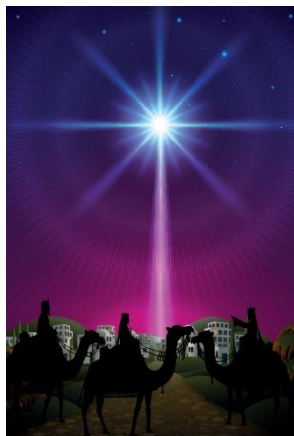
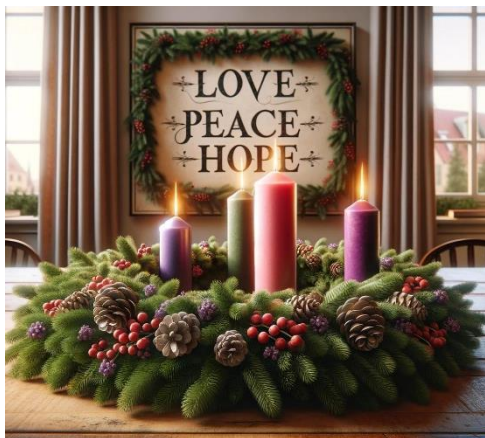


MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY DECEMBER 2025 & JANUARY 2026



**“The people who walked in darkness have seen a
great light; on those dwelling in the land of deep
darkness, light has dawned.”**

**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)

FEBRUARY 2026 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the next edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D by 13th January at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, January 25th.



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

The building development was funded by the following

The **Methodist Church**



Ariennir gan
Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Assembly Government



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

LETTER FROM THE MANSE

Dear friends

It's mid-November (at the time of writing), and Advent is in sight. The nights have been drawing in. Today has been one of those sparkling winter sunny days, the skies bright blue and the sun dazzling, belying the chill. But much of October and November has been coloured that distinct shade of Swansea grey – and the rain! My best purchase this month has been a pair of rubber boots, and I think I will be getting my money's worth!

When it rains so consistently and heavily, when the house never gets light, when it seems as though the sun will never shine again, I feel the weight of the threatening skies pressing down on my head. The weather tells me I am powerless against nature's extremes; endless rain sends me into a spin, along with all the world's bad news. Add to all that the thought of everything that needs to be done before Christmas, and no wonder there's a tight feeling in my chest. I know that fear is coming for me!

Advent is a season of hope, but the fear was real. Each Sunday our Advent candles (see *next page*) remind us that there are challenges to face, but we need not be afraid – the light is coming.

First – a candle for our forebears in faith – who were called out by God on a journey, and told to leave everything for an unknown future. What would they find? What will we find?

Second – a candle for the prophets, who had a fearful message for those who refused to turn away from injustice and empty religion, but also a promise of a child, a wonderful peaceful counsellor, who would drive our fear. Where will we find him?

Third – a candle for John the Baptist, who fearlessly called people to change, to turn to God, and to live justly (and did it so fearlessly that it frightened some people!). Will we turn to God in trust?

Fourth – a candle for Mary who overcame her fear to carry the light of hope and love in her body, and change the world. Can we set aside our fears and fulfil God's call on our lives?

It was the angel who said to Mary: "Don't be afraid." Stephen Cottrell writes: "Those famous words, 'Don't be afraid' are an abiding call from God to trust ever more deeply in him."

Each year we undertake an Advent journey. A journey that starts in the dark, but the light increases, slowly, slowly. Week by week the brightness gains strength – adding peace, joy, love and hope, until we celebrate the ultimate Light that has come into the world – a light no darkness can put

out; the light by which we walk so that we never travel in darkness again (John 1:5; John 8:12).

It all begins with one step in the dark – a resolve to trust that God is there, and that with each step the journey is revealed, and the riches of God’s presence and grace are given to us as we travel.

Isaiah 43 tells us not to be afraid, because God has called each one of us by name. On this journey through Advent, we are God’s, and whatever happens, God is with us. Matthew’s gospel tells us that Jesus’ name is Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us’

The promise of Advent and the reality of Christmas is rolled up in these words.

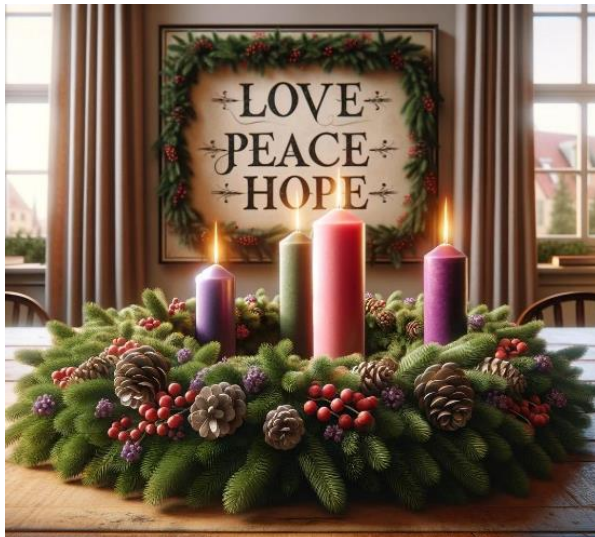
Whatever you are facing this Advent, this Christmas, you are not alone. When the rain falls and the skies are overcast, I look back, and I know that God has been with me. As I look forward, I have no reason to doubt that it will ever be any different.

May God bless us on our Advent journey, and may our trust in God grow, as God’s love and light eclipse our fear.

With prayers and love

Louise

[Many thanks to Revd Louise for her ministry among us during 2025. May God bless her in 2026. Ed.]



WORSHIP SERVICES DURING DECEMBER AND JANUARY

- December**
- 7 Revd Louise Gough (Communion)
 - 14 Revd Andy Walker, with dedication of Christmas boxes
3.30 Blue Christmas service - Revd Louise Gough
 - 18 Thursday Communion - Revd Louise Gough
 - 21 Nativity Service
6.30 Carol Service - Revd Louise Gough
 - 24 7.00 Service on Zoom only, with Holy Communion - Revd Louise Gough
 - 25 Christmas Day, 10.00am, with Revd Louise Gough; please bring a present to unwrap
 - 28 Sue Raad
- January**
- 4 Revd Louise Gough - Epiphany and Covenant Sunday (Communion)
 - 11 Revd Pam Cram
 - 15 Thursday Communion - Revd Louise Gough
 - 18 Revd Louise Gough
3.00 Swansea Minster – Ecumenical Service to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
 - 25 Heather Coleman

All services are in UCS at 10.30am unless otherwise stated.

Evening Prayer is held on Zoom from 7.00-7.30pm every Sunday, unless otherwise stated.

PASTORAL CONCERNS

We remember those who are in hospital, in care homes and nursing homes, those who are awaiting treatment and those who are convalescing. We pray that they will know God's strength and peace, and be able to trust in God's presence with them.

We pray for those who are recently bereaved, especially during the Christmas period. May they know 'the peace that passes all understanding', through Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.

OUR CHRISTMAS SERVICES

December 14

**Revd Andy Walker, with dedication
of Christmas boxes**

**3. 30 Blue Christmas service –
Revd Louise Gough**

December 18

**Thursday Communion – Revd Louise
Gough**

December 21

Nativity Service

**6. 30 Carol Service – Revd Louise
Gough**

December 24

**7. 00 Service on Zoom only, with
Holy Communion – Revd Louise
Gough**

December 25

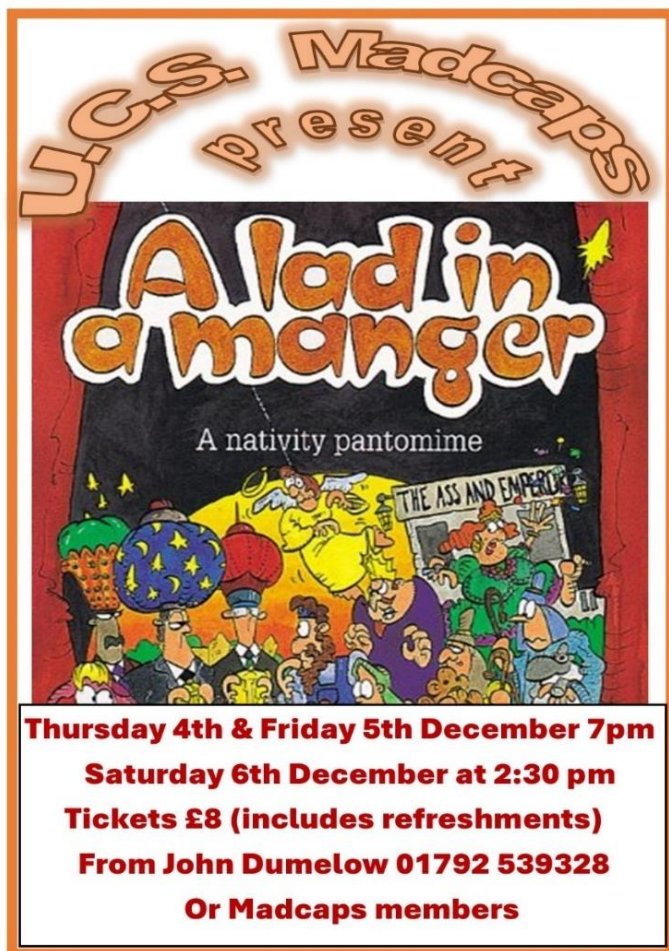
**Christmas Day, 10. 00am, with Revd
Louise Gough;
please bring a present to unwrap**

December 28

Sue Raad

A LAD IN A MANGER – 2025

Twenty-five years ago, this was the title of our first church pantomime, and so Sketty Madcaps were born and the rest, as they say, is history. I wonder how much of the “history” you can remember? Can you remember who took part and who supported? Can you remember the choir and the children involved? This coming year, our church celebrates a very special anniversary, and so Madcaps thought that perhaps we might look back, before we looked forward. Hence on **Thursday, 4th December, Friday, 5th**



December and Saturday, 6th December, Madcaps will be offering you an updated version of the greatest story ever told.

What better way to start our church's and our personal Christmas celebrations? Please do book one, or even all the dates, in your diary to come and support us. All money raised will be for church funds, but more importantly, we will be coming together with family and friends to remember the reason for the season.

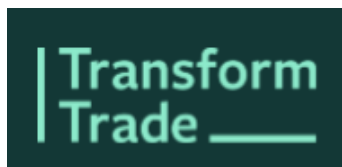
Can you come – oh yes! You can!

Jan C.

[Many thanks to Jan, and all involved in Madcaps, for their hard work. Ed.]

COMMUNION COLLECTIONS

December - Transform Trade



Transform Trade is related to Traidcraft and continues to operate even though Traidcraft no longer exists. It supports producers across the world to fight for a fairer trade system, valuing people over profit. Some of its work is advocacy but it also invests directly in some fair trade businesses, for example in fashion.

January - All We Can



All We Can is the Methodist relief and development movement. It works with local partners to help communities find their own solutions. It supports people in emergency situations such as natural disasters as well as trying to develop communities.

If anyone wants to give a charity gift to someone this Christmas have a look at <https://www.allwecan.org.uk/support/all-the-ways-to-give/see-our-range-of-gifts/>

REMEMBERING GRAHAM B

Graham's funeral took place on 20th October, at Margam Crematorium followed by a service of thanksgiving at UCS led by Revd Louise.

Graham was born on 28th March 1939 at Neath Hospital, right at the beginning of World War Two. His home was in Skewen with his parents, Brinley and Elsie, and widowed Mamgu, ('Gu'). Graham's love of music started early, and he would enjoy visits with his mother to the Welsh National Opera. He later passed on his love of music to his daughter Rhianon.

Graham also loved sport as a boy and young man, playing for Skewen cricket and soccer teams. The death of Graham's brother Howard, aged just four, had a profound and lasting impact on Graham.

Graham was educated at Coedffranc Boys School, Dumbarton House School in Swansea and Neath Grammar School. On leaving he did his national service, and then settled back at home and worked for the Civil Service in Port Talbot, staying long enough to achieve his long service certificate!

Graham's whole life was shaped by his early upbringing at chapel. He was baptised in Tabernacle Welsh Independent Chapel in Skewen. Going to chapel was a full-time job in those days, and he attended Sunday School, morning and evening services, Band of Hope, Magic Lanterns and youth club. An early visit to Iona (*see photo below*) made a lasting impression on him and introduced him to the hymn "Lord of the Dance."

Graham had a huge love of nature – fuelled early on by a geography trip to Snowdonia. The camping and hiking and climbing gave him a life-long interest in the environment and conservation, and he got out into nature as often as he could. Holidaying with his cousin and family in Europe and visiting a few times when they emigrated to Canada broadened his horizon. Graham retained a huge interest in Canada and was very knowledgeable about it. He read widely and joined Welsh classes in his retirement. Graham volunteered in the Oxfam shop in Swansea, and loved meeting students and people of all nationalities there. He did a lot of charity work – helping with the charity bikes in Dunvant and he prepared Christmas boxes at church to be sent overseas, year after year.

Graham loved riding on the buses and would chat to those he met. My early conversation with Graham outside church was on a number 20 from Swansea one Friday afternoon.

Graham's faith sustained him all his life, and he was a faithful and devoted church member. Even after the building closed, Graham continued to do the garden at Bethel. He loved being part of the church, and when it came time to move to a care home, he insisted that it needed to be near his church. When he was no longer able to attend in person it was a comfort to him to be able to join in with the services on zoom.

Graham loved his family deeply and always took a genuine interest in others. He was kind and gentle man, impossible to argue with – quiet, and unassuming, with a deep Christian faith that saw him through some very difficult times. We miss his presence among us and have entrusted him into God's safe and loving eternal care.

Revd Louise



Tŷ HAFAN CONCERT: Paul E would like to invite us to attend one of these concerts on December 7th by the renowned Treorchy Male Choir Paul has followed in his mum's footsteps in being an enthusiastic supporter of Tŷ Hafan, the children's hospice. It is completely dependent on donations for its wonderful work with children and their families. If you can't actually attend, speak to Paul about making a donation.

Celebrate Christmas with
Treorchy Male Choir
and Special Guests
on **Sunday 7th December**
Presented by **Sian Lloyd**



Brangwyn Hall, Guildhall, Swansea
2:30pm & 7:30pm

Tŷ Hafan 
CHILDREN'S HOSPICE
HOSBIS I BLANT

Kindly supported by

 **euro**
COMMERCIALS

FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP FOR ADVENT AND EPIPHANY

The next series will be held before and after Christmas, on the theme, **'A JOURNEY WITH THE MAGI'**, There will be three sessions before Christmas (Advent) and two after Christmas (Epiphany), as follows:

December 2nd, 9th and 16th

January 6th and 13th

All in the Wesley Room
from 10.00 to 11.30am



A cold coming we had of it
Just the worst time of year for a journey,
and such a long journey...
All this was a long time ago, I remember.
I would do it again, but set down
This, set down
This. Were we led all that way
For Birth or Death?

(T.S.Eliot, The Journey of the Magi)

What does this journey mean for us today? We will use a study resource prepared for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and sessions will be led by the Revd Noel Davies.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I was stunned and not amused to read the article in the November magazine, by Rev John, (*"Sweets for my sweet"*) about baking and selling cakes at our coffee mornings, and the possible risks to our health.

Would he take the same attitude to drinking alcohol?

"All things in moderation" has been a saying, since it was credited to Socrates (c. 470-399 BC)

In Philipians 4 we read "Let your moderation be known unto all". The Greek word translated as moderation can also mean gentleness, kindness or forbearance.

Eating or drinking too much of something good can be negative, as we know. Proverbs 25 offers advice on moderation, saying, "If you find honey, eat just enough – too much of it and you will vomit"!

Baking cakes for our coffee mornings gives people an opportunity to contribute to the life of our church, when they may be unable to do all the tasks which they used to do to help the church when they were younger. Those who are unable to bake or don't particularly like baking are able to buy homemade cakes, thus enabling them to contribute to numerous charities, which is a worthy thing to do, is it not?

Cakes, biscuits etc usually include eggs and milk, which provide protein, and fruit cakes contain some of our "5 a day"!

I know that most cakes also contain sugar, therefore you could choose only to eat the cakes you buy as part of your own regime e.g. one small cake or one slice per day. You may then eat no cake until the next coffee morning, if you don't bake or buy cakes!

One thing is certain: no one can dictate to others how much cake, chocolate, sweets etc they consume.

Everyone has the free will to do or eat what they like (though there will always be criticism). If they abuse that free will then they will suffer the consequences, as we know, in all aspects of life.

Yours sincerely,

Janet M N

Dear Editor

"Let them eat cake." So said Marie Antoinette (allegedly!), although of course she wasn't referring to cake as we know it. **"Let them not eat cake"** appears to be the mantra of John A. As one of the people who often

manage the cake stall for our monthly coffee mornings, I am sure John will expect me to respond to his comments. Firstly, I would say that whilst not bought up in a manse many of my childhood memories centre around cooking. Nowadays, I still see cooking and sharing as a lovely way of caring.

But, back to our cake stall. Please note that we do not make baking and selling cakes as a “priority” but a few facts which may not be apparent to anyone who simply glances at the stall as they walk past. Our cake stall normally brings £95+ to very special charities. However, to me it isn't solely about the money. More importantly, I know personally that:

- They offer an opportunity for those who are not able to make practical contributions in other ways, a chance to give and feel that they are part of our church outreach.
- They are usually the centre of laughter and chat, and we all know the value of laughter.
- During “chats” people share throw away lines and little snippets of their life. Often unknown facts, concerns, worries that can be picked up later.
- Customers often explain why they are buying, for friends and family visiting, elderly neighbours, sick friends. They talk to us about them and then I am sure spread the news of UCS work when they share the cake.
- Stopping our cake stall would not prevent anyone buying cakes from the five other shops in Sketty which sell cakes, often made with ingredients far less healthy than our cooks use.

I would not of course accuse John of being “a killjoy” and I agree that over-indulgence in sweet food could be seen as a problem akin to alcohol abuse. However, whilst we support alcoholics in the best way we can, we do not have to stop enjoying a drink. Our current nanny state seems to wish to impose restrictions which govern people's lives rather than support them in taking responsibility for themselves. So please, don't let us lose all the extras that our cake stall offers because a few people feel the need to change their eating habits. What happened to personal resolutions?

Perhaps the answer could be for those who have concerns to make lots of samples for people to taste along with free recipes. The choice is then theirs. PS In my day, the song “sweets for my sweet, sugar for my honey” signified love and happiness, care and smiles– not an over-indulgence in sugar which should be discouraged.

Jan C

SWANSEA AND GOWER TALKING MAGAZINE

This is a charity which publishes a monthly talking magazine to people who have a visual impairment and find reading a normal magazine difficult. It is an independent charity but has always had close connections with our church. Jean K was one of the founder members. The church allows us to use their premises and share the office. Several members record articles for us and MADCAPS record a short story for us each month. We currently have about 80 listeners in the area. I have the dual roles of “Secretary” and “Recording Engineer”.

It is run entirely by volunteers and has enough money to continue for the next twenty years or so, without having to fund-raise. It is a source of concern that I am the only person with the technical expertise to put the magazine together each month. If anything happened to me then the magazine would be in danger of folding. I am therefore looking for an apprentice who could eventually take over.

What we need is someone who is happy using computers, willing to learn, and who has a few hours each month to work on the magazine. Editing audio files on a computer is much like word processing. You can mark bits of sound and cut and paste them together using the exact same techniques you use in word processing. The learning curve is actually quite shallow for anyone familiar with a word processor.

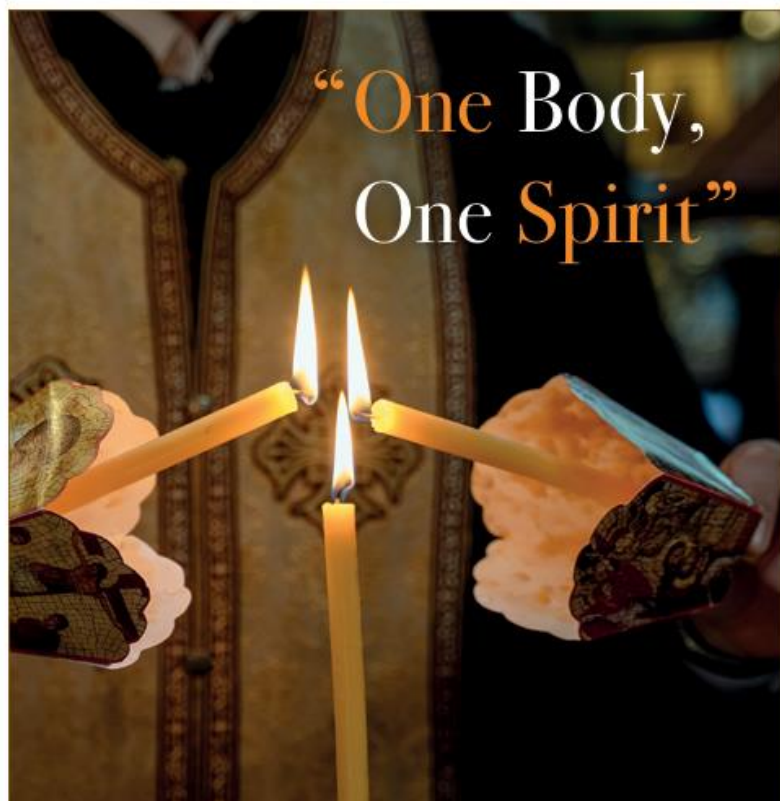
If you would be interested in taking on this role, please let me know.

Les W

DECEMBER 6TH, from 10.00 'til 12.00, COFFEE MORNING:
proceeds for the Alzheimer's Society and the Old Mill



WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2026



Un Corff, Un Ysbryd
Aon Cholaínn, Aon Spiorad
Aon Chorp, Aon Spiorad

18-25 JANUARY 2026



www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

A united service for the Week of Prayer will be held at the Swansea Minster (formerly St Mary Church) at 3.00pm on Sunday, January 18th. Let's try to have a larger number of people attending from our Uniting Church than attended the Nicaea Service. Let's bear witness to our commitment to God's call to Christians to be 'one in Christ'.

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS FROM ALAN C

The Good news!

Tools for Self Reliance: Following on from Janet's article last month about the sad closure of the TfSR branch in Porthcawl, their sister organisation TfSRCymru is alive and well in South Wales. They have a depot in



Crickhowell, where tools are gathered, checked, cleaned and (where possible) repaired. I have acted as a collection point for many years for people in the Swansea Valley, so if you have any unwanted DIY tools (including nails and screws), sewing machines or garden implements, then please let me know. I can collect if necessary. Items which are suitable are sent out to the Kalwande project in Tanzania; the rest are sold (for example at the Swansea Green Fair) bringing in important income for the project. I've just heard that the 22nd container of tools from the Crickhowell depot has arrived in

Tanzania! Look at their inspiring website for more information!

<https://www.tfsrcymru.org.uk/tanzania/>

More good news – from Tanzania! Many of you will know that I have been going out to Tanzania annually for 15 or so years, supporting amongst other things, Heshima which runs a textile training project for local Maasai women. In January it is hoped to open a carpentry training centre, so all is going well! Incidentally, I have a number of beautiful double-sided aprons, produced by the ladies, for £10 each. Wonderful Christmas presents for all! (see photo).

You may also have heard me speak about the school being built by Moses, which continues to go from strength to strength. There are now 90 children attending and facilities include a library/computer room, a kitchen, toilets with running water,



mains electricity and wi-fi. The challenge now is to complete the building of 2 new classrooms before the start of the new school year in January, at a cost of around £10,000. Some generous donations have already been received or promised, including from a Swiss family who recently spent 2 weeks at the school providing educational and IT support. If anyone would like a history of the school, including an update, then please let me know and/or look at the school's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsfofeducationtz/>

The Bad News!

Some of you will have seen media reports in the past 10 days of post-



election violence in Tanzania. The cause of this is the incumbent President, Samia Suluhu Hassan, either imprisoning leaders of the main opposition party on trumped-up charges, or even “disappearing” them prior to the election. Consequently,

the election was basically rigged in her favour, so that she won (according to “official” figures) nearly 98% of the vote and has therefore been elected for another 4 year term. It was clear when I (Alan) was in Tanzania 4 weeks ago that there was going to be trouble: everybody I spoke to said that they had no faith in the electoral process, and everywhere I went, on every lamp-post and billboard, there were only pictures of Samia, extolling her virtues and all that she had done for Tanzania since taking over following the death of the previous President 4 years ago.

Sadly, the inevitable street protests were met with brutality by the police and military, who clearly were able to shoot and kill with impunity. Overnight curfews were imposed, schools and shops closed, and all normal business suspended. It seems likely (although unconfirmed) that non-uniformed armed mercenaries/thugs/military from neighbouring Uganda were invited by the President to join in the rampage, although (of course) the President blames “outside forces” for the violence. It is likely that up to 1000 people were killed and many more seriously hurt. Some of you met Evelyn who joined us at the Pentecost in the Park Service back in May. She sent me graphic videos and pictures of horrendous injuries, and bodies lying in the streets. She lives in Dar-es- Salaam (ironically translated as “haven of peace”) and added that: “now-adays we

sleep in great fear because the killers follow citizens at their homes and kill randomly”. Sadly, it was the same situation in Arusha (near where I am based), with many killed, and bodies in the streets: the same streets I walked down in complete safety just a few weeks earlier. Another friend, Moses, said: “Things like this do not happen in Tanzania.....”.

Thankfully, the situation is returning to some sort of normality, but there is great anger directed at the President. Will the country ever be the same again? The all-important tourist industry has been devastated, throwing thousands out of work. Many families are mourning the loss of loved ones, who may not be able to give them a funeral because the authorities want to hide evidence of their brutality by removing bodies from hospital morgues. Anyone sharing photos of the dead or wounded is threatened with imprisonment (or worse). 240 people have been charged with terrorism offences: among whom is the prominent Tanzanian businesswoman, Jenifer Jovin, who was accused of “encouraging protesters to buy gas masks in order to protect themselves from the police's tear gas” and could face life imprisonment!! The democratic situation in Tanzania is always fragile. However, what we see this year is a country being destroyed by an arrogant, paranoid, power-hungry woman. Initially, 4 years ago, people welcomed her as a breath of fresh air, with promises of freedom of expression for individuals, the media and opposition groups. “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”.

We hope and pray that Tanzania, a country renowned for its gentle, hospitable people, and one which I almost regard as my second home, will recover and healing take place. “Lest we forget” has for me a contemporary ring about it this year. *(from the Clydach & Morrision Newsletter, 9/11/25)*

Update from Alan:

At present, some sort of calm has been restored, but my friends tell me they are reluctant to go into the big towns, where there are still many police and military personnel on the streets, and some do not even feel safe in their own homes. The Government has released some opposition leaders on bail, but civilians suspected of being involved in the protests are still being arrested. There are likely to be further protests, especially on Independence Day, December 9th, when the police and military will have been told to shoot first and ask questions afterwards-- assuming the victim is still alive.

One of my friends commented: “Tanzania will never be the same again”. Clearly, there have been rising tensions in Tanzania over the past few years due in part to the ruling party having been in power in effect since independence, but the recent rigged election has tipped the country over the edge.

Thankfully, Heshima and Moses’ school have not been directly affected, both located some distance from the nearest township.

CHRISTMAS BAGS

A huge thank you to everyone who has played a big part in helping with our UCS project of giving a bag for Christmas to our local Refugees and Asylum seekers.

At this stage of writing I express my very grateful thanks to all those who sewed the numbers of bags. All have been labelled with their appropriate category and distributed to those who requested a bag to fill.

I have already received and stored safely many of these filled bags. A reminder that all bags should be handed in before December 7th.

I am very grateful to those who instead of taking a bag have given me items to fill bags, as well as many very generous donations. These donations are being used to make sure the bags are filled with, what we hope, will provide some treats at this special time.

We are on target to meet the required numbers of 30 family (2 adults), 40 single male, 25 single female and 48 children’s bags of varying ages. This will have been achieved with the help of so many to whom I am very grateful as co-ordinator.

Photographs will be taken at the service when the bags will be dedicated, on December 14th, and will appear in the next magazine.

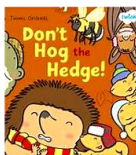
Linda J.

THE FLOWER ROTA FOR 2026 is now on the notice board in the foyer. If you would like to give flowers one Sunday, please sign your name in the givers’ column of your chosen date and if you would like to arrange them yourself (which you are very welcome to do) please sign in the arrangers’ column. If you are unable to get to church and would like to give flowers, please let me know and I will add your name to the list. Thankyou.

Rosemary *[We’re grateful to Rosemary (and the team that assists her) for all she does to ensure that there are flowers to adorn our worship, Sunday by Sunday, and for special occasions. Ed.]*

UCS GETS MESSY (from Linda J.)

Our session on 11th October was attended by 13 children. We had fun exploring a theme of Autumn and Woodland Animals. Our story entitled “Don’t Hog The Hedge”, included a treasure hunt. It talked about animal hibernation as well as the necessity for resources of all sorts to be shared. Crafts for the session included leaf rubbings and using autumn leaves to make leaf men. Paperbags were used to make animal puppets. Snack time included cheese and pineapple on sticks placed to make the shape of a hedgehog as well as biscuits the children had decorated. Games included Pin the tail on the fox.



Our session on 15th November was attended by 7 children (4 of our regular children were unable to attend). The theme was trees.

We had two stories, one being The Talking Tree with the message of the importance of trees in the natural world. The other story was that of Zacchaeus. We made a craft about that later in the session.

We used bubble wrap to paint trees in the four seasons and made little, paper decorated, trees to stand in small log holders.

The highlight of the afternoon was the making and later eating the edible trees the children designed using twiglets and a variety of different fruits and sweets.



Many thanks to Linda J., and her helpers, for all she does with Adventurers, UCS gets Messe, and Christmas Bags. Ed.

EXTRACT FROM THE MESSAGE SENT TO THE CHURCHES BY THE WCC WORLD CONFERENCE HELD IN EGYPT IN OCTOBER, ON 'WHERE NOW FOR UNITY?'



In a world marked by division and polarization, by violence and war, and by apathy and complicity in the face of the resulting injustices, Christ's call to unity (John 17:21) remains as urgent as ever.

In the face of continuing disunity, the Sixth World Conference has reflected on progress made and the persistent call to embody Christ's prayer: "that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

In this on-going journey, this is our call:

- to renew our commitment to faith, mission, and unity in Christ Jesus;
- to listen together to the Holy Spirit;
- to walk together as pilgrims;
- as children of the Father learning together to live out our faith, hope, and love, and
- to practice justice, reconciliation, and unity.

Let us aspire to live the unity for which Christ prayed, that the world may believe, and experience God's gifts of healing, justice and abundant life."

HELP REQUIRED FOR OUR CELEBRATION BANNER

The Craft Club are busy working towards a new banner to mark the Church's 150th Anniversary. We have designed the banner, and we hope it will reflect the history of the Church and its activities past and present.

We would like as many Church members and friends as possible to help us with this project. In February, we shall be giving out small leaves in Autumn colours and made out of left over scraps of material. We would like you to take a leaf home and decorate it in any way you choose. This could be an embroidery, a drawing or the name of a person you feel has contributed to the life of the Church past or present. Further details will be in the February magazine.

Please put your thinking caps on.

Thankyou in anticipation of a good response.

Liz

REMEMBERING WITH LOVE

November is a month which brings with it a time for remembering and reflection. The summer and autumn colours have nearly faded, leaving us with the memories of warm sunshine and happy times.

We look back and remember those times with love. It is the same with people who have touched our lives, the ones we have loved and who loved us. The ones who made a difference not just to us, but to the world in which we live in.

So in November we remembered, with love, all those ordinary and yet 'extraordinary' people who touched our lives, by placing a heart on our tree of remembrance.



Many thanks to Chris H for this 'Garden of Remembrance', giving us the opportunity to remember and give thanks for particular people we have loved and lost, by adding their names to the tree. (ed)

A HUGE THANK YOU

On November 1st a coffee morning was held in aid of Muscular Dystrophy UK. As we no longer have an active local branch, I decided that it was about time that we attempted to raise some well needed funds which can go towards research or equipment for MD sufferers.

The tables were set up the day before, and thanks to all those who helped to do that.

But little did I think how the morning would turn out to be such a success financially.

The cake stall, an integral part of every coffee morning at UCS, was weighed down with delicious offerings. The cake stall alone raised over £200, which shows how popular home-made cakes are.

But the amount raised didn't end there. With support from UCS members, and families who have or know of those with MD, we raised the staggering total of £1,151 (as at 18 November). This must surely be an all-time record? PS Honestly, I didn't force people to come at gun point!!!

Janet N



PREPARING FOR THE GREEN FAIR

This year, the Green Fair, in the Waterfront Museum, will be held on Saturday 22nd November (10-4) and Sunday 23rd (10-3). We have a stall on both days and are delighted, this year, that some of our friends from Christ Well URC will be helping us.

In past years, we have given away flower seeds, bird food etc. so we felt it was time to do something different. Judith had the idea of making paper angels to give away, but how many would we need to make and from what should they be made, as this is a Green Fair? We had no idea.

Then came another brainwave, why not meet at the same time as the Craft Group, to save lighting and heating (very ECO friendly!) and have a mass



angel making session, using recycled paper and string. We had to buy wooden beads for the heads, but there is a possibility that these are also recycled from wood offcuts.

The Craft Group kindly agreed to lay aside their sewing for one week and joined us. We were also joined by others who are not members of the Craft Group nor Green Friends which meant that more UCS members were involved. On November 4th, in two hours, we made 200 angels.



Thanks to everyone who helped, and, in advance, as the next magazine isn't issued until February, thanks to all those who will be helping at the Green Fair. Please come to the Fair and say

hello.....and you can go away happily, clutching a paper angel!

Janet N

A NEW BRITISH CITIZEN!

As a church, we were delighted to learn recently that our friend, Douglas A, has been granted British Citizenship. It was officially ratified at a ceremony at the Swansea Civic Centre on November 18th. He was supported at the ceremony by Pat B. D and Pat D, on behalf of UCS. A number of us from UCS had planned to attend the ceremony, but attendance is now restricted



to two people. We all wish him well for the future. Douglas came to the UK from South Africa some years ago. He comes from an Afrikaans family and, therefore, did not

learn English until he first went to school in South Africa.

Douglas has been a very committed member of our church community over recent years. He attends Sunday worship very regularly, joining in fellowship over coffee after the service, where he has made many friends among us. We also appreciate the well-informed contributions he always makes to our Faith and Fellowship discussions.

Over recent years he has been volunteering at Matthew's House, High Street (which offers 'hospitality and hope in the centre of Swansea') and at the Repair Café* within the Swansea Environment Centre.

I've only recently discovered that he's been learning Welsh and has been awarded an achievement certificate for his success as a Welsh learner (as has Taurus too). Llongyfarchiadau!

No wonder his application was successful! It's a privilege to have Douglas among us. Dymuniadau gorau am y dyfodol oddi wrth dy ffrindiau yn Eglwys Unedig Sgeti. Best wishes for the future from your friends at UCS.

** "The Repair Cafe is a local initiative providing free repairs of household objects by a team of volunteers. It focuses on encouraging the repair and re-use of objects that may otherwise end up in landfill. The perfect way to keep your planet and wallet healthy!"*

Noel

DEMENTIA AND ME / US

As we seek to become a more dementia friendly church, I thought this article may give us some gentle personal and church pointers.

If I get Dementia, please embody MY reality:

- Always announce yourself. Never ask “do you know who I am?” That makes me anxious.
- Don't argue with me about what is true for you, versus what is true for me.
- If I think we're visiting my parents, let me believe that. I'll be happy.
- If I am sad or anxious, hold my hand and listen. Don't tell me that my fears are unfounded.
- If I become agitated, take the time to try to work out what is bothering me.
- Ask me to tell you a story from my past.
- Don't treat me like a child. Talk to me like the adult that I am.
- Please NEVER talk about me as if I am not in the room.
- If I can no longer use eating utensils, don't feed me like a child. Finger food I may manage.
- Try to always have my favourite music playing in the background.
- I want to enjoy the things I always enjoyed. Help me find a way to read, see friends etc.
- Don't exclude me from activities and remember, I still like having hugs or handshakes.
- If I pick up items and carry them around, please just help me return them
- Don't be frustrated if I mix names, events, places, it's not my fault – but it's not yours either.
- If you cannot care for me full time, don't feel guilty. Find somewhere or someone who can.
- If I live in a community, please visit me often.

Remember, it is my timeline which is confusing me. My words do not reflect my feelings for you. I am still the person you know and love.

Jan C

RESPONDING TO ANTI-MIGRANT PROTESTS *(from the Methodist website)*

"In a church that sees diversity as a gift rather than a challenge, a generous response to those of other faiths and a desire to engage in dialogue are signs not of weakness but of strength. The antipathy to other religions that is apparent in some parts of Britain today is perhaps an instinctive, perhaps even an understandable, reaction to difference, particularly in the wake of global conflicts which have in part been informed by religious extremism, but it is based on a narrow view of God's purposes. The Christian faith that the Methodist Church has taught me is based on a much broader interpretation of those purposes, one which is open to receiving and learning from those other faiths whilst at the same time holding fast to the unique significance of God's saving acts in Christ. That is what we are promoting through our evangelism and growth strategy."

The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Methodist Conference

Following on from our recent Community Matters meeting led by Adella, what can we do in Uniting Church Sketty? Here are some thoughts from the website: As church members, we may feel scared and threatened by events around the UK; we may be supportive of protests or of politicians speaking out in favour; we may be confused by the use of narrow, nationalistic ideas, especially when Christian language is used.

- **Encouraging critical reflection and thoughtful conversations**

This can be done through bible study, preaching, worship and conversations that engage with current concerns and political debates. Listen deeply, whilst carefully naming Islamophobia, racist language and Christian nationalism for what they are. Instead of wrapping ourselves in flags, talk about what it means to clothe ourselves in Christ.

- **Facing up to injustice**

The Methodist Church and the URC are committed to being justice-seeking churches, acting with people seeking asylum, and with people who are experiencing marginalisation in society or other forms of discrimination for justice (in collaboration with other churches).

What common ground can we find with people who are facing homelessness, or financial exclusion or a struggle for school places, without turning to the false and easy answers of the far right? How can people who may feel alienated know that they are loved to the uttermost by God?

These are challenges for preachers, worship leaders, pastoral visitors, stewards and elders, leaders of children and young people groups and others. Could UCS, the circuit and the URC region arrange opportunities to encourage or build confidence around preaching or talking together on these issues? How can we engage with our political leaders, locally and nationally, about policy responses to these issues?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT A LOCAL AREA COORDINATOR (LAC) IS?

At the Community Matters evening last month this was one area of discussion. Here is a description taken from the Swansea Council website:

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/whatisaLAC>

Local Area Coordinators are there for the whole community.

- Local Area Coordinators walk alongside you and your community while you:
- Make new connections and friends
- Get involved in groups and activities
- Overcome personal challenges
- Get your voice heard by people in power and being involved in improving public services
- Make your contribution to your community
- Think about what your 'good life' looks like

How does it work?

Anyone can meet with a Local Area Coordinator. You could meet them in your local area or through an introduction from someone else. You and your Local Area Coordinator will get to know each other on your terms, exploring your idea of a good life and plans to achieve it. The number of times you meet really depends on what you want to achieve. They can help you to find out about your community and introduce you to friendly, helpful people within it. They can help you explore and build on your strengths and can support you to share your skills and gifts with others. They can help you connect with formal services if that is what you feel you need.

Do they help groups too?

Local Area Coordinators are there for the whole community. They can help local community groups to keep going and grow by introducing more people and supporting them with things like finding opportunities for

funding. Local Area Coordinators can also support people set up groups when someone has an idea to start something new.

Unfortunately, the LAC for our area has recently moved post, so I can't share any contact details. As soon as more information is available, I will pass it on.

Adella

Christmas BiBLE Quiz

The Journey to Bethlehem

- Who ordered the census that led Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem?
- Which book of the Bible begins with the lineage of Jesus Christ all the way back to Abraham?
- To whom was Mary engaged when she became pregnant?
- What relative did Mary visit before Jesus was born?
- What did Mary ride on during her journey to Bethlehem?
- How far did Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem?
- Why did Joseph and Mary need to go to Bethlehem specifically?
- What Old Testament prophet foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem?
- What was the purpose of the census decreed by Caesar Augustus?

The Nativity Scene

- In which town was Jesus born?
- In what type of building was Jesus born?
- Why was there no room for them in the inn?
- What did Mary do with all the things she heard about Jesus?
- What name was Jesus given, and who had given this name beforehand?
- On what day was Jesus circumcised and officially named?
- Who was the righteous and devout man in Jerusalem who had been promised he would see the Messiah before he died?

Announcing the birth

- Who were the first people to visit baby Jesus according to the Bible?
- How did the shepherds learn of the birth of Jesus?
- Where were the shepherds when the angel appeared to them?
- What were the shepherds doing when the angel appeared?
- What was the message the angels gave to the shepherds?

- What did the angels say to the shepherds after announcing Jesus' birth?
- What appeared with the angel after the birth announcement?
- After the angels left, what did the shepherds decide to do?
- How did the shepherds react after seeing Jesus?

From [Christmas Bible Quiz with Answers - Faithful Parables](#) [See back cover for answers! But no peeping! Look up the Bible verse first. Ed.]

OUR JOURNEY WITH THE MAGI: SETTING OUT

An introduction to our Advent and Epiphany Faith & Fellowship

St Matthew tells us that before their journey even began the Magi looked up and out. Two thousand and more years ago there was none of the light pollution that has dimmed the stars for us, nor any artificial light beyond flickering fires and oil lamps. No one had ever ventured into the sky, the home only of birds, bats and insects. Night came with its great bowl of stars and moonlight and when darkness fell, earth-bound people looked up, and out.

Looking up and out is fundamental to Christian mission. When we imagine people engaged in prayer and reflection we often think of the search for stillness and silence, closing our eyes and folding our hands, becoming inward looking and focused as we dig down inside ourselves for God. Yet prayer and



reflection can be the opposite as well, an opening of our eyes to become more aware, more connected with the universe around us, more aware of the needs of our fellow human beings in our communities and neighbourhoods and of our place in a stupendous creation.

Ancient peoples looked up at the stars and sought to make sense of what they saw there. They called moving stars, *planetes*, the wanderers, because they seemed to be moving about among the fixed stars. Now we know these are the planets of the solar system. People used their eyes to distinguish the brighter from the dimmer stars and joined their dots of brightness to imagine them as images, people, animals and things: the names of constellations. The seemingly random arrangement of lights

became accessible, nameable, so that any new thing could be noticed. And if they saw something new, those people, the ones who looked up and out, would ask: what is *that* doing there?

In the time of Jesus, new and unusual phenomena in the night sky could be understood as signs from God. After all, God created the heavens as well as the earth, so that any new thing, - a supernova, a comet - would be



noticed and interpreted as something God wanted his people to see. Such rare but marvellous and wonderful sights must surely, those people thought, be signs of something really extraordinary happening, something we would really want to know about. So heavenly signs must have correspondingly amazing events

associated with them: a birth of a king perhaps, a change in earthly power relations, something new, exciting or frightening. And those who looked up and out would talk about this among themselves, and they would say: 'we need to find out what God is doing.' We will try to do the same!

(image from the Jerusalem Post via WikiCommons)

- *On the next cloudless night, go outside and look up at the stars. And wonder! And praise?*
- *Jesus himself looked up at the same moon and stars. What do you imagine he felt when he looked at the night sky? What else can you see in today's night sky that Jesus would not have been able to see? What impact have human beings made on the map of the night sky?*

Talking about those who study the stars – I discovered recently that Sir Bernard Lovell, who designed, built and was the first Director of the Jodrell Bank Telescope and Observatory, which opened 80 years ago this year, was the organist in a local Church of England parish church in Manchester for 40 years. Astronomy, science, faith and praise journeying hand in hand!



ANSWERS TO THE CHRISTMAS BIBLE QUIZ

The Journey to Bethlehem

- Caesar Augustus. (Luke 2:1)
- The Gospel of Matthew. (Matthew 1:1-17)
- Joseph. (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:27)
- Her relative Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist). (Luke 1:39-40)
- The Bible does not specify; tradition often suggests a donkey. (Not mentioned in Scripture)
- About 90 miles (145 kilometers). (Geographical fact, not stated in Scripture)
- Because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David, and Bethlehem was the city of David. (Luke 2:4)
- Micah. (Micah 5:2)
- That all the world should be registered/taxed. (Luke 2:1)

The Nativity Scene

- Bethlehem. (Luke 2:4-7; Matthew 2:1)
- While the Bible does not specify a building, Jesus was born in a place where animals were kept, traditionally thought to be a stable or cave. (Luke 2:7 mentions a manger)
- The Bible simply states there was no guest room available for them, most likely because many were travelling for the census. (Luke 2:7)
- She treasured them up in her heart and pondered on them. (Luke 2:19)
- Jesus: the name was given by the angel before he was conceived. (Luke 2:21; Luke 1:31)
- On the eighth day after his birth. (Luke 2:21)
- Simeon. (Luke 2:25-26)

Announcing the birth

- Shepherds, who were told of his birth by angels. (Luke 2:15-16)
- An angel of the Lord appeared to them and announced the birth, after which a host of angels praised God. (Luke 2:9-14)
- In the fields (Luke 2:8)
- Watching their flocks at night
- "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10)
- A host of angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." (Luke 2:14)
- They said, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." (Luke 2:15)
- They returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had