

CONNECT

The Magazine of the Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit

Winter 2013

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WATER AID PROJECT IS LAUNCHED



Tell us all your news

Keep us informed with news of people, activities and special events by sending your contribution to the Editor or sending her an email.

Deadline for the next issue is 3rd March 2014.

Editor

Mrs. Myra Maddock
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The Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit is supporting the charity Water Aid for its 2013/14 mission project.

The project was officially launched at the Mission Day held at Sketty Methodist Church on Sunday 13th October. Mr David Padfield from Water Aid gave a presentation on the charity in the afternoon and this was followed by a faith tea. The preacher at the circuit service in the evening was Rev Dr Stephen Wigley, Chair of Wales Synod.

Rev Siperire Mugadzaweta, the chair of the circuit missions committee, said, 'We are delighted to be able to support Water Aid this year. It's a very worthwhile charity that literally saves lives. Please support the different events that will be taking place in our churches over the next twelve months'.

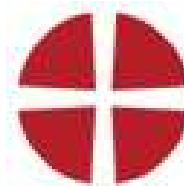
(See pages 10 and 11 for more information on Water Aid)

Salvation is free but discipleship costs everything we have.

Billy Graham



Message from the Superintendent



Welcome to the Winter edition of Connect which is full of interesting information concerning the work of the Methodist Church here in Swansea.

As we make our way through the season of Advent everyone will be busy preparing for Christmas. Time will be spent organising get-togethers with our families and friends, shopping for presents and travelling from place to place. The decorations will be adorning the Christmas tree in our homes and our churches and thoughts will soon be focused if they are not already on the annual carol service.

While we are busy organising our Christmas celebrations, let us pause and think about the millions of people throughout the world who will be busy for a very different reason this Christmas. The reality for them is that Christmas will be spent collecting water.

As you will have read on the front page, the Methodist Church in Swansea and Gower is supporting Water Aid for its 2013/14 mission project. The fact that one in ten people in the world today (768 million) lack access to clean drinking water and one in three people (2.5 billion) lack access to sanitation is truly shocking and we are supporting Water Aid as it seeks to transform lives in some of the world's poorest communities.

Not only is Water Aid involved on the ground in these communities putting in water pumps etc. but it works with other aid partners calling on world leaders to agree a new Sustainable Development Goal that will help realise a world where everyone, everywhere has safe water to drink, good hygiene and sanitation by 2030.

When you next flush the loo or take a bath or shower. When you put the kettle or the washing machine on or when you fill your pans to cook your vegetables for your Christmas lunch just remember how fortunate you are and ask yourself what you can do to support the Water Aid project.

I am delighted that the Methodist Church is once again supporting the Swansea Churches Homeless Night Shelter. Seven churches in the

Swansea area will offer shelter for the homeless from the beginning of January to the end of March 2014. Each church will be responsible for one night of the week with Saturday being our allocated night.

Guests are given a hot meal and a bed for the night and as they are using the shelter the local authority and various support agencies are working to find them permanent accommodation.

Please remember the night shelter in your prayers, the guests and the fifty Methodist volunteers who are helping to run it and if you would like to support the shelter financially please contact the circuit treasurer Mr Bernard Gwyther – his contact details are on the inside cover.

Leo Tolstoy wrote a story in 1885 called 'Where love is, God is also'.

It's the story of a cobbler, whose name was Conrad, a godly man who made his living making shoes. One night the cobbler had a dream that the next day Jesus was coming to visit him in his shop. He got up early the next morning and went to the woods to gather some greenery with which to decorate his shop in order to receive so great a guest. He waited all morning and the only thing that happened was that an old man shuffled up, asking to rest. Conrad saw that his shoes were worn through, so he brought the man in. "I'll give you a new pair of shoes," he said and put on the old man the sturdiest shoes in the shop before sending him on his way.

He waited through the afternoon and the only thing that happened was that an old woman carrying a heavy load of firewood came by. She was weary and, out of compassion, Conrad brought her in and gave her some of the food he had prepared for his special, anticipated guest. She ate with relish, for she was hungry. Refreshed, she went on her way. As night fell a lost child came into the shop crying bitterly. The cobbler was annoyed by the child's presence, because he had to leave his shop and take the child home to his family. As he returned to his shop he was convinced that he had missed his Lord. Sadly, he sat down, and in his imagination he

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news in brief

Reynoldston

The Stable Trail – Messy Church. An interactive Family Christmas starts at Reynoldston Village Hall from 1.00 p.m. on Saturday 7th December.

Penlan

Bible Fellowship every Tuesday evening at 7.30 p.m.

Wesley

Lite Bites and Fellowship every Thursday at 12 noon.

Mumbles

Lunchtime Worship every Wednesday at 12.45 p.m.

Sketty

Bible Study on Philippians (see page 6 for full details)

FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES will re-start at Sketty on December 6th at 7.30pm with a Christmas classic – “It’s a Wonderful Life”. Admission is free, but donations will be welcome.

It is planned to show a film on the 2nd Friday of each month. Please contact Janet Neilson for more details. Everyone welcome.



Open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5pm
for Morning Coffee, Hot and Cold Light Meals,
Daily Specials and Afternoon Teas
Theo's Coffee Shop is at Mumbles Methodist Church
(01792 363803)

The Alpha Course is for everyone who wants to explore the big questions. The next course at Mumbles Methodist church will be in September 2014.
www.alpha.org

Swansea Samaritans are available 24 hours a day providing confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress, despair or suicidal thoughts. Their phone number: 01792 655999

200th Anniversary of the Methodist Missionary Society

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already present in indigenous cultures, and our failure to allow maturity by keeping Partner Churches dependant and limiting their self-determination. The three Presidents from the first missionary countries visited, Sri Lanka, South Caribbean and Sierra Leone, responded with forgiveness, and this was very moving. There was a Drama, depicting scenes from 1813, and the sermon was given by Dr Daleep Mukarji-Vice President of the Methodist Conference.

All in all, it was a very inspiring and enjoyable day. Through it I heard about a reunion for the Nixon Memorial Methodist Hospital which I am attending in London, so watch this space!

Sybil Smith

There will be an ecumenical event at All Saints Church Mumbles on Sunday 19th January 2014 at 3.00 p.m. The theme of the service is "Coming Together in Peace" and the speaker is Mrs Win Hawkins.

Did You Know

That you can sign up for a number of e-newsletters from the Methodist church. Just visit the website www.methodist.org.uk

Bible Study on Philipians

Following the success of last year's course, the Local Preachers of the Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit are happy to accept the offer of Rev Dr Noel Davies to lead a series of Bible Studies. This year's series will be on the letter of St Paul to the Philipians. It will be aimed at Preachers and Worship Leaders but is open to all, including all those attending worship at Sketty and other Circuit churches.

The Sessions will be at 7.30pm to 9.00pm in the Hall at Sketty Methodist Church on Mondays, fortnightly, starting 13th January. It is likely that the session on 10th February will be in the Hall at Bethel URC, and that the final session will be on Tuesday 25th March at Sketty in the Wesley Room.

Dates for diary: 13th January, 27th January, 10th February (at Bethel), 24th February, 10th March, Tuesday 25th March

PRISON CHAPLAINCY TEAM

For many years now the chaplaincy team at HMP Swansea has been supported on Sunday mornings by a small group of people from a number of churches. Every other week we provide a musician and one or two supporters whose role is simply to be there (shake hands, talk to the men etc). Once every 6 weeks we take the service in its entirety.

We are currently looking for anyone interested in joining the team - especially musicians (who, we know, are always in demand for their own churches). If you're interested and would like more information, please email Liz Hinds at extremely.linden@lineone.net

The Bible is greater in scope than *The Lord of the Rings*, has more adventure than *Master and Commander*, more romance than *Love Actually* and in terms of popularity and sales leaves the whole *Harry Potter* series in the shade. How can it ever be regarded as boring?

“Let’s keep Christmas”



Peter Marshall was a Presbyterian Minister who emigrated from Scotland to America in the 1920's and twice became Chaplain to the US Senate when he concluded his ministry in one of the most prominent Washington DC Churches. In spite of his untimely death at the age of 47 years his prayers and preaching left an indelible mark on US religious life. Some may more readily recognise him from the 1951 film "A man called Peter" with Richard Todd starring as Peter.

In the 1940's he preached a sermon "Let's keep Christmas" of which this is a small extract. Surprising how his words still seem so appropriate today.

Peter discussed the joy and spirit of Christmas.

"What a happy place the earth would be if we could all open our hearts to the wonderful spirit around the world tonight not just on Christmas but throughout the year."

"We all feel the pressures of Christmas. The traffic is terrible, you can't find a parking space, the shops are crowded, mobs and queues make Christmas a nightmare.

We are all thinking about presents. What on earth can we buy for so and so? We think of friends and loved ones who are so hard to shop for. We can't think of anything they need, which is strange considering the time we spend thinking about it.

Maybe there is nothing in a store that they need.

But what about some token of love? Love itself and friendship and understanding and

and consideration and a helping hand and a smile and a prayer?

You can't buy any of these in a store, yet most people are in greater need of these than a present.

We all need them.... Blessed will they be that receive them this Christmas, or at any time. Let us not allow the rush to crowd Christmas out of our hearts for that is where it belongs. Christmas is not in the stores.... but in the hearts of people.

Let us not give way to cynicism and mutter that "Christmas has been commercialised". It never will be unless we let it be. Your Christmas is not commercialised unless you let it be.

Let us not succumb to saying that "Christmas is only for children"

That shows that we have never understood Christmas at all, for the older you get the more it should mean, for Christmas though forever young, grows old with us.

Have you been saying "I just can't seem to feel the Christmas spirit this year?"

That's too bad, because as a confession of a lack of faith, it is very significant.

You are really saying that you feel no joy that Jesus came into the world....

You are confessing that his presence in the world is not a reality to you....

Maybe you need all the more to read the Christmas story again....

Need to sit down with the Gospel of Luke and think about it.

I thank God for Christmas, would that it lasted all year. For I have observed that on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day all the world is a better place, and men and women are more loveable. Love itself seeps into every heart and miracles happen.

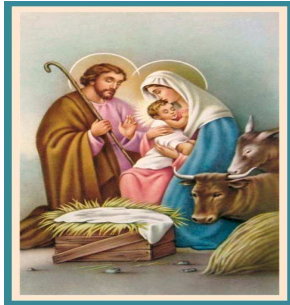
When Christmas doesn't make your heart swell up until it nearly bursts.... and fill your eyes with tears..... and make you all soft and warm inside.... then you'll know that something inside you is dead.

There is obviously great joy when we are together as a family at Christmas, indeed the crooked star and the old tree decorations that have been in the family for years are the things we cherish most.

(continued on page 8)

Let's keep Christmas

(continued from page 7)



But we should cherish more what Christmas really means:

The beginning of Christianity
The Second Chance for the world
The hope for peace...
And the ONLY WAY

If history has any voice, it is to say that all the ways of men lead to nowhere. There is only one way... **The Way**... untried.... untested.... unexplored fully..... the way of Him who was born a babe in Bethlehem

In a world that seems not only to be changing but to be dissolving, there are millions who want Christmas to be the same.... with the same old greeting "Merry Christmas" and no other.

We long for the abiding love of men of goodwill that the season brings. Because we believe in the ancient miracle of Christmas with its softening, sweetening influence to tug at our hearts once again.

We want to hold on to the old customs and traditions because they strengthen our family ties, bind us to our friends, make us one with all mankind for whom the Child was born.

It brings us back again to the God who gave his only begotten Son, that "whoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"

So we should not "**spend**" Christmas or "**observe**" Christmas... we need to "**keep**" Christmas in all its traditions

May we keep Christmas in our hearts that we may be kept in its hope."

Submitted by Robert Alderdice



Community project in
Clydach, Swansea Valley

Menter cymunedol
Cwmtawe
yng Nghlydach Cwm Tawe
97 High Street (opp. St. John's)

Mince pies and mulled wine!

*Please come and support this ecumenical venture
in Clydach*

Saturday December 14th 10-12am



Children's activities: making Christmas
decorations!



@Ty Croeso, 97 High St, Clydach

Cakes etc for sale..... Raffle

£2 adults—children free!

Croeso i bawb!

The Circuit Says Thank You



(Above) Thanks to Margaret Bizzell for her work with Methodist Women in Britain and as a Circuit Steward.

The Circuit Mission Service in October provided the perfect opportunity for the church to say thank you to four ladies who had made 'an outstanding contribution to the Methodist Church and the ministry of the Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit'.

Those were the words of the Superintendent minister, Rev Howard Long as he invited Margaret Bizzell, Alice Rutter, Margaret Hancock and Joan West to come forward to receive gifts and certificates from Rev Stephen Wigley, chair of the Wales Synod who greeted and thanked the ladies on behalf of the Methodist Church in Wales.

Margaret Bizzell is planning to move from Swansea to live near her family in Australia. Margaret is a member of our Murton Church and for the last 10 years has supported the work and ministry in Penlan. As well as serving as a circuit steward she is also a past president of the South Wales Women's Network.

The gifts Margaret received were presented to her by Janet Neilson to say thank you for all she's done for Network and Methodist Women in Britain. Janet said, 'All the gifts have a Welsh theme so that, hopefully the next time Wales play down under, and win, she can get into the swing of things'



(Above) Thanks to Alice Rutter and Margaret Hancock for the many years served as Methodist local preachers

Alice Rutter and Margaret Hancock have served as local preachers in the Methodist Church for many years. Alice's accreditation as a preacher took place in 1951 and Margaret's in 1976. Both have proclaimed Jesus and served His church faithfully through the years.

Joan West began playing the organ as a youngster at Ebenezer, Plasmarl in 1942. Following the closure of the church in 1996 Joan and other members moved to join Wesley church in Brynhyfryd where Joan continued to play the organ and help lead worship. Joan is a tremendous musician and has played for many choirs and music groups through the years. After over 70 years of playing the organ she has now decided to go part-time. Thank you Joan.



(Above) Joan West receives a certificate from the church acknowledging 70 years of playing the organ at Plasmarl and Wesley

Fellowship Week at Lindors



Ten people from the Swansea and Gower circuit joined others from around the U.K. at a Fellowship Week organised by Jean Long and held at Lindors Country House Hotel in the Wye Valley.

Lindors is one of the Christian Guild Holiday Hotels.

The Guest Speaker was Rev. David King, Superintendent of the St. Neots & Huntingdon circuit, whose theme was Discipleship and Christian Holiness. The week included morning devotional sessions, time for reflection and relaxation, a day's outing to Laycock Abbey and evening entertainment with the Forest of Dean Male Voice Choir, the Coalway Singers and a quiz organised by Brenda King.

A first-time Fellowship Week guest was a retired nun, Sister Kay, a deeply spiritual person who was in inspiration to us all and has already booked for next year. Ann and Marion shared a lodge in the grounds of Lindors, next to the swimming pool, where they exercised a great ministry of hospitality – lots of cups of tea and coffee and a bottomless biscuit tin for anyone who wanted to call. Even the speaker and his wife found their way into the lodge after hearing the laughter coming from there.

The week concluded with a very moving communion service conducted by Rev. David King, during which an offering was taken for Action for Children Stepping Stones Children's Centre, the Fellowship's chosen charity and raised £265.50.

Next year the Fellowship Week at Lindors will be Sunday 21st September to Saturday 27th September. The Guest Speaker will be Rev. The Lord Griffiths of Wesley's Chapel, London. Included in the activities will be a boat trip around Bristol Docks with a commentary about its history, followed by a visit to Wesley's new Room; also, a day at a National Trust property and possibly Gloucester Cathedral.

Everyone is welcome and anyone interested please contact Jean Long (tel: 01792 404278) or Lindors direct (tel: 01594 530283).

Ann and Marion will be in residence again!!

Jean Long

Mumbles Methodist church has been running two new children's clubs, which we are keen to grow in the New Year. They will be re-starting on Tuesday 14th January, and children from our other circuit churches are very welcome to join us. They would also be welcome at our first Holiday Club in February half term.

Also, if any adult members of circuit churches are interested in helping with either the kids clubs or the holiday club, please let Ceri know at cerimumblesmethodist@gmail.com



Come along to find out all about great Sportspeople in the Bible!

Games! Songs! Stories!

Half term holiday club for 4-11 year olds at Mumbles Methodist Church

February 24th-28th

Each morning, 10am – 12pm

£1 per child per session

Places may be limited so advanced registration is recommended. For a registration form please email cerimumblesmethodist@gmail.com

Superintendent's message

(continued from page 3)

lived through the moments with Jesus as he imagined they might have been. He thought to himself, "What a great time it could have been."

Conrad cried, "Why is it, Lord that you haven't come? Have you forgotten that this was the day?" Then softly in the silence a voice was heard: Lift up your heart for I kept my word. Three times I came to your door; Three times my shadow was on your floor. I was a beggar with bruised feet; I was the woman you gave food to eat; I was the child on the homeless street.

May God bless you all this Christmas.

Howard

Mumbles Methodist Church presents

Xplore!



Can you build the best Lego models? Do you rock at quizzes? Are you a great team player? Do you want to investigate the Bible?

Then this is the club for you!

Kids club for school years 3-6
(parents do not have to stay!)

Tuesdays 5 - 6pm
Drop-off from 4:45pm

Victoria Hall, Dunns Lane (minor hall)

News from Brunswick

At Brunswick we have started have started a group called FAN (standing for Friends And Neighbours). Its aim is to make people feel loved and not feel lonely. All people are welcome and the group meets on a Wednesday morning from 10.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. with a cup of tea and a cake/ biscuit. People just come and talk without anyone interrupting. If you do not want to talk you do not have to. You can just listen. The aim is to get to know and love one another, Christians or non Christians.



The new friends and neighbours group formed at Brunswick Methodist Church

At Advent we will be holding ecumenical Bible Studies using the York courses. These will be held at Brunswick church at 11.00 a.m. on Thursdays from the 28th November for four weeks. The themes this year are expecting Christ in our family, expecting Christ in me, expecting Christ in prayer and finally, expecting Christ in the end.

Special Christmas services include

A Christingles Service on the 15th December at 10.30 a.m.

A Carol Service led by our Choir on the 22nd December at 10.30 a.m.

A Christmas Eve service with Holy Communion at 7.00 p.m.

A Christmas Day Service at 10.30 a.m.

A New Year Covenant Service on the 5th January at 10.30 a.m.

Siperire Mugadzaweta

The best evidence of our having the truth is our walking in the truth.

Matthew Henry

The End of Christendom – Crisis or Opportunity?

(Some thoughts from an article by Rhys Llwyd, first published in *Cristion*, the ecumenical magazine of the Welsh language churches).



Rhys Llwyd

In the past in Wales almost everyone was Christian and unbelievers were rare and stood out. But today we live in a different situation. Those who stand out now are those who proclaim Christian faith. WE have moved from Christendom to a secular society.

The meaning of Christendom is 'Countries of Faith'. It's a concept that goes back to the fourth century when Constantine, the great Roman Emperor, became a Christian. As a result Christianity became the official faith of the Empire, an area that covered most of what is Europe today. This change from being 'people on the edge' of society, to being the 'establishment' was a very significant one that has cast a shadow over the history of the Christian Church ever since. Some argue that Constantine's conversion was of great benefit to Christianity because it's official status led to it spreading readily. But others argue that it was a negative development, especially in the longer term, because it has led the faith far away from its radical roots.

Today, many theologians and Church leaders are trying to rediscover what it is to be the true Christian church in this period of 'Post-Christendom', by looking at what the church was like in the 'Pre-Christendom' world. One reaction is to attempt to cling on to what little is left of the 'Christendom' that is rapidly disappearing. We hear Christians claiming that they are being persecuted

because they no longer have the favoured position in society that they had a century ago. This idea that Christians in this country are persecuted is heard far too often, and is a claim that belittles the experience of those Christians who really are suffering persecution in many parts of the world. It's not by shouting, and refusing to let go of Christendom that we should adjust to the change – but rather by rediscovering the heart of Christianity, a radical faith of those on the edge.

Looking at the Acts of the Apostles we can see how the Church of Christ organised itself, lived and grew in an atmosphere that was in many ways similar spiritually and culturally to our situation today. It was a time when few people knew about Jesus, a period when the majority worshipped money, celebrity, and superstitions. Here we see confident faith, a dependence on the Spirit, and Christians living out their faith. By rediscovering that simplicity of faith that we see there, we will discover how to live as Christians in the Post Christendom Wales that is opening out before us. We have no need to fear as we step into the unfamiliar, but rather we should see it as an exciting challenge, moving on confidently because Jesus has promised to build his Church.

(submitted by Pam Cram)

Mumbles Methodist Church presents:

LET'S GO!



Come and join us for fun, games, stories, craft, lego and more!

Each week we will have lots of games and activities and a short Bible related story.

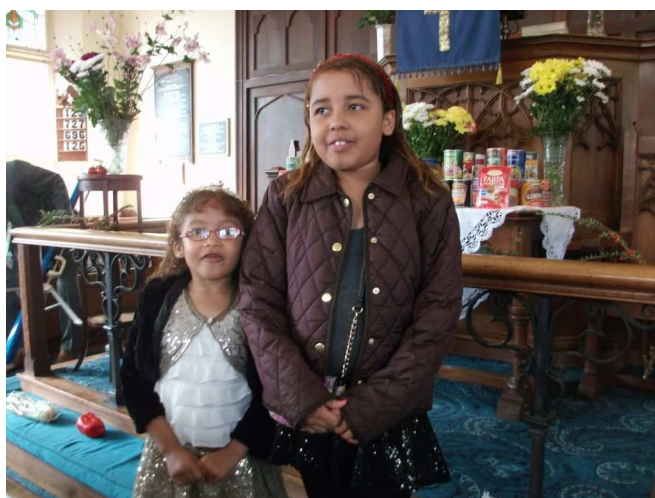
Kids club for school years R-2
(parents do not have to stay!)

Tuesdays 3:45 – 4:45pm
Drop off from 3:30pm

Victoria Hall, Dunns Lane (minor hall)

News from Morriston

In spite of ongoing work in the downstairs area of Morriston, we have managed to have two very successful events this autumn. On the last Sunday in September, Back to Church Sunday, we had our Harvest Service, and the children sang beautifully for us. We also received a new member, Mr Alf Harwood, by transfer. Alf had come 'back to church' a few months previously and found our church to be the spiritual home he was looking for. The food collection was all for the Swansea Food Bank.



Celine and Joanna Lloyd after they'd sung a duet at the Harvest Service.

At the end of October, with the downstairs rooms beautifully decorated and cleaned for the occasion, we welcomed people from around the Circuit and community at the 'Cuppa and Cake' afternoon. This was very well attended and guests were impressed with the new entrance doors, kitchen, screened side lobby and new 'accessible' toilet. Thanks to all who supported this event.

It's hoped that the main work is now over, and we look forward to our Christmas services - a Carol Service on Dec. 22nd at 5.00 p.m. and Christmas morning service at 9.30 a.m.

This is Christmas: not the tinsel, not the giving and receiving, not even the carols, but the humble heart that receives anew the wondrous gift, the Christ.

Frank McKibben

200th Anniversary of the Methodist Missionary Society



On Sunday 6th October, I was invited to Leeds to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Methodist Missionary Society. All ex-Missionaries or Mission Partners were invited, so I went following my time spent in Sierra Leone as a midwifery sister at Nixon Memorial Methodist Hospital in Segbwema from 1969 to 1972.

We started with a morning service at Leeds Methodist Mission which was led by Rev Stephen Poxon (a former President of the Methodist Conference) who some of you may remember from his time spent as a minister here in South Wales. His wife, Deacon Myrtle Poxon, is a former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference.

This was followed by a lunch where I met previous missionary colleagues, or mutual friends of colleagues. As Sierra Leone was one of the first 3 places visited by missionaries, the President of the Sierra Leone Methodist Conference, Rev Arnold Temple, was there and I was able to meet him over lunch.

We then walked through Leeds to a site near the Playhouse. This was the site of the Old Wesleyan Chapel in St Peter's Street where the meeting held there on 6th Oct 1813 led to the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. After a service, a plaque was unveiled by the Rev. Ruth Gee, this year's President of the Methodist Conference.

We then walked to the Leeds Minster for a service of worship titled "One Mission". All the previous Missionaries and Mission Partners processed at the start of the service, and then filled the gallery of a packed church.

The most striking part of the service was the **Act of Confession** where Stephen Poxon led us to say, that we regretted our failure to recognise God

(continued on page 6)

We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.

Oswald Chambers



Imagine a world without many of the foods we take for granted every day: coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, bananas. If you're buying them today, presumably you're expecting to be able to buy them in five or ten years' time.

But did you know that 70% of the world's food is produced by smallholder farmers and their situation is frequently under threat due to uncertain prices, climate change, and inability to invest due to poverty. Unless there is a dramatic scaling up of support to such farmers, and improvements to the terms of trade they receive, small-scale farming communities will remain in crisis, threatening the very availability of many of the foods we take for granted today.

Since Fair Trade products are now in supermarkets you may think the job is finished, but there's still lots of work to be done. The emphasis of groups like Traidcraft is to put small, and sometimes isolated, farmers first, and to make a long-term commitment to helping them. One example is

Dennis Korir, 52, a smallholder tea farmer in Kericho, Kenya, and member of a co-operative group. On his five-acre farm he grows two acres of tea, and has recently diversified into growing green beans and mangetout.

'Before I joined the co-operative I was a smallholder farmer working alone to supply leaves to a tea company, but I didn't get any support on how to improve my situation to earn more money for my family,' he says. 'Since joining the co-operative I've received support and training in improving tea yields, which have increased from 300 kilos per month in 2008 to 1,500 kilos today. I have been trained in using fertilisers that comply with Fairtrade environment standards and these have helped improve the quality of my tea.'

Together, the co-operative's members are now able to buy fertilisers at reduced cost, which he says helps a lot, as the costs of these have risen over the last couple of years. 'Rising production costs, higher food prices and increased school fees are a worry,' he says, 'but since joining the co-operative I feel more secure, as I know that my tea will get a fair price.'

In Swansea we're fortunate in having a Fair Trade Forum that is always working to maintain the Fair Trade City and County status that was gained nearly ten years ago. A number of schools in our area have gained Fair Trade recognition, with children making the whole family more aware of the Fair Trade mark.

It's a sign of success that Fair Trade goods are now in the supermarkets, but, as Traidcraft points out that buying from smaller outlets and stalls guarantees that these small-holder farmers don't only get justice through fair prices, but also are supported long-term; are guaranteed regular income; and receive a social premium for the benefit of family and community.

To find out more you can go to www.fairtrade.org.uk; www.fairtradewales.com; or www.traidcraft.org.uk or ask Pam Cram or Pat Thomas who run Fair Trade stalls at various events.

Pause to Ponder

What other people think of me is becoming less and less important; what they think of Jesus because of me is critical.

Sir Cliff Richard

Since my heart was touched at 17 years old, I believe I never have awakened from sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without my first waking thought being "how best I might serve my Lord".

Elizabeth Fry

Bookshelf



Reading has always been a popular pastime. In the past it was always an “actual” book as that was the only way to read. Today, however, there are so many different ways to access literature, and, so many books to read. I expect you’ve walked into a bookshop belonging to a nationwide chain and been overwhelmed by the choice.....such as buy one and get another at half price!

Through “Connect” we thought it would be a good idea to offer some books which you may like to read. These books could be said to have an “implicit” religious content. If you read them and don’t enjoy them, please don’t hold me responsible!

- 1 The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry by Rachel Joyce – it’s a story about a man who walks across England to save a dying friend and it is also about a woman who stays at home and saves her marriage. It’s about forgiveness and the power of small, everyday things.
- 2 Miss Garnet’s Angel by Salley Vickers – following the death of a friend, Julia Garnet seeks solace in an impromptu visit to Venice, where a lifetime of caution is challenged. She encounters paintings which tell the ancient story of Tobit.
- 3 The Little Coffee Shop in Kabul by Deborah Rodriguez – in a coffee shop in one of the most dangerous places on earth, five very different women come together. As these women discover there’s more to one another than meets the eye, they form a unique bond that will change their lives for ever.

- 4 Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom – you may have had a grandparent, teacher or colleague who was patient and wise, who understood you when you were young and searching, who gave you sound advice to help you make your way through it. For Mitch Albom, that person was Morrie Schwartz, his college professor. Mitch rediscovered Morrie many years later
- 5 I am David by Anne Holm – for readers aged about 11 – 14 – David is told to follow the compass southwards until he reaches Salonica and find a ship bound for Italy. Then to travel north to Denmark where he will be safe!

Janet Neilson

Mumbles Toddler Group

In October the Mumbles Toddler Group helped Tina to celebrate her 60th birthday. Tina has been a faithful volunteer every week at Toddlers for almost 12 years, as well as helping at several other toddler groups in the area. We celebrated with a special birthday cake and everyone sang Happy Birthday. Many of the parents and carers brought gifts for Tina to thank her for her service to the local toddler groups.



CONNECT Winter 2013

Wesley Guild Craft Fair at Clydach



The Guild has been busy through the year making beautiful craft items and an amazing £700.00 was raised towards the Centenary celebrations of our Guild in 2014. The Guild has decided to send £200.00 of the amount raised to the Action Aid's appeal for the Philippines.



The winner of the hamper was Marion Bate.



"I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when I cannot feel it. I believe in God even when He is silent"

Words written by a victim of the Holocaust

Water Aid



Mr David Padfield (Water Aid) Rev Siperire Mugadzaweta and Mrs Sybil Smith (chair and secretary of the Circuit Mission Committee) and Rev Howard Long (Circuit Superintendent)

Just think for a moment how much you use water without really thinking. We put the kettle on, go to the loo, run a bath, cook food, wash the car and most other things. We just go to the tap and expect an endless flow of clean water whenever we want it.

It would be difficult for us to imagine life without safe water or toilets but that is the daily reality for millions of people across the world. This is why Water Aid is working to enable the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation. These basic human rights underpin health, education and livelihoods and form the first, essential step in overcoming poverty.

With over 30 years experience Water Aid has proven that together water, sanitation and hygiene education provide the key to poverty reduction. By focusing on projects that combine these three elements, health benefits are maximised and the results are long lasting and wide reaching.

By providing clean drinking water and a safe environment in which to use the toilet, lives can be saved. However it is only when the links between lack of water and sanitation and diseases are explained that health benefits are maximised. This is done through hygiene education. Communities are taught about the key practices that prevent the spread of germs which cause water and sanitation related diseases. Providing soap and hygiene promotion can reduce cases of diarrhoea by 53%.

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Harvest at Penlan

We delivered 1500 leaflets to homes around our church to advertise our presence in the area and to invite people to come.

“How many service sheets shall we print? Thirty? Forty? Fifty?”
“Maybe fifty is a bit optimistic.”

But we printed fifty and fifty one people came to our service on the afternoon of 20th October, including four children and a three month old baby. Praise the Lord!

Apart from a handful of local people we had a good number from the Phoenix Choir who practice in our building and also from the First Steps Forward group of disabled adults who make use of our premises twice a week.

The Communion table was decorated with fruit and vegetables, and a further table was stacked with packets and tins of food, but it was a Harvest Service with a difference. Not only did we sing “We plough the fields with tractors, with drills we sow the land...” but our thoughts were directed to *everything* for which we could thank God. And it was a joy and encouragement to hear people from the Choir, from First Steps Forward, from our congregation, and from the community sharing with us what they were grateful for. Maybe we ought to have time in all our services for this kind of sharing.

As well as the fellowship over tea and coffee afterwards we were able next day to take a car load of food to the Swansea Food Bank and to send them a total of £84 from donations in the plate by the door.

Quentin Hawkins

A Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest met at a social function. “This baked ham is really delicious,” the priest teased, “you really ought to try it. Surely it won’t do you any harm!” The Rabbi smiled and said “I’ll try some at your wedding.”

Bethel URC and Sketty Methodists – coming together!

For some time now, neighbouring churches, Bethel URC and Sketty Methodist have been drawing closer together. A major milestone was marked in this process on Sunday 13th October when Bethel joined with Sketty for morning worship in the knowledge that from now on we will be worshipping together on Sunday mornings (evening services have been joint for some while). No longer will it be ‘you in your small corner and I in mine’, but it is part of our continuing journey together as we work out, under God’s guidance, how to move forward as a single congregation.

During the service, the church was set a challenge by Rev Leslie. Upstairs in the balcony was a very full glass of water. The challenge was to get the glass of water to the communion table without spilling a drop – but once you held the glass you weren’t allowed to move! The only possible way to do this, the congregation discovered very quickly, was to form a human chain from the balcony, down the stairs, into the back of the church and down the aisle. This took about 30 or 40 people of all ages, who, enthusiastically and willingly formed the human chain and with much laughter and cooperation, brought the glass of water successfully to the communion table.

“This”, said Leslie, “is a physical reminder of our journey together. Working together, being together is the way we must go. And in the future, when we get bogged down with decision making, when we can’t agree on the best way forward – let us remember this moment and the fun and laughter we had working together.”

Later in the service, Pam Tucker, Senior Steward at Sketty and Pat Davies, Church Secretary at Bethel led the congregation in a liturgy, committing ourselves to the way ahead and each said these words: “We commit ourselves to working together, to learning new ways, and where necessary giving up what is precious in order to move forward, even when we find this hard.”

There is much work now to be done. But the service was a positive milestone and we move forward in faith, love and hope!

Leslie Noon

Water Aid

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Water Aid use technologies that are low cost and appropriate for the local community, including locally sourced materials and spare parts which can be easily purchased and transported. Through working with partners, local people are trained to ensure the projects continue to work properly long after Water Aid ends its support. To ensure communities are responsible and feel a sense of ownership for their projects they must be involved in all stages of the work. Water Aid and its partners work with individuals and families, paying special attention to the role of women and the most vulnerable people in society, so that they take responsibility for projects and ensure they are sustained.

About Water Aid

Water Aid is an international non-profit organisation that was first set up as a response to the UN International Drinking Water & Sanitation decade (1981–1990). Water Aid works in 27 countries worldwide, transforming millions of lives every year with clean water, safe toilets and hygiene education.

768 million people – roughly one in ten of the world's population – have *no choice* but to get water from wherever they can, whether it's a dirty pond or an expensive water vendor.

Some facts to make you think

2.5 billion people in the world do not have access to adequate sanitation, almost two fifths of the world's population. (*WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) Report 2013 update*)

768 million people in the world do not have access to safe water. This is roughly one in ten of the world's population. (*WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) Report 2013 update*)

Around 700,000 children die every year from diarrhoea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation - that's almost 2,000 children a day. (*Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group, 2012 and Unicef Child Mortality Report, 2012*)

The average person in the UK uses 150 litres of water a day. In Australia it's around 500 litres and in the USA, over 570 litres. (*UNDP: Human Development Report, 2006: page 34*)



Women in Africa and Asia often carry water on their heads weighing 20kg, the same as the average UK airport luggage allowance (UNDP: Human Development Report, 2006: page 34-35)

Water in Accra, Ghana, costs three times as much as in New York. (UNDP, 2006)

Since 2004 Water Aid has reached 15.1 million people with sanitation. (WaterAid, 2013)

Since 1981 Water Aid has reached 19.2 million people with safe water. (WaterAid, 2013)

www.wateraid.org

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? (Matthew 25:37)

Time for a Smile

As they were discussing the importance of prayer, a husband told his wife, "I do some of my best praying while I am driving." She said, "How strange, I too do my best praying while you're driving."

The new curate was meeting a friend in the local coffee bar. As he went in, he noticed two pretty girls looking at him. He heard one whisper "Nine," as he passed. When his friend arrived he proudly told him a girl near the door had just rated him nine out of ten. "I don't want to ruin it for you," the friend said, "but when I walked by, they were speaking German."

Gower Chorale Tour of Rome

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Gower Chorale at Assisi

Friday, All Saints Day, was a public holiday in Rome. We performed at the Church of Jesus and Mary situated amongst the smart shops. The celebration of this Mass was conducted in Latin in the Tre dentine style, in which Luke took part. On this occasion, Alan had been looking forward to accompanying us on a Fixed Manual Organ but only a child's portable keyboard was available! However we rose to the occasion, the congregation and their Priest appreciated our performance.

We were sorry to leave Rome on Saturday for our homeward journey, but were able to enjoy a short visit to Florence before arriving at Pisa airport for our flight home.

Throughout our tour we were able to share our tradition and love of Choral Music with audiences unaccustomed to experiencing this type of music being used in their worship. It was a privilege to be able to sing in such beautiful buildings and enhance the worship services of our Catholic friends. I am sure we will remember our tour for many years to come!

Anne Whitehead and Claire Sykes

Whatever else be lost among the years,
Let us keep Christmas still a shining thing;
Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears,
Let us hold close one day, remembering
Its poignant meaning for the hearts of men;
Let us get back our childlike faith again.

Grace Noll Cromwell

My best friend Janet has found in her father's things a huge scrap book of articles from the Evening Post newspaper dated from 1904. Her great grandfather was a Wesleyan Methodist at our church and the cuttings are all about life in Mumbles and in particular the life in our church and the Victoria Hall, which was used as a hospital in the First World War. There was even a cutting about the new organ and its inauguration in 1916. Janet's father was Harry Davies a well-loved member of our church in the 1950's-1990's and he held many offices in our church.

This is one article which I liked from 1916:

Little Sonny Frazer was looking ahead and was very thoughtful. "Mummy" he said, "does the Bishop have to be a good man?" Mum was a little taken back by this question but understood why he was asking it. There had recently been an occasion when he saw the Bishop going into the new church in the area which was being opened for the first time, decked out in all his regalia; crook, mitred hat and splendid flowing robes.

Mum replied, "Of course he has to be a good man, as he has so many churches and people to look after". Sonny stopped for a while digesting this information, then said, "Mummy does the Methodist Minister have to be a good man as well"? "Certainly," she said, all ministers must be good men". Sonny sighed and blew out a long breath, and then replied to his mother "then in that case I think I will be a local preacher!"

Ann Beynon

Children's Letters to God

Dear God,

In school we read that Thomas Edison made light, but in Sunday School they said you did it first. Did he steal your idea?

Do you draw the lines around the countries? If you don't, who does?

Did you mean for giraffes to look like that, or was it an accident?

It is great the way you always get the stars in the right place. Why can't you do that with the moon?

Gower Chorale Tour of Rome

Rain and gales were sweeping southern Britain on October 27th when a group of Gower Chorale choristers and our Musical Director, Luke Spencer, gladly boarded a warm coach in Swansea and set out for a week's singing tour of Rome. The group of about half the entire choir with some partners included some well-known members of our churches: Sybil (Brunswick), Sue (Mumbles), Delyth and Margaret (Bethel URC), and Anne, Claire and Alan (Sketty). Since the Summer Luke had been rehearsing us very hard so we were sure to be "note and word perfect" in readiness for our planned performances in Rome! Despite the group being divided up and flying from two airports we all arrived safely and on time on Monday afternoon. The weather was perfect and remained so throughout the week.

Luke gathered us together for an evening rehearsal in the 'Piano Bar'. This proved to be quite eventful, as one of our choir members made a 'grand entrance', fell down two marble steps, and required attention from the medical members of the group. Meanwhile the rest of us were subject to Luke's tender mercies in a rehearsal accompanied by our long suffering pianist, Robert, on an out of tune piano!

On Tuesday we sang during the Mass for the Entry, Offertory and Communion at the close, in the beautiful Santa Maria Maggiore church. The acoustics of this church were amazing. Our voices soared and floated upwards into the ceiling and bounced off the marbled walls surrounding us. This was indeed a spine-tingling moment. In fact so unaccustomed were we to the different sound our voices produced, many of us were completely taken by surprise and felt overwhelmed! The Priest was delighted with our contribution to the service and invited us to be photographed with him while he held a Welsh flag. On leaving the Church we stood outside on the steps and sang to people waiting to visit inside. A memorable experience indeed!

Now, I have to say that our trip included some elements of surprise. The timings of our performances were 'relaxed' and some of our planned activities became somewhat un-planned. Our evening performance in one of the churches was cancelled because of a Health and Safety matter regarding Lead Paint!! This meant we had some spare time and a group of us were fortunate in having a retired Professor of Archaeology share his breadth of knowledge with us as we walked around the Forum, the magnificent Coliseum and

the Church of St Peter in Chains. His rallying cry of 'flowers' as he held up his walking stick adorned with plastic flowers will become a catch-word for us.

Wednesday was 'Vatican Day' At 8 a.m. we were sitting in St Peter's Square waiting for the Papal Audience due to begin at 10:30. We joined the thousands and thousands of pilgrims who had travelled from all over the world for the occasion. Whilst waiting for Pope Francis to arrive in his Pope-Mobile, Luke conducted us as we sang some anthems to the crowds immediately sitting around us. Owing to the excited anticipation of the Audience, a few of us needed to investigate the state of the Vatican Loo's. After a forty-five minute queue we reached our destination and are happy to commend the pristine facilities to every lady in 'need'. To our dismay on leaving the facilities we found ourselves to be 'kettled' in one area of St Peter's Square without any visible access to our seating area. Barriers had been erected while we were in the Loo Queue. In spite of being attired in choir uniform of long black skirts and 'Cardinal Red' tops the smartly dressed guards didn't understand our plight and would not allow us to return to our seats. Fortunately our fraught situation was observed by an English speaking young Italian lady photographer, and we just followed her like lost sheep as she tried to find a clear walkway, through the 'maze' of barriers for us. Suddenly Pope Francis arrived close by in his Pope-Mobile and waved to us (he must have known our plight!) Miraculously, a clear pathway appeared and we arrived at our seats in time for the Audience. Once on the Dias, Pope Francis welcomed individually every country and organisation to his Audience. He asked that all of us extend his greetings to our families, friends and those we know who are sick. Each stage of the Audience given in Italian by Pope Francis was translated into several different languages by interpreters so that everyone could appreciate his message.

On Thursday we travelled to Assisi where we sang in the Lower Basilica of Santa Caterina. This most beautiful building survived the earthquake of September 1997. We performed during a Mass and afterwards marvelled at the Caravaggio paintings which adorn the ceiling. Assisi is a very calm and beautiful location - we all enjoyed our visit in a more relaxed ambience compared with Rome which was busier than usual owing to a long Bank Holiday weekend (All Saints, followed by All Souls Days).

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