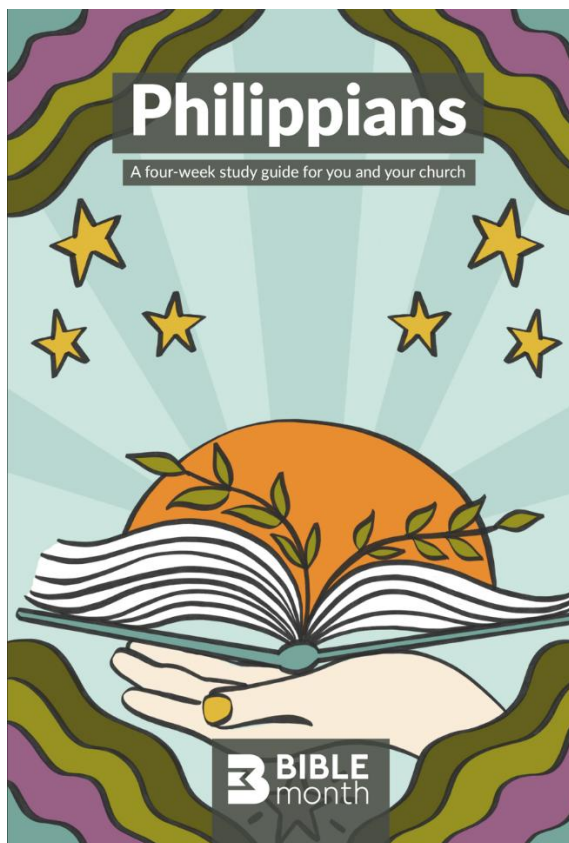


MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY

June 2026



BIBLE MONTH

- Rejoice in all circumstances
- Live lives shaped by Christ's humility and love
- Stand firm together in unity and hope
- Find peace through prayer and thanksgiving

**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)

JULY/AUGUST 2026 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the next edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D by **16th JUNE** at the latest, but sooner, if possible. Issue date: Sunday, June 28th.



Wesley Chapel
1876

150
mlynedd
:
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



May 24th was Aldersgate Day, the day John Wesley's conversion is marked and remembered. So this month we rejoice in, and give thanks for, two of the founders of our two traditions, whose lives overlapped: John Wesley (*left*, born 28 June 1703, died 2 March 1791), cleric, theologian and evangelist, and Isaac

Watts (*below*, born 17 July 1674, died 25 November 1748), Congregational minister and hymnwriter.

Now I have found the
ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may
remain...

John Wesley

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul,
my all.

Isaac Watts



Dear friends

When was the last time you had a sleepless night? Memorably, for me it was the Thursday night of the election, earlier in May. The Senedd votes were not due to be counted until Friday, but I wanted to get a sense of the general direction of travel, so I opened the BBC News website. I wished I hadn't.

Now, I know it is important for the minister, as church representative, not to be party political. But a key question for me is always whether the policies of the various parties are compatible with the values Jesus displayed as we read them in the gospels.

Of course, we always approach Biblical text with a certain amount of interpretation, and through the colourful lenses of our own culture, context and conditioning. However, there is no doubt that Jesus had a special concern for the most vulnerable people in the communities he spent time with. His harshest critiques were always levelled at those who had the means to act with compassion and justice but failed to do so. Jesus spelled out his own manifesto in Luke 4, borrowing from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the **poor**. He has sent me to proclaim release to the **captives** and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are **oppressed**, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

'The year of the Lord's favour' could refer to the year of Jubilee (in Leviticus 25), where debts were written off, land was rested and slaves were set free. This is a vision of economic justice that fits with Jesus' grace-filled vision of a community where 'outcasts and sinners' were welcomed. Jesus would have been brought up with the laws understood to have been given to God by Moses, which time and time again command people to treat strangers with kindness and fairness, and to protect those without any means of support (the laws refer to 'widows and orphans', shorthand for all those who found themselves in precarious positions). Leviticus 19:33 says "do not mistreat foreigners who are living in your land. Treat them as you would an Israelite and love them as you love yourselves." Zechariah 7:9 says "You must see that justice is done and must show kindness and mercy to one another. Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners who live among you, or anyone else in need." These foundational imperatives to shape society with compassion I'm sure informed Jesus' ministry - he always made time for beggars by the

roadside, and was criticised for mixing with tax-collectors, prostitutes and sinners.

In our current political and general climate, how can we, as followers of Jesus, embody Jesus' values and actions in our every-day lives? We proclaim in our hymns and on our banners that 'all are welcome'. How can we demonstrate Jesus' compassion, especially among those who now feel more vulnerable than ever because of their background or status or their sexuality or their economic situation?

Within our church walls there is much love. I have seen it and received it in many wonderful and heart-warming ways. I also know that you demonstrate God's love in the world, through your relationships and daily activities and encounters – brilliant! But how can we put the message (God's message) across, in ways that are impossible to miss, for those around us? How can we proclaim that with Jesus – and at UCS - strangers are welcomed, and those who might often find themselves excluded can find a place among us and meet genuine compassion. All inspired, of course, by the immense compassion of Jesus, whose love melted all the barriers that said, 'keep out' and 'you are not welcome here'?

How can we proclaim the love, the compassion, the justice, that is needed to mend the divisions that deepen in our communities and our world every time we look to our own narrow interests, blame the stranger and reverse policies designed to protect our already burning planet? Also, crucially, who are our partners in this work, whether or not they hold the same faith in Jesus? There is tremendous strength in seeking allies and working together with those who also want to transform communities with love.

I fear that as time goes on, the need for this will become critical. As the general culture shifts to further disenfranchise the already marginalised, as welfare is cut, as green policies are reversed, we need to actively stand for Love - the tenacious love of God that enters the pain of the world and ultimately transforms it.

Let us never forget 1 John 4: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. Anyone who does not love, does not know God, because God is love." So, as it says in Psalm 31, "be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord".

With prayers and love
Louise

UCS WORSHIP SERVICES IN JUNE

BIBLE MONTH ON PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILIPPIANS

June 7	Revd Louise Gough (Communion)
14	Revd Louise Gough
18	Thursday Communion: Revd Louise Gough
21	Revd Simon Walkling
28	Sue Raad

6.00: Circuit Rededication Service in UCS

All services are at 10.30am unless otherwise indicated

COFFEE MORNINGS

Saturday 6th June 2026 10 -12 noon

Proceeds for Marie Curie

Saturday 4th July 2026 10 -12 noon

Proceeds for Stand Up for Downs



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.

UCS GARDEN

Many thanks to Jackie and Gary C, who continued the work which GREEN FRIENDS did recently (and thanks to GF too) by planting a greater variety of plants from their garden and my garden. We are waiting for more plants to be delivered thanks to a donation which we have received. Please spend some time when you are at UCS looking at the changes, which will come to fruition in the coming years.

Janet N

FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP : WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

Normally, our next Faith and Fellowship sessions would be held during the Methodist Bible Month in June. But this year its 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?

Five sessions were planned – all on Tuesdays. The first has already been held, so there are four sessions left, 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:

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 4th: What does the Bible say about the future?

MESSY CHURCH @ UCS : An outsider's thoughts



In April, I attended MESSY CHURCH as an observer. Little did I realise how much preparation takes place before each session. We, as a church, are so fortunate to have a dedicated team of workers who provide such interesting activities for the children each month. By the end of the session every child had an amazing “bag of goodies” which they had made, to take home. Please pray for the children who attend Messy Church, their families, and the adults who prepare such imaginative activities for them.

Janet N

150TH ANNIVERSARY – 19TH AND 20TH SEPTEMBER



1876-2026



This year we are celebrating the 150th Anniversary of our building, recognising that both Bethel (Congregational and, later, 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!

COMMUNION COLLECTION FOR JUNE

Our communion collection for June will be for Matt's café, run by a team of volunteers. The café provides a friendly, relaxed space where everyone is welcome to pause and chat. Many appreciate the chance to build

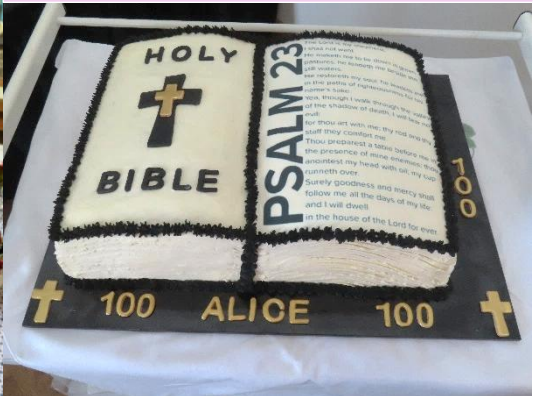
friendships and feel part of a community. The café also intercepts and reuses food destined for landfill and uses it to feed people who need it on a "pay as you feel" basis.



Some of the photos from Alice's 100th birthday party. Many congratulations from your UES friends.



1926 - 2026





The Party in the UCS Hall was organized by Maggie, helped by church friends. It involved a lot of work, but it was all done with love and in appreciation of what Alice has given throughout her long life of Christian witness.



Alice was born in West Cross but lived and received her early education in Neath. She went to study Natural Sciences at Newnham College, Cambridge, where she completed her degree, but was not granted her degree certificate until over 50 years later, since women weren't allowed to graduate from Cambridge then! She was trained and accredited as a Methodist Local Preacher (serving in that role for over 70 years), was accepted as a missionary with the Methodist Missionary Society. She served in

Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe now) and Belize (in Central America). She came back home to care for her mother and was appointed head of Chemistry at Bishop Gore. She also taught briefly in Glanmôr School. Throughout her life, Alice's Christian commitment has been unwavering, her preaching has always been Biblical and relevant, and she's still keen to learn and discover new things and to share what she has learned, as those who attend Faith and Fellowship know.

Alice has appreciated music and art, travel and companionship. She rarely misses a classical music concert in the Brangwyn or an interesting performance in Taliesin. Alice has always 'told it the way it is!', offering praise and critique in equal measure! And we rejoice that she is part of our church community in UCS. She is one of our many treasures!



***Alice and
Maggie making
sure that
everything is
shipshape!***

Guide to photos: The cake made by Chris H for the UCS congregation on May 3rd; Alice at the party; Alice receiving the cake in church; Alice cutting the church cake; the cake made for the party by friends; Sandra C. greeting Alice on arrival at the party (with Howard L, and Pam & Bryn J from Eaton Road, in the background); local preachers and ministers who have been Alice's colleagues and friends over the years. Photos from Janet N., Jan C., Maggie C., Louise G., and the editor, with thanks.

JUNE IS BIBLE MONTH, FOCUSSED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The Study Guide says: Philippians encourages us to find our strength in the one who holds us fast. Whether in celebration or struggle, we are invited to press on together, confident that “the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6). Join us for Bible Month 2026 — and bring your church... on a journey into the joy of the gospel. Together, we'll discover again that our hope, peace, and joy are found in Christ alone.

Daily reading guide

A free booklet is available which lets you read the whole book a small chunk at a time, with daily reflections, questions and a prayer prompt. See [Bible Month - The Methodist Church](#)



The Apostle Paul's short but powerful letter overflows with joy, encouragement, and love – even as he writes from prison. Philippians shows us that joy is not the absence of difficulty, but the presence of Christ in every circumstance. As Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Throughout Bible Month 2026, communities will explore what it means to:

- Rejoice in all circumstances
- Live lives shaped by Christ's humility and love
- Stand firm together in unity and hope
- Find peace through prayer and thanksgiving

If you would like a copy of the Bible Study Guide on Philippians that we used last year in Faith & Fellowship, please let me know. There are three examples of these reflections in this magazine.

A REFLECTION ON PHILIPPIANS 2: 12-18 – LIVING OUR SALVATION

¹²Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

¹⁴Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour in vain. ¹⁷But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul is convinced that this is the fact: we **are** saved, through faith in Jesus. Now it must be activated (like some domestic appliances which warn us that ‘*Your device has not been activated*’!) ‘Be what you are!’ to fulfil God’s plans for us. How? No groaning and moaning, no falling out, being blameless (difficult at times!) and all this within ‘a stubborn and obstinate generation’, so that we can cast the light of the Gospel in the world around us – today! This is living our salvation. This would also give the apostle the greatest joy: that his ministry had such a powerful impact on the lives of the saints in Philippi that they could rejoice with one another.

FRIDAY 5TH JUNE – A HAPPY SUMMER EVENING

We’re delighted to announce that the **Abbey Players** are coming to entertain us with an evening entitled **Songs from the Shows**. Their compere will be **Jonathan Lycette**, who we know is always good fun.

We missed not having them perform for us last year and so want to welcome them with a full church this year.

Tickets are £8 – which, judging by the way prices have increased for other concerts, seems to be amazing value.

As usual profits will be shared between our church and Abbey Players.

With the latter, the money will go towards their next production of **Frozen** at the Grand in the Autumn. (UCS’ share will go towards church funds.)

Do join us for what promises to be one of those delightful evenings where everyone leaves with a smile on their face.

Jan C



The Gower Chorale presents



John Rutter's

Psalmfest

and other items



Saturday

June 20th 2026

7 pm

All Saints Church
Mumbles

Musical Director
Dr William Reynolds

The Gower Chamber Ensemble

Organ
Stephen Power

Soprano
Bethan Maria Evans

Tenor
Robyn Lyn Evans



Gower Chorale

Tickets £20

Under 18's free

Tickets available from
01792 404391/207950
or www.gower-chorale.co.uk

or contact Anne W. or Margaret W.

WHAT IS OUR CHRISTIAN VISION OF A NATION OR COMMUNITY? WHAT SHOULD A STATE LOOK LIKE?

The recent elections for the Welsh Senedd, the Scottish Parliament and local councils in England have raised a lot of questions and challenges about the future of government at all levels in the UK and about what we look for in those who we elect to govern us, nationally and locally. There will be many answers to these questions among our readership, but here are some key principles that seem to me to be central from a Christian perspective, rooted in love:

- Governments and those who govern should always act with compassion, seeking to understand people's suffering and offering professional, well-resourced and dependable care to all, within the inevitable financial constraints on resources.
- Governments and those who govern should always act with humanity, dignity and respect, always remembering – from a Christian perspective – that we are ALL God's children made in God's image, and that no one should be beyond the reach of compassionate care and kindness, in a community where all belong together.
- Governments and those who govern should develop and implement economic policies that seek to benefit rich and poor equally, developing infrastructures that build an economic and social fabric that is fair to all its citizens and seeks to ensure a prosperous future for all communities and individuals.
- Governments, those who govern and every citizen, should behave towards one another and towards those they govern and amongst whom they live, without violent aggression, prejudice, antagonism or abuse of any kind.
- Governments and those who govern should always speak and act with honesty, truthfulness, integrity and sincerity.
- Governments and those who govern should create communities where all are welcome, where there are appropriate legal safeguards, where the innocent are defended against hatred, injustice, violence and thuggery, and where everyone feels safe.
- Governments and those who govern should embrace the global partnerships and friendships that international connections create for us and should play their part in ensuring that the creation of a

peaceful, just and free future for the planet and for all peoples is a high priority and should take precedence over developing the war machine and instruments of mass destruction.

- Governments and those who govern should recognise that all people of all faiths or of none have an equal place, an equal voice and an equal right to safety and freedom of religion within our planet, our nations and our communities.

All this is, of course, over-simplified, and expresses only very general principles. But building a peaceful, safe, just and fair society does depend, I think, on allowing these foundational Christian approaches to shape our personal and communal behavior, and our commitment to the future of our planet and our society. If this is what we believe – and not everyone will agree with everything, of course – then our praying and our acting should be focused on living out these Christian principles in radical worship and committed action. We cannot sit back while Christian love is eroded in the name of a false Gospel.

Noel (This article was written completely independently of the minister's letter. 'Great minds...!')

The following is a prayer from the URC Daily Devotions for May 13th by The Revd Dr Neil Thorogood, Moderator-elect of General Assembly. It was inspired by an art installation by Colombian artist, Dorothy Salcedo, which is a long deep fissure or crack in the floor, as you enter the Tate Gallery which "represents borders, the experience of immigrants, the experience of segregation, the experience of racial hatred...":

PRAYER

How we love to police the categories that we create:
the insiders and the outsiders,
the accepted and the unacceptable,
the good and the bad.

Then, to confound our thinking and undo our divisiveness,
you, Jesus, walk along arm in arm with untouchables,
party with notorious sinners,
promise paradise to convicts.

Jesus, be relentless with us;
unpick our partisan ways.

Teach us the hospitality you embody. Amen.

Recently there was a far-right march along Hope Street in Liverpool, which links the Anglican and Catholic Cathedral. Church leaders responded with the following joint statement from Christian leaders across Merseyside.



We stand united in affirming that the recently advertised ‘Walk with Jesus Rally’ is not organised by, or representative of, the recognised Christian community in Merseyside. Together, we reaffirm our shared commitment to love, justice and compassion. Liverpool is a city built on diversity, solidarity and welcome. We will continue to stand firmly against hatred, prejudice and division in all its forms. “Love your neighbour as yourself.”

*Reported in **Reformed**, the newly renamed magazine of the URC)*



(from the CTE website)

You might have heard about *A Million Acts of Hope* – a social media campaign (and more!) designed to drown out the marches and other activities creating division in our society. It presents instead a positive alternative that showcases the amazing and constant work of churches, community groups, uniformed organisations and everyone else who work to create community and demonstrate the kind, compassionate and hopeful country we live in. There are different ways to be involved.

The simplest is to Sign Britain’s Biggest Thankyou Card - anyone can sign online at <https://millionactsofhope.org>. Please do this if you can.

Another is to Share a photo on social media of an activity you’re involved in which shows people in communities coming together and enjoying themselves and then adding it to the Act of Hope Register.

Adella, from the Christ Well Newsletter for May 17th

Every year since 1922, the Welsh League of Youth (yr URDD) has sent a message from the youth of Wales to the youth of the world. The theme this year was language:

**2026
PEACE
AND
GOODWILL
MESSAGE**

19.05.2026

Urdd

MINORITY LANGUAGES

Peace speaks every language

*'Why bother',
'Who cares',
'What's the point.'*

Why bother?
Because this is the language of memory,
the language of my youth, woven into our being,
giving meaning to the land beneath our feet.
A language that is past, present and future.

Who cares?
We do.
For it is the language of community, of belonging, of pride,
of laughing until we cry.
Of rant and reason and splendid nonsense,
the language that says, 'you are not alone'.

What's the point?
The point is a language
that colours the mind and kindles the soul,
that imagines far and wide – and kinder still.
A language that breaks down barriers
and opens worlds of possibilities.

Yes.
There is a point to a language
with hope at its heart.

from the Urdd Website: [Saesneg.png \(1654×2339\)](#)

**ON 24TH JULY AT UCS WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO
EXPERIENCE A QUITE UNIQUE MUSICAL
PRESENTATION**



Lola A, granddaughter of John and Lynda, is visiting as part of a UK tour with her colleague Juana Casas Farras, under the name Phrygian Clouds. Although Lola is already a professional orchestral harpist, she has gone on to study medieval harp and song. Those who attended Lynda's memorial service will probably recall her playing the triple harp and singing in Welsh. She was deeply influenced by her grandma's singing and also by visiting folk nights here at Tŷ Tawe, where she first experienced improvised accompaniment on the triple harp. She is currently completing her studies at the University of the Arts (HfK) at Bremen, Germany, and has had specialist tuition with medieval specialists in Lyon and Paris. On this occasion she will be accompanying herself and Juana on a small Gothic harp – somewhat easier to transport! She sings chants by Hildegard of Bingen as well as folk songs and her own poems. To quote her own publicity: *'Inspired by poetry in Welsh, English and French, as well as chant, polyphony and jazz, she creates her own musical language that transcends time and connects cultures.'*

Juana is a Spanish vocalist and pianist who is currently studying Jazz (voice), also at Bremen. Rooted in storytelling and jazz, her practice moves fluidly between folk and interdisciplinary performance.

It promises to be a special event.

Note it in your diary!

Admission will be free, but donations will be welcome.

SHARING SABBATICAL EXPERIENCES!

In the planning of my Sabbatical, which was from 01.02.26 to 31.03.26 (Palm Sunday), I thought of it in terms of *Resting in God*.

However, a few days into my sabbatical and with the start of my chosen reading, I came across the phrase *Growing in Christ* which fitted well too. A few days further on, however, and God showed me the phrase *Spiritual Kairos* [*Kairos* means a significant time ed.] which also fitted very well with how I was viewing, and beginning to experience, my sabbatical time. I did in fact experience all these approaches over the two months.



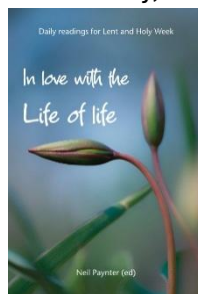
In the planning of my sabbatical, I wanted to have the following:

Experiences for Mind and Spirit - time to explore further various types of prayer e.g. Prayers of Lament, Hesychia Prayer [which focusses on uniting the mind with the heart to experience God's presence] and Centring Prayer; read more poetry and explore the role of Black Out Poetry and study further Psalms of Lament.

Experiences for Body and Spirit – I wanted to walk, in sections, the Gower Pilgrimage Way with Alan and our dog Seal. Giving me and Alan time together in God's creation and learning more about Gower and its churches.

Visits to places which give me joy. Which included a visit to Sarum College in Salisbury and the Cathedral there and Gladstone's Library, Flintshire (a residential library – the fact that you can stay at a library was mind blowing!)

I especially wanted to have my Sabbatical time during the period of Lent, as I wanted to look deeper into the meaning of Lent and follow a specific book of daily readings for Lent and Holy Week. The book I chose was called '*In love with the Life of life*', edited by Neil Paynter, published by Wild Goose Publications, which is part of the Iona Community.



So, what have I enjoyed? In no particular order:

- Time and the space to research further the information I set out to read.
- My visits to Salisbury and Gladstone's Library.
- Joining the Iona Community online for their daily worship services.
- By walking different parts of the Gower Pilgrimage Way, I have regained my confidence to walk longer distances than I am used to and to enjoy walking in a variety of weathers. We didn't walk the Gower Pilgrimage as per the walking guide but planned our different routes to fit our needs i.e. mainly doing circular walks and often having lunch at a local pub, supporting the local economy!
- It was inspiring to visit the different local churches and learn a little of their lives and history. A few of them had a special area created in the church offering hospitality to people walking the Pilgrimage Way. There is plenty of information about the churches on the Pilgrimage Website and a few booklets that accompany the route. At each church you can stamp your Pilgrimage Passport.
- Having the 'mind space' to pause, be grateful and to be more aware of God's grace in my life.
- Worshipping at different local churches and at Llandaff Cathedral.
- Being reminded of the importance of being critically aware of church, community and society matters.
- Learning more about the depth of the Lent experience.
- Joining a Green Christian online event which set off another train of thought and reflection!
- Learning more about being a Peacemaker. 'Peace-making is the height and depth and breadth and length of the Spiritual Life', John Dear, American priest and peace activist.
- **RESTING in GOD!**



Adella

THE NOONS' NEXT STEP

On 6th May, one day after his 65th birthday, Geoff retired from the Manufacturing Technologies Association after working there for 39 years. His retirement lunch was held in the posh surrounds of the Savoy Hotel in London! One of his many retirement gifts was a framed, signed Welsh rugby shirt (he has supported Wales since the age of 13!).

Leslie will 'sit down' (Methodist-speak for retire) at the beginning of August – although she doubts that her retirement 'do' will quite match up to the dizzy heights of the Savoy! Her farewell service will be zoomed (for anyone who wishes to join) and is at 4pm on Sunday 2nd August. The zoom link will be shared in the weekly notices nearer the time.

They have bought a house in Oakham (where Leslie's family lives) and are currently having it completely renovated.

(We wish them both a happy retirement and we celebrate our continued friendship. Ed.)



THE CIRCUIT EASTER OFFERING SERVICE MURTON CHAPEL, 10TH MAY (Part 1)

Circuit churches came together for this inspiring and informative celebration of the world church – though it could and should have been



much better attended! We dedicated our Easter offerings and committed ourselves to the work of World Mission through the Methodist Church. This year's theme was 'Unbound: A Gospel that breaks barriers' and was focused particularly on Rwanda (in East Africa), Germany and Bolivia (in Latin America).

There were some key moments in the service. Eleanor Cuthill spoke movingly about her time in Rwanda some years ago and how that experience still lives on for her.

The Rwandan genocide 30 years ago led to the death of nearly 1 million people in a period of almost three months. '...attacks were brutal and

systematic. Neighbours who had lived side by side were locked into conflict. Those who sought sanctuary in churches were mown down by killing gangs. Women were often raped before being killed in a particularly misogynistic way. Sadly, some politicians and church leaders were identified as instigators of the killing sprees. Some escaped before facing justice. Others were tried in community courts and sentenced to imprisonment.

Eleanor reflected on her experience, particularly a visit to the Genocide museum in Kigali. Outside of the museum, there are beautifully laid out gardens. This includes a series of ponds and distributed about the gardens is a series of strange gorilla-styled statues. Each of the gorillas



has its back to the centre of the pond, such as the one pictured which is on a mobile phone. These symbolise that, whilst neighbour turned on neighbour, the world turned its back and didn't intervene until too late; we were all just too busy with our own concerns and worries to stop, think and help others in need. During these events and in the aftermath, the UN and countries including the US, UK and Belgium were criticized for their inaction and failure to strengthen the force and mandate of the UN Peacekeepers who were stationed in the

country, but unable to intervene.

Today, Rwanda is a very different place. Legislation is in place that makes it illegal to speak of the different ethnic groups and much has been achieved in ensuring peace and reconciliation. The country feels stable and progressive. Now, 30 years on from the genocide, some of those sentenced for the most serious crimes are due to be released from prison into the community.

The churches in Rwanda are heavily involved in supporting the reintegration of people into their community and in enabling reconnection with their neighbours. Thanks to the resilience and courage of all involved there is real evidence of a shared vision that the genocide must never be allowed to happen again. "We are all Rwandans now."

(From Eleanor and the Easter Offering website)

REPORT TO ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING: MAY 2026 (PART 1)

CHURCH ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS



All the following aspects of our life in UCS involved many different members of the church who organised, contributed to and participated in worship and fellowship at Uniting Church Sketty. For all these many people (who are not named), we give thanks – for their faithfulness, creativity, willingness to serve, and commitment.

A is for Adventurers, who we see grow in confidence and understanding due to the creativity and thoughtful preparation of the leaders. A joy to have them in our services.

B is for our Building, and those who maintain and care in quiet ways to provide a warm and welcoming place for all, and who have had to cope with builders tackling the roof during the year.

- **for Beautiful Banners** made by the craft group to decorate and inform the church

C is for Coffee mornings and Cake, raising money for charities and providing an opportunity for fellowship every month;

- **for the Clothing Bank**, providing clothing and goods for refugees and Asylum seekers;
- **for the Car Rota**, helping members attend church

D is for Drama from the Madcaps, enjoyed by its members and their audiences contributing to charities. At Christmas, the group reprieved their first ever production of "A lad in a stable" which was not only very amusing but also conveyed the true meaning of the Christmas story.

- **for Displays** that are imaginative and thought-provoking in the entrance area of the church, for members and visitors to see and appreciate
- **for the Dancing group** providing exercise and fellowship
- **for the Dementia Friendly group** helping the church become more inclusive.

E is for Ecumenical services arranged during the year to celebrate the Council of Nicaea, The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, both in Swansea Minster, and a service on Trinity Sunday in St Davids Roman Catholic Church.

F is for Faith and Fellowship an opportunity this year for informative and challenging discussion on Philipians, The Journey of the Magi, and

Amos, and the current series on the Bible. The sessions were very well attended with participation from everyone.

- **for Flowers** generously given, beautifully arranged and distributed to members and friends
- **for the Fairtrade stalls** held monthly to help bring an awareness of the wider world and their economic problems.
- **for Food Bank** to which members contribute regularly for use in the Community.
- **for Finance** and those who take on responsibility for ensuring the church meets its commitments as well as dealing with the giving week by week.

G is for Green Friends who keep Green Issues high on the agenda, keep church members regularly informed of green issues and arrange events to publicise issues in the community.

H is for Hope, as we pray for today and for our future together.

I is for Inclusive which UCS aims to be. Members attended sessions on zoom arranged by the URC and a Circuit service to highlight different needs and how to meet them as be

J is for a Joyful celebration of Alice Rutter's 100th Birthday recognising her long commitment to the church as a former missionary and Local Preacher. There was a special tea and two cakes!

K defines who we are: 'Kindred spirits working together for the Kingdom of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our King.'

L is for the Leadership Team, Elders and Stewards working together to support the Minister and to develop a vision and purpose for the church;

- **for monthly church Lunches** providing an opportunity for fellowship and a day away from cooking!

M is for the Church Magazine produced monthly to provide information on church, community and worldwide church news

- **for Messy Church**, a monthly meeting of young children for learning and fun.
- **for the Mission Outreach and Events Committee** who plan charitable giving and social events.
- **for Maundy Thursday and a very different and inspiring Communion service** led for us on Maundy Thursday by the Cardiff Methodist Community Choir

[to be continued]

Pat D

THE LAST SUPPER AT SWANSEA MINSTER



Swansea Minster is delighted to host Peter Barnes' incredible modern interpretation of The Last Supper — a striking installation created using over 50,000 recycled computer keyboard keys. This unique artwork invites you to look closer, reflect deeply, and explore hidden words and symbols woven into its mosaic design. (*You may have seen it recently on 'Songs of Praise' Ed.*)

'The Last Supper' sculpture was inspired by the famous painting of the same name by Leonardo da Vinci. And just as the Bible and the original painting connected with people using the latest modes of communication, this sculpture seeks to use the keyboard keys to create the mosaic effect. To add further interest, the letters spell out quotes from the Bible for viewers to discover. Sculptor Peter Barnes said, "My aim was to recreate Leonardo da Vinci's painting as an abstract, three-dimensional form; I wanted to keep the detail to a minimum while retaining all the expression and interaction of the characters." With Bible quotes threaded throughout the sculpture, Peter says that it took over 50,000 keyboard keys to complete the work. "I wanted this sculpture to be finished with a mosaic but not in a conventional way. I realised that a computer keyboard is made up of squares which could be used as tiles. This led me to thinking of the possibilities; that letters, numbers and symbols could be utilised to create further interest and meaning."

MORE REFLECTIONS ON PHILIPPIANS



The Letter to the Philippians is one of four letters written by Paul while he was imprisoned. Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon are the others that are regarded as ‘letters from prison’. They were written during the middle period of Paul’s apostolic ministry. Philippians

was probably written after his first visit to the city but before his second recorded visit. A date around 54AD to 55AD is therefore likely. There has been considerable debate about whether Paul wrote these letters or whether they merely bear his name and were written by someone else, probably with Paul’s knowledge and input. But I’m convinced that Paul composed Philippians – probably with help – very much as a pastoral, rather than a theological, letter to Christians he knew and loved and cared for. Here we get to the heart of Paul’s relationship with the churches. This is the starting point for these two reflections on the opening and closing paragraphs of the Letter.

Philippians 1: 1-7

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God’s holy people (saints) in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me.

Verses 1-2 Greeting

Paul includes his colleagues in the faith and his partners in apostolic ministry in his greeting. He sees the church in Philippi (and all the churches) as a servant church sharing in a servant’s ministry, seeking to rid itself of all selfishness and submitting itself to Christian obedience. These Philippian Christians are saints, as we are, not because they (any more

than we) are perfect but because they, like us, have been called and owned by God. **‘Grace and peace to you.’**

Verses 3-7 Remembering, giving thanks and encouraging

The warmth of the Apostle's relationship with the saints in Philippi is evident in these verses: he remembers them with thanksgiving, prays for them with joy and expresses his affection for these fellow Christians. No one is left out of this warmth: **‘always in all of my prayers for all of you’**. Paul also acknowledges their part in building up the fabric of the church: they were partners in the Gospel, standing alongside him when he was imprisoned, proclaiming the Gospel, and being advocates for the Gospel in the public arena. This is the strength of this early Christian society.

Philippians 4: 19-23

¹⁹And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²¹Greet all God's people (the saints) in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. ²²All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

At the end of his letter, Paul is back where he started: with greetings. For Paul, the community of **saints** is the heart of it. He sends greetings to his friends in Philippi from himself and **those who are with him**. Prison has not separated him from **the saints**. The greatest wonder, however, is that he sends greetings **to those in the service of Caesar**, who serve the imprisoning Empire! Fellowship in Christ breaks down walls. In Christ, we are one - and that's the end of the story! And the end of the letter. **The grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit! Amen.**

A Prayer: *Risen, Easter Lord, fill me with hope and encouragement so that I may stand firm in your strength. Jesus, our risen Lord, bind your people together in your Spirit that we may be ‘united together, caring for all and seeking God’ in all we are and do. May we live in harmony with one another and with all your people, so that we may be witnesses of your purpose to bring all things and all people into your unity. Mould me, so that I may show in my life and character those virtues of Christian living that have been seen in your saints throughout the centuries and so become, by your grace, what I was called to be. Amen.*

Noel