

MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY

May 2026



Christian Aid Week is our shared moment to come together – across churches, communities and households – to stand alongside people living in poverty. For one focused week,

thousands of people across Britain and Ireland give, fundraise, pray and act together. This year, what will we do?



**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)

JUNE 2026 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the next edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D by 19th May at the latest, but sooner, if possible. Issue date: Sunday, May 31st.



Wesley Chapel
1876

150
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150
years



Uniting Church Sketty
2026

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
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Assembly Government



**THE NATIONAL
LOTTERY**[®]

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

Dear friends

Before I moved to Swansea I was warned about the rain – but no-one told me about the wind! Windy and extreme weather is not unique to Swansea (our earth cries out), but there have been a good many days lately when I've sat in my study and watched the trees bending, and heard my windows rattle alarmingly, and the thud of my gate blowing open and slamming shut (one day I *will* replace the clasp!). The sea totally changes its character in strong winds, and the beach extends onto Oystermouth Road. Gales can uproot trees, cause significant structural damage, and generally wreak havoc. Being out in high winds can feel like an assault.

Pentecost this year falls on 24th May, and that's the day we commemorate the Holy Spirit transforming the disciples of Jesus and enabling them to preach good news to thousands of people, who all understood the message despite language barriers, and as a result, many were baptised. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit is described as “a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.” Acts also describes what felt like tongues of fire which rested on them – and “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.”

These are attempts to describe the indescribable – but the Hebrew word for “Spirit” is “Ruach” which means “wind” or “breath”.

Like wind, the Spirit can turn things upside-down and have life-changing effects, sometimes very unexpectedly and dramatically, but the Spirit's work is always loving, always constructive.

I love the idea of the Holy Spirit as breeze, blowing the fresh air through, gently disturbing things and bringing change. I also love the image of the Spirit as breath.



As a long-term student of the flute, I have discovered that the secret to playing is balancing and changing the air (speed), angle (of blowing) and aperture (in the lips). These combinations make the music. But without breath, without air, there is no sound – the flute simply remains silent. All sound needs vibration, and for humans, sound most commonly travels through air. We sometimes think of breath as air – and without breath, without air, there can be no life.

When I get stressed and tense, as we all do, I need to remind myself to breathe. Breathing can easily become shallow, but we can remind ourselves to breathe deeply, as that is good for our bodies, minds and emotions. Breathing can also become prayer, especially when we mindfully breathe in the Spirit of God (who is Divine Breath) and breathe out our gratitude to God. This form of prayer can remind us just how close God is, just how interconnected our lives and being are with the Holy Spirit of God, the original life-force that brought – breathed - us into existence (Genesis 2).

As we look towards Pentecost, we could take the opportunity to intentionally put ourselves in the Spirit's path, like a flute waiting for its player's air. So the invitation is: take some time (every day, if possible) just to sit or lie quietly and breathe – to be aware of the Spirit's closeness to you and in you, deliberately, gently and lovingly. You could ask God's help to consciously try to be open to the Spirit's work and promptings, within and all around you in the world. You also could ask for the Spirit's inspiration – especially as the word "inspiration" comes from the Latin word which means "to breath into". I believe that all inspiration comes from the Spirit – and I constantly marvel at what human beings, with the help of the Spirit, can produce (such as the wonderful, creative, moving and challenging portrayal of the last week of Jesus' life by Gauri and Cardiff Methodist Community Choir at UCS on Maundy Thursday).

The Spirit is all around us, living, breathing, inspiring, holding all things together, and showing us God's love.

Last year during sabbatical I enjoyed an eight-day silent retreat at St Beuno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre, where I had nothing else to do but breathe and pray. I made a similar retreat during my previous sabbatical in 2016, which is when I wrote the following prayer:

God
the breeze in my hair

your Spirit's breath;
the sunlight through the trees
your Spirit's light;
the colours of creation
your Spirit's pallet;
the music in my ears
your Spirit's song;
the spring in my step
your Spirit's dance;
the silence in my soul
your Spirit's dwelling;
the peace in my heart
your Spirit's keeping.

God
with each touch of the Spirit
remind me of your nearness.
Keep me close to you
and ever open to your presence.
Amen.

May this be true for you this Pentecost and always.

With love

Louise

WORSHIP SERVICES IN MAY

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 3 | Revd Louise Gough (Communion) |
| May 10 | Christian Aid Week : Revd Howard Long
6.00 Circuit Easter Offering Service at Murton |
| May 17 | Dr Alan Cram |
| May 21 | Thursday Communion : Revd Louise Gough |
| May 24 | Pentecost Sunday : Revd Louise Gough |
| May 31 | Trinity Sunday : Revd Andrew Pearce
3.00 United Service at St David's RC Church |

All services are at 10.30am unless otherwise indicated

OUR MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE 'I'LL NOT WANT'

Our Maundy Thursday service this year was very different from normal. At Revd Louise's initiative, the Cardiff Methodist Community Choir led the service. It was moving, inspiring and radical in its understanding of what the Last Supper and Jesus' passion mean today. The choir describes itself as 'Singing for Social Justice'. We all had different responses, no doubt, to the issues raised, but trying to see Jesus' passion and death in the context of today's violent and suffering world is always a good thing.

It was heartening to see a good congregation, not just from UCS but also from other churches in Swansea and beyond. The service began with dim lighting and sacred silence. As we gathered, those who were to be leading the service received the bread and wine of holy communion from Revd Louise, as they stood together at the front of the church – a reminder of what Maundy Thursday commemorates. Then, as they walked quietly into the sanctuary, the choir sang Dan Schutte's song, reminding us of Moses' call and ours:

Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

The words and music were developed by Gauri Taylor-Nayar, who led the choir and instrumental group, and also narrated the service in a very helpful and challenging way. We were reminded that Jesus called the Twelve to be his disciples ('to be with him') and the name of each appeared on the screen one by one, giving us time to reflect and give thanks, and to think about our own call to follow Jesus. It was these same disciples that were gathered around the table at the Last Supper, in all their fragility and strength.

We were invited to receive communion at the front of the church while the choir sang familiar Taizé music quietly and reflectively (including 'O Lord, hear my prayer'). Communion ended with a reminder that, whatever

confronts us and challenges us, 'When I walk through the valley of death, ...you are with me (*in grace and love*) ... I shall not want' (Psalm 23)

The service ended quietly, still in dim lighting, while the choir sang as they left the sanctuary. We were encouraged to follow their example, and leave the sanctuary quietly and reflectively.

The words and music were well chosen, the singing (and some miming) by the choir and by various soloists was good. It was truly a time of worship and reflection. We left the church with these well-known words on the screen:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3.16-17).

Thanks to Revd Louise for arranging this visit from CMCC. For more information about the choir, see [Cardiff Methodist Community Choir: singing for social justice - The Methodist Church](#).

Noel

FOR REFLECTION:

God is love; and He enfoldeth / all the world in one embrace;
with unfailing grasp He holdeth, / ev'ry child of ev'ry race.
And when human hearts are breaking / under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching / deep within the heart of God.

Timothy Rees (1874-1939), Bishop of Llandaff, 1932-39

NO MOW MAY

What can be more glorious in God's world than the re-awakening of nature after a long winter?



Already this year I have seen bluebells in their natural environment (ancient woodland). Yes, bluebells are flowering about two months earlier than we (of the older generation) would have expected during our childhood! Other wild flowers such as daisies and dandelions are also lighting up our lives.

I know that some people regard dandelions as weeds, BUT a weed is actually only a wild flower that **some people** think is growing in the wrong place!

GREEN FRIENDS have put out a plea for **NO MOW MAY**. Please don't cut your grass/lawn during May as dandelions etc are essential as pollinators for bumble bees and other insects early in the growing season. Through NO MOW MAY we will all be helping to increase the variety of insects and wild flowers growing in our lawns.

In the past three years, when I have not had my lawn cut from October to the following September, gradually, the wild flowers e.g. Ragged Robin, have increased in area, which is a wonderful sight. Please consider taking part in NO MOW MAY in your gardens and, of course, the UCS garden.

Many thanks.

Janet N (on behalf of Green Friends)

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

from 'Auguries of Innocence' by William Blake

COFFEE MORNINGS

Saturday 2nd May 2026 10am-12noon

Proceeds for Christian Aid

Saturday 6th June 2026 10am-12noon

Proceeds for Marie Curie



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. May they know 'the peace of God that passes all understanding', through Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.

AVAILABLE TO A GOOD HOME: Twin drop leaf, teak garden/conservatory table available. Free to a good home, donation to church funds an option. Preferably collected but delivery could be arranged within Swansea.



Dimensions: Table Top 63cm x 134cm; height 71 cm; each drop leaf measures 63cm x 56.5cm

Contact: Rev. Linda



Our communion collection for May will be in support of Christian Aid.

For over 75 years, Christian Aid has been working to tackle poverty and injustice around the world. They

partner with local organisations in some of the most vulnerable communities, helping people access clean water, build sustainable livelihoods, respond to emergencies, and stand up for their rights. From supporting farmers as they adapt to climate change, to providing vital aid in times of crisis, their work brings hope and practical help where it is needed.

WHERE HARDSHIP MEANS HUNGER... URBAN FARMERS CAN GROW HOPE



In the crowded and noisy settlements of Nairobi, most parents wake every single day knowing that they must go and earn money, otherwise their children won't eat that evening.

With no formal work opportunities, heartbreakingly low pay, and no social support, it's a precarious and frightening daily struggle that no family should have to face.

The aching hunger is bad enough. The relentless stress is overwhelming. 'When I wake up, I have a lot of worries. Sometimes I don't have food,' says Fridah Moraa, a recently widowed grandmother determined to support her family on what little she earns.

'Now I'm responsible for everything.' With school costs, rent and water to cover, providing food for every meal is a problem that never goes away. But Fridah's faith in God, and in her own ability to provide, is unwavering.

With tools, seeds and specialist training from Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope, Fridah's now making the most of a small space in the city to grow a steady supply of fresh vegetables that she can cook for her family or sell on her market stall.

Reflecting on her new role in life, Fridah says: 'I never thought that a woman could also be a provider.' With her inner strength, unstoppable resolve, and a little help from Beacon of Hope, Fridah's overcoming poverty to feed the youngest members of her family and protect them from the threat of malnutrition.

Fridah rightly takes pride in all she's achieving: 'When I harvest what I've planted, it makes me happy. Urban farming has changed my life.'





Christian Aid and its supporters are joining together once again during Christian Aid Week (10-16 May) to fundraise in all kinds of ways – from coffee mornings and craft stalls to hiking and biking for the **70k in May** challenge.

With seven days to make a difference, every gift, act and prayer counts. What will you do to support someone like Fridah to grow food, protect their children from hunger, and nurture hope?

- **£5 could buy the seeds that kickstart a family's nutritious vegetable garden.**
- **£10 could pay for the pair of chickens that produce fertiliser for an urban farmer.**
- **£15 could purchase the hand tools that mean an urban farmer can tend their crops.**
- **£30 could buy the trio of cone garden planters that host hundreds of plants in a tiny city space.**

Find out more about the campaign at caweek.org

AN ECUMENICAL SERVICE FOR TRINITY SUNDAY



- **St David's Roman Catholic Church (next to St David's Multi-storey Car Park)**
- **Sunday, 31st May, at 3.00pm**
- **Preacher: Fr Gregory**

THE 2026 SENEDD ELECTION : 7TH MAY



Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament

The Senedd election on 7 May 2026 is widely regarded as the most significant since the establishment of devolution in 1999. For the first time, the Senedd will have 96 Members (up from 60), elected through a closed party list proportional representation system, across 16 six-member constituencies. Voting age is 16 and above. To explore the changes in the voting system and how to vote in the Senedd Election, Cytûn has published a simple guide: ***Voting in the 2026 Senedd Election.***

Wales has been governed by Labour – sometimes in coalition, sometimes in minority – at every election since 1999. That dominance is now under serious challenge. Opinion polling throughout 2025 and early 2026 has placed Plaid Cymru and Reform UK neck and neck at the top, with Labour trailing and the Welsh Conservatives in significant decline following their loss of all Welsh Westminster seats in 2024. The Greens, energised by their new UK leader Zack Polanski, are expected to enter the Senedd for the first time. The Liberal Democrats, with a single sitting Member, are fighting for modest gains.

The new proportional system means that no party is likely to achieve an overall majority. Coalition negotiations, confidence and supply arrangements, or minority government are all probable outcomes.

The key issues identified by analysts and parties alike include

- NHS waiting times and hospital infrastructure
- the cost of living
- housing
- transport
- the Welsh language
- energy policy, and,

- with particular intensity in this campaign, immigration (though this is largely a reserved matter that is not within Senedd competence)



The parties contesting this election present markedly different visions, not just for Wales's public services, but for its constitutional future, its economic model, and its relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom. Cytûn

commends careful reading of the full manifestos alongside this briefing...

Faith communities understand, perhaps better than most political actors, that these issues place real pressures on communities: they are visible in the pews, in the foodbanks run by churches, and in the pastoral conversations that ministers are having every week. Any manifesto that fails to reckon seriously with this interlocking reality – the squeeze on household budgets, the moral weight of international conflict, and the constraints it places on domestic public spending – risks speaking past the very voters it seeks to persuade. The next Senedd will have no choice but to govern in that context, and the churches of Wales will be watching closely to see which parties have the honesty to say so.

It is our Christian responsibility:

- **to pray for candidates and voters**
- **to engage with the conversations in the media**
- **to reflect on key Christian concerns that affect us, as individuals and as communities**
- **to vote at the election on 7th May**
- **to pray for those elected to serve us in the Senedd for the next four years**

Taken from the Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales website; last paragraph added by Noel

FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP : WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

I think the general view is that the Lenten series on the prophet Amos went well. We had an average attendance of about 20 people, including three friends from other churches and five ministers! We had fun (yes, 'fun' discussing Amos – who generally proclaims doom!). We all learned a lot about Amos, about our faith, about God, about one another and about ourselves. Sometimes we had 'a full and frank discussion'!

Our next Faith and Fellowship sessions would normally be held during the Methodist Bible Month in June. But this year the focus will be The Letter to the Philippians, which we've already studied last year. So, instead, we agreed to have monthly, rather than weekly, sessions during the summer and into the autumn. Rather than study a particular book, we decided to look at the Bible generally.

We read the Bible regularly, we always hear Bible readings in worship, preaching is Bible-based and we regard the Bible as fundamental to our faith. But we don't often ask: What is the Bible and why is it important for Christians? We will spend time thinking about the Bible as a whole, its origins, its structure and the way the various books relate to each other. Who are some of its key characters? What does the Bible mean for us today and how does it speak to us now?

There will be five sessions – all on Tuesdays – as follows (though these topics might be tweaked slightly as we go along!) and in each session we will look at the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament and the Christian witness of the New Testament to Jesus as Lord and Saviour:

MAY 5TH: What is the Bible? How was it formed? Why is it still important?

JUNE 2ND: The Bible as history: Can we rely on what it tells us about the story of salvation? And about the God who saves?

JULY 7TH: The Bible as a handbook for worship and prayer

SEPTEMBER 1ST: The Bible as a guide to moral living, to living out the love, justice and peace of God, as seen in Jesus.

OCTOBER 6TH: What does the Bible say about the future?

150TH ANNIVERSARY – 19TH AND 20TH SEPTEMBER



1876-2026



This year we are celebrating the 150th Anniversary of our building, recognising that both Bethel (now URC) and Sketty Methodist were around long before the building in which we now worship. There will be a special weekend of events on 19th and 20th September. On Saturday 19th we are planning to gather for a celebration afternoon at 2pm until 4.30pm - there will be cake!

Worship will take place at 10.30am on Sunday, with a special service, and on Sunday evening there will be a Gymanfa Ganu, in which we can all participate! Further details will appear soon - and we are also hoping for some volunteers to help with the practical arrangements, refreshments etc. Please save the date!

A piece of forward planning for THE GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK.

THE GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK

On Saturday June 13th, the GREEN FRIENDS of UCS invite everyone to participate in A PICNIC IN THE PARK. Meet at 12 noon at Singleton Botanical Gardens (weather dependent) with a picnic lunch and drink.

There will be activities for all ages e.g. art and craft activities; a prayer walk etc. More details to follow nearer the date.

Janet N (on behalf of Green Friends)

OUR JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK TO EASTER



'And in the place where they crucified Jesus, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb...' (John 19.41)

Many thanks to Chris H for her displays in the Foyer. About the Holy Week and Easter display, she writes that it was intended to help us think in a visual way. "I hope that they spoke for themselves and could be interpreted by each of us in a personal way." I'm sure they did. Many thanks, Chris.

THE MOON, ANYONE?

*'Fly me to the moon;
And let me play among the stars...'*

This was the first song heard on the moon when Buzz Aldrin landed there, over fifty years ago - a song sung by Count Basie and Frank Sinatra. These are the words that came to mind when I saw that Artemis II - the first attempt to reach the moon (but not land on it) for over half a century - launched successfully and safely on April Fool's Day. (Unsurprisingly, in a recent survey, 49% of respondents said they wouldn't want to go to the moon!)



The crew travelled a distance of around 250,000 miles from earth (the farthest anyone has ever gone), travelling a total of around 620,000 miles. They saw the other side of the moon that no one has ever seen. The capsule hit the earth's atmosphere on its return journey at a speed of around 25,000 miles per hour (a speed that could take us from Swansea



to New York in 6.5 minutes - if we wanted to!) and splashdown took place safely into the Pacific shortly after 3.00 o'clock on Saturday morning, April 11th, at a speed of only 19 miles per hour, with all the crew safe and well.

And it cost at least \$4 billion. Think! Seriously! So much could have been achieved with such sums, bearing in mind the millions who are in poverty, homeless and unaccompanied refugees and asylum seekers in our warring world. Was this not immoral waste?

But then I read articles that asked different questions and offered an alternative vision. One article in *The Guardian* emphasized the close partnership between 14 countries behind this initiative. A partnership in a world where such collaboration is often rare - and dwindling! We were reminded by the same article that the initiative to the moon half a century ago, spurred individuals and countries to consider the future of our planet and its environment more closely. Can the same impulse happen again? There is a real need for it.

Isn't there a danger that we focus our attention so much on the land under our feet and its painful challenges, that we lose sight of the

greatness and wonder of the cosmos? And that we lose sight as Christians and as a family of countries, on the vision of unity and harmony, of partnership and mutual care that we are called to embrace in these challenging days? According to one of the NASA leaders, "We are doing this for all of humanity!" I wonder! But if a partnership around Artemis II is possible, surely a partnership in the name of justice, peace and reconciliation could also be equally possible in the name of this fragile planet and its people.

I remember that the words that struck me powerfully fifty years ago, when the original space 'race' was at its height, were these from Psalm 139:

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."

This challenges our vision of God. Fifty years ago, one of the popular warnings was, 'Your God is too small!' It strikes me that not much has changed. Isn't our God (or at least our vision of God) still 'too small'? We forget that the God we believe in is 'omnipresent', present in all things and all places. We need to remember always that "God so loved the *cosmos* (John's original Greek word!) that he sent his only Son..." We can't travel anywhere that is beyond the reach of God's cosmic love. Even to the moon!

Victor Glover, one of the astronauts on Artemis II, commented at the start of their journey: "In all of this emptiness, ...you have this oasis, this beautiful place that



we get to exist in together. As we go into Easter Sunday, and think about all the cultures all around the world, whether you celebrate Easter or not, whether you believe in God or not, this is an opportunity for us to remember where we are, who we are, that we have a common humanity, and that we have to get through this together." (from <https://www.crosswalk.com/>; image from www.beliefnet.com)

But I still question the morality of such a costly enterprise, however exciting it all is...

Noel

**I WOULD LIKE TO RISE VERY HIGH by MICHEL QUOIST
[A Prayer for Ascension*, with the previous article in mind!]**

I would like to rise very high, Lord;

Above my city, above the world, above time.

I would like to purify my glance and borrow your eyes.

I would then see the universe, humanity, history, as the Father sees them...

I would understand that my life, an imperceptible breath in this great whole, is an indispensable treasure in the Father's plan.

Then, falling on my knees, I would admire, Lord, the mystery of this world which, in spite of the innumerable and hateful snags of sin, is a long throb of love towards Love eternal.

I would like to rise very high, Lord,

Above my city, above the world, above time.

I would like to purify my glance and borrow your eyes. Amen.

(from *Prayers of Life*, 1963)

* *The Feast of Jesus' Ascension is on May 14th this year*

Gower Chorale Summer Concert

**Saturday, June 20th 2026 at 7pm
All Saints' Church, Oystermouth**

Rutter	Psalmfest
Mathias	Let All The People Praise Thee
Mozart	Laudate Dominum
Parry	I Was Glad
Elgar	Give Thanks Unto The Lord
Evans	Give Unto The Lord (Psalm 29)

Musical Director: Dr. William Reynolds
Soloists and Musicians to be announced later
Tickets £20. Children Free.



Every person is made in God's image and is of equal value

Everyone is welcome

The Methodist Church is committed to *Justice, Dignity and Solidarity*. We believe that all people are uniquely made in the image of God, and we aim to live this out in the Church and in our communities. This forms our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work *(from the Methodist Church website)*



Drown out division by a million acts of hope

(from the URC website)

Common themes in the Methodist Church and the URC
