

CONNECT

The Magazine of the Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit

Winter 2017

In this issue

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20

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 **

Editor

Mrs. Myra Maddock
Tel: 207484
email: myra43@virginmedia.com



In November representatives from the Swansea and Gower Circuit made a 470 mile round trip to visit Lighthouse Homes in Shirebrook, Derbyshire. The purpose of the visit was to see how a Recovery House works and to meet with Darren Jones who founded the project in 2003.

The Lighthouse, partnering with Green Pastures and the Methodist Church provides accommodation for men and women in different locations that have been made homeless, many of them suffering from alcohol and drug addiction but with a desire to change. The Lighthouse is a Christian project that offers a place of stability that supports residents as they break free from addiction and turn their lives around.

Mr Ken Allison, a Local Preacher and Circuit Steward here in Swansea said after visiting Shirebrook, 'The Methodist Church in Swansea is currently working with the homeless through the Night Shelter at Uniting Church Sketty and the Ogof Adullam Drop-In Centre at Brunswick and we are continuing to explore the possibility of offering Recovery Housing as part of our outreach to those in great need in our city.'



From left to right: Mr Ken Allison (Circuit Steward) Mrs Cerys Davies and Mr Huw Davies (Ogof Adullam Homeless Project Coordinators) Mr Darren Jones (Lighthouse Homes founder) and Rev Howard Long (Superintendent Minister)

**Swansea and Gower
Methodist Circuit**



MINISTERS

Superintendent: Rev.Howard Long
12 Worcester Drive, Langland,
Swansea SA3 4HL
Tel: 366712
email: hlong@btinternet.com

Rev.Andrew Walker BTh, BA
28 Linkside Drive, Southgate,
Swansea SA3 2BR
Tel: 232867
email: andrew.walker@methodist.org.uk

Rev.Leslie J.Noon
47 Sketty Park Road, Sketty,
Swansea SA2 9AS
Tel: 203938
email: leslienoan@hotmail.com

Rev.Siperire Mugadzaweta BA,MNSc
5 Channel View, Sketty,
Swansea SA2 8LY
Tel: 206793
email: siperiremugadzaweta@gmail.com

CIRCUIT STEWARDS

Mrs.Heather Coleman
Tel: 290214
e.mail: hacoleman@ntlworld.com

Mr.Martin Gregson
Tel: 843256
e.mail: gregson.martin@yahoo.com

Mr.Ken Allison
Tel: 401620
e.mail: k.allison1@ntlworld.com

www.methodist.org

www.swanseamethodist.org.uk

The Swansea and Gower Methodist
Circuit is a Registered Charity
No 1134882

news in brief

Uniting Church Sketty

Coffee morning Saturday 3rd February 10 a.m to
12noon raising funds for Commitment For Life
Pantomime – February 15th, 16th at 7p.m & Sat 17th
February at 2p.m and 7p.m Ticket Price TBC
Asian Christian Fellowship Christmas Service – Sunday
December 3rd at 5.00p.m at UCS (Bethel Building) All
Welcome

Brunswick

FAN 'Friends and Neighbours' every Wednesday at
10.30 a.m.
Intercessory Prayer Meeting every Wednesday at
4.00 p.m.
Coffee mornings on the last Saturday of the every
month.

Mumbles

Theo's Coffee Shop - open daily 9.00a.m – 5.00p.m
Wednesday Lunchtime Worship 12.15p.m
The Alpha Course 2018. From Wednesday
10th January at 7p.m

Wesley

Bible Study every Tuesday 10.00 a.m.
Lite Bites – Every Thursday 12 noon - 2.00 p.m.

Penlan

Special Sunday evening services will take place on
December 10th and January 28th

Clydach

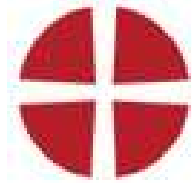
Tea and hymns December 13th at 2 p.m. at
Capel Y Nant Hall, Heol-Y-Nant, Clydach,

Murton

Coffee Mornings every Tuesday at 10.00 a.m. in the
Wesley Room, all welcome.



Message from the Superintendent



The opening verse of Luke's account of the birth of Jesus says that a decree went out from the Roman Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered and that this was the first registration taken while Quirinius was the governor of Syria.

Syria is a country that has been torn apart for the last six years by a civil war in which hundreds of thousands of people have died and a million more have fled to safety in neighbouring countries. It is place where a relentless persecution of Christians and other minority groups has and is taking place and where Russian, American, French and British warplanes are bombing so called 'Islamic state' positions. This has resulted in ISIS fighters being pushed out of most of their major strongholds bringing to an end the group's intention to create a powerful "caliphate" that would rule across the Middle East.

The misery and destruction in Syria over the last six years is incalculable and this so St Luke tells us in his Gospel was the region of Christ's birth. In New Testament times Judea was considered pretty insignificant and so it formed part of the vast Roman province of Syria and Quirinius was the governor.

The world into which Jesus was born was a very turbulent place.

As we reflect this Christmas on our Lord's nativity and wonder and marvel at the stable scene we know that the Christmas story doesn't stop there for later will come the slaughter of children in Bethlehem by the tyrant Herod and the baby Jesus being taken to Egypt as a refugee. It's a sobering thought when we realise that the Holy family had refugee status in a foreign land.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) website there are over 60 million refugees in the world today, the highest figure ever recorded.

Wars, conflicts and persecution are forcing people to flee their homes and seek refuge and safety elsewhere. Up of 40.8 million people are displaced internally within their own countries, there are 21.3 million refugees and 3.2 million asylum seekers (people who have applied for refugee status and are awaiting the result) in industrialised countries. This means that 1 in every 113 people globally is an asylum seeker, internally displaced or a refugee. Syria (5.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and Somalia (1.1 million) produced nearly half of the world's refugees in 2015. Turkey, with 1.6 million Syrian refugees was the top hosting country in 2015, while in the EU the countries with the biggest volume of asylum seekers were Germany and Sweden.



Rev Inderjit Bhogal, a former President of the Methodist Conference and founder of City of Sanctuary has said that *the current refugee situation is crying out for an end to war and violence, for respectful dialogue between people of different religions and ideologies, equality between rich and poor, and respect for the earth and environment. Refugees are human beings and have a moral right to migrate for safety and every nation has a moral duty to rescue and protect refugees. People of different faiths, beliefs and ideologies can work together to towards these goals.*

(continued on page ***)

The power of choosing good or evil is within the reach of all.

Elizabeth Fry

Mr.X Appeal

Once again this year we are very busy with the Mr X Appeal. Every year we hold a Spring Fair and then in November we hold a Christmas Fair to raise the money we use to buy gifts for the Mr X Appeal. We raise the money a year in advance so that the gifts we buy can start to be bought in the sales throughout the year enabling us to buy more gifts. Last year 107 gifts were bought and this year we have 118 gifts to buy (all but 12 already bought).



Just some of the gifts bought last year

For those of you who don't know anything about the Mr X Appeal, lists of names and ages are printed by social services of children of all ages up to 16years and come from low income family. Each child has their own code number so that when the gift is bought a gift tag is put on the parcel with the code placed in the corner which identifies which social worker the child is registered with. Parcels can be made up of a toy, chocolate, books or any other appropriate gift for the age of the child.

Mr X himself, as you may have seen in the press, sadly passed away last year, but thankfully his son has taken over organizing the lists and is also able to collect the parcels, which for us is very helpful. Anyone can help as I'm sure you would agree that every child should have a parcel to open on Christmas morning.

The Appeal is now in its 58th year and is designed to enable the community to help a local needy child in a very personal way at Christmas time. Here at Clydach I, myself, have been involved with the Appeal for 38 years only buying a few gifts myself in the beginning. Then at Pentrepoeth Sunday

School we joined in with the rest of the Swansea and Gower circuit as we met to hold a Christmas Thanksgiving service at Brunswick Church and took along the gifts we had collected within the Sunday School for the Mr X Appeal.

Then later I held some coffee mornings at home to which I invited staff from my work place and raised money ready for the next appeal. When I took over the Wesley Guild I introduced it to the ladies and we soon turned it into an all day fund raiser. The ladies started knitting sewing and baking along with many other things. Now everything is held in the School room at Capel-y-Nant Clydach twice a year for MrX. as we went from strength to strength.

As we work a year ahead this Christmas Fair takings will be added to the Spring Fair takings already in the bank in readiness to start again in the January sales. Our Christmas Fair will be held on 18th November at Capel-y-Nant at 2pm and there will be a warm welcome for everyone.

If you would like to support Mr X, names can be had by contacting Mr X on 01792 863400 or 01792 523885 or if you have any questions please feel free to ring me on 01792 844256.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this article.

Merry Christmas to you all from Clydach Wesley Guild.

Marilyn Harry

Dreams

It's that time of year again, Oh yes it is!! **15th, 16th & 17th February 2018 is panto time at Uniting Church Sketty.** This year our traditional family pantomime is entitled "Dreams" and as usual our cast spans a huge age range and encourages all the normal audience involvement. In keeping with our wish to support local charities, proceeds from this production will go to HUFU (Hands up for Downs). So, contact John Dumelow 01792 539328 to reserve your tickets, and come along and *dream (laugh and sing) with us.*

Jan Chaplin

“Claim to Fame”

I wonder, do any of you out there have a “claim to fame” in the village, town or city where you were born?

I recall two such “claims to fame” which I’d like to share with you, relating to the village of Dreghorn, Ayrshire, Scotland, where I was brought up.

Our Wedding Reception on 4th July 1970 took place in the “Dunlop Memorial Hall”, Dreghorn, which was officially opened on Saturday 14th October, 1961, in memory of John Boyd Dunlop, F.R.C.S.I, of “tyre fame”! John Boyd Dunlop was born in Dreghorn on 5th February, 1840, and died in the year 1921. He was the inventor of the pneumatic tyre, so our wee village in the heart of Ayrshire was made famous, at least by one person’s presence, quite a long time ago!



John Boyd Dunlop

It just so happens that Doug, before retirement, worked for National Tyre Service, Swansea, and was very familiar in handling pneumatic tyres, so it was certainly a coincidence that this particular Welshman should eventually marry a wee Scottish Lassie from Dreghorn and have our Wedding Reception in the Dunlop Memorial Hall! So we could say that Doug became “associated” with the memory of John Boyd Dunlop, if only for a brief few hours, on 4th July, 1970. On the other hand, perhaps Doug could have been heard to exclaim “I can’t get away

From the memory of work, not even on my Wedding Day!”

Very sadly, many churches, for one reason or another, have either closed their doors, then been demolished, or turned into a different venue.

However, Perceton and Dreghorn Parish Church in my village was actually very cleverly dismantled in 1997, brick by brick, each brick numbered, so that the church could be shipped, then re-built in Japan, 6,000 miles away! The stained glass windows were taken in their entirety, the roof trusses lifted off complete, and pews, pulpit and organ also removed. The church now takes pride of place at Hiratsuka, 30 miles from Tokyo, as the focal point of a traditional wedding complex! So how’s that for preservation? Quite an incredible feat!

The church was originally built in Dreghorn in 1877, and closed in 1992, due to a dwindling congregation! It was empty for a few years, but I’m so glad it didn’t remain derelict for long, because it was “rescued” in 1997, and now has a “new lease of life”!

I have very happy and vivid memories of attending this church all through my childhood. It was situated on the perimeter of the village, looking onto a wonderful vista of quiet fields and meadows. The Manse remains as a “private house”, and I’ve found out that a hotel, incorporating a restaurant, now stands on the original site, so at some point, for reminiscence sake, a visit is definitely envisaged!

So I guess that is the second “claim to fame” in Dreghorn which I recall.

**Irene Dendle
Morrison Methodist Church**



Why use liturgy and is it relevant today?

Christian liturgy is a pattern for worship that is used by a Christian congregation or denomination. The Anglican Church, seeking to translate Latin Mass into English during the English Reformation, eventually developed the Book of Common Prayer. When John Wesley left the Anglican Church, and began the Methodist Movement he published 'The Sunday Service of the Methodists of North America, with other occasional Services'. This was based on the Book of Common Prayer and Wesley himself is quoted as saying 'There is no liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid scriptural, rational piety, than the Book of Common Prayer'. There have been several updated versions since that time, including 'The Book of Offices', 'The Methodist Service Book' and 'The Methodist Worship Book' which is the version we use in our Methodist Churches today.



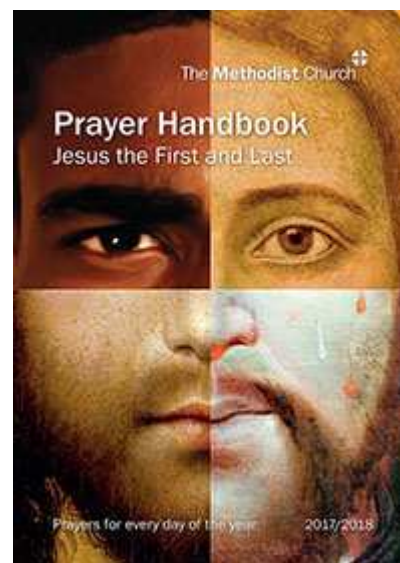
Liturgy gives a framework to worship, it is a set format that can be easily understood and followed. It also has the flexibility to be adapted or for some parts to be omitted. Our churches today tend to be flexible in the use of written liturgy via the Methodist Worship Book, using it only (in part) for Holy Communion services or for formal services such as Baptisms, Christenings etc. The format for most regular Sunday services in our churches tend to be very similar e.g. call to worship, prayers of adoration and confession, bible readings, sermon, prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, blessing, all interspersed with usually 5 hymns.

For some this can feel very restrictive, it can feel monotonous, it can lack personal authenticity for them and in turn they feel they are not able to relate to it. People can just read the words aloud, not really thinking about what they are saying, because they say it so often. For others, there could appear to be lack of room for the Holy Spirit to move because the focus is on

doing everything in the same set way each time, rather than giving time and space to see what the Holy Spirit wants to accomplish.

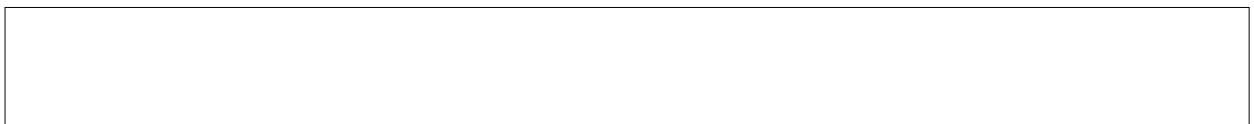
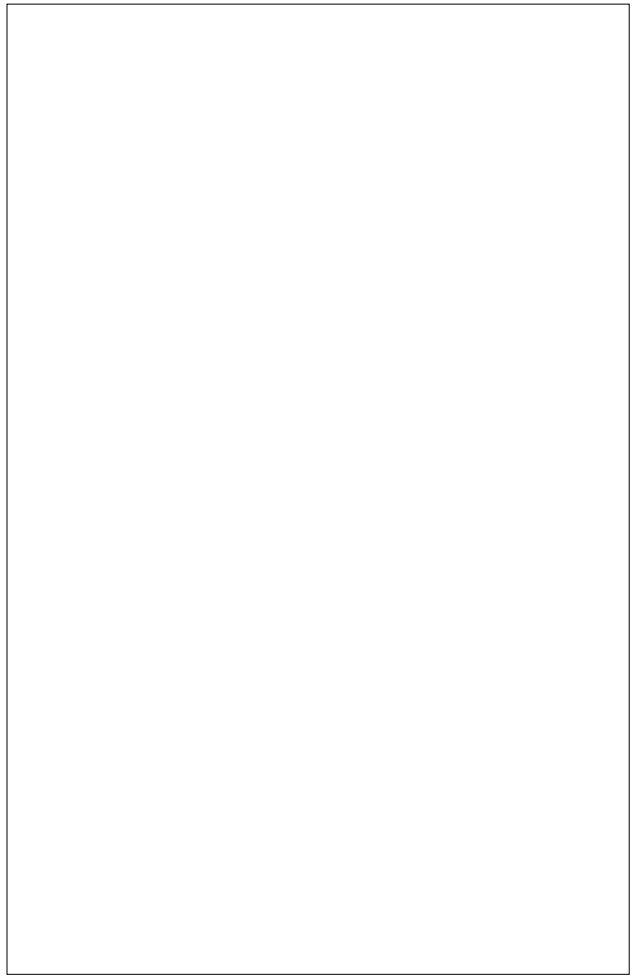
Many people however enjoy the liturgical style of worship. In reading the words aloud and corporately there is added meaning to them, reading aloud emphasises and re-affirms their faith. The familiarity of the service brings a sense of order, calmness and comfort. They know what is going to happen and when, there is no clamouring for the microphone and there are no unexpected surprises that will make them feel uncomfortable. There is also, if we allow it, room for the Holy Spirit to move when we are flexible within the structure.

For me, having come from a Presbyterian then charismatic background before becoming a Methodist I can see both sides. I have been in churches where there is so much order that it can feel suffocating and I have been in churches where there is no order at all, which can feel out of control at times. Liturgy is still valuable and still relevant to us today. Reading aloud helps me to focus, to concentrate on what I believe, and it reaffirms my faith. As a local preacher in training it is helpful to have a structure to a Sunday morning, it helps me to prepare and gives me a starting point when I prepare my services. There is also the flexibility to have a basic structure but to try new things within it, which is important as we seek to reach out to young people who may be looking for a less formal style of worship.



Cerys Davies





A lesson in love, life and people

My journey started on Wednesday 13th September 2017. Heading off from London Heathrow airport at 3am with my best friend Hannah by my side and 12 other dentists, dental nurses and dental therapists. We landed at Entebbe airport on Thursday 14th September 2017. It was very hot. Our hotel was a short bus journey from the airport and was a very basic room but luckily we had our own flushing toilet! We had a much needed rest and slept well, ready for the days ahead.

The first dental clinic we did was at an orphanage in Entebbe, which is owned and run by a Dutch woman named Natalie, who actively looks for and helps children of all ages, who have been living on the streets, abandoned or abused. Some of these children are as young as 2 days old. Many of them victims of child sacrifice, which is a belief that many Ugandans still practice. This means if a child is born pure or perfect, the family will sacrifice them to god, with the belief that this will bring them good fortune.



Alice with baby Hilda who was offered as a sacrifice to God by her mother

At the orphanage we treated 120 children, many needed extractions due to all the sugar cane and sugar in milk they were given as children. However, the happiness and positivity of the orphanage was amazing and it was an incredible environment to be a part of.

We set up clinics everyday all over Uganda heading further south each day. The places we visited included Rwenga, Musaka, Kabale and Mbale treating the locals that lived in these areas. However, many people did travel hundreds of miles just to visit our free dental clinics as they had never seen a dentist before.

The most patients we saw in one day was 271, starting at 9am and finishing at 4pm, so they were very long hard hot days, but so worth it for the help we were giving to so many people.

Our clinics were mainly set up in the local churches, which some were just wooden shacks in the mud! We also set up our dental clinic at a children's prison called Kampiringisa. We treated 130 children within the prison, however there was not nearly as many extractions at this clinic, as the children were mainly from very poor backgrounds they had never had access to sugar or sugar cane, so their oral hygiene was the best we saw on the whole trip.



Free toothbrushes and toothpaste were given out to all the people the team met.

Some of the children, as young as 3 years old, were in the prison due to being classed as 'social outcasts' as they were either gay, albino or just looked different to everybody else. As you can understand this is barbaric and a very backwards way of thinking. It was very difficult hearing these stories from the children within the prison, as they were all such lovely characters and deserved much better. However, at the end of the clinic all the children performed some music for us with the instruments that they had been learning how to play and they were amazing and we were all very impressed that they had learnt how to play an instrument in such awful circumstances.

While working in the dental clinics, I worked as a dental nurse assisting the UK dentists and the Ugandan dentists. It's a lot different in comparison to my role in the UK, as we didn't have any use of electricity.

*(continued on page **)*

(continued from page ***)

During my journey in Uganda, I have learnt so much about people, life and love. Uganda was a huge culture shock for not just myself but for my Dentaid team mates too. During the clinics that we did throughout my stay in Uganda it was very hard emotionally and physically. The days were hot and long and some of the locals were quite difficult to work on. We mainly did extractions on the majority of people that we saw, as their teeth were in such poor condition. Many had never even seen or used a toothbrush before. We gave our oral hygiene instruction classes and free toothbrushes and toothpaste to everyone we saw.

The money that was donated towards my trip has helped over 2000 people giving them the essential dental treatment that they needed. Many people that we saw had been in dental pain for over a year and our clinics in Uganda have enabled them to be seen by a dentist and be treated for the problems they had.

Overall my trip to Uganda was life changing and my outlook on life has changed dramatically for the better and I can safely say it was the best time of my life.



The DentAid team who travelled to Uganda

If you would like to see my video and photo compilation of my trip please feel free to email me and I'll be able to send you it via email or over WhatsApp.

My email: alicemaylong101@icloud.com

Alice May Long

(Alice Long was christened in Mumbles Methodist Church on Easter Sunday 1996)

Greetings to all in the circuit



We are the latest addition to the circuit's supernumerary community. Our names are Frieder and Grace Kreschnak (you will have to wait for the pronunciation until we meet!), and we have moved from Wellington, Somerset, to Loughor. Grace hails from South Wales and I from Germany. We look forward to meeting you soon.

With every blessing

Frieder & Grace



A remarkable Christmas present

Not a pack of notelets, nor chocolates, nor body lotion or soaps. It was, perhaps, an afterthought – a small penguin book wrapped in a new bath towel, the main present. The book is called “The Optician of Lampedusa”. Lampedusa is a small Mediterranean island near Sicily. Permanent residents are few, because the island is essentially a summer resort for Italian families.

The optician's small yacht set sail for an idyllic party and picnic, to celebrate the end of the holiday season with his Italian friends who were to return from their weeks of ice cream sales, balloons and buckets and spades. Suddenly the passengers realised that the sound of screeching birds was in fact the screeching of drowning people who surrounded their boat. They managed to rescue forty-seven, mostly men, and the book tells of this rescue and the aftermath and sad consequences.

Sometime after I had read this book there was an article in the Methodist Recorder about the anniversary celebrations of our church in Rome. A visiting V.I.P. was presented with a Lampedusa cross (apparently wooden crosses have been made from the wreckage of the sunken refugees' boat). My book told how police divers had recovered bodies for burial. One horrific discovery was the bodies of women, grouped in circles, with the women holding hands.



The Lampedusa cross is made from the driftwood of refugee boats

My Christmas present did for me what we had been urged to do – it put Christ into Christmas.

Alice Rutter

Painting The Town Purple



Did you know that Swansea is the only city or town in Wales to be in possession of the Purple Flag award? The Purple Flag standard, launched in 2012, is an accreditation process similar to the Green Flag award for parks and the Blue Flag for beaches. Run by the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM), Purple Flag status recognises city centres where visitors can expect an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out.

Swansea city centre was first awarded the status in 2015 in recognition of the excellence of its evening and night-time economy between 5pm and 5am. In granting the retention of the status in 2017, independent assessors, who visited the city centre, said Swansea has one of the strongest and best supported evening and night-time economy partnerships they've ever seen.

Swansea Street Pastors are proud to be one of the partner organisations involved in the city's night time economy and were mentioned in the assessors' report. Street Pastors work alongside many other organisations working to ensure that people can enjoy a safe night out, move freely in the city centre and get home safely. As Christian volunteers from churches across the city we bring a specific slant to our contribution, with prayer very much part of our ministry. Street Pastors provide a practical ministry on the city's streets at night: we provide water, flip flops, basic first aid, and a listening ear and we collect and dispose of discarded bottles and glasses and sweep up broken glass in order to prevent injuries. We are always on the look out for vulnerable people who need our assistance; often we help them contact friends or family to come and collect them or escort them to a taxi so that they are able to get home safely after their night out.

*(continued on page***)*



Starting on Wednesday January 10th – 6.30p.m at Mumbles Methodist Church

The Alpha Course is a short practical introduction to the Christian faith. It started in the early 1990's at Holy Trinity Brompton, an Anglican Church in London and has been a huge success, so much so that that last year it was being run in over 8000 churches in Britain and in over 130 countries worldwide.

Alpha is for everyone and is based around a meal and includes a DVD presentation and short discussion. It is relaxed, non-threatening, low key, friendly and fun. Alpha is a place where no question is too simple or too hostile.

'This is our 15th course and promises to be as exciting as all the rest. We will begin with a meal and then watch a large screen Alpha presentation. I invite anyone who wants to find out more about the Christian faith to come along. It's friendly and fun and there is absolutely no pressure to say, do or sign up for anything.'

Rev Howard Long

If you are interested please contact Howard on 366712 or e-mail hdlong@btinternet.com



(continued from page 3)

Rev Stephen Wild, also a former president of the Methodist Conference wrote these words

Mary and Joseph were not rich people; Jesus was born in a stable. It was a busy time when the census was being taken and this young couple had little resources. I wonder if people saw them as someone I had a conversation with on the train recently did? They described refugees as an 'inconvenience'. The kind innkeeper didn't treat them as an inconvenience as others in Bethlehem did, but helped them in their time of need.

Emmanuel, 'God-with-us', is not selective to one particular class or type of person. No one is inconvenient to the God who is with us. His great grace reaches to all people whoever and wherever they are.

As Christians we are called to follow the one who in the words of the Psalm (72 v4) was born to defend the cause of the poor, give deliverance to the needy and crush the oppressor.

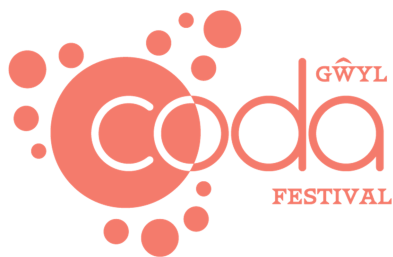
At this Christmas season I pray that the Christmas story inspires us all to re-commit ourselves to joining Jesus in that mission.

Howard

At the moment there's not a lot of information available about the programme but it's developing all the time and it's worth taking a look at the website from time to time if you can. Thanks to a grant from an organisation supporting the arts, CODA has been able to make some arts awards ahead of the Festival. The work of the artists concerned will be a part of the Festival and they will in turn promote the ethos of CODA and its news as they travel the country. The four award winners are Jane Sutcliffe, of Hijinx Theatre North Wales, who amongst other things does performance work with adults with learning disabilities; Judith Parry, who will be running an interactive poetry project; Eleanor Brown, who writes songs to inspire action; and Cass Meurig, singer/songwriter who combines traditional Welsh tunes and creative takes on Biblical themes.

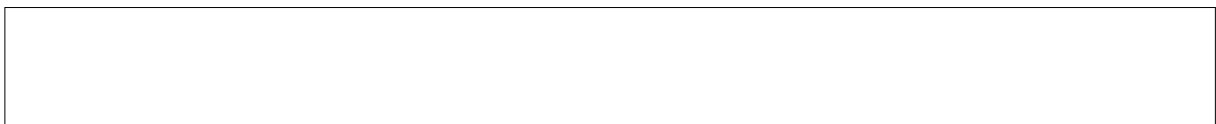
The ethos of the Festival is given as: Inclusive, Welcoming, Generous, and Diverse. "Coda reflects the people who are part of it. We have among us various expressions of faith, many different ways in which we try to join with others to put things right and a commitment to bringing new perspectives through the arts". More information and ticket bookings: www.coda.cymru

Pam Cram



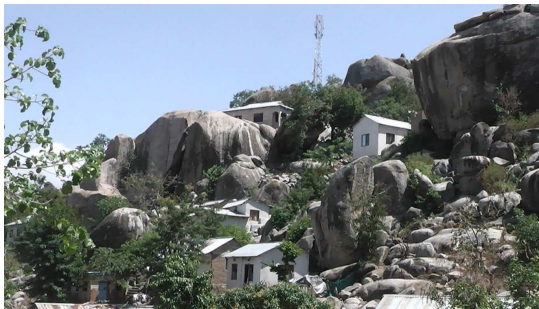
CODA – Tickets now on sale for the Festival!

CODA, which means 'arise' in Welsh, and is a musical term in Latin/English, is the title of a network of people keen to engage people in Wales in faith, music, the arts, and campaigning for justice and peace. CODA is also a Festival in which all these things will come together – and more! It will take place near Llanidloes in mid Wales on the weekend of July 27th - 29th 2018 and tickets are now on sale! The venue is a camping site but you don't have to camp – just come for a day, or find somewhere nearby to stay.



I visit Tanzania twice a year to volunteer with a couple of projects in the north of that country, just outside Arusha. However, an opportunity to explore a different part of that vast country is always welcome. During my last trip in October, I was able to visit a project supported by Amos Trust. The project, Cheka Sana, works with street children and young people in Mwanza, on the shores of Lake Victoria.

Mwanza is a large town on the Eastern shore of Lake Victoria. It is often known as "Rock City": not because it is full of ageing rock stars, but because of the peculiarly shaped granite boulders littering the surrounding hills! A very attractive town, but Cheka Sana estimates that there are probably 800 children and young people living on the streets.



Rock City

It is impossible to condense all the different aspects of the project, and all that I experienced into a few paragraphs, but I hope this gives a taste. On arrival at the airport, I was met by Eric, who acted as taxi driver throughout my 2 days. A meeting with Catherine, the Project Manager, revealed my programme for the two days, which basically involved shadowing the project workers as they went about their normal daily activities, including going out onto the streets at night to meet the children. The overall aim of Cheka Sana is, firstly, to re-unite the street children with their parents and families, and, secondly, to enable the young people to set up their own businesses.



The reasons why children (some as young as 7) are living on the streets are numerous: breakdown in relationships at home, escaping abusive parents/carers, parents/carers who are simply unable to care for their children, peer pressure or even the imagined "excitement" of living on the streets. Initial contact is made by the Street Outreach team, who go out onto the streets in the evening and early morning to befriend the children, and to begin to build trust. Four things stay in my mind: the patience and gentleness of the Outreach Workers; the respect the children have for them; the kindness and care shown by many security guards and stall and café owners, who keep an eye on the children, reporting any issues to the street workers and some also providing food and shelter; and the sight of children, some as young as 7, sleeping on hard concrete in the open air.

Once trust is built, the children are invited to visit the Day Centres. At these centres, the children are assessed for any medical/malnutrition issues, and through games, story, arts and crafts, sport and group discussions the children receive basic education in life skills, hygiene etc potentially over a 3 month period, although no child is forced to attend. One-to-one counselling is also provided. For those children where it is not possible to return to their families in the short term, they are invited to stay at the residential centres (one for the boys and one for the girls), where long-term support is given. Contact by the project workers with their families and other key people in their community is an essential part of their work and gradually, if there is a willingness by both the parents/carers and their children to be re-united, the children spend more and more time with their parents/carers, and less time living at the centre. Meetings between the children and their parents are supervised by a Case Worker. A successful outcome may take up to 24 months.



Dennis (ex-street child and now outreach worker),

*(continued on page ***)*



(continued from page ***)

Coincidentally, my younger son Nigel met two of the Outreach Workers at the Street Child World Cup in Cape Town in 2010 and Rio de Janeiro in 2014 when they themselves were street children: Dennis and Sadouk were members of the Tanzanian Street Child team in Cape Town and then ambassadors for the team in Rio.

The Youth Programme works with older teenagers and those in their twenties, who are also on the streets or, in the case of the young women, working on the streets as prostitutes. I was able to experience first-hand the work with young women. Again, the project workers befriend and gain the trust of the young people and, after a few months, they are placed in "Association Groups" of 10-15 women. A social worker is allocated to each group teaching them health and hygiene, sex education, child-care and self-defence. In addition, the skills and strengths of the group are identified, so that the women are enabled to set up a business venture (for example, bulk-buying maize and re-selling it in their communities). All expenses are paid for the first year by the project. Any profit made enables the women to give one another loans so that they can each set up their own additional businesses. Of the two groups I visited, both were financially solvent after only 2 months and the girls had left behind their abusive lives of prostitution.



a group of ex-prostitutes who now run their own business selling maize

My overall impression of Cheka Sana is one of total dedication and professionalism of the workers to the children and young people, and the obvious respect and trust that is built up. Clearly, the project achieves its aims, although, of course, not every child or young person is a "success story". The support provided by Amos Trust is highly valued, especially as Amos Trust does not measure outcomes simply in terms of percentage success rate!

My thanks to all involved in the project for enabling me to see first-hand the wonderful work amongst the "Dirty Angels", as Garth Hewitt, Amos Trust founder, has called them.

NB Some of you will have seen Garth performing at Uniting Church Sketty during the past few years. Amos Trust's website is: www.amostrust.org

amos trust
justice and hope for the forgotten

Alan Cram

The Vigil – Palm Sunday 25th March 2018

I know, I know, it's not even Christmas yet! But here is an advance date for your diaries. On Palm Sunday evening, 25th March 2018, the Fforestfach Drama Group will be performing the play called The Vigil. It will be performed in the Sanctuary at Sketty. This is a dramatic play of the Easter story translated into a modern setting in a small town American courtroom. The action occurs between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. A man known as the Gardener is on trial, charged with having moved Christ's body from the tomb. The characters involved in the great drama are called to the stand. Each tells in everyday language what they saw and how they reacted, and as each contributes evidence for the defence or the prosecution, the familiar story achieves stirring suspense.

Details about timing and tickets will be available nearer the time, but if you would like to start Holy Week in this way (and maybe bring a friend or a neighbour), then put it in your diary now!

Rev Leslie



(continued from page ***)

If you would like to know more about the work of Street Pastors, including the work of the Prayer Pastors please contact me: Win Hawkins (01792 413639)

Win Hawkins

Swansea Night Shelter 2018

Once again, on behalf of our Circuit, Sketty is hosting the Swansea Night Shelter. Churches from around our city have come together and are busy preparing to receive up to 12 guests a night in January, February and March.

I'm delighted that we have around 30 people from Sketty and elsewhere in the circuit who have volunteered to help, and who have committed to do the one hour refresher training in preparation.

Volunteering at the night shelter sounds altruistic – but it's so much more than that. It's enjoyable! You get to know people you perhaps otherwise wouldn't, and if last year is anything to go by, it's quite literally a laugh! Laughter is good for the soul – and both the guests and the volunteers would testify to this.

If you are reading this, thinking that you would like to be a part of it, there are two practical ways:

- You can pray. Pray for the guests who are living on the street, that through the night shelter they will be able to access assistance to lead them into accommodation; pray for the volunteers and the churches taking part.
- You could make a dessert for 6-8 people. Sketty will be hosting for six weeks every Saturday from 6 January to 10 February. If twelve people each made a dessert (ie two a week) we would cover the whole period. If you could help in this way, please contact me, so that we can work out the logistics (if necessary desserts could be frozen so that we could arrange pick up earlier in the week).

Thank you!

Rev Leslie

Mumbles Messy Church



We held our first Messy Church in the Victoria Hall during October half-term. It was run jointly between Mumbles Methodist Church and Castleton Chapel. The theme was Jesus, Light of the World and there were lots of craft activities, a story, some songs and pizza to end. It was a huge success and 49 children came along and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Huge thanks to all those who helped out and came along on the day. We are looking forward to planning more in 2018.





Pure Joy!

*A Christmas Carol Service
with a Young People's
Jazz Orchestra, set in the
warmth of Murton Church.*

*Directed by Ben Walker. With Simon Price, Harry
Hutchins, Josie Maggs, Rudado Mugabe, Luke Sarfas,
Emma Kett-White, Thomas Rees, Beth Evans, Evan
Extence and Katie Stephens.*

*Saturday 23rd December 2017.
5.00 pm and 7.30 pm.*

Information: 01792 230226. Murton Methodist Church.



Get ready to make a splash at ...

THE BIG DAY OUT

Saturday 3rd February 2018
Make sure you save the date!

ONLY £10 PP

Meeting at Mumbles
Methodist Church, Swansea
at 10.00 am followed by swimming at LC2.
For more information keep an eye on the Methodist
Youth Wales Facebook page.

The Methodist Church
Yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd

 Hoffwch ni ar **Methodist** Like us on  Facebook **Youth Wales** Facebook

 children & youth

 wales
SYNOD
CYMRU

The Story of Trees

In the weeks before Christmas, the trees are cut down,
Express mass transported to cities and towns,
To be sold and rehomed, hung with tinsel and lights
That twinkle away through the long winter nights.
We gather around them, give gifts and make merry,
Devour the chocolates and knock back the sherry.
But what does the seasonal centrepiece mean?
Is it just a traditional Christmas card scene?
A hangover from our Victorian past?
(Only now we have trees where the needles hold fast...)
Or can we say more? Well, listen in, please,
For the story of life is the story of trees.

Dig down through the dirt, through the frost and the snow;
Let's follow some tree roots, and see where they go.
Rewind to another, less Christmassy Eve:
A girl in a garden, surrounded by trees,
Planted and watered by God, the Creator,
With Adam and Eve there to act as curators,
With one simple rule, one fruit not to eat,
No matter how tempting, no matter how sweet
Or how juicy or ripe it might look to the eye,
Because God's rule was clear: if you eat it, you die.
To us that sounds harsh, like he's trying to oppress them –
But think about all he provided to bless them:
A paradise, perfect in every respect.
Was obedience really too much to expect?

Well, you know the story – so picture the scene:
The girl in the garden so luscious and green,
When along comes the Devil, disguised as a snake,
Slithers up to the girl and says to her "Take
Some fruit from the tree – you will surely not die,
That thing that God said – it's probably a lie.
And maybe I'm just going out on a limb,
But I think he's afraid of you being like him"

Eve was persuaded; she broke God's command.
She wanted His wisdom; she reached out her hand,
And the glistening globe was plucked from its place,
A bauble that cursed the entire human race.
She gave some to Adam; he ate just the same,
And a species was plunged into guilt, into shame.
God's sentence was passed: the man and his wife
Were ejected from Eden, cut off from true life.
Like needles from trees, we fall to the earth
But there's hope – there is Christmas – there's one special birth.

*(continued on page***)*



(continued from page***)

So fast forward through thousands of years worth of history
Until you reach one quite incredible mystery.
The first tree recounted man trying to be God;
This tells of God become man – and what's odd
Is he didn't come checking to see who'd been good,
Because no one would qualify – none of us could.
No – he came to give rebels an undeserved gift,
To proclaim perfect peace, to heal a rift.
This tree marks the moment when things turned around:
A light in the darkness, a seed in the ground,
That would grow, that would blossom would live his life right
As the true son of God, his Father's delight.

And yet, Jesus Christ was cut down in his prime,
He did nothing wrong – he committed no crime
But nevertheless, humanity – we –
Hung the Light of the World up to die, on a tree.
No needles, but nails pierced his hands and his feet,
His head crowned with thorns, a King's downfall complete.
And gathered around him to scorn, not to sing –
the world said goodbye to its once new-born King.

So the scripture's fulfilled, chapter and verse,
Saying he who died hung on a tree is accursed.
But the question that comes is -whose curse did he face?
Is this triumph of evil, or triumph of grace?
the twist in God's plotline, the story of trees,
Is that Jesus was nailed there for you and for me.
and tree number three's not the end of the story;
On day number three, Jesus Christ rose in glory,
With evil defeated, its captives set free,
And outcasts in-grafted to God's family tree.

History's big picture? The trees tell it all:
The tragedy, triumph; the rise and the fall.
These trees all around us, so carefully arranged,
Are monuments marking when everything changed.
And the one in your living room, there by tradition,
Remembers a birth that was God on a mission
To rescue the world, give its people salvation,
Bring life out of death; from despair, celebration.

David Crofts ©

This poem was printed with the kind permission of Mr. David Crofts. More of his poems may be found on Christ Church Central's You Tube channel and he can be reached by email at dave.crofts@christchurchcentral.co.uk

