



MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY OCTOBER 2024



**“You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.
The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing” (Psalm 65.11-13)**

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

Minister: The Revd Louise Gough

Senior Elder: Pat D

Senior Steward: Jan C

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

NOVEMBER 2024 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the November 2024 edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D at by October 15 at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 27 October.

NB We have stopped producing audio recordings of this church magazine due to a lack of demand. This is under continuous appraisal and if you think such recordings could benefit you, please let Les W If you would like to receive the weekly notices and/or monthly magazine via email (.pdf file) please contact Lynne W.

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 refurbished hall was funded from the sale of the Bethel building

LETTER FROM THE MANSE

Dear friends

WARNING – CONTAINS CHALLENGES!

If I were to list my top ten favourite things to do on a Saturday in September, attending Methodist Representative Synod probably wouldn't be on it! (Don't tell anyone!) In the interests of a Uniting Church, I don't think a URC Synod would feature either! But all the same, as I write I'm recovering from an all-day Saturday Synod, held in Newtown – the 7am pick up time doesn't help the cause!

As ever, it wasn't so bad when I got there! I was able to meet up with old friends from past circuits, and there was some inspiring content! The Methodist Church currently has a strategy called "God for All", encouraging the church to be a 'growing, evangelistic, inclusive, justice-seeking Church of Gospel people'.

There were a number of presentations during Synod which explained what some churches were doing to fulfil this aim – very encouraging and interesting! We heard of a church which is finding simple ways to engage with its community by making its premises welcoming and visible, meeting people and offering worship and activities outside the building, and making relationships with neighbours, schools and local businesses and organisations. We heard of a minister using his artistic skills to teach art in a local café, whilst having very natural conversations about God. We heard of churches thinking about their particular contexts and the people they were likely to encounter – and how they could engage with them.

What struck me most of all, was that all the ventures began with church members listening to the people in their local community – not doing things 'to' or 'for' people they didn't know, but getting to know people and doing things with them. Sometimes the listening took a long time – and it always included making the space to listen to God. Often, ideas failed, but no matter – they kept listening and just tried new ones. New ventures also began when people asked themselves what gifts God had given to them, and how they could use them.

An enormous amount of good work comes out of UCS, and members are incredibly generous. Many of you are involved in some wonderful things outside church. I also know that running a church is very tiring and takes an enormous amount of time and energy, and most of you have been giving yourselves to this for years!

However...

I wonder what would happen if we very deliberately put our focus on listening to God and listening to the people in our local community. I wonder if this would affect the things that we do and spend our time on (I suspect and hope that it would!). I wonder if we could refocus some of our activities to help to make us a 'growing, evangelistic, inclusive, justice-seeking church'. (This is not to follow a specifically Methodist agenda or be denominational, but simply because those aims seem good!) Perhaps we could consciously consider the gifts that God has given to us, and how we might use them in a new, more outward looking way.

We took a step towards this on 10th September when we received visitors from The Gathering Church in Cardiff (a church for LGBTQ+ people), who encouraged us to consider how we could be a more welcoming and inclusive church. The feedback seems to be that those who attended found it a very helpful session. We were reminded that we need to be better at speaking about matters such as sexuality and the struggles that people in church often hide, sometimes because they have had extremely painful experiences. We were also introduced to several practical steps we could take to be more inclusive, and challenged about how we can let others know that we are registered for same-sex marriages. I hope we can give some thought to these things so that we can offer a considered, real and caring welcome to those who might be seeking to find a church in which to feel safe.

UCS, you have a real gift for caring, and you are doing some fantastic things. After all I heard at Synod, and all that was shared during the visit of the Gathering Church, I believe it's time we stopped hiding the light that God has given us, and let the community know that we have treasures to offer – not necessarily expecting people to come in, but going out instead. I don't think we need to make it difficult, or imagine that is

beyond us. It isn't. With some careful prayer, listening, an agreed shared mission, and some new thinking and action about one or two of the things we are already doing that we might do slightly differently or in a way that points more determinedly outwards, I believe we could find new purpose and joy as we fulfil our calling, and be a greater blessing to others.

I hope these are things we can consider in our personal prayers, our prayers as a church (we pray for the church, and much else besides, each Sunday evening at 7pm on Zoom – usual church link, all welcome), in our meetings and in our conversations.

It's a secondary factor, but I would love to be able to share a pioneering good news story from UCS at a future Synod, to encourage others to use their gifts to be a growing, evangelistic, inclusive and justice-seeking church of Gospel people too!

Blessings and love

Louise



from the Christian Aid webpage

WORSHIP SERVICES IN UCS IN OCTOBER

October 6 th	Revd Louise Gough (Communion)
13 th	Caroline Buckler
AT 6.00pm	in Uniting Church SKetty: Circuit Mission Service
20 th	Revd Louise Gough (HARVEST FESTIVAL)
27 th	Heather Coleman

All at 10.30am unless otherwise stated

HARVEST WINDOWS

This year's Harvest Thanksgiving Service will be on October 20th. Our harvest windows will be “decorated” with non-perishable food and toiletry items to be passed on to the foodbank and clothing bank. Items to donate include:

- toiletries (especially sanitary items)
- tinned meats and fish
- dried pasta, spaghetti and rice
- tinned fruit, vegetables
- tinned soup, baked beans etc
- jars or tins of pasta and curry sauces.

Please leave any donations marked “Harvest” in the usual way in the foodbank area and Adella and I will collect them.

Thank you in advance, Julie, Adella, Ian and the Leadership Team.



COMMUNION COLLECTION - SWANSEA PRISON FELLOWSHIP

The Swansea Prison Fellowship meets in our church once a month to pray for the prison and prisoners. The fellowship supports a number of projects which need financial help. The angel tree project raises funds to enable parents in prison to send a gift to their children at Christmas. Prisoners fill in a form then volunteers from SPF buy and wrap the gifts and arrange for them to be delivered to the children. The Sycamore Tree Project is a restorative justice course delivered by volunteers from SPF in the prison. This takes place several times a year and is well attended. It can be life changing for prisoners as they explore the impact of their crimes. SPF also supports a prayer line where anyone in any of the prisons can leave a message with their prayer

request and volunteers pray for them. Volunteers also take part in Sunday morning services in the prison on a monthly basis.

Susan G

IN MEMORIAM: KEITH M

In August, our friend and faithful fellow-member, Keith M, died after a very sudden illness. These tributes help us to remember Keith and give thanks to God for all he was to his family and friends, and as a gracious and always willing servant of Uniting Church Sketty. May God give to all who loved him, peace and comfort.

David M writes:

In the September Church Magazine, in the section 'About the Buildings and Grounds' there is an item, "We are looking to fill two vacancies.....etc."

For members of the congregation who are possibly unaware why this advertisement is included, I must inform them it is due to the sudden, sad, death, of the member who took care of these duties in recent times, Mr. Keith M.

Keith was born and raised in Sketty, scarcely 100 metres from this Church, in De La Beche Rd, grew up attending this church, and Bethel, pre dating in many ways their eventual amalgamation. That was the way it was for children of the area growing up in that period, enjoying the benefits of both establishments' Cubs, Scouts, Youth Clubs, and of course their summer "Outings!"

Keith was seventy-nine years old, still living in Sketty, and a retired Electrical Engineer, who enjoyed a wide range of pursuits and interests, including a passion for the Golf course, his Classical Guitar Circle and of course, his Church.

His untimely loss was sudden, unexpected, and devastating, to his family and many friends and associates, and I hope and trust that this brief insight into the life of Keith, will allow those that did not know him, to have a better awareness of who he was, and indeed, what he stood for.

Therefore, I shall close with a comment from another system, where Keith was enthusiastically involved, over many years, "He lived respected, and died regretted".

R.I.P old son, your brother, David.

Alan J writes: For many years Keith was a regular door steward when we had evening services, always welcoming and friendly. He was an

assistant property steward. For many years he looked after the grounds, weeding, tidying and mowing the grass. He looked after the heating requirements week by week as each weekly schedule changed. If ever a ladder was required for a job Keith was up the ladder in no time... Indeed, if ever anything was required to be done, I only had to ask him, and he would be there – EXCEPT a Tuesday or Thursday. They were golf days! I will miss him, and his friends in the family of our church will miss him.

Revd Louise Gough writes:

I'm sad to say that having been at UCS a relatively short time, I didn't know Keith well, but very much valued his presence and enjoyed the conversations briefly shared on Sunday mornings.

I remember him playing his guitar in my welcome service for my specially chosen song, "Teach me to dance", and I appreciated chatting to him about the guitar (having recently picked up mine after many years). Keith was a long-standing, and possibly founding, member of Swansea Classical Guitar Circle, and being a music lover, was also experimenting with the clarinet.

I know that Keith contributed to the Finance and Property Committee, and I believe he also used his skills in the wider Circuit.

We were all shocked when Keith was taken ill and suffered the loss of his leg. I visited him in Morrision Hospital shortly before he died. It was humbling to hear how positive he was. He knew he would never play golf again, but was looking forward to going home, trying his guitar and enjoying all the things he'd thought about, that he would be able to do. It was also wonderful that he joined zoom Evening Prayer from Morrision Hospital one evening – we were just about to pray for him, and he appeared on our screens, and chatted away happily. An email he sent me from Morrision a few days before that, read: "Just to let you know that my grand-daughter passed her driving test this morning. I forgot all about my leg, I was so excited."

It was no surprise that his funeral service, at Swansea Crematorium, was not just standing room only, but so well attended that a large crowd gathered outside and also filled the waiting room!

Keith always struck me as a lovely, gentle person. Our prayers are with his family, whom he loved so very much.

ADVANCE NOTICE ABOUT CHRISTMAS BAGS 2024

I apologise for mentioning Christmas when it is only October, but I am going to be in need of everyone's help again!

Last year UCS provided bags full of goodies for over 90 adults and over 80 stockings/ bags for children. A wonderful total!

These days we have cause to worry about our heating bills as well as increased costs in our shopping, but I am sure, like me, you would

not wish the gesture we have made for the past four years to fail at a time of its greatest need.



This year again the bags will be for our local refugees and asylum seekers. Many bags are already made and will be ready for distribution for filling in November – full details in next month's magazine. I will hope then with Adella's help to have details of the numbers of each category bag required. This year we have changed the children's stockings to bags as they are easier to be carried without losing their contents.

Many of you when shopping may wish to start purchasing items to include in your bag but, naturally, I will be very happy to receive donations of money to purchase items for those unable to do their own shopping.

Bag contents: For those new to the project and wishing to know more about the sorts of items suggested to go in the bags then I will be happy to provide ideas but socks, toiletries and treats of edible items are always appreciated. The bags do not need to be fully filled but provide a gesture of our love and welcome.

Please pray for a successful outcome that, with the help of everyone in UCS alongside the UID and SASS teams, we will rise to the task and achieve our target of ensuring a bag for every refugee and asylum seeker in Swansea.

Many thanks
Linda J

OCTOBER COFFEE MORNING

Saturday, 5th October, 10am – 12noon: Proceeds for Save the Children

FROM JON D, UCS TREASURER

Methodist Church Mission Fund

Global Mission partnership is only possible because of your kind donations to the World Mission Fund. For more about how your generosity supports WMF and stories of how your money is used please visit

methodist.org.uk/worldmissionfund

From Rev Pam Cram

Commitment for Life

Thank you so much for all your dedicated support for Commitment for Life. Ongoing Partnerships like Commitment for Life deepen our relationships with those across the world and challenge us to keep justice and peace at the centre of our Christian Life. Together we are part of the transformation of God's Kingdom and seeing Change happen

From Patrick Watt, Chief Executive Officer Christian Aid

Swansea City of Sanctuary

. Can I thank you all for your fund-raising for us. It is greatly appreciated. As a small volunteer organisation, donations are our life-blood. As you are aware we are embarking on an exciting but also challenging "Community Cohesion" project in the coming months & look forward to talking/working with your members about how we can mutually support the aims of the project, when we meet in mid-September. This money will help support this programme, which is badly needed in this current climate. Thank you again for your tremendous support

From Stephen Richardson Treasurer

Penlan Community Focus

Please can I ask you to pass on and share much Gratitude to USC members on behalf of the Circuit and Penlan Church Trustees for the donation, much appreciated.

From Grace C

Blood Bikes Wales

I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Members of Uniting Church Sketty for being so generous in support of Blood Bikes Wales. Contributions such as this mean that we can continue our free service to the NHS in Wales

**From Roy Chandler, Treasurer,
Blood Bikes Wales**

Recent Benevolence Payments made

Shuktara Trust (UK)	£750.00
Penlan Community Focus	£634.55
Blood Bikes Wales	£521.33

CHARITABLE GIVING 2023-24, INCLUDING GIFT AID &c

Muscular Dystrophy	£409.05
Save the Children	£459.80
Action for Children	£321.18
Shelter Box	£426.43
MacMillan Cancer Support	£589.35
British Red Cross	£426.42
Tŷ Hafan	£339.85
Sketty Foodbank	£408.75
Wales Air Ambulance	£390.00
Crisis	£599.55
Alzheimers Research UK	£537.13
Ronia's Fiji Internship	£1172.17
Sketty Foodbank	£295.57
Stepping Stones	£445.60
Maggie's	£394.95
Alzheimers Research UK	£752.55
Pettifor Trust	£524.00
Macmillan Cancer Support	£100.00
Transform Trade	£366.07
Methodist World Church Mission Fund	£1313.36
Old Mill Foundation	£549.35
Christian Aid	£1705.85

League of Light	£642.46
Moses' School	£452.85
Marie Curie	£680.06
Shuktara Trust UK	£750.00
Swansea City of Sanctuary	£438.20
Commitment for Life	£256.32
Methodist World Church	£256.33
Penlan Community Focus	£634.55
Blood Bikes Wales	£521.33
	£17,159.08

Church Donations

All We Can	£300.00
Methodist Ministers Housing	£150.00
URC Ministers Housing	£150.00
Global Justice Now	£200.00
Methodist Homes for the Aged (MHA)	£250.00
Methodist Fund for Property	£150.00
Mission in Britain	£300.00

TOTAL RAISED 2023-24

£18,659.08

Gower Chorale Concert



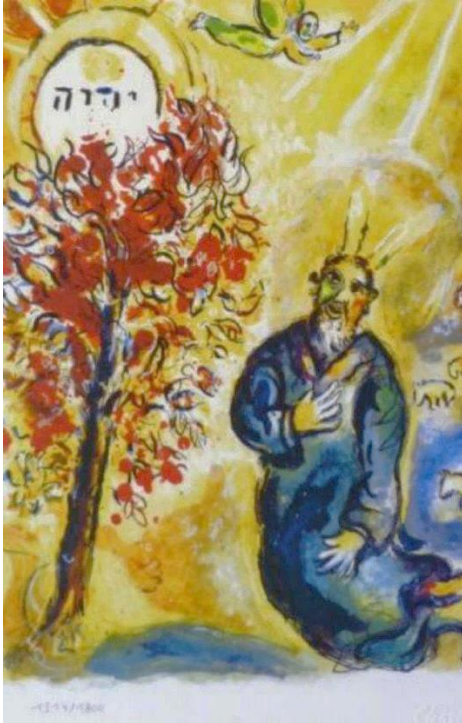
Handel's Messiah

Sunday, December 8th at 7pm

In the Brangwyn Hall

Tickets cost £24 and are available now

Please contact Anne W



FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP

CHAGALL AND THE BIBLE



During Bible month in June our Faith and Fellowship sessions on Genesis used examples from Chagall's depictions of some of the Genesis narratives to explore the deeper meaning of the texts we were looking at. We agreed to follow this up in the Autumn.

So there will be two sessions of Faith and Fellowship focusing on Chagall's art in paintings and in stained glass windows.

They will be held on October 8th and 15th from 10.00 to 11.30 in the Wesley Room.

Reud Noel D and Janet N will lead the sessions, with input also from Reud Louise Gough.



A good number of people gathered in UCS on Tuesday, 11 September, to share in a presentation and discussion, led by Delyth and Georgia, two of the leaders of The Gathering, an inclusive LGBTQ+ Christian worshipping community in Cardiff. As a church that is committed to ensuring that 'All are welcome...', we were challenged to think what this means in reality. If we really mean it, do we actually make it clear that ALL are indeed welcome? How do we demonstrate that, not only among ourselves, but also within the larger community around us? A short film highlighted the experience of two



women, Maddy and Carys, who are in a loving relationship with each other. When their relationship is 'discovered' by the church music group of which they're members, they feel rejected, they feel shamed, and they feel that they have no alternative but to leave. In due course, they find a Christian spiritual home among The Gathering.

We were asked to reflect together in small groups on how Maddy and Carys felt but also on how we would feel and behave in such situations. Would they feel welcomed among us? Would they feel accepted? How would they know that they're accepted? As the excellent resource book that we were given says: 'What signs would they find outside or online to show them they are welcomed? During a service in our church, how would they know that they are safe, welcome and wanted among us?'

These are challenging questions. Over coming weeks and months, we need to think about how we make known within the church and within the community that, indeed, 'All are welcome'. Would we display a rainbow flag or sign; could we develop a specific statement of inclusion; how do we make it known that UCS is open to same-sex marriages; are we clear that we would not tolerate any conversion therapy ("to cure 'gayness'!"), and should we include this in our safeguarding policy? Challenging but important questions!

Noel

THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR – BRA COLLECTION

October is the month when Britain shines a special light on Breast Awareness. Prince Phillip Hospital in Llanelli works with their recycling partners to raise money for their Peony Brest charity by collecting unwanted and no longer loved or needed bras. Bras must be clean but can be in any condition, any size and colour. If suitable they are remodelled or repaired. Otherwise, they are dismantled, with anything possible being reused. Only a small amount of each bra is actually disposed of – properly. This scheme not only raises funds for the Unit, it also offers employment to people in the UK and ensures we limit our landfill deposits.

With the agreement of our ECO and green recycling group, UCS is pleased to support this venture, and a bin is already in our recycling area for your contributions. Please spread the word, among relatives, neighbours and friends. This venture is time bound so please start immediately. Go to it folks and let's see if we can have a bin overflowing with our offerings.

Many thanks for your support.

Jan C

MORE SMILES FROM MADCAPS

Thoughts about me growing older.

1. I thought it would take longer.
2. Of course, I need to talk to myself sometimes I need expert advice.
3. I've noticed people my age are so much older than they were.
4. I mustn't lie to myself – if I want to remember, I do need to write it down!

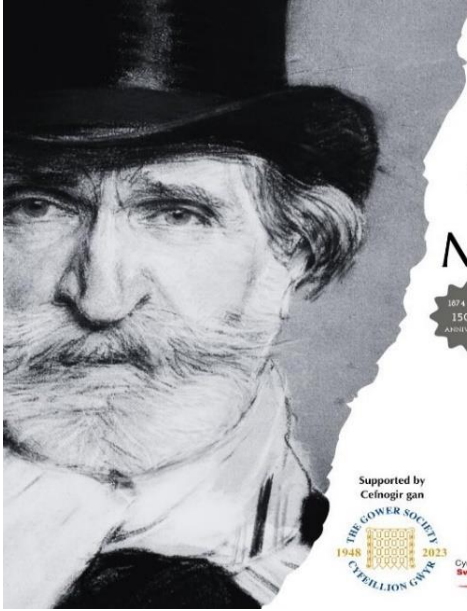
Advice for others – growing older.

1. Decide “in fashion” to be the clothes that still fit you.
2. Duct tape can't fix “stupid” - BUT, it can muffle the sound.
3. Relax, don't rush, “on time” means when you get there.
4. Ageing might slow you down – BUT don't let it shut you up
5. You don't need anger management. You need people to stop getting on your nerves.
6. It's okay that nowadays, “one for the road” means visiting the bathroom before you leave the house.
7. Your people skills are fine. Maybe work on your tolerance for fools.
8. No, you can't put yourself in the dryer and come out wrinkle free ten minutes later

Most importantly

Please don't ever learn to act your age! You are good, JUST THE WAY YOU ARE.

Jan C



PHILHARMONIC

SWANSEA PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

BRITISH SINFONIETTA / SINFONIETTA PRYDAIN
ARWEINYDD / CONDUCTOR: JONATHAN ROGERS

GIUSEPPE VERDI MESSA DI REQUIEM

1874-2024
150th
ANNIVERSARY

1874-2024
D'ATHLEIAD
150

Soloists / Unawdwyr

Angharad Morgan, Sian Meinir
Joe Morgan & Thomas Humphreys

Saturday / Sadwrn - 7:30pm

23 November / Tachwedd 2024

NEUADD Y BRANGWYN HALL

Supported by
Cefnogrif gan



Tickets / Tocynnau £25 / £18 / £10

Ticket Secretary / Ysgrifennydd Tocynnau 01792 299443
On the door / Wrth y drws / swanseaphilchoir.org

If you'd like tickets for this concert to mark the 150th Anniversary of the first performance of Verdi's Requiem, please contact Noel.

ADVANCE NOTICE



- The Gower Chorale -

THE GOWER CHORALE in UCS

On Saturday, January 25th 2025, the Gower Chorale will give a concert in UCS.

Their musical director, Dr William Reynolds, writes, 'The Gower Chorale, who in 2025 celebrate their 30th anniversary year, will perform a selection of much-loved choral classics, including music by Handel, Fauré, and Verdi'

Proceeds will be shared between UCS and the choir.

SKETTY SUNBEAMS PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

On Wednesday 4th September 2024 we re-started Sunbeams, with 18 children and 17 accompanying adults (Mums, Dads, grandparents, carers). It seems a good time to review the previous year. We had 39 sessions, with an average attendance of 15 children (maximum 25, minimum 7) and the total number of different children who came at least once was 76. The number of different adults who came at least once would probably be a few over 80, as sometimes the same child attends with different parents, grandparents and aunts on different occasions. It would be hard to overstate the diversity of family backgrounds represented. We have said goodbye to a number of our regulars who have gone on to school nursery classes or moved away. We don't advertise, but word of mouth seems effective in spreading the word of our existence and what we do. The structured combination of play, craft activities, refreshments and action songs seems to work well, and we are pleased to see children grow up, become more independent and often more sociable.

A parent has allowed us to quote from her thank-you card at the end of the summer term as she left for school: "Dear Heather, You & the team should be so proud of the amazing job you've done with Sunbeams! It's a very special baby group & one that has the most positive impact for mums, dads and children. (My daughter) is a better, more creative, loving, more considerate child because of it... so thank you. I hope you know how brilliant you & the team are, and I wish you lots of good vibes & thoughts for the next children coming into Sunbeams. WE have thoroughly enjoyed."

We are most grateful to all the church members who help, sometimes on a rota basis, sometimes filling in to cover absence. We would like to recruit more helpers, for setting out (from about 9 am) and putting away, for preparing refreshments and washing up, and for generally being with and talking to the parents and keeping an eye on things. The session is 10am to 11.30 am. We ask for a donation of £1 per child each week. Last year we were able to pass on £355 to the Church in recognition of the use of Church facilities.

On 11th September there were again 18 children- not all the same. For obvious reasons we can't show children, but the photos show the hall laid out ready for play and craft activities, the Wesley Room laid out ready for refreshments, children's refreshments ready for collection, and the corridor while we were in session.

Jeff C (Sunbeams reception desk)



Top left: The buggy rank. Top right: The Hall ready for action.

Bottom left: Wesley Room laid out for snacks. Bottom right: The Snacks!

BARN DANCE

There will be a Barn Dance at UCS on Saturday, 19th October, at 7.00pm. Come and join us! There will be dancing, music, refreshments, a quiz for those who do not want to dance (*surely there aren't any party poopers among us!! ed.*). There will be live music! A free fun night for everyone!

URGENT – MEN REQUIRED!

Are you male and have you a good reading voice. If so, would you be prepared to read a few articles each month and record them for the “Swansea and Gower Talking Magazine”. We aren't sexist, it's just that listeners need to hear a variety of voices, and we already have several female readers. If so, discuss it with Les.

PASTORAL UPDATE FOR OCTOBER (from Gwen D)

We give thanks for Jean E, who died peacefully on September 18th in Gorseinon Hospital. We give thanks to God for all she was to her family and her many friends, and for all the wonderful, gentle care she received during her final weeks. She was a faithful disciple of Jesus throughout her life. We pray for her family, that they may know joy and gratitude as they remember her, and for God's peace and comfort in their sorrow.

We hold Gwyn B and his family in our prayers on the death of his brother at the end of August. May they all find peace and comfort.

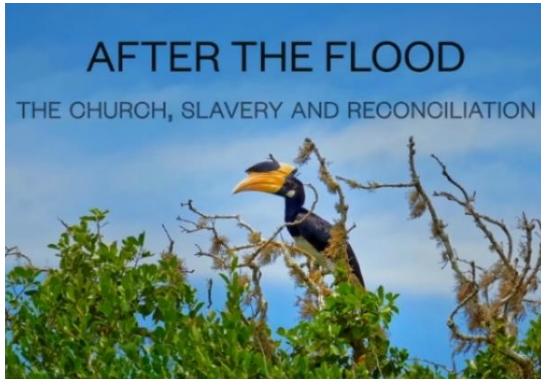
Please pray for families who are dealing with health and other challenges, that that they will take comfort from, and feel supported by, the love, support and prayers of those around them.

Please also remember Trevor who, at the time of writing, is still in Hospital, and Graham who is currently in Campion Gardens Care Home.

It was wonderful to hear from our young people about some of their recent experiences. As Ronia and Maresha move on to university, we wish them well

with their studies and hope they will soon make new friends and settle into life away from home.

Congratulations and best wishes to Elinor (daughter of Clare and Nigel K) and Steve who recently married in Derbyshire.



A new documentary produced by the Methodist Church aims to be educational and redemptive and addresses the historical neglect of slavery in British Christian history.

Academics and theologians take the viewer on a historical journey to show how Biblical

passages and their interpretations were used to justify slavery. White, European Christians saw themselves as replacing Israel as the new chosen people of God; blackness became associated with sin. African Christianity was completely ignored.

Some seventeenth-century Christian missionaries wrote scathingly about the brutality of slavery but continued to reconcile it with their faith rather than calling for abolition. They believed the truth of Christianity was a gift to native peoples, making them more peaceful and pliant.

The documentary highlights how the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel owned slaves in Barbados, branding them with their organisation's name. However, the Church of England was not the only denomination involved in these horrific practices.

The legacy of transatlantic slavery and racism in the church goes well beyond the nineteenth-century abolition of slavery. In fact, the black, British emancipators have been all but written out of history. White evangelical abolitionists often take the credit. Also unmentioned are the rebellions of the

slaves, who fought for their freedom. Black leadership of white congregations is still relatively unusual. And only two black theologians teach in British universities.

Churches are being encouraged to arrange a showing of this film in the next few weeks.

(from The Methodist Church website)

UCS GETS MESSY - SEPTEMBER 14TH

What a lovely surprise it was to have 19 children attend our first session of the new school term. Many of the parents stayed and they seemed to get as much fun from the craft activities as the children! These activities, all based on a dramatized version of the story of Noah, included painting rainbows and suncatcher windchimes, sticking a large tissue paper rainbow and decorating cakes with cream and rainbow sprinkles.

Noah took animals into the ark. We made monkeys with moveable legs and arms and played the game “cat and mouse” with the parachute. The snack time included animal shaped biscuits.

A very busy session which saw the children going home happy after their afternoon’s efforts. We hope our next session on 12th October will be equally well attended.

Linda, Laura and team

Sorry, no time to take photos—all leaders too busy!! *(So here’s a cartoon instead!* [from

commons.wikipedia.org] *Did it look a bit like this in the Hall? ed.)*



GREEN MATTERS (posters from Beulah URC, via UCS ECO group; used with permission)

Recycling is absolutely vital for dealing with waste,



but first, let's

REDUCE buy less

REUSE avoid single-use items

REPAIR don't bin it, fix it

RENT, BORROW and **SHARE**

RECYCLE as a last resort



**Plant based diets
relying on locally
sourced and seasonal
produce are healthier
and have a lower
environmental impact.**

Plastic finds its way into every corner of our lives and vast quantities pollute our world. Governments and big brands need to take action, but there are affordable swaps we can all make to reduce our own plastic footprints:



- carry a reusable bottle and coffee cup**
- refill containers**
- buy loose fruit and veg**
- get our milk delivered**
- take our own shopping bags**

A SYRIAN WOMAN CHALLENGES JESUS

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter...(Jesus and the woman have a brief argument... Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. (Mark 7.24-30)

What do you make of Jesus? What an odd question, you may think! From childhood, most of us have known who Jesus was and is. And yet, we should always be asking ourselves what we make of Jesus. Is Jesus comforting or challenging; cosy or disturbing; among us or beyond us? Bonhoeffer during his final days in the Nazi concentration camp where he was executed in April 1945, wrote that the key question to be asked in those critical times (of Nazi dominance and cruelty in Germany) is: 'Who is Jesus Christ for us today?' It was Jesus' question to his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" It's still the crucial question for us today.

This story tells us some key things about Jesus:

- 1 Jesus goes beyond the normal boundaries of Jewish life and culture and goes to a new, unexplored territory.
- 2 Jesus is confronted by a woman: an even greater challenge to Jewish norms and culture.
- 3 The woman argues with Jesus. So Jesus revises his understanding of kingdom priorities in the light of the woman's perspective and understanding.
- 4 Jesus' kingdom has dawned among the Gentiles too: it's not just a Jewish reality.

So, who is Jesus? These are among the clues offered by this story:

- He is the one who pushes at the boundaries of social and cultural and religious belonging.

- He is the one who is open to be challenged and scandalized by those on the fringes and those who are seen as outsiders.
- He is the one who changes his perspective and priorities in response to the need he sees around him.
- He is the one who recognises the presence of God's reign in unexpected places and among unexpected people.
- He is the one who challenges the norms of social contact and intimacy in the name of healing and wholeness.

Chad Myers describes what Jesus does here and elsewhere as 'creating an ecumenical community'. This story challenges us

- to renew our commitment to the ecumenical vision, the vision of unity
- to redefine what our ecumenical community here in Swansea and in Wales generally should be like.
- Do we still have the deeply held commitment to the ecumenical challenge and vision that the ecumenical pioneers had a century ago?
- God's calling in Jesus remains the same: 'Make every effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity that the Spirit gives' (Ephesians 4.3).

This ecumenical vision also raises the issue of living with differences, a key idea in this story and in the modern ecumenical movement. But there are questions for us:

- Are there limits to living with differences? Who is included? Who cannot be?
- To whom and among whom and with whom is our mission, the mission of the kingdom, undertaken?
- How do we ensure in our attitudes and relationships that 'all means all'?
- How do we make it clear that members of the LGBTQ+ community, for example, are welcome in our church? This is a real example of living with a whole range of differences.

Remember the hymn we often sing, and the banner displayed in the front of our church: 'Let us build a house where **ALL** can dwell... (For) **ALL** are welcome in this place'

Noel