



# MAGAZINE OF UNITING CHURCH SKETTY March 2025



## LENTEN ROSE

**The Lenten Rose burst into bloom  
Before the Spring arose.  
Its green buds bravely ventured forth,**

**Surrounded by the snow.  
Impelled to spread the joyous news  
In time for Easter's dawn,**

**It struggled through the frozen earth  
To praise the risen Son.**

*(Connie Faust)*

**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)

**APRIL 2025 MAGAZINE:** All items for inclusion in the April 2025 edition of the Magazine to be sent to Noel D by 18<sup>th</sup> March at the latest, but sooner if possible. Issue date: Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> March.

*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 



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

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## Dear Friends

You may remember that late December saw the prices of leftover Christmas confectionary slashed, and the shelves filling up with Easter eggs. Fear not – though the seasons are confused, the chocolate-makers busy and the retailers cashing in, the liturgical year remains solid. The holy season of Lent opens on 5<sup>th</sup> March, with Ash Wednesday – beginning the period of preparation for Easter.

I love that the old English word (sorry it's not Welsh!) for Lent means 'spring', the 'lengthening' of days. Though we can't guarantee golden weather in Swansea (which, when it is not wearing its spectacular sky-scape colours, often favours grey), we will see daylight gradually pushing back the dark evenings as the days go by.

Lent is a time for our personal lengthening – for our growing in faith, for a deepening of our discipleship as we follow Jesus. Traditionally, it is a time of special religious observance, inspired by the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness at the start of his public ministry, as our preparation for Easter. We may think of giving something up, or taking something on, and doing those things which enable us to be close to God, and that express our love through service to others.

For me at least, Lent this year will be different, because for most of it, I will be 'on sabbatical'. Methodist standing orders (please don't stop reading!) define a ministerial sabbatical as 'a period of release from the ordinary duties of the appointment, in addition to normal holidays, for the purpose of pursuing an approved programme of study, research, work or experience'. Sabbaticals are opportunities 'to retrain, refresh and renew the very base from which future activity may spring'.

I am aware that I am extremely privileged to be gifted this sabbatical (sabbaticals are actually regarded as a requirement!). Many ministers experience sabbaticals as times of growth and development, and one minister even recorded that the sabbatical 'renewed my soul'. I'm no expert in anatomy, but this reminds me of muscles, which when held

in tension can get very short and tight, and need releasing and lengthening to resume healthy use.

I'm sure we could all do with some lengthening, and renewal deep within. So how are we – and how are you – going to use Lent to 'become lengthened'?

It is only in God that we can find ourselves lengthening – letting go of the tension, lightening, growing, flourishing. It's only in God that we discover who we truly are, God's beloved – and that God does not desire for us the tightness and the stress that so often accompanies our daily lives: the demands on us, the effects of seemingly endless bad news and catastrophic world situations. Jesus came to bring us life, in all its fullness – Jesus' ministry was directed towards individual and social wholeness.

It's only in God that we find our true space, to stretch, to let go, to be – I say time and time again that the word 'salvation' is connected to the word 'space'. The Psalms (and it's also mentioned in 2 Samuel) tell us that God brings us to a spacious place and sets our feet there. Psalm 118:5 says "I called to the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and put me in a spacious place".

I pray that this Lent you will discover your 'spacious place'. The place where your soul is renewed, where the tensions melt and you no longer feel hard-pressed or hemmed in (by fear or worry or whatever it is that constricts). I pray that this Lent you will grow towards wholeness, expand your faith, your heart, mind and being.

You don't have to look far to find your spacious place. You can find it within – a vast interior space of peace and freedom. To get there, you simply have to consciously recognise that you are in God's presence.

This Lent, perhaps you can take some time, take some more time, to stretch out in God's presence and know that you are in a spacious place. It doesn't require special words, special knowledge, special super-spirituality. It just needs the recognition that 'you cannot *not* live in God's presence', as Richard Rohr says. God is the foundational love that holds, surrounds and fills you.

May you have a blessed Lenten journey – and a blessed Holy Week and Easter. I will be thinking of you – and we can share lengthening stories on my return!

With blessings and love, *Louise*

### WORSHIP SERVICES AT UCS

March	2	Revd Louise Gough (Communion)
	5	12.00 noon: Ash Wednesday Service (Revd Louise)
	9	Sue Raad (Lent 1)
	16	Revd Louise Gough
	23	Local Arrangement and led by our own members
	27	Thursday Communion (Revd John Atkinson)
	30	Revd Dr Noel Davies

All services are at 10.30am

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

Prayers will be led in turn by the Revds John Atkinson, Noel Davies and Linda Woollacott. Everyone welcome.

**A reminder:** As already announced, 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. We wish Revd Louise well during her restorative sabbatical.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a 40-day season of repentance, fasting, reflection and. Ultimately, celebration. It represents Christ's time of temptation in the wilderness, where he fasted and where Satan tempted him. Lent asks believers to set aside time each year for similar fasting, marking an intentional season of focus on Christ's life, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection. *(From christianity.com)*

## INTIMATE WORSHIP

Those two words don't always go together. Usually some of us like to maintain a safe distance, some of us like to sit with the same friends every week, some of us like to use the gallery (is this for a better view, to keep away from the crowds, or just for the sheer excitement of being higher up, like being 'in the gods'...?). but Sunday morning worship on February 9<sup>th</sup> was different – by accident not design! When we got to church, the heating had not come on – not because of human failure but because of a mechanical fault. So those of us who were there early made an executive decision to relocate to the Wesley Room. It was, of course, neatly laid out for coffee after the service. 36 chairs arranged around tables. But they were clearly not going to be enough so lots more chairs were brought in and people sat where they could find space – sometimes having to sit next to someone they didn't normally sit with! Scary! But everybody entered into the spirit of the move (including, I hope, the minister leading worship – me!!) Thanks to the on-duty stewards and everyone who helped to make the move so smooth and quick!

What did people think of the unusual experience? What did you think, if you were there? The leadership team meeting a couple of days later thought we should do it again, as an occasional 'planned' approach to worship (though, as a generally unspontaneous person, I liked the spontaneity and last-minuteness of worshipping this way!) The singing was good (thanks to Allan S for moving seamlessly from organ to piano); the tech. team quickly transferred to the excellent facilities in the Welsey Room; and those on zoom were still able to share in the service. The preacher liked the intimacy of being closer to people and the informality. The style of communication certainly changes.

Snags? Since we were largely dependent on the screen to see hymns and images, people were warned at the beginning that if they couldn't see the sceeen they had to move around, and risk causing chaos:

chaos – controlled, of course - would be fine! At least one person was so tightly packed into her seat – getting more and more packed in as the service progressed! – that she couldn't stand up to sing the hymns! By the way, it was Racial Justice Sunday and we reflected on Joseph's 'coat of many colours' as a symbol of unconditional and irrational love that binds us together; of hatred, jealousy and conflict that can divide families, humankind as a whole (and even communities in our own city); of the rich diversity of our congregation, of the world church and of the human global family; and of God's promise of a world of harmony and unity, love and peace. The intimacy helped!

Would I do it again? I'd really love to – so watch this space!

Noel

### **PASTORAL UPDATE (from Gwen D)**

- We were sad to lose our friend and faithful servant, Hazel, who, following a short illness, died peacefully in hospital.
- Our love and prayers go to Ceri, Grosvenor and their family, following the death of Richard. We remember them, and all those who are recently bereaved, and hold them in our prayers.
- We send love to Joyce who, following a fall, is in hospital and to David who has now returned home.
- It has been good to see new friends who have been worshiping with us recently and we hope they have experienced a warm welcome.



### **OUR COMMUNION COLLECTION FOR MARCH -**

Sketty Foodbank is our communion collection charity for the month of March. All donations

in cash or in kind go directly to helping local people in crisis.

Donations are not used for administrative costs and all volunteers

give their time for free. Since 2021 the charity has helped over 5,000

people in Swansea with emergency food supplies. UCS is proud to continue our support of this local charity.

**Susan G**

### **COFFEE MORNINGS:**

- Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 10am-12noon. Proceeds for the Pettifor Trust
- Shrove Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 4pm Pancake Party. Tickets £5, tickets from Gaynor or Church Stewards. Proceeds for Church Funds.

### **URC WALES SYNOD WEBINARS: 'A MORE ABLE CHURCH'**

During recent months the URC Synod of Wales has arranged a series of webinars on what it means to be an inclusive church. At the first webinar, Verena Walder, church leader in Mumbles URC, led a session on helping people with visual impairment to cope more easily with church life, especially worship. In the second webinar, Adella Pritchard offered insights into the impact of hearing loss on a person's ability to engage fully with the worship and life of the church.

The third webinar was held on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Its theme was 'A More Able Church – Holy Head Space' and focussed on the experiences of neurodiversity that people in our churches may bring. It was good to see about 12 people from UCS there! The Revd Julie Kirkby spoke about her experience of dyslexia and the personal challenges this brought in her early life at home and at school and in her later life and career. But she spoke too about the ways she was helped to see her experience as a gift that enriches the life of the church and not as a 'disability'. Hers was a very moving personal testimony. The Revd Kate Wolsey, a minister in Pembrokeshire, shared her experience of teaching and ministry among children and adults with a range of experiences of neurodiversity. She suggested more careful use of language, using visual images and signage rather than depending so much on reading and words; creating a quiet place where people could find peace when what was happening around them was too challenging and disturbing; giving people freedom to opt out of things we expect from congregations (such as standing to sing hymns and



listening for long periods of time); avoiding printing things using black print on white paper.

I invited some of the attendees from UCS to share their responses to the webinar. One commented that the challenge in all of this is that people are individuals with individual needs: what helps one person or one group may make things more difficult for another. Another commented that after researching further, it became clear that traits of neurodiversity can include repeated behaviour patterns and not being at ease in social situations. How could we deal with such in our church community? Another asked: How can we all, individually and collectively, act to ensure the church is a safe place for anyone to ask for the minor adjustments which might aid their experience, without them needing to explain why? How can we be alert and sensitive to other people's needs? Another encouraged us to see if there are any useful symbols that could be suggested alongside words e.g. for the Prayer Room, Kitchen etc. This respondent leads worship regularly in our church, and will continue, where possible, to divide what needs to be said into smaller sections, including appropriate illustrations, being ever mindful of the words from her favourite Iona Creed, which speaks of Jesus 'who spoke the deepest truths in the language of the living room'. Another concluded that the needs of various groups are diverse; the best approach, it seems to them, would be to make sure the church is a safe place in which anyone could express a need, knowing the church would be willing to respond.

At some stage, as we aspire to be an increasingly inclusive church, we need to start a conversation about these questions and how we could develop ways of incorporating some of these ideas into our church life and worship so that we become a place where people with different gifts and needs can feel welcome and at ease.

**Noel**

## **NEW CHURCH PROJECT- BEING DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY**

In a change of plan to the previous plan, our church project this year will be looking at dementia and how we can be a dementia friendly church. Dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem solving and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with everyday life. It is likely that all of us know of someone who suffers like this.

The aim of being a dementia friendly church is to make sufferers feel included. The church should be accessible. A quiet space that people can escape to can be helpful and people should not feel ignored even if they don't want to speak. There will be other ways to help which we hope to learn about to help UCS become a dementia friendly place.

**Susan G**

**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**

## **REVIEWING SOME OF MY PURCHASES FROM OUR FAIRTRADE STALL**

**The Cheeky Panda Bamboo Pocket Tissue:** to be honest with you, I was drawn to this product by the lovely picture of a panda face on the packaging! But with so many of the products on the fair-trade stall, it is only when you start to read how the item is made, you realise what a good product they are and sadly how many bad products there are on the general market.



So what do I mean by a good product? These pockets tissues are free from tissue dust, fragrance, pesticide and chlorine bleach. The tissue is carbon balanced with the World Land Trust which means that the company can be trusted to protect plants and animals in endangered rainforests.

**Organic Paper Stem Ear buds:** I know that there are some schools of thought which say not to use earbuds but I use them and so was really pleased to be able to find these 100% organic cotton tip ear buds on the stall. On the packaging you can read how they are gentle on the environment, gentle on the farmers, and gentle on you the user and this product meets global organic textile standards and is certified by Soil Association Certification.

Moving on to a couple of food items. My family know that I like toast with my marmalade, and I bought a few months ago the lovely tasting artisan **Lime marmalade** from the Eswatini Kitchen, Africa. This lime marmalade is hand prepared, and you read on the label the comment that as this product is made with natural ingredients the colour may vary between seasons! Buying the project directly helps the women of Eswatini and the many local farmers who supply them and helps supports 'Manzini Youth Care' a community based organisation working with orphans and children.

**Hibiscus Jam** made by Meru Herbs, Kenya. I was drawn to this jam because I have never tasted hibiscus fruit and have really enjoyed eating it. It's like a less sweet strawberry jam. Meru Herbs is a cooperative of farmers who produce herbal teas, jams and sauces free from fertilisers and chemicals. The trust provides sustainable livelihoods in accordance with fair-trade principles.

Happy shopping!

**Adella (a member of Green Friends)**

## CHILD TRUST FUNDS UNCLAIMED

Do you have young people in your family born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011? They could be one of the 730,000 to date who, on reaching the age of 18, are entitled to claim money which was invested by the Government on their behalf between those dates. Each fund now amounts to at least a 3-figure sum and could possibly be in the thousands.

Gordon Brown set up the Child Trust Fund Scheme with the idea that each child being born in Britain should have a nest egg when they reached 18. A voucher worth £250 was sent to parents to open an account (£500 for low-income families). This could be added to by parents and relatives. Nearly 1 in 3 families did not engage with the scheme or use the voucher, so the Treasury opened an account for them anyway on the child's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday. The moneys have sat there ever since accruing interest year by year.

The Share Foundation offers a free service to reunite young people with their fund. Beware of others who will offer the same service but at a cost. Contact [sharefound.org](http://sharefound.org). Anyone over the age of 16 may apply but not have access to the money until they are 18 years old. It was originally thought that firms who hold the money could use the individual's National Insurance number to track them down, but this was ruled out as too complex a process to engage in. Instead, the Government looked for ways to inform people of these Child Trust Funds, leaving it up to individual applicants to apply. So, I'm passing the word on. Unless this money is claimed it will be absorbed into Government funds.

**Linda W**

**The season of Lent is a time of spiritual retreat for the whole Church. The liturgy prepares us more specifically to celebrate our liberation. In communion with Christ in the desert, the Church is invited to forty days of purification, of stripping down to bare essentials, of discipline, meditation and prayer before the Festival of Easter. These forty days are a celebration of our joy in God's forgiveness.**

*(from 'Praise in all our days: The Taizé Community Common Prayer')*

The TV was turned to ITV and, by chance the tail-end of the previous programme – some kind of quiz – was still running. The word ‘Shuktara’ was mentioned, so I pricked up my ears! A female contestant had just won the prize of £20,000 and said that it would be given to her favourite charity, Shuktara in Calcutta – the home founded and run by David Earp!

**Alice R**

**A friend shared the following with Linda W. recently:**

We were given this at church this morning. ‘Prayer is offered to God by people every hour of the day and night in every part of the world. When we pray here it is as if we are dropping in on a conversation already in progress. A conversation between God and people which began long before we were born, and will continue long after our death.

So we should not be surprised or disturbed if there are some things which we do not understand straight away. For a brief moment, we step into the continual stream of prayer, which is being offered today, and which will be offered to the end of time. We are with those who pray here, and in heaven.’

### **IN MEMORIAM: HAZEL McCLELLAND**

Hazel was born in Swansea in 1929, moved to London with her family when she was 8, and then, when war started in 1939, the family moved to Bridport and then back to Swansea, where she attended Glanmor School. Then back to London. After leaving school, Hazel worked in The Treasury. While there, she met John, who worked in the Ministry of Defence. They were married – on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1950! – in the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, with Dr Sangster officiating. Soon they moved to live in Harrogate, where Elizabeth and Andrew were born and spent their early years.

Elizabeth and Andrew enjoyed a very happy childhood. Andrew recalls that Hazel was a feminist before anyone knew what that term

meant, enjoying an equal relationship with John, and encouraging Elizabeth and Andrew to respect girls and boys, women and men, equally. Because Hazel's teenage years were lost in the war, she always wanted her children to make the most of those years.

In due course, the family returned to London, first to Fulham and then to Ham, near Richmond. John continued to work in the civil service. When the children were teenagers, Hazel went to Battersea Training College to train as a Home Economics teacher. They attended the Presbyterian Church in Putney, where John became an elder. In due course, in 1972, the church became part of the URC. They retired to Penclawdd and attended Crofty Presbyterian Church. When they later moved to Langland, they became members of Bethel.

John died in 2007, and life would never be the same for Hazel. But she carried on. Andrew says, 'Of course she mourned my father and missed him immensely, but she also got on with her life. She would wake up every day, looking forward to another day and responding to any setbacks with determination. She was not easily intimidated or put off!'

Hazel was efficient and organized in her family life as well as professionally. She knew her own mind and said what she thought. But she was also caring and always ready to help others, as other residents of Brynfield Court would testify. She was older than many of them but still 'looked after' them when they needed help. She was courageous and determined. She walked quickly, drove efficiently until the end, and was always young at heart. And fun to be with. "95? She can't be!" It's probably one of the things that made her such a well-loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. And friend.

As a member of Bethel and, for the last ten years, of Uniting Church Sketty, she was faithful, committed and fully involved. She had a strong faith, was a thoughtful Christian disciple and missed very, very few Sunday services. So many people in UCS counted her as a friend. She was a regular attender of the house group led by Pat in our house. More recently, she came to our Faith and Fellowship sessions at key

times of the Christian year. She was always up for a meal with friends, for holidays and day visits, and for journeys back and fore to France. –

She was a dear friend. She will be sadly missed. But we treasure what she was for all of us, by nature and by the grace of God. ‘Honour such people as these!’ And may God give peace, comfort and hope to all who loved her and were loved by her.

Hazel chose this hymn to be sung at her funeral:

Make me a channel of your peace:  
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;  
where there is injury, your healing power,  
and where there’s doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace:  
where there’s despair in life let me bring hope;  
Where there is darkness, only light,  
and where there’s sadness, ever joy.

This prayer was answered in so many ways in Hazel’s life.

**Noel**

**‘At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.’** *(Mark 1.12-13)*

**“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.”**

*(Isaiah 58.6-9)*

**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 11<sup>th</sup> March 18<sup>th</sup> March 25<sup>th</sup> April 1<sup>st</sup> April 8<sup>th</sup> April 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Led by the Revds. John Atkinson, Noel Davies and Linda Woollacott**