

**MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH
SKETTY
SEPTEMBER 2025**



**We are called to be lights in the world and to
reflect THE Light of the world, who is Christ**

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

Minister: The Revd Louise Gough

Senior Elder: Pat D

Senior Steward: Maggie C

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

OCTOBER 2025 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the October 2025 edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D at by 16th September at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 28th September.



(Front cover image by Louise Gough)

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The **Methodist Church**



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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The refurbished hall was funded from the sale of the Bethel building

LETTER FROM THE MANSE

Dear friends

Where on earth does the time go? September has come around very quickly! Back in June, I was privileged to attend a Wesley Club evening where members shared their creativity by showing things they had made, painted, stitched, drawn, crafted, written... It was lovely to see the wonderful things that appeared on the table, and special to hear what each person had to say about their offering.

One thing made me sad though – most of the amazing Wesley Club members apologised that the thing they had brought wasn't as good as so-and-so's, or they wished they hadn't had to follow what had gone before. But I also heard gasps of delight from those assembled as they saw what had been made and presented. Perhaps the self-effacing introductions came from a desire to compliment other contributions, or were caused by our natural reserve, or a learned modesty to speak humbly of our gifts.

Yet when we create, we are doing what our Creator intended us to do – we are made in God's image as creators. I believe with all my heart that God celebrates who we are and what we make as we live our lives. We are born with great imaginations and with the abilities to play and produce wonderful things. We should celebrate those things and continue to imagine, play and produce long into adulthood (all our lives!), and be proud of all we can do. The world would be a much poorer and drabber place without human creativity – it would be deprived of so much beauty and meaning. I have also observed that amateur artistic endeavours can touch the heart as much as professional ones.

I realise that I am probably the last person to give this advice or to comment on unnecessary apologies! I am often hard on myself and have high expectations that I would like, but often fail, to live up to. I know I'm not the only one to whom this applies!

The truth is that God delights in us – and that we are God's work of art, God's masterpiece. Ephesians 2:10 says that we are God's, and

we are created in Jesus “to do good works, which God has prepared for us to do”.

We ourselves are part of God’s creative expression, then – no two the same. We are also called and instated as members of the body of Christ, so that we can build each other up, and find our true community in Christ – a community of compassion and love.

I pray that we might continue to create an inclusive community of acceptance and love, where there is room for everybody to express uniquely what is inside them. So much of our church’s life at UCS endeavours to do this – our desire to make our worship available to all (through technology), artistic creativity in the Craft Group, the Folk Dancers, Sunbeams, Adventurers and Madcaps, our explorations into becoming a more dementia-friendly church, our interest in fair trade (a theme for next month’s harvest), our support for refugees and asylum seekers (notably in the clothing bank), our welcome to God’s rainbow people, and all that we do to encourage human flourishing.

In a world where so many lines are being drawn, and when natural glory is so often marred or stunted, let us celebrate each other’s unique creativity. And on the occasion where things turn out a bit wonky, a thread comes loose or a chunk breaks off, let us rejoice that God can use our imperfections. As we remember each Christmas, what is small, vulnerable, marginalised and easily crushed, can be light for the whole world.

Happy and blessed creating!

Louise

WORSHIP IN SEPTEMBER

September	7	Revd Louise Gough (Communion)
	14	Dr Alan Cram
	18	Thursday Communion: Revd Louise Gough
	21	Caroline Buckler
	28	Revd Louise Gough

Our communion collection for September will be for Action for Children. They provide a wide range of services for children and parents and campaign for their welfare. They provide help for disabled children and young carers and provide parenting classes. They have 118 places in family style homes and arrange fostering as well as many other much needed initiatives.



If you have a charity you would like to suggest for a communion collection, please let me or Adella know.

Susan G

A NEW SERIES OF FAITH & FELLOWSHIP will start on September 2nd.



We will study one of Paul's most intimate and encouraging letters, The Letter to the Philippians. This Letter gives us a sense of his closeness, his warm love and his deep concern for the integrity of faith, the sincerity of the Philippians' Christian behaviour,

and the power of their Christian witness to the Gospel. Sessions will be as follows:

- SESSION 1 (SEPTEMBER 2):** 1:1-14, Greetings and foundations
SESSION 2 (SEPTEMBER 9): 1:15-26, Proclaiming and living the Gospel
SESSION 3 (SEPTEMBER 16): 1:27-2:18), One in humility and service
SESSION 4 (SEPTEMBER 23): 2:19-3:7, Timothy and Epaphroditus
SESSION 5 (SEPTEMBER 30): 3:8-21, Goals and achievements
SESSION 6 (OCTOBER 7): 4:1-23, Harmony, joy, virtues and glory

ALL ARE WELCOME, OF COURSE! Our reflection will be led by Noel Davies.

Please ask Pat or Noel for a copy of the study guide (even if you can't come, since they've sent double the number I ordered, for the same price – again!)

REMEMBERING DAVID P

David was born on 24th June 1931 in Cardiff, the only son to Frank and Phyllis. Frank was stationed in Llandudno during the war, and that was where David's love of North Wales comes from – perhaps rather unusual for someone from South Wales!

David was subscribed into the RAF for two years, and on moving back to Cardiff joined Roath Park Congregational Church. It was at the Youth Club there that he met his lovely future wife, Barbara. They were married on June 19th, 1954.

David's work in insurance took him to Ffos-y-fin in Ceredigion in the early 1960s, and he loved living in the countryside. After five years he was moved to Swansea, but always went back to Pen Bryn for holidays, first in a tent, and then in a caravan. These were very happy and special times for the family.

David was a very loyal church member at Roath Park, and later Bethel, where he and Paul became friends, and of course, UCS. He served as an elder in Roath Park and in Bethel. David and Paul were both involved in forming the "Sketty Friends of Tŷ Hafan support group", and in 2001, David, and Paul too, had the honour of attending Tŷ Hafan to see the then Prince of Wales officially open the hospice. Paul has special memories of David at fundraising coffee mornings for Tŷ Hafan – encouraging people in with a big smile, and making sure his donation bucket was filled.

David was a huge rugby fan – a fanatical Wales and Llanelli supporter, and he watched anything to do with Rugby Union, even when teams from England were playing an obscure match – that tells you a lot!

More than anything, David was proud of his family and had a gallery of pictures of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He would inform all his visitors that all his grandchildren had graduated from University, even though his gallery had already told the story!

Though David was very quiet, especially in later years, he had a great sense of humour and was extremely close to his family. He would do anything for anyone. He was a loyal, loving and lovely person.

As Paul put it, "David was a very loyal and special friend right up until the end. It was very rare for him not to attend any church function whether it be worship, a meeting or a social occasion. It's been sad to witness the various changes in him over the last couple of years. But having said, that, he never lost his smile, friendship or cheeky comment, and he still

managed a short walk around Murton most days. David – thank you for all the love, support, laughter and friendship you gave us all over the years.”

Revd Louise Gough

PASTORAL UPDATE (from Gwen D)

- We remember the family of our friend David P following his death in July. We give thanks for his long and faithful life and service.
- It's good to know that Alice J is now back at home with Bill after spending some time in hospital. We send them both our love.
- Congratulations to Chris L on the birth of her 2nd Great Grandson, Beau, son of Chloe and Chris and brother to Noah.
- Congratulations also to Angus and Annalene who have recently celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary.
- Jon H competed in the Swansea Sharks 3km Open Water Swim, coming 1st in his age category and 5th overall. To make best use of all the training involved in preparing for this swim, and prompted by the horrific images of children suffering in Gaza, Jon decided to raise money for UNICEF. Jon is very grateful for the support of church friends and pleased to report a total of £1235.25 (including gift aid) was raised.

We give thanks to God for the life and witness of Cynthia Mumford who served the Swansea and Gower Circuit as a Local Preacher for many years. We are grateful to God for her friendship, for her contributions over the years to our worship and for her faithful Christian discipleship. May her family and friends know the peace and love of God. (Ed.)

CHURCH FUNDS

It may be sensible at the start of our new financial year (1st September) to give an overview of Church finances. Income from contributions by members and friends has been falling in recent years, partly because of the loss of valued members by moving away or death. Some expenses have been rising, and we expect our insurance costs for example to be going up this month. The draft budget we have been working on suggests a deficit over the year of £6000. If this turns out to be an accurate estimate, this will need to come from our reserves.

Our annual income is expected to be between £80,000 and £90,000. You

may be able to do some mental arithmetic about how much that might be for an average member.

We have also been seeking quotations for necessary work to the guttering and fascia boards, the junction of the corridor roof and the old part of the building, and some other roofing issues, to seek to avoid the repeated episodes of water ingress when heavy rain is accompanied by south-westerly winds. We may be able to get some assistance with the costs of this work, but the total cost is likely to be several tens of thousands of pounds.

We realise that there is probably a wide variation in the financial circumstances of different people in the Church, and for some people it will not be realistic to ask for additional monetary contributions.

In this situation we would like to suggest that if you are able to do so you consider some or all of the following:

If you give by standing order, consider increasing the amount.

If you do not give by standing order, and have a regular income, you might consider paying that way in future.

However you give, you consider increasing the amount you give regularly. If you are in a position to do so, on occasion think of putting an extra note or coins in the collection (in a blue gift aid envelope if you are eligible for Gift Aid). This might be rather easier than changing a standing order for many people.

Organising more fund-raising events specifically for Church funds, rather than for some specific expenditure on furniture or equipment.

Perhaps if you have particular good fortune, thinking of sharing that good fortune with the Church with a one-off donation. Or if you decide to give yourself a special treat that might also be an occasion for a special gift. Church organisations, which have been generous in the past, might consider increasing their donations to the Church where possible.

We may also need to consider carefully any expenditure on items or activities which are peripheral to the running of the Church. Uniting Church Sketty remains committed to its longstanding commitment to raising funds for and donating to charitable causes.

We are not in a crisis, but neither are we in a situation where things can be allowed to drift.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or one of the others dealing with finances – Laurie H, Jon D or Les W.

Jeff C, on behalf of the Finance and Property Team

P.S. Whereas John Wesley's famous sermon 'On the use of money' in its original form is not very readable, I have found this summary after a quick search: <https://www.eaforchristians.org/blog/john-wesley-the-use-of-money-12>. It quotes the online blog of one of our former ministers, Rev Richard Hall.

This summary of Wesley's sermon quotes these concluding words:

*"These, then, are the simple rules for the Christian use of money. **Gain all you can**, without bringing harm to yourself or neighbour. **Save all you can** by avoiding waste and unnecessary luxuries. Finally, **give all you can**. Do not limit yourself to a proportion... give all that is God's by using your wealth to preserve yourself and family, the Church of God and the rest of humanity. In this way you will be able to give a good account of your stewardship when the Lord comes with all his saints."*

PEACE AND VIOLENCE IN GAZA

Given the tragic events in Gaza, I asked our friend Leah O to write a piece for the Magazine from her perspective as a Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at the School of Social Sciences in Swansea University, specializing in genocide studies:

I want to write about peace and violence in the ongoing genocide in Gaza. On the one hand, we have direct violence - killing by bomb, drone, tank or gun. It's comparatively straightforward. An IDF officer gives an order, someone gets in a warplane, drops a bomb.



We see the aftermath on the news - blooded civilians staggering from wreckage, lifeless children in arms - and the Gaza Ministry of Health increments the confirmed death toll, currently 61,722, though this is probably an undercount: how do you account for every death in a sea of rubble?

On the other, there is indirect violence. There are many terms - from Martin Luther King's 'positive peace' - (and its absence) - to the Genocide

Convention's 'conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction in whole or in part' - in each case, the link between perpetrator and victim is less direct, but still lethal. Destroying access to safe water kills by thirst or cholera. Destroying houses kills by exposure. Destroying schools or mosques might not kill directly, but unknits the social fabric that keeps people alive. Starvation kills by itself, by weakening immunity to disease, and by preventing mothers from nursing. Famine is seldom 'there not being enough food', but is rather a policy choice. In 2008, the Israeli MoD limited Gaza's food imports to the 'minimal' level to avoid malnutrition. Since October 2023, restrictions have tightened further - between March-June 2025, for example, Israel allowed in only a quarter of this 'minimal level.' The US-backed 'Gaza Humanitarian Foundation' is accused of shooting hundreds seeking aid. Taken together, this indirect violence may kill hundreds of thousands more.

How to respond to this? I don't know. I wish I did! Between seemingly unaccountable leaders and proscription of direct action, it's easy to become disillusioned. I used to be a Quaker before finding UCS, and still carry my pacifism with me, following Jesus' message and challenge of peace.

If you've attended protests, you'll have heard the chant 'no justice, no peace!' This isn't just a demand for both, but a statement of fact. A ceasefire tomorrow wouldn't stop indirect violence that threatens the lives of millions sheltering, hungry and cold, in supposed 'safe zones' - real peace demands more. In our prayers, in our daily work, in support for people in our own communities and overseas - we need to remember that the pursuit of peace means more than the cessation of violence (though that'd be a start!). God asks us to 'Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow' (Isaiah 1:17). This, too, I think, is the peace that we pray for, and that we're charged to seek.

Leah O

A PRAYER: Bring now, Lord, we wholeheartedly pray, your wisdom and your peace into the world, that our world may not be ruled by war, injustice and hatred but by peace-loving wisdom that offers everyone life in all its fullness. Strengthen us, that we may be co-creators with you in building a better world. Amen. *(Adapted from the Methodist website)*

REFLECTIONS *(by Anne W, a member of Green Friends)*

Highlights of our holiday in beautiful Norway:

- High, rugged mountains – often snow-capped;
- cascading waterfalls;
- crystal clear water in the fjords;
- Sea Gulls, Terns, Sea Eagles;
- meadows of wild flowers in peaceful pastoral countryside;
- Sami reservations & reindeer;
- and best of all, uplifting and ‘everlasting’ midnight sun.



So, what did we miss; what didn't we see when we were there?

- Litter;
- trodden in chewing gum;
- dog poo on the streets; graffiti on buildings;
- debris in the fjords and open sea water;
- and the smell of traffic fumes.

(Best not to have any photos!! Ed.)

It's been quite an unwelcome shock on retuning to our shores!

The week's news, as I write, is quite depressing.

So far, there has been **no peace deal for Ukraine** (indeed, as this magazine goes to press, there has been an enormous attack on Ukraine) and Israel's determination to take control of Gaza pushes on.

At the recent **UN Summit in Geneva on Global Plastic Pollution**, world leaders have failed for the second time to resolve key disagreements. Namely, whether or not to curb plastic production and regulate harmful chemicals. The final round of negotiations on a treaty to end all plastic pollution has been totally unsuccessful.



At home, **the recent 124 mph winds of Storm Floris**, which affected Northern parts of UK, saw wind farms at a complete standstill. This was due to them ‘over working’ thus generating far more power than cables to the grid lines could cope with. Various lines had to be switched ‘off’ and

gas plants switched 'on' so the southern parts of UK could receive the required energy. Britain's grid is creaking and in need of massive investment - £10 billion per annum to move all the clean powered electrons to where they are needed. Are we going to pay less for our energy supplies? You might think that 124 mph wind is extraordinary and should be of no concern. But how often have you noticed wind farms around the country being at a standstill? Probably for a similar reason.



On a positive note: **Sea Horses** have returned to Studland Bay in Dorset. Conservation efforts to protect Sea Grass, creating eco moorings, have succeeded in providing a correct habitat for Sea Horses.

Japan has constructed **a 395 km wall with 9 million trees on top** for a nature powered coastal protection against future tsunami waves. The wall also traps debris and restores the coastal ecosystem.

In 2024 8,700 people died as a result of flash floods. 14 million people lost their homes and were displaced.

Many communities around the world such as Indonesia, Brazil, the north coast of Kenya, and

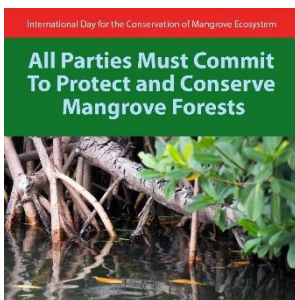


Mexico,

rely on Mangroves for house construction, charcoal production, building fishing gear/boats and also for seeds for animal feed.

Conservationists are teaching them how to regenerate and protect Mangrove forests in order to prevent salination of agricultural land rendering it useless, devastation of villages by flash flooding and how to create an eco-system

for food production.



It is both interesting and uplifting to listen to radio programmes, such as Unexpected Elements on BBC Radio 4 and World Service, and to trawl the 'web' to discover interesting facts on the conservation activities throughout the world!

Anne W

Thanks to Anne for doing the trawling for us! Photos from Wiki Commons sources. Ed.

TWO NOTICES FROM ROSEMARY B

MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING: How quickly time goes by! It's time for my **Macmillan Coffee Morning** this year on Saturday 6th September. I will have a cake stall and bric-a-brac stall for which I would appreciate donations and also a raffle. If anyone is able to help on the day, please let me know. It will be much appreciated. I look forward to seeing everyone on September 6th.

FOLK DANCING: Following their summer break, **Folk Dancing** will be starting back on Monday September 8th. We would love to welcome more members to the group. It doesn't matter if you haven't danced before, we're very good at adapting dances to suit our abilities! Why not come and give us a try. We'd be so pleased to see you.

Many thanks, Rosemary

NOTE ABOUT THE CIRCUIT E-NEWSLETTER: Janet N has agreed to co-ordinate information which UCS groups would like to appear in the circuit e-news e.g. coffee mornings, Messy Church, special events etc. The next e news will be sent out in early September so please send any information you want included to Janet by 25th August at the latest. She asks you to contact her by email.

Saturday 6th September 10am-12noon Coffee Morning: proceeds for Macmillan

Saturday 4th October 10am-12noon Coffee Morning: proceeds for Save the Children

JON D'S LAST REPORT (probably!)

Income from recent Fundraising Events

Strawberry Tea	£340.00
Madcaps	£300.00 (Profit from Murder Mystery Evening)
August Coffee Morning	£159.05

Recent Benevolence Payments (Since June Edition)

Ty Laura	£350.45	
Dementia Friendly Swansea	£316.83	
Sketty Foodbank	£29.00	
Action Aid	£625.75	
Mixtup	£333.35	At time of writing

Benevolence Payments 1st September 2024-31st August 2025

(Coffee Mornings, Communion Collections and other donations/funds raised)	£14289.66	At time of writing
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UCS Treasurers Role

As many of you know, Laurie (H) became Uniting Church Sketty Treasurer from the 1st September, replacing Jon (D) who stood down at our AGM in May 2025

Jon will continue to provide support/guidance to Laurie during his first months in the role, as will Jeff C and Les W who will continue to work on “simplifying” some of the Treasurer activities

Both Jeff's and Les's support/guidance and help in the past have been so appreciated by Jon, and Laurie looks forward to their continued support as he takes on this new role.

Jon would also like to thank the Sunday morning counting team, and all congregation members who have been involved in fundraising and other activities for their support and patience over the last 4 years+

[UCS is very grateful indeed for Jon's careful and committed work as treasurer over recent years. He has been a good steward of our finances, always ensuing that we are wise in what we do and always obedient to the demands of the service and witness of the Kingdom. We wish Laurie well in his new role Ed.]

CIRCUIT INFORMATION: Saturday 27th September 10am-12noon
Circuit Strategy Workshop/Vision Day at UCS. Open to all to
bring ideas and hear what others are doing

At the Baptist Union of Wales annual meeting in London, the Revd Owain Llyr Evans, Minister of Minny Street Welsh Independent church in Cardiff and current President of the UWI, spoke as one of the ecumenical guests. Here is a summary translation of his message which I thought worth sharing. He began by referring to several stained-glass windows in chapels across Wales.

“They are windows made from broken pieces: windows formed from bits of old windows – some dating back to the 15th century. When those old windows broke, or were broken, pieces of the glass were collected, kept and later used to create new windows. They are really beautiful. Chaotic perhaps; fragmented, tattered, but beautiful.



We are like those broken pieces, different denominations, traditions, emphases and trends...You and I, and people like us and unlike us work and co-operate to fulfil the great prayer: Your kingdom come...your will be done. Our individual efforts are pretty pathetic. Each church and denominational contribution is quite small. But God is a God of the details. God notes the smallest things, appreciates them, uses them, treasures them. No matter how small our contribution to the Kingdom of God, that little contribution becomes an essential piece in the Kingdom's stained-glass.

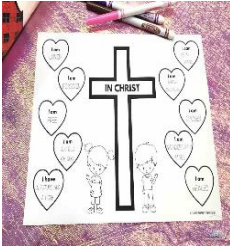
When Edward Elgar (right) died, he left bits and pieces of a symphony he had been working on. Sixty years later the composer Anthony Payne had the opportunity – and awesome responsibility – of pulling those bits and pieces together into a symphony. In February 1998 the Elgar/Payne Symphony was performed at the Royal Albert Hall.



Our ministry is an unfinished symphony, all bits and pieces, but God – the eternal composer – is at work bringing those disconnected pieces together to create an entity – a masterpiece.”

[This note by Pam Cram originally appeared in Y Tyst, the UWI newspaper. I'm grateful to Pam Cram for letting us use this piece from the Clydach Newsletter in our Magazine. Ed]

ADVENTURERS



After a break from preparing lessons over the summer, we look forward to restarting our usual Adventurers programme on Sunday, 7th September.

During this summer break we have made provision for any children attending church to join our team in the hall where different activities

have been planned each week. The uptake has been low but it was felt important that the opportunity was there.



UCS GETS MESSY



The team are also busy planning the new term of “U.C.S. Gets Messy.” The sessions are planned for children aged 4 to 11 years.

Our first session of the term takes place on Saturday September 13th between 2:30 and 4pm.

More details available on a poster soon.

Linda J.

I believe churches are important for praising and speaking with God. But so are car rides, showers, coffee shops, the gym, conversations, gardens, walks etc. Don't let a building confine our faith because we will never change the world just by going to church. **We need to be the church in the world.**

[seen and sent in by Jan C.]

DANCING FOOLS AND ALL THAT JAZZ

Following on from my thoughts about creativity in the opening letter, I am absolutely delighted that a church member from my previous church has recently achieved her long-held dream of having a book published! It was launched at Waterstones in Wilmslow during August, and the photographs on Facebook show a wonderful occasion!

It's a colourful, fictional tale of an amateur adult dance group in the North-West of England, and their adventures competing in the "Expressions" dance competition held in Paris.

The book is called "Dancing Fools and All that Jazz" by B Fleetwood. It is available in kindle and paperback editions, and it is advertised on the Waterstones website for orders (and probably other places too). (I don't think it is available in the Swansea Waterstones.)

It's an uplifting, life-affirming, humorous book – probably aimed at women, but there are men among the reviewers who speak warmly of it too! It's a surprisingly emotional read, with some vivid and realistic characters. It's well written and the way the story unfolds through various voices, with their very human struggles, keeps those pages turning!

I am so proud that Becky's writing has been published, and I wanted to share the good news. There is so much talent in all the churches I've known!

Revd Louise

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

AN ECUMENICAL SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND COMMITMENT



to mark this 1700th 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 28th 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.

RECENT FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH'S 'ALL WE CAN'

(prepared by Pam C)

Information on refugees:

What is a refugee? A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

How many people are refugees? More than 120 million individuals have been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. 36.8 million are refugees.

Where do refugees come from? 73 percent of all refugees and other people in need of international protection come from just five countries: Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, and Sudan.

Where are they now? Islamic Republic of Iran, Türkiye, Colombia, Germany and Uganda hosted 37 percent of the world's refugees and other people in need of international protection.

Are there child refugees? At the end of 2024, of the 123.2 million forcibly displaced people, an estimated 49 million (40 percent) are children below 18 years of age. 2.3 million children were born as refugees.

All We Can and refugees At All We Can, our history can be traced back to the 1930s, when Methodist Minister, Henry Carter, felt the church had a responsibility to respond to the refugee crisis in Europe. He pioneered the Methodist Refugee Fund as a personal initiative to raise money and collect supplies to relieve hunger and improve conditions among refugees, particularly in Austria and Germany. Since the 1930s, All We Can have launched various appeals that have supported refugees in crisis. In the last 15 years, All We Can has launched 3 major emergency appeals to support refugees. We have supported Syrian refugees in Jordan, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, and Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

MEETING WITH THE SWANSEA WEST MP, TORSTEN BELL



On August 21st, I joined church leaders and representatives from the central area of Swansea who had been invited to meet Torsten Bell, MP for Swansea West. He is making an effort to meet community leaders and wanted to hear about what churches are doing. (Sadly, at the last-minute, Adella wasn't able to attend). About 15 of us met in St James' Church in Uplands. A

number of key social issues were discussed:

- The rise in antisocial behaviour around Swansea Minster (St Mary's) was a concern. It was recognized that some of this, at least, was the result of the recent early release policy for prisoners. Changes in the Probation Service since 2010 were mentioned and the gradual recent improvement since the service returned into Government control.
- The use of Food Banks, though still very high, has plateaued recently. But there is still an urgent need for these services, even among some people in employment.
- We reviewed the work being done by churches among refugees and asylum seekers. There was much concern that the rhetoric around this issue (including the reports about recent protests outside a hotel in Essex) does not match the statistics. It was claimed that refugees and asylum seekers do not account for the rise in net migration. Torsten Bell was keen to safeguard truth in public debate and public life. Some schools (e.g. St Joseph's and Bishop Vaughan R.C. Schools) are Schools of Sanctuary and play an important role in developing changed social attitudes.
- We were challenged at the end of our meeting by Torsten Bell to consider whether people had given up on whether things can get better. Do people – in our churches and in society – still have hope for the future? In response, it was said that this would have to be 'a long game'. There are good things going on. Despite the rhetoric, racism, homophobia and similar extreme attitudes are not on the increase, certainly compared to previous generations. So one key question is: how do we learn to tell a better story? It occurred to me during this conversation that it is easier to find hope in particular local settings. There are pockets of hope, and we need to find ways of weaving these into a story of hope for the future of society.

Noel

ANSWERS TO THE BIBLE MONTH QUIZ ON JOHN'S GOSPEL

1. How many times does 'logos' (Word) appear in chapter 1?
Four times; three times in verse 1 and once in verse 14.
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)
There are seven signs altogether: turning water into wine in Cana (2:1-11); healing the royal official's son (4:46-54); healing the paralysed man at Bethesda (5:1-15); feeding the 5000 (6:5-14); Jesus walking on water (6:16-21); healing the man who was blind from birth (9:1-7); raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45). John 20:30-31 says that these signs 'are written that you may believe (or 'continue to believe') that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.'
3. Who was Nicodemus and where in the Gospel do we hear about him?
He is described as 'a leader of the Jews' who 'came to Jesus by night'. He is mentioned in chapter 3:1-15 and chapter 19:39.
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?
The main character in the Old Testament story is Moses, who hears the voice of God, in the burning bush, identifying himself as 'I am who I am'. You can find the story in Exodus 3:1-15.

How many 'I am' sayings are there in John's Gospel?

The main 'I am' sayings are as follows:

I am the bread of life (6:35)

I am the light of the world (8:12)

I am the door of the sheep (10:7)

I am the good shepherd (10:11 & 14)

I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)

I am the way, the truth and the life (14:6)

I am the true vine (15:1 & 5)

There are a few other examples where the phrase 'I am' appears alone (such as in the trial before Pilate) or in association with other phrases. But the above are regarded as THE 'I am' sayings.

5. Lazarus had two sisters. What were their names? What do we know about them?

You can read about them in Luke 10:38-42 and John 11. They were called Mary and Martha, they lived in Bethany, and both sisters, and their brother Lazarus, were friends and followers of Jesus. They welcomed him into their home. The sisters called Jesus when Lazarus fell ill and then had a deep conversation with Jesus after Lazarus had died. Out of that conversation comes the fifth 'I am' saying above. At the end of the narrative Lazarus is raised.

6. 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?

Jesus washed the disciples' feet 'during supper' on the night before Judas betrayed him (13:1-11)

7. What are the various terms for Jesus' followers used in John 15:1-18?

Branches of the vine (v5); 'my disciples' (v8); 'my friends' (v13); people chosen and appointed by Jesus (v16)

8. How many times does the word 'one' appear in chapter 17? What are the different meanings of 'one' in this chapter?

Six times. It is used to mean (i) the unity between God the Father and God the Son, (ii) the unity between the Father, the Son and the disciples of Jesus, and (iii) the unity among all the disciples of Jesus then and in the future.

What are Jesus' sayings from the cross as recorded by John? What other saying are recorded in the other Gospels?

- a. ***Three sayings appear only in John's Gospel:***

"Woman, here is your son... Here is your mother." (19:26-27)

"I thirst." (19:28)

"It is finished." (19:30)

- b. ***Three appear only in Luke's Gospel:***

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

(Luke 23:34)

"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

(Luke 23:43)

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

c. *One appears in both Matthew and Mark, but not in the other Gospels:*

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46 / Mark 15:34)

9. What did the risen Jesus say to Mary in the garden? How did Mary respond?

Jesus called her by name, 'Mary'. She responded, 'Rabbouni (Teacher)'. When she was about to touch him, Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

10. How many times does the risen Jesus 'appear' to his followers, according to chapters 20 and 21?

Five times.



It is with truly heavy hearts that the United Reformed Church shares news of the death of **the Revd Dr Peter Cruchley**, who passed away on 15 August, having been diagnosed with cancer in January this year. Peter was a URC minister, who served in Ely, Cardiff 1992-2001, North Cardiff Group 2001-2007, and Rhiwbina 2007-2016. In

2016, he joined the Council for World Mission (CWM), serving as Mission Secretary for Mission Development (2016-2022), and in 2022, Peter joined the World Council of Churches (WCC) as Director of the Commission for World Mission & Evangelism (CWME).

The son of missionary parents, he was absolutely committed to sharing the life-flourishing news of the Gospel by encouraging all not just to hear, but to *follow* in the radical footsteps of Jesus.

Peter was the driving force behind CWM's Legacies of Slavery Project, which has informed the URC's own commitment to addressing the continuing legacies, including our 2022 statement of Confession & Apology, and our ongoing work towards repairing justice. The son of missionary parents, he was absolutely committed to sharing the life-

flourishing news of the Gospel by encouraging all not just to hear, but to *follow* in the radical footsteps of Jesus.

Peter was insistent and fearless in his call to justice, with former colleague, the Revd Dr Collin Cowan, Moderator, United Church of Jamaica & the Cayman Islands, reflecting: “Peter was courageous and daring in his prophetic uttering; he stood his ground for his convictions; and he made himself vulnerable for the cause of peace.”

Peter was vocal in challenging the Church to confront its role in trans-atlantic slavery, colonisation, and the racist legacies which scar our world today.

(from the URC website)

(Bethel members will remember Peter as a member of the congregation while he was a student at Swansea University, and after ordination, preaching at Bethel regularly. We thank God for Peter’s rich and varied ministry, and pray that God grants his family and friends comfort and peace. Ed.)

Season of Creation 2025

September 1 to October 4



**PEACE
WITH CREATION**
SEASON OF CREATION 2025

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration,

conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family around the world in prayer and action for our common home.

Our Biblical text for this year is Isaiah 32:14-18 (*see below*). The prophet Isaiah pictured the desolated Creation without peace because of the lack of justice and the broken relationship between God and humankind. This description of devastated cities and wastelands eloquently stresses the fact that human destructive behaviours have a negative impact on the Earth.

Our hope: Creation will find peace when justice is restored. There is still hope and the expectation for a peaceful Earth. To hope in

a biblical context does not mean to stand still and quiet, but to act, pray, change, and reconcile with Creation and the Creator in unity, repentance (metanoia), and solidarity.

¹⁴The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks, ¹⁵till the Spirit is poured on us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. ¹⁶The Lord's justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness will live in the fertile field. ¹⁷The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever. ¹⁸My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. [*Isaiah 32:14-18 (NIV)*]



Seen in a church magazine on the Isle of Man and sent in by Linda J. Does not apply in UCS, naturally.