the last magazine, it's my turn to write the letter for July and August and it's lovely to be having this opportunity, but I have wondered what to write. These two months can be such different experiences for people.

For some it's a time to slow down: less meetings to attend, fewer groups to visit. For others it's a busier time; looking after school children on holiday, family members visiting and for some it may be 'life as usual'? Six years on and I still get a buzz from living by the sea. Previously living in Birmingham, come July and August and the sunnier weather, our family thoughts would turn to holidays by the sea and day trips to the coast.

Now I can just walk out the door and, 15 minutes or so later, I can be on the beach. I get such enjoyment from walking on the sand and listening to the waves (when the tide is in!) and this experience helps me to slow down and reflect on daily matters. So for me, in these 2 months I think I will be looking to have more reflective walks on the beach. In the community work world, it's good to have times of action and times of reflection.

In July/August time, some of my work commitments stop, while one off work commitments increase because it is the summer. But I do have some extra time to read or learn about other church community work initiatives or learn about the work of other Christian organisations. One such organisation is Green Christian (which UCS is now a member) and their 'Green Christian Way of Life Community.' The details of which I share with you now.

This Way of Life is offered to believers for whom care of God's creation in all its forms is a fundamental outworking of their faith. The Way of Life is a calling for deeper engagement and shared encouragement. Followers of the Way are called "Companions" who have committed to following 4 disciplines. The disciplines are: Daily prayer and Devotions; Living Gently on the Earth; Public witness and Encouragement.

Green Christian Followers of the Way believe that Christian discipleship and formation in the 21st century must be informed by a lifestyle which nurtures God's creation rather than destroys it. 'All of creation waits on tiptoe, with anticipation, for the children of God to come into their own' (Romans 8. 20-22)

Whatever your experiences are in July & August, I pray that you too have time to reflect more in God's presence, who will speak to you in these reflection spaces. I pray too that you will enjoy being part of UCS's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary service on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July, an opportunity to hear God call us to be greater witnesses to our faith in Sketty.

Adella

We welcome our minister, the Revd Louise Gough, back from her sabbatical. We hope that she feels refreshed and renewed, and we look forward to receiving the fruits of her time of reflection in our worship, and in her continuing ministry among us in Uniting Church Sketty. (See p20)

Noel

**THANKS:** As a church community, we express our deep gratitude and appreciation for the long service that Sonia B, Gwyn B, Jan C, Jon D, and Alan J have given to our church over many years, Sonia as Church Meeting Secretary, Gwyn as Serving Elder in Bethel and in UCS, Jan and Alan as Stewards and Senior Stewards, and Jon as Treasurer. They have served us with dedication, and offered leadership and care. Fortunately, they're not going anywhere, and they will continue to be part of our church community and to use their talents to serve God's people.

We pray God's blessing on Ruth A, Susan G, Laurie H and John P as they take on new responsibilities, and thank them for their willingness to serve our church.

## WORSHIP SERVICES IN JULY & AUGUST

|               |           |   |
|---------------|-----------|---|
| <b>July</b>   | <b>6</b>  | Revd Louise Gough and the Revd Simon Walkling<br>(UCS 10 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service and Communion) |
|               | <b>13</b> | Revd Louise Gough   |
|               | <b>17</b> | Revd Louise Gough (Thursday Communion)  |
|               | <b>20</b> | Revd Noel Davies  |
|               | <b>27</b> | Revd Howard Long  |
| <b>August</b> | <b>3</b>  | Revd Louise Gough   |
|               | <b>10</b> | Revd Louise Gough   |
|               | <b>17</b> | Local Arrangement Service led by UCS members  |
|               | <b>21</b> | Thursday Communion  |
|               | <b>24</b> | Revd Louise Gough   |
|               | <b>31</b> | Revd Martin Spain, URC Ecumenical & Interfaith Officer<br>for the Synod of Wales                          |

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.

**FAIR TRADE:** Thanks to all in UCS who continue to support the monthly fair trade stall. Sales have been good these past few months. We have a stall 13<sup>th</sup> July and then no stall in August, resuming on 21<sup>st</sup> September. So please stock up on your favourites in July.

We are opening up the stall after the service to the wider community who may be interested in attending so if you know people who like to support fair trade, please let them know.

**Jackie C**

## COFFEE MORNINGS AND STRAWBERRY TEA

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July**, 10-12, Coffee Morning. Proceeds for Action Aid

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July**, 3pm, Strawberry Tea in Gaynor & Ian Brown's Garden.

If wet, in church. Tickets £6. Proceeds for Church Funds

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August**, 10-12, Coffee Morning

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September** 10-12 Coffee Morning Proceeds for Macmillan

**A NOTE FROM JON D:** Final Figure for Marie Curie Coffee Morning: £756.46 (which includes a Retiring Collection for Marie Curie at our Mothers' Day Service). Final Figure for Christian Aid Collections: £1522.30

## **WE ARE 10!**

On Sunday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, there will be a special service to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> 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.



### **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?**

## OUR COMMUNION COLLECTIONS FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS

### July: Dementia Friendly Swansea



Continuing with our dementia project we have chosen a local charity to support. Dementia Friendly Swansea focuses on improving the quality of life for people living with dementia. They run the Dementia Hwb in the Quadrant and also have a forum to discuss dementia friendly projects and initiatives in the area and share good practice.

### August: Mixt up



Mixtup is a youth club for 11-25 year olds with mixed abilities. It aims to provide its members with the things that most young people want; their independence and

freedom away from their day to day responsibilities and just to be themselves and have fun in a safe and stimulating setting.

***Continuing with the theme of dementia the following prayer is written by Bruce Bane who has frontotemporal dementia:***

Oh God, I am losing myself to this disease.  
Slowly, but surely dementia eats away at me.  
Little by little it takes away what makes me who I am.  
But You, merciful God, continue to know me fully.  
Dementia can't change who I am in Your eyes.  
To You I am the sum of all I have been and all I will be.  
And so You celebrate all of me and all of my life,  
You wrap all of who I am in love, acceptance, and forgiveness.  
So God, I ask You to help me step outside my moments of loss and grief.  
Help me know myself as You know me.  
Help me see that nothing of me is lost to You.

Help me celebrate with You.

Help me to embrace your gifts of love, acceptance, and forgiveness  
and help me know that it doesn't matter how devastating dementia is.

You will always and forever know me fully and love me deeply.

For this I give you thanks and praise, God of my life.

<http://brucebane.wordpress.com/>

## **FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**The series of Bible Month Studies and Reflections will continue in July  
as follows (in the Wesley Room, 10.00-11.30):**

**Week 3 – July 1: Jesus' discipleship course (John 13 to 17)**

**Week 4 – July 8: 'The hour', the resurrection and our drama (John 18  
to 21)**

**If you missed the first two, don't worry. You'll be welcome to come to  
these!**

**Noel**

## **RHYS'S MARATHON THRU' MAY (from Gwen and John D)**

He did it! Despite hay fever, our grandson Rhys completed his marathon challenge at the Gnoll Park 5K on 31 May, raising over £4,000 including Gift Aid. We're grateful for the incredible support from everyone, including messages on his JustGiving page, support from his school community, and a wide network of family, friends and colleagues. Rhys also achieved a new personal best time, cutting 3 minutes off his previous 5K record. His sister Ffion handled marketing, leading to an interview on S4C's Heno. Encouraged by readers of Rhys's story on JustGiving (written before the marathon), we are sharing it here:

'Hi, I'm Rhys!

Last summer my Dad was diagnosed with cancer. It felt terrible!!!  
At first, I thought ... Who's going to kick a rugby ball to me now?!  
But then after a while, I kept thinking ... What if I get cancer or  
someone else in my family gets cancer?



I realised there's not much I can do stop cancer, but I can make sure everyone who is affected by cancer gets help when they need it. Maggie's Swansea does just that. They made sure my Dad had someone to talk to when things felt tough. It's a very relaxing, cool place but very expensive to keep going. I love running, and that is why I'm running a Marathon in May for Maggie's. 26.2 miles is a long way but I'm going to give it my best! Please help me reach my target by giving what you can.'



## **PASTORAL UPDATE JULY/AUGUST 2025 (from Gwen D)**

- We give thanks for the life and contribution of Dr. Geraint Jeremiah; our thoughts and prayers go out to Mary and her family, may they find strength and comfort in the love and support of their family and friends.
- At the time of writing, Graham B. is in hospital. We pray for him and send him our love.
- Our Sunday morning services are enriched by the presence of friends who, although unable to attend church in person, remain faithful and share in our worship on Zoom. We send love to them and give thanks for their faith and commitment.
- We also remember the growing number of friends who are unable to join us at church. They are not forgotten and continue to receive care and support from the dedicated Pastoral Team and others within our church.
- Warm congratulations to our friends Esme K., who recently celebrated her remarkable 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and also to Gaynor B. and Linda J. who recently celebrated their 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays.

## IN MEMORIAM: Dr Geraint Jeremiah

*Dr Geraint Jeremiah was a faithful and committed member of Uniting Church Sketty and, before our churches came together as Uniting Church Sketty, of Bethel United Reformed Church. Brought up in a Welsh Congregational Church, he still treasured the language and traditions of the faith that nurtured him. We give thanks to God for all he was by nature and by grace. We give thanks for the gentle and committed care he received during his last years, from Mary and his family, and the carers who helped care for him at the end of his life. We pray for God's blessing of peace and comfort for all his family and all who loved him and all those he loved. We will all treasure our memories of him. His funeral was held in UCS on June 20<sup>th</sup>. The following is the tribute given by Huw at that service.*

My name is Huw, and the man you know as Geraint Jeremiah, I have been lucky enough to call Dad. Thank you all for being here today to celebrate the life of my father, Geraint Morgan Jeremiah, a man whose quiet strength, deep compassion, and unwavering dedication touched so many lives.

Dad was a true son of Wales. Born in 1944 in Cwmgors to Reece Jeremiah, a coal miner and Eiddwen Jeremiah, nee Morgan, an elocutionist. He has an older sister, Mair. He came from well-loved and humble beginnings. He carried his roots with immense pride throughout his life. His early years were marked by discipline, perseverance, and a love for learning. Even as a young boy, he showed a deep appreciation for academia, elocution and music. He performed in a dancing group in the Eisteddfod. He played the oboe with great joy and, as fate would have it, often sat beside none other than Karl Jenkins, who would go on to become one of Wales' most celebrated composers. These moments, steeped in culture and tradition, stayed with him always.

Dad went on to study medicine at St Thomas's Medical School in London. It was at St Thomas's Hospital in 1969, when he'd finished his training, and while working as a house physician, Dad met the love of his life - Mary Margaret, a student nurse, who was assigned to help him perform a lumbar puncture. Her compassion matched his own – and together they

built a life of care, service, and devotion. Through 51 years of marriage, Mum has stuck with Dad through thick and thin.

For over 40 years, Dad served as a general physician at Neath and Port Talbot Hospital. Medicine was his passion. But more than any title or qualification, he was a healer in the truest sense. Patients knew him, not just as a doctor, but as someone who genuinely cared. He was there in their most vulnerable moments, offering reassurance, dignity, and kindness.

My Father's unstinted commitment to the NHS in the Neath area facilitated the development of the New Neath Port Talbot Hospital—a legacy of commitment to community health that will endure for generations. Beyond his work with patients, he was dedicated to training countless junior doctors, always taking time to teach, to guide, and to pass on his knowledge with generosity and patience.

In 2002 Dad was awarded an OBE for services to medicine. It was presented by the then Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace. Later he had a road named after him on the site of the old Neath Hospital.

My Father loved a good joke. One of the favourite stories that he recounted was a time when my Mother was pregnant with me and he took his young son Gareth into the Hospital. Whilst in the hospital, 3 year old Gareth pointed at an overweight nurse's tummy and proudly told her, "I know what you have got in there!"

I recall he once told me he had been asked "How can he park his car 2mm from the wall in the hospital every day?" He told me he would drive his big old red Volvo estate into the space, and stop when he hit the wall!

At the heart of everything he did was family. He was a loving husband, a dedicated father, and a proud Tadcu. He and Mum built a home full of warmth and stability. He was a steady presence through both joyful and painful times – including the heartbreak of losing his son Gareth at just 29. Through grief, he remained strong, supporting our family with quiet courage and deep love.

Dads are someone to look up to, someone to learn from, someone to be proud of. My Father, I know, was all of these things for me, Gareth and Geraint. He and Mum always made sure we always had what we needed, and provided for us so we might make the most of our education and my brothers and I could have the best foundations for life. Before I left home

at age 18 to go to university, my father gave me two pieces of advice. Never forget where you have come from and never forget your manners. My Father leaves behind his beloved wife Mary, two sons – Huw and Geraint, my wife Kat who he treated like his daughter – two grandsons, Morgan and James, and his sister Mair. He also leaves behind a legacy of lives healed, lessons passed on, and hearts touched by his kindness. Dad was the kind of man who never sought praise or recognition. He simply got on with what needed to be done – whether that meant a long night on call, a quiet word of advice to a colleague, or being there without hesitation when someone was in need. He worked hard. He lived humbly. He provided for his family. And he never forgot where he came from. Even in his final years, he remained rooted in Welsh culture – cherishing the music, the language, and the spirit of the land that shaped him. So today, we don't say goodbye in sorrow alone – we celebrate a life beautifully lived, life of purpose, compassion, and integrity. A life that made the world, and all of us, better. I know my Father was proud of his three boys and loved my Mother. We are proud of him too. I love you, Dad. Thank you for everything. You did good!

## ODESSA 2025

*I was inspired by reading this account of a remarkable journey that Jeremy, Shirley and the late Graham J' son, made recently. Details for donations are at the end of his article.*

In May, I joined Aid2Ukraine volunteers, taking vehicles and humani-tarian aid to support displaced families in Ukraine. We were driving an ambulance, a minibus and a van. These are used to evacuate displaced people from war zones and were stuffed full of donated medical and humanitarian aid.



In Odesa, I was surprised at the feeling of normality. The street was alive with music blaring out of cafes and bars, street buskers, food stalls and pony rides. Then, however, we got an alert for an incoming air raid. We



heard no explosions, but we were later told that a missile had landed in the port area and injured 5 naval staff.

The next day, Wednesday, we had an emotional presentation, handing over the minibus to 5 young soldiers

and their commanding officer, fighting in Zaporizhzhya. There were 3 displaced ladies there too, who have family fighting at the



front, and one whose town now no longer exists. Two of the ladies

had been in the military. One had been informed on by a neighbour. She spent 12 months in captivity, where she was tortured and saw horrendous things. We were given certificates and gifts, including the Ukrainian emblem from the soldiers' sleeves. The commanding

officer commented on the comfort that it gives them to think that people outside Ukraine are supporting them. We had a tour of Odesa and saw the damage done to this beautiful city, including the magnificent Bristol Hotel, now devastated by an explosion.

On Thursday, we went to a dilapidated 19<sup>th</sup> century hospital that supports the rehabilitation of soldiers. Rusting beds are being taken out of use and soldiers are sleeping in corridors.

The soldiers there were exhausted, traumatised, some suffering psychoses, and on drug management because of their mental health problems. The willingness or ability of the soldiers to interact with us was varied.



We heard from one young soldier, who spoke excellent English. He talked about fighting with the Wagner group and the reality of not expecting to survive. The side of his face had been burnt by a tracer bullet. Other soldiers spoke about the difficulty of not having seen their wives and children for over 6 months. Shockingly, most soldiers would return to the





front after only 2-3 weeks at the hospital. Despite the poor state of the hospital, the soldiers had built their own gym and we were able to add some equipment to this. The toilet, however, is still a bucket. The soldiers tend the gardens, which included a miniature Stonehenge!

We went to a church housing displaced refugees. 40 beds, crammed in, with residents sharing 2 toilets and 1 shower. They arrive with nothing, and some had been there for 3 years, all

suffering from trauma. One lady had been beaten by Russian soldiers; they broke her leg and tied her son to a radiator, where he was tortured and raped for months. We were unable to communicate with him.

On Thursday night, our air raid alerts went off 4 times. After a piercing alarm the message was, "Incoming threat. Please make your way to the nearest shelter. Your over-confidence will be your undoing"!

Having been uncertain of the value of the trip, seeing our emotional reception and the devastation this conflict has caused for so many people, I am convinced that we provided both tangible support and a demonstration of our awareness of the Ukrainians' situation as well as a commitment to help them.

Our next trip is planned for October, and I have opened a GoFundMe account (*search for Aid2ukraine – supporting displaced families*) for donations for a vehicle. Alternatively, it can be accessed through this QR code. If you prefer, my mother, Shirley Jones, will be happy to receive any financial donations on my behalf.



## **THE COVENANT FOR VISIBLE UNITY IN WALES, 1975-2025**

On Saturday, June 7, I went to Cardiff for a holy communion service at the Norwegian Church in Cardiff Bay, to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Covenant for Visible Unity in Wales agreed on 1975 between The Church in Wales, The Methodist Church, The Presbyterian Church of Wales, The

United Reformed Church, and congregations of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

About 50 people attended the service, led by the current chair of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches, Miriam Moules, a Methodist local preacher from Pembrokeshire. The Revd Dr. Susan Durber (see page 22) preached and the Revd Anna Jane Evans, Ecumenical Officer for the Presbyterian Church of Wales, presided at communion.



As the first General Secretary of the Commission (from 1977 to 1990), I was glad to be there and to share in thanksgiving and re-commitment. I think I was the only person at the service in Cardiff who had attended the inaugural service of the Covenant for Unity in Wales in Aberystwyth during the Week of Prayer for Unity in 1975!

As churches, we have grown in mutual trust and collaboration. New relationships have been forged locally and nationally. But the goal of visible unity in one Church has not been achieved. Many – including me, at times – have become disillusioned.

But Susan Durber encouraged us: we must never give up on the vision of one Church ‘for this land and people of Wales’. “I am impatient for more than a vague ‘spirit of ecumenism’,” she said, calling for a visible, transformative unity. “One that mends wounds, that creates something new and restored from broken fragments of church history; ambitious, visionary, recklessly enthusiastic... strong enough to answer with an ‘Amen’ the prayer of Christ that ‘they may be one’”

We must continue to be committed to the goal that God has set before us. I dare to hope that this anniversary will encourage us – will encourage me! – to continue to seek deeper unity with one another, here in Sketty, and in Wales as a whole. What could **WE** do **here**? **Noel**



## DO THE LITTLE THINGS – FROM GREEN FRIENDS

**PLASTIC** – we cannot live without it since it has so many uses BUT there is a problem – it is not biodegradable. We've seen the pictures of our own plastic waste contaminating the environment in far eastern and African



countries and that is not what we want.

Realistically you and I cannot solve the problem, but we can look for ways in which we can make our own small contribution, in our everyday lives, you in your small corner and I in mine.

Here are some ideas from my own experience and I'd love to learn from yours:

- SEEP sell a dish/pan sponge which does an excellent job (I have put one in the kitchen for you to try), it is long lasting, washable and zero plastic. It is made of natural materials, sustainably sourced and compostable in the food bin. Far superior all round to the foam ones available in packs.



- We grew up having our milk delivered in glass bottle, to the door, by the milkman. Well, I do now, following a recommendation from some Green Friends. Out with the clumsy plastic from the supermarket, full cream, semi skimmed or skimmed, at your door 3 times a week – a variety of other products are also available. Order and payment are available on-line and by phone.



- If you don't want liquid laundry detergent in plastic containers, don't care for the pods or the bulky washing powder boxes there are ECO friendly laundry sheets available in compact packaging which do a good job, even at 30 degrees. Some are available in the larger supermarkets and there is a greater choice online. Like all products it's worth researching country of origin and transport to get the fuller





picture. It is important to look not just at the obvious advantages but also all the implications, some research is needed.

- Mothers Earth does dishwasher sheets, only available on their website, which I haven't tried yet. They are plant based with no micro plastics and do not require separate rinse aid or salt. SMOL also do ECO friendly dishwasher tablets, these are only available online and letterbox packed. They do a free trial but wouldn't suit me because you need to sign up for a regular delivery. Both these products keep the



cost down by cutting out the retail side, BUT if price is an issue, then bear in mind that, unfortunately, ECO products cannot match the big producers on cost.

- We try to limit our plastic waste, but it is unlikely that we can eliminate it altogether, so it is worth considering products made from recycled plastic. After years of wooden garden furniture which eventually rotted and had to be disposed of, I now have a set made from recycled plastic (not those in the photo!) and I've noticed similar benches appearing in parks. The pieces are very heavy and not for moving to catch the sun and OK, not as attractive as wood, but they don't involve cutting down trees and won't need renewing.



- Looking forward. Some of us take soft plastic, which cannot be put into our green bags, to the supermarkets for recycling. Swansea is currently running a trial in a limited area to collect soft plastic in blue bags at the kerbside, something to welcome. Longer term there is research going on in the UK to develop a product which will do what



plastic does and biodegrade. Hopefully something will come of it without too much of a downside.

- Micro plastic is much in the news currently, something we were unaware of until recently. Some progress has been made by not



deliberately adding plastic particles to products such as face washes and toothpaste. We are now learning how micro particles can be shed from plastic and enter the body, the more scientists learn, the more problems emerge.

Meanwhile we must do what we can, because every little helps and if we stay alert, we can learn how to do better as we go forward.

**Sonia B**

## **REJOICE AND SING IS 35 YEARS OLD!**



This URC hymnbook, which is still available to us at Uniting Church Sketty, is 35 years old this year. **Rejoice and Sing Live**, held in Coventry in May was a celebration that involved much hymn singing and short addresses by some of the key people involved in its production. **Rejoice and Sing** brings together tradition and newness,

hymns treasured, and tunes and words we needed to learn. David Thompson, who chaired the editorial committee, shared recollections of the process of producing it. The committee started with a collection of about 5000 hymns and reduced them to 648! Quite an achievement. The largest correspondence, not unexpectedly, was about hymns that were left out! And the largest number of complaints was about omitting 'All things bright and beautiful'!



David doubted whether there would be another hymnbook like it, since our styles of worship no longer require, for so many churches, the use of actual hymnbooks. Words are usually projected on screens, as in UCS. One consequence I've noticed is that the nature of our singing has changed. Most people sing the melody (often rather shyly and reticently), and very few people are able to sing the alto, tenor or bass parts. Singing 'in harmony' is left largely to choirs rather than congregations – even in Wales, even in Welsh-speaking, Welsh-worshipping Wales!

But David also feared that the decline of schools' music teaching services for children and young people means that there's been a parallel decline, sadly, in musical literacy: in the ability to 'read' music and sing it or play it. There has also been a move away from traditional hymns to more popular forms of music making in worship – often called songs rather than hymns! Indeed, is this one reason why 'charismatic' churches seem more attractive to younger people than more 'traditional churches' such as ours? Could their music be more appealing to a new generation? But I hope that – wherever we are on this musical and poetic journey of faith – singing praise to God, Father, Son and Spirit, Source, Redeemer and Renewer, will continue to be at the core of our Christian life. I found it moving that Stephen Orchard, also a member of the original committee, affirmed that, for him, Isaac Watts' words are still at the heart of his faith:

I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler pow'rs;  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life and thought and being last,  
Or immortality endures.

I hope that the words of Psalm 95 still ring true for us: "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song."

**Noel**

### **THREE MONTHS OF SOMETHING DIFFERENT... OR, WHAT DID LOUISE GET UP TO ON HER SABBATICAL?**

It is a privilege of ministry that every seven years, Methodist ministers are given three months away from their usual life and duties for the purposes of refreshment and renewal. My previous sabbatical was taken a year early, and this one a year late, so I was extra grateful for the gift of an extended sabbath!

Before I fill you in a little on my adventures, it is the chief purpose of this submission to say an enormous thank you to the Revs Noel, Linda and John for all the extra things they undertook in my absence, and to every

one of you for playing your part (and extra parts) in the continuing work of the church. Thanks too to Rev Howard for chairing the church meeting. It is all very much appreciated. I did miss you!

I hope that I am still feeling the benefit of my change of pace and activities when you read this.

My sabbatical began on 17<sup>th</sup> March, with a morning spent clearing my desk and a special evening meal. Sabbaticals afford the opportunity to step outside the usual tasks and do something different. So, two weeks in, having done my best to learn nine routines, I was able to swap my dog collar for sparkly crystals, enjoy something of a home-made Strictly-style make-over, and take to the floor at the Brangwyn Hall for “The Welsh Spectacular” dancing competition, a whole weekend event. This was followed several weeks later by my ballroom and Latin dancing exams. One day before my sabbatical ended, my teacher declared my rumba technique fit for purpose – a little late, but that’s life!

Dancing was fun, but the main event of the sabbatical was my eight day silent retreat at St Beuno’s Jesuit Spirituality Centre in North Wales. The days took on a beautiful rhythm as, along with the other retreatants, I embarked on a journey of silence, prayer and attentiveness, enhanced by the beautiful grounds and prayer-filled chapels. We all kept silence, except for half an hour a day when we met individually with a guide to talk things through – and mine was lovely! I last visited St Beuno’s during my previous sabbatical in 2016, and I hope I don’t leave it so long before retreating there again.

Itinerant ministry plays havoc with friendships, so I was very pleased to reconnect with friends in Wellington (Somerset) and Bath and had very enjoyable visits. I was also able to see my family. My sister came to stay twice, and we spent a few days in Tenby too. My good friend from Manchester also made it to Swansea - and what a surprise - it poured with rain!

I thoroughly enjoyed these, and other trips (mainly taken in Wales), but staying at home was also lovely and I had time to appreciate life in Swansea by the sea, with Gower always on hand to dazzle me afresh – I’m a sucker for a good beach!

In between all my comings and goings, I had a good clear out at home, necessary as I never quite managed to get fully organised after moving in.

During the process I rediscovered and reorganised treasures from my past that helped me relive my childhood and formative years, and also my experiences in various appointments. My best find was the letter from my local preaching grandpa, informing me that he had asked the circuit to give me a note to preach – starting me off on my official preaching journey. At mum's I found a picture of me at the age of three months, with mum and dad, on my baptism day – also good to reflect on, and currently on my 'phone home screen! (Though it will doubtless soon be replaced with one of my cat, Bluebell!)

I am so grateful for three very special months, and to all those who enabled it. Jesus came to give us life in all its fullness, and I thank God for those times when we are able to receive the gift of refreshment and new life.

**Rev'd Louise**

### **BIBLE MONTH QUIZ: JOHN'S GOSPEL (You'll need your Bible!)**

1. How many times does 'logos' (Word) appear in chapter 1?
2. The wedding in Cana is described as Jesus' 'first sign'. What others can you find in this Gospel? Why were they included? (See 20:30-31)
3. Who was Nicodemus and where in the Gospel do we hear about him?
4. The 'I am' sayings refer back to a well-known Old Testament story. Who was the main character in the story and where in the Old Testament does this 'I am' phrase appear first?
5. How many 'I am' sayings are there in John's Gospel?
6. Lazarus had two sisters. What were their names? What do we know about them?
7. There isn't an account of the Last Supper in John's Gospel. What other action of Jesus took place that night, according to John?
8. What are the various terms for Jesus' followers used in John 15:1-18?
9. How many times does the word 'one' appear in chapter 17? What are the different meanings of 'one' in this chapter?
10. What are Jesus' sayings from the cross as recorded by John? What other saying are recorded in the other Gospels?
11. What did the risen Jesus say to Mary in the garden? How did Mary respond?
12. How many times does the risen Jesus 'appear' to his followers, according to chapters 20 and 21?

***(Answers in the September magazine)***

**Noel**

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

### **AN ECUMENICAL SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND COMMITMENT**



to mark this 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be held in Swansea in September. 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. **It will**

**be held at Swansea Minster (formerly St Mary's) on Sunday, September 28<sup>th</sup> 2025 at 3.00pm. All will be very welcome.**

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.

### **ESCALATING CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) strongly condemns the Israeli military attack on Iranian territory – an unlawful act that violates international law and the sovereignty of a nation-state.

Such aggression endangers the entire Middle East region, reignites cycles of violence, and risks triggering a catastrophic war with global implications. It challenges all efforts made through diplomacy and dialogue, and gravely undermines the pursuit of peace, justice, and human dignity. *(Since this statement, there's danger of US involvement.)*

We reject all forms of violence and escalation, including deliberate attempts to set the region ablaze for political gain. The only path to real and lasting security lies in the commitment to international law, mutual respect, and negotiated solutions.

The peoples of the Middle East have suffered enough. We call upon the international community to hold accountable those who threaten peace, and to act urgently to prevent further escalation. The WCC remains steadfast in its call for justice, restraint, and dialogue as the only moral and sustainable way forward.

**Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay**

**General Secretary, World Council of Churches**

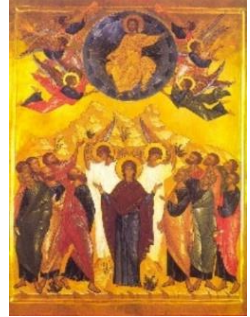
**16<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

## ASCENSION, PENTECOST AND TRINITY

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*I'm finalising this Magazine over the weekend of Trinity Sunday. And I look back at leading worship in three different churches on these three Christian festivals. So much theology to be crammed into a 'packed' two-week period! So much to get to grips with 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.

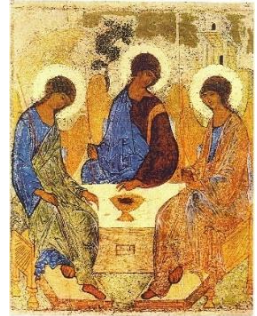
They have become different people.

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.' And we are the product of their witness to the risen Lord in the power of the 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 whose Word became life in Jesus, who was and is with us in the crucified and risen Lord. This is the God who empowers, challenges and sends, through the Spirit who is at work in all times and places, among all peoples and nations. This is the God whose amazing and wondrous love is within us, alongside us, behind us and ahead of us. This is the God who is our companion on all our journeying – which is one of the aspects of the Trinity illustrated in Rublev's icon of the visitors at the oak of Mamre. In and through this God we are raised to newness, entrusted to bear witness, and empowered for service.

This then is Trinity:

- The God who breathes life and love into the universe.
- The God who becomes human in Jesus.
- The God who sends the Spirit to equip us, as Jesus breathed and promised.
- The God who is Source, Son and Spirit, whose 'Eternal love, cascades through life in overflowing grace'

Look at the images again. Notice how all the 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. This is the God too who comes to us, around the Lord's table, in Jesus. This is the 'real presence', in joy and despair, in sharing and receiving, in bread and wine, in prayer and praise, in blessing and sending. This is God.

**Noel**