



MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY February 2025



“These peoples I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their offerings will be accepted at my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Isaiah 56:7

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY
9 FEBRUARY 2025

**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 P (Swansea Region of URC Churches)

MARCH 2025 MAGAZINE: All items for inclusion in the March 2025 edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D) by 11th February at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 23rd February.

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 know. If you would like to receive the weekly notices and/or monthly magazine via email (.pdf file) please contact Lynne W

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The building development was funded by the following

The **Methodist** Church 

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

Dear Friends

I am writing this on the 14th day of January – so, fourteen days since the year turned and greetings of “Happy New Year” flowed in and out of mobile phone message accounts, the Vienna Philharmonic played their waltzes, and Scotland’s famous celebrations were cancelled because of the stormy weather!

As far as the weather goes, the situation did not improve – 31st December saw people in various parts of the UK returning home from parties to flooded properties. Having had our socks blown off (and many other things) by Storm Darragh earlier in December, Swansea seemed to escape the worst of the new year weather, but Cheadle/Stockport where I used to live, suffered badly with rising waters, and several streets fairly near to my old manse were submerged.

The widespread flooding in the UK was quickly followed by wildfires in LA – the news is currently dominated by horrific scenes of whole communities reduced to rubble and ash. My only prayer is that this encourages President Trump to take climate change seriously.

You could say, going by that last statement, that I live in hope! But (aside from the fact that Hope is a small village in the Derbyshire Peak District!), hope can be very hard to come by these days. The world can often seem like a very disturbing place, and we have a constant stream of bad news to contend with every hour of every day. Since the Covid pandemic, in particular, and with numerous difficult political situations, war and first-hand experience of climate change, anxiety is prevalent. Why do we seem so stuck in catastrophe? Why is the world further retreating into its enclaves and posturing for power, instead of uniting for the sake of earth’s future well-being?

There have been times in recent years when I have struggled to stay positive, and occasionally have had periods where I have seen little point in anything given the wider context. Thankfully, God, faith, good friends, music, and constructive actions and thinking (not to mention a certain grey and white cat) have helped to keep me going, but I know it can be a constant effort to remain engaged and not give in to despair.

So where does our hope come from?

As Christian people we know that our hope is in God. Hope is being certain and trusting that God is our cornerstone, our all. We hope in God and God's steadfast love. We hope for what we do not see, the unseen things which are eternal. We wait for God. God tells us not to be afraid because God, who loves us, is with us always – the Bible has so much to say about hope.

Hope goes hand in hand with love, and hope is made real in action.

My sister sent me the following inspiring words by Nick Cave (musician and writer) - words to shake us out of a negative attitude, and into activities for change and good:

“Hope is an emotional temper that emboldens the heart to be active, it is a condition. It is a feat of imagination, both courageous and ingenious, a



vitality that inspires us to take innovative action to defend the world. Hope is essential to our survival and our flourishing. We achieve this vitality of spirit by rejecting the relentless promotion of despair and opening our eyes to the beauty of things, however imperilled, degraded, or difficult to love the world may appear to be. We try to

view the world not as it is packaged, presented and sold us but as we imagine it could be. We do not look away from the world; we look directly at it and allow the spirit of hope – the necessary driver of change – to inspire us to action.”

Jesus did exactly those things – he looked at the world as it was, and imagined it and created it as it could be – a world where everyone was cared for, where everyone mattered, and was heard and seen; where everyone had a place at the table and was welcome at the feast. He showed everyone he met that they were deeply loved by God, and this set them free. He created a community of people who lived for God and others, and knew the transforming power of hope, and of love.

In all that Jesus taught and did – in his envisioning of a world renewed according to God’s values, ‘the kingdom of God’, or ‘God’s new world’ – love was everything. Our best way of living in the world as it is, is to live bravely, lovingly, and aware of the beauty which, despite everything, is all around us.



So – even though it’s hard, if we can find the strength to keep on living with hope and with love, and believing in a better world, we will be inspired to create it – and even small changes can make a big difference!

I pray that we will keep on discovering hope and love in the world we live in – in all that is breath-takenly beautiful, and in all that needs love and transformation.

May we find God’s love in 2025, no matter what happens, and know, without a doubt, that God is with us.

With blessings and love

Louise

WORSHIP SERVICES AT UCS

February 2	Revd Louise Gough (Communion)
9	Revd Noel Davies (Racial Justice Sunday)
16	Revd Louise Gough
20	(Thursday Communion) Revd Louise Gough
23	Heather Coleman

All services are at 10.30am

Evening Prayer is held on Zoom every Sunday evening from 7.00pm to 7.30pm, using the UCS link (see Weekly Notices). Everyone welcome.

ADVANCED NOTICE: Our minister, the Revd Louise Gough, will be on sabbatical leave from mid-March to mid-June. Overall ministerial responsibility will be in the hands of the Circuit Superintendent, the Revd Howard Long, but cover in the various areas of ministry will be provided by the Revds John Atkinson, Noel Davies and Linda Woollacott , as happened when we were without ministry in 2022-23. More details next month. We wish Revd Louise well during her restorative sabbatical.

IN MEMORIAM: ANNE V

The Church was always at the heart of Anne's life. She was brought up, with her twin sister, Shirley, in Walter Road Congregational Church. After many years (and involvement in other churches in areas where she worked) she became a member of St Andrew's URC in St Helen's Road, when the two churches joined. When that church closed, she and Shirley became members of Bethel URC and then of UCS (where she served as a trustee until very recently). Anne always played a full part in the worship, life and witness of these churches (even serving - occasionally and very reluctantly - as pianist for services!). She had been an elder for almost 50 years – and a serving elder for most of that time. She always brought wisdom, commitment and experience into discussions and decision-making.

She trained as a primary teacher, specialising in Religious Education. Teaching was her life and she had lifelong friends as a result, with one of whom, Cynthia C, who taught with Anne in Terrace Road School, and who is an elder in Christ Well URC, she had a telephone conversation every Sunday before lunch. Through her training, Anne had an extensive knowledge of the Bible and she always had a substantial and significant contribution to make to Bible studies and discussion groups. She was at one time a representative to the Wales Synod of the URC, was involved in the URC Women's Group in Wales, and attended their annual gatherings. She would drive (usually alone) to the Windermere Centre in Cumbria for URC conferences and training weekends. She was a member of the URC Synod of Wales' visit to Hungary, and acted as treasurer for the visit. She also served a period as Chair of the Swansea URC District Council. In the

wider sphere, she was a keen and committed Guider, supporting and leading generations of girls, and a long-term supporter of Save the Children.

I first met Anne in ecumenical services and Lent Groups when we first moved to Swansea in 1978

– a reminder that the ecumenical life of the church was vitally important to her. After I had spoken in Bethel about the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 2008 (on the theme, ‘God, in your grace, transform the world’), Anne embroidered a pulpit fall for Bethel and for Ebeneser Newydd, the Welsh church where I was minister at the time, based on the Assembly logo and theme (see photo).



This reminds us of the many friends she had in embroidery and quilting groups, to which she brought friendship, skill, creativity and patience. She used her embroidery skills to make quilts for Shirley’s grandchildren when they first went to live away from home! Anne decided not to make a quilt for one of the grandsons on the grounds that a young man like him wouldn’t want a quilt made by her. When he complained, “Why hasn’t Aunty Anne made ME a quilt”, she had to relent, and made him one!

Anne deeply appreciated the way in which Shirley’s family always embraced and included her. There was rarely a family celebration or a family holiday in which Aunty Anne was not involved, and it was a joy for Pat and I to share with the whole family in celebrating Anne and Shirley’s 90th birthday in the summer (along with others who were marking significant birthdays too).

We remember Anne in our house quite often because of her response on one occasion to endless rehearsing of some service in Bethel when she was asked, by the person ‘directing’ it, to go over and over a reading. Anne’s exasperated response was: “I think I’ve peaked too soon!” We still laugh about it!

It is a privilege to have known Anne as a friend but also as a fellow Christian. She walked the way of faithful discipleship right up to the end;

she bore her final illness with courage, faithfulness to UCS worship services, and hope; and she died peacefully in Tŷ Olwen on December 29th, firm in the faith of Christ, with family around her. She was truly one of ‘the saints in Christ Jesus’. We give thanks to God for all she was, by nature and through God’s grace, and pray for God’s peace for Shirley and the whole family.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you put your faith into practice, so that you may overflow with hope.”

Noel

IN MEMORIAM: JOAN P

Joan Mary V was born on the 1st October 1928 in Hampshire – Chandlers Ford, I think it was. Her parents were Emily and Harry V, her father being a builder. They moved back to Cardiff when work was hard to come by in Hampshire. Joan was the second child of four, she had an older brother called Ron, and a younger brother called David, before she finally had a baby sister who, as you know, was called Jean - my mother. David is the only one left out of the four children. Apart from being in Hampshire when she was very small, Joan spent the rest of her life living in Cardiff and then moving to Swansea in December 1975.

She married John Hugh Ph in Beulah Congregational Church, Rhiwbina, Cardiff on the 9th June 1956. John was an architect. They went on to have four children, Martin, Andy, Tim and Helen - Martin lives in St Albans, but Helen and Tim still live in Cardiff, whilst Andy still lives in Swansea.

Joan was always very much involved with the life of her local Church, holding many positions. Whilst in Bethel she was one of the group of ladies who were involved with making the three section banner of Bethel URC that is now on the wall in the Wesley Room in UCS. When UCS first had Sunday lunches in Yr Hen Dderwen, John and Joan would join us occasionally.

When John set up as a self-employed architect, Joan became his secretary, then later she took over the driving as John's eyesight was affected badly with glaucoma. Joan also enjoyed water colour painting, joining a local class in Mumbles. Both Joan and John were members of

the Sketty Friends of Tŷ Hafan Support Group for the full fifteen years during which we ran.

They had a number of moves in Swansea, the last being to Willow Court, where Joan remained following John's death in November 2022, until various health issues meant it was advisable for her to move to a nursing home. This move took place just before Christmas 2023, when she moved into a new nursing home in Lisvane, Cardiff.

The last time I saw her was on Sunday, 6th October 2024, when around twelve of us gathered to celebrate her 96th birthday - she was on very good form that day. Her first words to me when she saw me was "Oh no, not you again" - I wonder why those comments made me think of Mum! Sadly, in December she picked up a severe chest infection that left her very weak – she passed away peacefully in her sleep, around 12.30am on Wednesday, 8th January – a wonderful special person to all of us.

Paul E

PASTORAL UPDATE (from Gwen D)

- We were sad to lose our friend and faithful servant, Anne who, following a short stay in Tŷ Olwen, died peacefully in the presence of her sister Shirley and other members of her family. We send our love and prayers to Shirley and her family.
- Our love and prayers also go to Paul and his family following the death of his Aunt, Joan who has died at her Care Home in Cardiff after a short illness.
- We are praying for Ceri and her husband Richard as he starts his treatment in hospital; for David who is still in Gorseinon hospital; and for Una, at home being cared for by Sian with the support of carers.
- Congratulations to Rachel, Jane and Laurie's daughter, who has become engaged to Ben; they plan to marry in York in November.
- Belated congratulations to Ian, Jackie and Gary's son, who was awarded his PhD last July.
- (We also remember Gwen and John and their family as their son-in-law begins his treatment. Ed.)

OUR COMMUNION COLLECTION FOR FEBRUARY will be for Tŷ



Olwen Hospice, a palliative care unit in the grounds of Morrision Hospital. The unit has 14 beds for in-patients, a day-care centre, and facilities for outpatients, counselling support and teaching. Specialist medical staff and nurses work in the unit and visit patients in other hospital wards and in their

own homes. Although it receives some funding from the NHS, the Tŷ Olwen Trust fund-raises to supplement this and allows them to do more for their patients.

Susan G

NEW PULPIT FALL



Those of us in the sanctuary on January 12th were privileged to see a wonderful new pulpit fall embroidered by the Craft Group. The words 'Hear the Word of the Lord' are particularly apt for a pulpit, where God's Word of Good News and challenge is proclaimed.

It reminded me of the African-American spiritual based on Ezekiel's vision: "Dem bones, dem bones, dem ...dry bones, O! Hear the Word of the Lord." May we hear God's Word in Christ, Sunday by Sunday, so that our 'dry bones' live by the power of the renewing Spirit.

OUR FRIENDS IN SKETTY FOODBANK were very grateful for the reverse advent calendar donations and thank us very much for our continuing support.

Ian G

COFFEE MORNINGS:

- Saturday 1st February 10am-12noon. Proceeds for Alan Cram's Tanzania Charity, Heshima: An Education and Training Project
- Saturday 1st March 10am-12noon. Proceeds for the Pettifor Trust

MONEY

We don't often remind readers of what it costs to run the church, but the New Year seems an opportunity. The cold weather has meant increased gas bills for heating, despite the excellent insulation in the hall and good insulation in the Wesley Room and rear rooms. Our new 3-year gas contract from April 2024 replaced a 2-year contract starting April 2022, and bills for September to December 2024 were actually 58% higher than for the same period in 2023.

Our income from voluntary giving (standing orders, weekly envelopes and money in the plate) has also been rather less than expected from September to December. We realise that the cost of living has been increasing but wonder whether members and friends of the church might consider increasing their standing orders or other giving in the next few months. Thank you for considering this. If you have any questions, please contact Jon D, our treasurer, or me.

Jeff C, Secretary, Finance and Property Committee

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

The photograph gives some indication of the amazing response to yet another Reverse Advent Calendar appeal. So, a huge thank you to those who contributed one of the many, many bags and / or to the over £100 given in money.



Our special thanks to Ian G who once again transported all our offerings to the Food Bank. This is also a good moment to remember that whilst it may be easy for us all to pop in weekly contributions to our Food Bank baskets, it is Ian who, week in and week out, takes responsibility for transporting it on our behalf. So

thank you, Ian, from all our church family and thanks to all our church family from me. Jan C

BENEVOLENCE PAYMENTS MADE SINCE LAST MAGAZINE

Sketty Foodbank	£125 .00 - Donations at Harvest
Sketty Foodbank	£220 .00 - Coffee collection 'tin'
Transform Trade	£54.00 - Collection at Fair Trade Coffee Evening
Crisis	£569.78 - Communion Collection
Shuktara	£793.45 - Coffee morning proceeds and donations received
Llamau	£660.25 - (50% of Madcaps Mr Toad Proceeds of £1320.50)

Extracts from Acknowledgements and Thank You's

Sketty Foodbank

The donations from UCS, as always, were very gratefully received. These recently included:

the huge harvest collection of goods, the coffee 'tin' (£220) and other donations at Harvest (£125).

UCS have continued to support all year round and we are grateful for your consistency and generosity. Without such support we would struggle to keep going in supporting approx. the 200 families we support every 4 weeks.

Kim - On behalf of the Trustees, Managers and Volunteers of Sketty Foodbank

Transform Trade

Thank you very much for choosing Transform Trade to benefit from your collection at Uniting Church Sketty. We are so grateful for your £54.00 donation. Your Church is part of a global community standing together against an unfair trade system, and we couldn't be more grateful for your support.

We stand with the communities fighting for a fairer deal from trade. By working in partnership, together, we can make a real and lasting difference - and build a world where everyone profits from the benefits of trade.

We would like to express our thanks to every member of your Church – this donation, and all of your hard work raising awareness for our work makes a real, positive impact on groups like Taslima's as they strive to increase their incomes and build secure futures for their families.

Your Church is part of a growing global community fighting for justice and we are so glad to have you with us.

With warmest wishes,

Karen Smith- Fundraising Administrator

Shuktara

Please would you thank all those responsible at Uniting Church Sketty for supporting Shuktara and the Shuktara family in Kolkata with this very generous gift

Sue Tungay

Shuktara Trust UK



A new home in the world for young adults

Save the Children

On behalf of everyone at Save the Children I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and for sharing the belief that no matter what unfair situation they find themselves in, every child should be able to discover who and what they can be. We wouldn't be able to do our work without amazing supporters like yourselves.

Kind regards,

Mia (Save the Children | Supporter Care Advisor)

Action for Children

Thanks to the generosity of amazing people like you, last Year Action for Children supported 687,755 children, young people and families. We deliver 426 services within local communities in the UK, in schools and online, working across 4 areas of work:

Children in Care

Disabled Children

Family Support

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Swansea Prison Fellowship

UCS's significant contribution will go a long way to meeting some of the needs this year. Angel Tree is in full swing. We send our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed.

(See the following article.)

Julie Edwards

Co Leader/Treasurer, Swansea Prison Fellowship

PRISON FELLOWSHIP, VARIOUS TREES, AND YOUR VERY KIND GIFT



In April 2024 we had the pleasure of visiting you to talk about Prison Fellowship and all that we do. We spoke about our visits to Chapel on a Sunday, and about our Prayerline, which gives people a chance to leave prayer requests! We spoke about our Sycamore Tree course which uses the story of Zacchaeus to teach Restorative Justice to the men.

However, the thing that caught your attention the most was our Angel Tree programme. This is a scheme where we provide Christmas presents for the men's children (we only deal with dads here). If you have a dad in prison, it can be a very confusing time, and it leaves a big gap in the family. Relationships can be very strained.

Our Website says “There are around 312,000 children in England and Wales with a parent in prison. That means, more than double the number

of children affected by divorce. Around 1 in 15 will experience their father's imprisonment before they leave school."

This makes you realise how necessary it is to help those children feel connected to their dads. The dads apply for their children to get a present, say what sorts of things their child likes, and write a gift tag for each one. They often say "To my little princess", or "to my big boy" and invariably end with "Daddy loves you".

These are the words the children need to hear... even more so on Christmas

morning! It is a wonderful way to bring joy to children whose joy might be a bit crushed. At that moment, they are sure that Daddy cares about them and wants them to be happy. One dad wrote afterwards: "I can only say from my heart, you didn't send gifts, you sent happiness and smiles."



At your Communion Collection in October, incredibly you managed to raise £371.47. It costs about £25 per child to run this programme, so that will provide nearly 15 gifts. We are just recovering from the massive wrapping frenzy of this year, but from all of us at Prison Fellowship, THANK YOU SO MUCH!!

If any of you would like to join us, we are always happy to see a new face and share our mission:

"To show Christ's love to people in prison by coming alongside them and supporting them."

For more information, drop us a line on swanseapf@gmail.com. Our members need to be Christians with a strong faith, and the backing of their Church – so there must be some good candidates amongst you! Have a great year, and please pray for the dads - they really need your ongoing prayers.

Janet Bevan, Swansea Prison Fellowship

CHRISTMAS BAGS



The photo shows the front of the Church on 16th December with the 100 bags for adults and 100 bags for children of varying ages. As co-ordinator of the project, I am very grateful to everyone in UCS who helped achieve this magnificent target.

My grateful thanks to

- The all those who stitched the bags providing a useful shopping bag after the contents have been used.
- Those who filled bags with wonderful contents expressing our love, care and friendship.
- Those who gave me money enabling me to bulk buy many items at better prices. Every penny helped to fill the number of bags we set as our target.
- To those who donated items.
- To those who knitted items – children’s jumpers, mittens, hats and pencil cases.
- Thank you everyone at UCS for your generosity making my task of co-ordinator an easy one.

On 17th December, after the bags had been blessed, they were handed over to Adella and the UID team for their distribution to the local refugees and asylum seekers.

We hope the recipients will have enjoyed discovering the bags’ contents and find lots of treats to make them feel welcome.

If you are new to our project and feel you would like to help, in any way, next year, it would be very much appreciated.



Linda J

(UCS is most grateful to Linda - Alan probably had a hand in this too! - and all her helpers for the enormous amount of time and effort this project required.)

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 2025

Sunday, 9th February, will be Racial Justice Sunday. Our service on that Sunday, led by Noel D, will mark the 30th anniversary of the Sunday. This year's theme is 'The coat of many colours' (but Joseph's 'amazing, technicolour dreamcoat' will probably not feature in the service – though who knows!)



'This year is an important one for racial justice on these shores as it marks the 30th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday (RJS). It was established by the Methodist Church in 1995 following the tragic racist murder of Black teenager Stephen Lawrence in southeast London in April 1993. The Lawrence family attended a local Methodist Church in that part of the capital, and the Methodist Church agreed to support the family's justice campaign to find young Stephen's killers. A few years later, the Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ), a Churches Together in Britain and Ireland programme, agreed to mainstream the special Sunday so that all the churches could engage with it.'

"Despite this amazing reality that people from all parts of the globe can share their experiences of being part of the Coat of Many Colours, which is the world church today, inequality still exists in the church and is still a factor that blights the experiences of too many people of Global Majority heritage or Black and Brown backgrounds. This leaves people not feeling as if they belong in the house of the Lord, or not being given the opportunity to use their God-given talents to further the Lord's Kingdom. Given the unwelcome decline in church attendance over the last several decades, British and Irish churches must wake up to the reality that God is doing a 'new thing' (Isaiah 43:19) among those Christians who now call these shores home. Again, our sermons and reflections in this resource address the importance of inclusion, and the need for all Christians to engage in the righteous work for racial justice." *(from the resources for RJS).*

The following prayers come from the worship service prepared for Racial Justice Sunday:

A GATHERING PRAYER

God of all people, You are the one who brought us into being,
Knitting and weaving us together
and forming us before we were even born.
You know us, each and every one –
Your dear children,
blessed to be bearers of Your image and likeness.

God of all nations,
You stitch and sew this intricate image of You
Like a garment of many colours, stitched, sewn and hemmed;
Each tone and hue painted with the tender care of You, the Artist,
Our Maker and Creator – clothing us all in Your love and mercy.

May Your dream for all Your dear children come true.
May Your hope for all the earth to be renewed and reconciled be made real.
May Your Kingdom come on this earth in this time,
and be established for ever.
We call on You, O God, that on this Racial Justice Sunday
You would bring together our hopes and fears,
our prayers and our praise,
and unite them, as we draw closer in communion with You and each other, for Your glory. Amen

A PRAYER FOR OTHERS

God of the garden,
Where life began and rich diversity sprang from Your imagination,
Stir within us a desire to be creative, as You are creative,
In our inclusion of one and all in our communities.
You are the Dancer,
The Weaver,
The Life Giver.
Teach us to dance,
To gracefully move to where You would call us to meet You

And to be Your hands and feet.
Teach us to weave our stories together,
Entwined in an inseparable love for You and for one another
As we worship You with one voice.
Teach us to bring life wherever we go
And to receive life wherever we meet You in a beloved other.
May we work together
For the flourishing of all people, in all places, at all times. Amen.

SENDING PRAYER

Jesus, as You walked this good earth,
Your feet upon land that is blessed and holy,
Crossing borders and boundaries to minister to those in need,
You encountered many people from different cultures and different
nations.
You listened to them,
You spoke with them,
You touched them and healed them,
You blessed them and forgave them.
May we follow Your example, loving and tending all You have made,
Healing, and sowing peace wherever You call.
Send us out in the power of Your Spirit. Amen.

Racism in Wales: A recent report by the Welsh Assembly Government, entitled *An Introduction to an Anti-racist Wales*, says: We want to acknowledge the strengths of ethnic minority people, in leadership and in surviving racism. From the Windrush elders to the resilience of refugees, both now and in the past, arriving at our shores, we know that people have survived considerable hardships and trauma. We want to build on the immense strengths, leadership and resilience ethnic minority people bring. We commit ourselves to supporting ethnic minority organisations who enable and empower people to survive and thrive. We also commit ourselves to developing the considerable leadership within ethnic minority communities, at all levels. We will regularly engage these leaders to inform us as we

find our way forward with this and other work. The Welsh Government is, therefore, focussing on six areas of concern:

1. Your experience of racism in every-day life.
2. Your experience of racism when experiencing service delivery.
3. Your experience of racism in being part of the workplace.
4. Your experience of racism in gaining jobs and opportunities.
5. Your experience of racism when you lack visible role models in positions of power.
6. Your experience of racism as a refugee or asylum seeker.

How do these areas of experience impact on us and challenge us?

FLOWER ROTA 2025: We all like to see the flowers in church each Sunday and these are given by church members and friends, often in memory of loved ones or to celebrate special times. There is a rota in the foyer to which people can add their name against their preferred date as to when they would like to give flowers. You are more than welcome to arrange your own flowers if you so wish, or we have a small group of arrangers who are willing to do this for you. There are still plenty of spaces on the rota for this year and plenty of dates to choose from.

Rosemary

FOLK DANCING has taken a longer break than usual and will be returning on Monday, 3rd February at 2pm. We give a warm welcome to anyone who would like to join us. Experience is not necessary, and dances are often adapted to suit the dancers! Plenty of exercise, and time as well for a cuppa!! We look forward to welcoming you.

ECO MATTERS: WHAT'S THE COST OF TURNING ON YOUR TAPS? (from Janet N, a member of Green Friends)

As expected, in 2025, we are going to have to pay more for the water we use. But we don't mind really, do we, because we have clean, fresh water on tap every day of the year (well 99% of the time)?

Do we take clean, fresh water for granted? The Environment Secretary, Steve Reed, recently tabled new legislation aimed at ratcheting up the

punishment for water companies that dump sewage and other nasties into our waterways.

Threatened with escalating fines, the water companies are scrambling to make some of the necessary investments to increase supply and reduce pollution.

One former executive of a water company said, “The public simply has no idea the incredible sum it would cost to make every stretch of river perfect for wild swimmers... We are going to have to change our relationship with water in years to come.”

In 2018, it was recognised that an extra 4 billion litres (879,876,993 gallons) of water would be needed every day by 2050. This could be achieved by building new reservoirs and pipelines to carry water from more plentiful areas to those where it is needed. However, there is a big snag – the cost would be between £21bn and £40bn to fix the problem.



Changes to our climate are causing rain to fall in heavier bursts and, therefore, sewers are flooding more often. (See, for example, the photo of a white van that Janet followed through floods in Pembrokeshire recently!). When this happens, companies open their sluices, pouring untreated waste

directly into waterways. And it's happening too frequently.

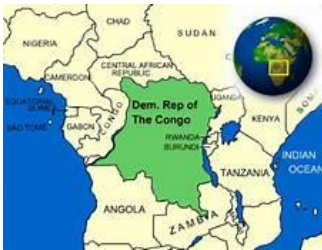
If you are concerned about the increase in your water bill, have you considered

- fitting a water meter, especially if there are only one or two of you living in your property?
- Do you use your washing up water to water your plants?
- Do you have a water butt in your garden?

- Do you live by the maxim –“If it’s brown flush it down”? (or is that going rather too far?)

As we are so fortunate to have clean water and flushing toilets, have you considered

- TWINNING YOUR TOILET or YOUR TAPS in your home, (<https://toilettwinning.org>) or twinning a toilet as a gift to a family member?



In contrast to the way in which we live – Ungwa lives with her three children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. “I have to leave home at four or five in the morning to fetch water to drink,” she says, “we have a serious problem with sicknesses like diarrhoea, typhoid and fevers.”

Lots of people like Ungwa walk miles to collect their water, meaning that the children can’t get their schoolwork done and their mothers have less time to do other things (such as growing food or working to bring in money).



As for toilets... they’re a luxury! Many people don’t have access to a decent working loo.

Ungwa’s village had a very dirty toilet, so people got sick easily, as it wasn’t safe to use. Twinning toilets is a solution. Thanks to the youngsters in UCS, all our toilets are twinned – BUT – are yours?

There’s some good news in Ungwa’s village. Thanks to Tearfund, the charity behind Toilet Twinning, the village now has a new toilet with “tippy-tap” handwashing, and because of that and a flushing toilet the family’s health has improved.

RIVER JOURNEY



Pure, clear, sparkling,
Rising from darkness
Trickling over glacial confines
Winding between huge boulders,
Gurgling through jagged rocks
Smoothing chattering pebbles.

Onwards, downwards,
Quickening flow, splashing,
Falling over mountain's side
Widening, deepening, pooling,
Playfully catching fallen leaves –
Fairy's boats, swirling,
Chasing downstream.

Between tall reeds
Nesting Swan lies hidden,
Old Nog awaits a tasty catch,
A flash of blue disappears
Kingfisher needs another haunt!

Rushing onwards
Gliding over sticklebacks
Tickling bare toes,
The pond dippers unaware
Of hovering Dragonfly.

Summer's day, idyllic scene?
Sadly, it's not what it seems.
Further down stream
Emerging like a bad dream
Riverbank muddy with silt,
Deep stagnant pools
A solid raft of debris
Car tyres, oil slicks,
Shopping trolleys, shoes,
Agricultural run-off,
Invisible harmful bacteria
And micro-plastics.

A toxic watery environment
No longer life supporting
The once virginal,
Life supporting glacial trickle
Completes its journey
Suffocating plants and wildlife life.

Oh, careless, thoughtless humans!

Anne W © January 2025

U3A SWANSEA ARMCHAIR TRAVEL

The Armchair Travel Group meets on the first Friday of the month in the Wesley Room at 2.00pm and has an average of 20 attendees, although there are more on the Members List (possibly still on their travels!) Topics are chosen and run by the members. We socialise before and after the meeting and normally have tea/coffee between presentations.

Members give short illustrated, interactive talks on countries and places of interest, for example we have had presentations on Mexico, Tasmania, Portugal, and India since September. Our January meeting comprised a talk and superb photography by Sam Samuels about Botswana, and a Road Trip Around Ireland (part 1) by Richard Beale. On 7th February, talks will be on the Galapagos Islands and Iceland. New members are always welcome.

Sandra C

SMILES FROM SUNBEAMS' PARENTS AND CARERS

I thought it would be nice to share with you some lovely comments that the Sunbeams Team received from parents and carers at the end of last term. There were 18 in total, here are a few of them. The average attendance of children last term was 16.

Dear Sunbeams, Thank you for all the Wednesdays you have given us in 2024. We really appreciate the effort you all put in.

Thank you to everyone at sunbeams!!! I first brought my two older boys 9 years ago and am now bringing my 'terrible' younger two and honestly, the love and warmth shown every Wednesday does not go unnoticed!!! A very warm Xmas to you all.

Thank you for being so welcoming. My son & I have only been a few times but have really enjoyed each time. Look forward to seeing you in the New year, Merry Christmas everyone x

Wednesdays are our favourite day of the week! I always feel so looked after and safe and my son loves being part of all the fun. Hope everyone has a lovely Christmas and Happy New Year! See you in 2025 x

Couldn't agree more with everyone! There aren't many places that I can comfortably take the twins by myself, but Sunbeams has been one for 2 years now! We're so grateful for how welcome we're always made to feel and for all the support ❤️ Nadolig Llawen!

Although we haven't been to Sunbeams since Sept (I should probably come to terms with leaving this go sadly 🙁) as my daughter is in Nursery, we consistently came to Sunbeams practically every Wednesday since Jan 2023. I agree with all the lovely words in this thread 'safe' 'happy space' 'friendly' 'relaxed'...Sunbeams is only there because of the lovely people who give their time. Wednesdays were our favourite day too. An absolute gem for so many mums and dads...and grandparents and childminders in Swansea.

When I had my daughter, I was so excited to come back. Our first time in February, was three weeks after her operation and a week after she began helmet therapy. I was super anxious about her helmet but as soon as we arrived, it felt so familiar and welcoming, with lots of familiar faces on the team! We look forward to coming every week. I want to thank the team and all the mums for your kindness and support throughout my daughter's journey. We can't wait to be back in the new year!



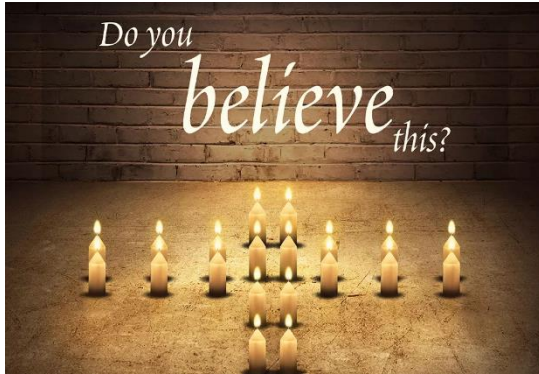
The Sunbeams Team is led by Heather and Jeff. Lynne W organises lovely craft activities every week, Maggie or Sandra C prepare the adults' and children's refreshments, and the rest of the team members are Pam, Pat, Ruth, Sandra M, Shirley and sometimes myself. Jon & Les offer support in

tidying up and Louise calls in to say hello to everyone and led a lovely Nativity before Christmas.

The team would be most interested in having additional volunteers to join the rota, particularly those fit enough to help setting up and putting away or assisting with refreshments. If you know of anyone, please contact Heather.

Adella

WE BELIEVE...IN THE CHURCH: A REFLECTION



January 18th to 25th was once again the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We will reflect on its theme, 'Do you believe this?' during the Lent Faith and Fellowship sessions on The Nicene Creed. In the meantime, in her introduction to the resources for the Week, Dr

Nicola Brady, General Secretary of Churches Together for Britain and Ireland, sets us this challenge: '... we have an opportunity to ask the hard questions about what may be getting in the way of our shared identity as Christians and our collective witness to the world.' I thought I ought to try and respond to her challenge from my recent experience of the Church. You'll have your own answers but here are some of mine:

- We focus too narrowly on our own church and congregation, and fail to recognise and live in community and partnership with other churches within our local community.
- We fail to find ways of being in friendship and partnership with Christians who have a different perspective and emphasis from ours, and who sometimes make us feel uncomfortable or frustrated.
- We fail to think and explore together, to pray and worship together, and to work and witness together.
- We tend to focus too much on the decline of the church rather than on God's call for us to become renewed for the future – and, therefore, to think that numbers are everything and 'there's nothing we can do'!
- We tend to limit our thinking about the church to our own direct local and national experience rather than have a global vision of the church in all its cultural, geographical and social diversity.

But there's another side to this story: the Church is brought into being by God through the Holy Spirit as a community 'in Christ' and, therefore, it is precious in God's sight (Isaiah 62.1ff)

- "You shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give".
- "You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the LORD and a royal diadem in the hand of your God."
- "You shall be called My Delight Is in Her ...for the LORD delights in you."
- "Your God shall rejoice over you."
- For Paul, the Church – which means us! – is the continuing work of God's Spirit (1 Cor 12.1ff): 'Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.' So through the Holy Spirit we are given wisdom, knowledge, faith, energy and healing.'

In the words of John Newton's hymn,

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for his own abode...

Noel

A PRAYER

Spirit of power, we worship and adore you.

Recalling creation's story, we feel your brooding presence.

Travelling from slavery, we follow you into freedom.

Standing before the cross, we seek you in the darkness.

Burning with your fire, we are compelled to discipleship.

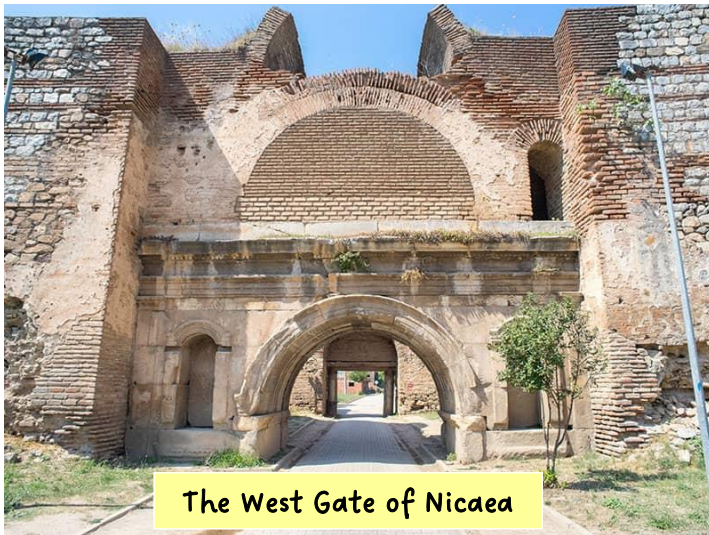
Creator God, Lord of Life, Spirit of power,

We worship and adore you. Amen.

(from the CTBI Worship Resources for the Week of Prayer)

FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP, LENT 2025

Nicene Creed 325-2025: What do we believe now?



Meeting on Tuesdays from 10.00am until 11.30am as follows:
March 11th March 18th March 25th April 1st April 8th April 15th
Led by the Revds. John Atkinson, Noel Davies and Linda Woollacott