

# CONNECT

The Magazine of the Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit

Autumn 2015

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### **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: myra43@virginmedia.com

**Deadline for the next issue is 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

## New Local Preacher Recognised



*From left to right – Selina Taylor, Mr Alan Cram ( LP Secretary) and Rev Howard Long*

On Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August at Pitton Methodist Church a special service was held to recognise Miss Selina Taylor as a fully accredited Local Preacher in the Methodist Church.

The service was led by the Superintendent Minister of the Circuit Rev Howard Long with Bible readings from Mr David Cann, Mrs June Thomas and Selina's mother Mrs Lynne Taylor. The Local Preachers secretary Mr Alan Cram read a special letter to Selina from the President of the Methodist Conference, Rev Stephen Wild, encouraging her in her preaching ministry.

Local Preachers conduct worship and preach routinely in Methodist circuits or, by invitation, as "visiting preachers" in other circuits. Rev Howard Long said, '40% of our services in Swansea and Gower are conducted by Local Preachers, but nationally throughout Methodism this rises to 70%. We owe a great debt of gratitude to lay preachers who bring so much to our church. We are truly blessed in Swansea to have 14 local preachers with another 5 in training.

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## Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit



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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Sketty

Coffee mornings for charities on the 1st Saturday  
of each month 10.00 a.m. - 12 noon.

### Brunswick

Bible Study 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at  
11.00 a.m.  
Every Wednesday 10.30 a.m. FAN 'Friends and  
Neighbours'  
11.30 a.m. Intercessory Prayer Meeting

### Murton

Coffee Morning every Tuesday 10.00 a.m. to  
11.30 a.m. in the Wesley Room, serving tea,  
coffee and biscuits.  
Occasional special fundraisers.  
Everyone welcome to drop in.

### Mumbles

Theo's Coffee Shop - open daily 9.00 a.m. –  
5.00 p.m.  
Christianity Explored Course – Starts Thursday  
15<sup>th</sup> October at 7.00 p.m.  
Christmas Fayre – Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November  
10.00 a.m.

### Wesley

Lite Bites & Fellowship every Thursday at 12 noon  
(from 17<sup>th</sup> September)  
Alpha Course – Tuesday Mornings 10.30 a.m. at  
the church. Starts 22nd September.  
Tuesday Ladies' Group every Tuesday 7.30 p.m.  
(during school term time)

### Clydach

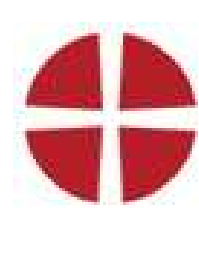
Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September – Macmillan Coffee  
Morning 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon  
Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November – Christmas Craft Fair  
2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.

### Editor

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## Message from the Superintendent



Welcome to the Autumn edition of Connect, the magazine that keeps the Methodist Churches in Swansea and Gower in touch with one other and to share news of all the exciting things happening in our churches and communities.

September in Methodism always marks the beginning of a new connexional year. It's a time when church programmes gets back to some normality after the summer break. Church councils and Circuit meetings are on the horizon and Harvest is but a few weeks away.

September is also the time when ministers who have moved over the summer will be taking their first services in their new churches. Even though our circuit has not been involved in stationing this year we remember in our prayers those circuits and ministers that have.

One big change taking place in the circuit is that Bernard Gwyther is stepping down as circuit treasurer and is being replaced by Martin Gregson. I would like to thank Bernard for the dedication and vision that he has brought to the role over the years and would like to wish Martin well as he takes on this important position.

As we begin this new connexional year in Methodism I urge every member of our church to make prayer a priority.

The Acts of the Apostles tells us that great numbers of people were coming to the Lord through the ministry of the church at Antioch. It was wonderful that day by day new converts were joining the fellowship.

The biggest danger a church faces is that it can get lulled into thinking that God is somehow pleased because the church is full but what matters most is not whether the church is full of people but whether the people in the church are full of God.

That is what was happening at Antioch. They were thriving not because of their extensive social programme but because they had a real longing for God and made prayer a priority. We read that it was while this church was

worshipping the Lord and fasting that the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' This was the prelude to the great missionary journey's recorded in Acts.

How do we discern the will of God for the church today? It has to be as we wait upon God in prayer and worship. Heaven help the church that tries to discern God's will through a committee.

In the interests of democracy, good church order and structure we have to have committees but the sad truth is that there are far too many people in our churches sat on committees rather than in prayer meetings.

### Refugee Crisis

This summer has been dominated by the refugee crisis which has been getting increasingly worse over the past year. With the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa showing no sign of abating many people including families and children are making perilous journeys in order to escape to mainland Europe.

The horrifying picture of young Aylan Kurdi, whose lifeless body washed up on a Turkish beach caused outrage throughout the world. The fate of this Syrian child whose life ended in the Mediterranean seems like it might have been a watershed – People are now demanding that governments take action to do all in their power to resolve this crisis and to alleviate the plight of those fleeing war and persecution.

Let us not forget that Jesus our Lord was himself a refugee. As a baby he was taken by his parents to Egypt in order to escape King Herod's murderous regime and kept there until it was safe to return home.

Our Scriptures teach the importance of love and compassion for all who are destitute, including people of other nationalities who come to live in our communities. We are instructed to not fear the stranger but to love our neighbours.

*(continued on page 4)*

***Is what you're living for worth Christ dying for?  
(Epitaph of Leonard Ravenhill)***



## 1. Burundi: The work must go on

Burundi, situated almost in the middle of Africa, is currently one of the world's poorest countries. In 1993, civil tension between ethnic groups came to a head in a conflict that lasted for 12 years. This year has seen a renewal of political tensions caused by disputed presidential and parliamentary elections. Thousands of people have fled the country and become refugees in neighbouring countries, including Tanzania.



Andrew Edwards, All We Can's Partnership Manager, writes: "Despite political instability and violence, All We Can's partners are continuing to help people in one of the world's poorest countries to fulfill their potential. Political developments in Burundi have pushed it to the brink of a crisis, but for now our partners are able to continue delivering their projects. We are proud to work with partners who are so committed to the communities they serve and are going to be doing all we can to support them during this uncertain time."

## 2. Nepal

The Himalayan country of Nepal, tucked between China in the north and India to the south, is the poorest and most unequal country in Asia. 8 million people live below the poverty line but women and girls in Nepal are often denied their basic human rights and have limited access to basic healthcare and education.



Many of Nepal's challenges were compounded by the two major earthquakes that occurred in April and May 2015, measuring over 7.5 in magnitude. Through trusted local partners, **All We Can** is committed to supporting recovery in Nepal. Here is one woman's story:

Sapana Shrestha, aged 26, lives a village in northern-central Nepal. On the day of the 25<sup>th</sup> April earthquake, she recalls, "I was sitting in home doing some housework and my children were playing around me. Suddenly the land was moving rapidly, I didn't know what was happening. The children were frightened. I stood under the door and I became very nervous. I did not think I would be safe from the earthquake. After a long time the earthquake stopped a little bit and then I ran to a public place with my two little sons."

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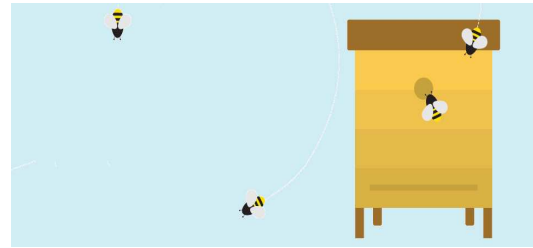


The walls of my home started to fall down and then totally collapsed. I was very shocked; I couldn't bring out any equipment from my home. Only on the second day did we start to search for food, clothes, mobile phones and other materials from our collapsed home.

When ERDCN (**All We Can's** partner in Nepal) provided a tent and mats we were very happy, as now we can save our family, food, clothes and other materials. We thank ERDCN for visiting our home and community, listening to our painful experiences, and providing some relief materials along with counselling, sympathy and motivation."

Alan Cram

## Harvest 2015 – create a buzz!



This harvest be inspired by stories of how people are working in partnership to cultivate God's creation and improve lives. Each church has received a beehive collection box and information pack, so if you want to contribute as a church, you can do so. If you are leading worship, or involved with young people in church or in schools, you may want to download the Harvest Resources. <http://www.allwecan.org.uk/service-materials/harvest>

If you want me to come and speak about the work of All We Can, please don't hesitate to contact me. **Alan Cram (01792) 845942**

**Do all the good you can.  
By all the means you can.  
In all the ways you can.  
In all the places you can.  
At all the times you can.  
To all the people you can.  
As long as ever you can.**

(John Wesley)

## CIRCUIT MISSION SUNDAY

**October 11th 2015**

**At Brunswick Methodist Church**

**3.30 p.m. Presentation of the ZRJ TRUST Zimbabwe Orphans**

**4.30 p.m. Faith Tea**

**6.00 p.m. Circuit Service and launch of the Circuit Project 2015/16**

## Ty Croeso – Clydach

A High Street ministry including foodbank distribution, drop-in and counselling.

Contact Rev Pam Cram 845942 for details

## GOWER MESSY CHURCH

**Saturday 3p.m to 5p.m**

**19<sup>th</sup> September – Glebe Hall, Bishopston**

**10<sup>th</sup> October - Village Hall, Reynoldston**

*Any method of evangelism will work if God is in it.*

*Leonard Ravenhill*



### A look back at the Conference

The 2015 Conference met at the Southport Theatre and Convention Centre. Here is an overview of some of the decisions of the Conference. For the full details, please see the Minutes of the Conference and [www.methodist.org.uk/conference](http://www.methodist.org.uk/conference).

### The President and Vice-President of the Conference

The Revd Steve Wild was inducted as President and Dr Jill Barber as the Vice-President of the Conference.



The President of the Conference challenged the Church to bring one new person to faith at every chapel or congregation across the Connexion. He said "Let's take God seriously. I want to help us in the task of evangelism, to put mission on the agenda and give our churches an aim to win a person for Christ." He reminded the Conference that wherever our mission takes us, God has gone there before us.

In her inaugural address, Dr Jill Barber spoke of the "four Ps" of Methodism: Prophecy, Pray, Passion and Protest. "Have we lost that passion for living out the gospel through social and political action?" she asked. "Is there a danger that we have privatised our faith, so that it makes us feel better as individuals, but we fail to relate it to wider community and global issues? I want to call on Methodists to get involved in local and

national politics. To become a voice for change, challenging the politics of self-interest and upholding the politics of the common good."



The Conference received into Full Connexion 49 new presbyters, as well as another 5 by transfer or reinstatement. The Conference also received into Full Connexion nine deacons. On the afternoon and evening of 28 June, seven Ordination Services were held at venues including Blackburn, Chester, Liverpool and Southport.

The Conference recommended 23 people to proceed to ministerial training.

**Courage Cost and Hope:** The Report on the Past Cases Review is a hugely significant piece of work. The report was published earlier this year, and the focus at the Conference was on the implementation of its 23 recommendations. The Conference appointed the Revd Gwyneth Owen as chair of the body charged with ensuring that the recommendations are implemented across the whole Connexion.

The implementation group will report to the Conferences of 2016 and 2017. The review itself recommends that a draft supervision

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policy should come to the Council in October 2015 and that a training course be developed by December and piloted throughout 2016. The final version of the course should roll out across the Connexion from January 2017.

The Revd Dr Martyn Atkins repeated the “full and unreserved” apology the Church made when the report was published. “It is essential that we recognise the failings of the past,” he said. “However, without a commitment to change and the willingness to take the hard steps to achieve that change, we know that an apology alone could never be enough. This is the challenge that lies before the Church today and will be a continuing challenge for us for many years to come.”

**Ethical investment** The report from the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI), along with related Notice of Motion (see below), looked at a variety of issues. But the two of highest profile related to investment in Nestlé and in fossil fuels. The Conference received the JACEI report and a separate report into Nestlé and Breast Milk Substitutes Marketing.

The Conference received a report on Fossil Fuels and Ethical Investment and the replies to several memorials on the subject encouraged the Methodist people to study the report and the Central Finance Board’s policy and position papers on this subject.

**Positive Working Together** The Conference received Positive Working Together, a major piece of work looking at bullying and harassment. The report requires districts to appoint someone to provide information for those experiencing bullying or harassment issues, and that training and support be provided to district reconciliation groups.

The report also directed that the Guidelines agreed by the Council should be promoted.

**Reaffirmation of Baptism with Water** The Faith and Order Committee produced an Order for the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith Including the Use of Water. This is not a service of Baptism and care must be

taken to ensure this principle is not compromised.

**The budget and accounts** The Conference approved both the Connexional Central Services Budget and the Unified Statement of Connexional Finances. It also agreed the District Allocations for 2015/16, a 2% rise in line with the plan agreed for the three years to 2016/17.

The total planned income for 2016/17 is £29.1 million, down from the £30.4 million budgeted for 2014/15. Total expenditure will rise to £36.3 million in 2015/16 from the budgeted £33.6 million this year. The increase in net expenditure is in line with the agreed reserves policy, and is budgeted to fall in subsequent years.

**The General Secretary’s Report** In his last report to the Conference as General Secretary, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins spoke of the privilege he has felt in his time in this office. He told the Conference how the work of the Revd Dr Robert Schnase of the United Methodist Church has been valuable in helping the Connexional Leaders’ Forum to focus on “two key themes: the accountability and flourishing of our ministers, and the fruitfulness and growth of our churches.”

**3Generate: Methodist Children and Youth Assembly** The report from 3Generate challenged the Church on a range of issues, including transgender rights and pornography. The Conference also heard that the success of the 3Generate event had prompted a move to a bigger venue for this year.

**Connexionalism** The Conference also received a major report on connexionalism, and what it means to be a connexional church in the twenty-first century. The Conference recommended the report, and relevant sections of Called to Love and Praise, for study across the Connexion.

The report looks at the challenges to connexionalism, but also the strength and support that it brings. The report says: “For Methodists connexionalism is not an abstract principle or a piece of historical

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baggage, but a way of being Christian.” The report asks hard questions about what connexionalism offers today, and although it offers its own answers, the whole Church is invited to discuss these as well.

**Secretary of the Conference** The Conference appointed the Revd Gareth J Powell to serve as the Secretary of the Conference, and the Revd Helen D Cameron to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Conference, both for six years from 1 September.

**Fellowship groups** The Methodist Fellowship Groups, congregations of Methodists united by a shared ethnicity or language, announced their intention to grow in deeper relationships, mutual partnerships and genuine integration in a report to the Methodist Conference.

The report, presented by the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, highlighted the importance of being one family with one mission.

About the report, Dr Atkins said, “We are committed to find continuing and healthy ways to harvest the richness brought into our Church by international communities of Methodists. Indeed, every part of the life of the Church is made better because of our life together, and there is much that we can learn from each other.”

Other matters proposed as Notices of Motion were adopted. These include:

- directing that a former presbyter who wishes to return to the active work must first seek reinstatement as a local preacher;
- directing the Council to make arrangements for and oversee research into the impact and effect of Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission;
- extending its condolences to the families of those killed in terrorist attacks around the world, offering its prayers for all affected, condemning all forms of violence conducted in the name of religion, supporting efforts at challenging extremist ideologies that seek to undermine the liberties of civil society, and calling upon the Methodist people of Great Britain to engage in constructive dialogue with people of other faiths;
- directing the Council to engage the support

of relevant connexional staff and work with Christian peace organisations to hold a web-streamed act of worship to mark 100 years since the right to conscientious objection was enshrined in law;

- assuring Christians around the world of the solidarity and prayers of the Methodist people, advocating protection of the freedom of religion and belief for people of all faiths, recommitting itself to encouraging those political actions that build a safer world where justice and peace ensure security and freedom for all;

- encouraging members of the Methodist Church to make representations regarding future savings in the welfare budget, and encouraging the Council to ensure that the Connexional Team continues to work towards enabling the Methodist Church and its members to speak out alongside those affected by changes in welfare provision and challenge the structural causes of poverty in Britain;

- supporting the “Home for Good” campaign in relation to the need for foster and adoptive families;

- directing the Council to appoint a working group to prepare a draft Conference Statement and discussion materials appropriate for different age groups on pornography;

- requesting the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment to work with the Central Finance Board to develop clear criteria for possible divestment from fossil fuels companies, and directing the Council to examine how these issues can be raised effectively with Her Majesty’s Government;

- directing the Marriage and Relationships Task Group, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, to ensure that the issues around cohabitation are considered and directing that, should the Conference decide to revisit the Church’s definition of marriage, consideration of cohabitation should form part of the process;

- calling on Methodist churches to consider

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***It is not the strength of your faith but the object of your faith that actually saves you***  
***Timothy Keller***



offering sanctuary to at least one migrant person or family who have reached Europe across the Mediterranean, and directing the Secretary of the Conference to write to Her Majesty's Government advocating a more generous and compassionate approach to this situation;

- offering prayerful support to the work of the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem.

The Conference referred motions to the Council concerning:

- the payment of National Insurance contributions where an individual has part-time employments with more than one church body;
- the marking of significant anniversaries in 2018 and 2019 for Methodist Homes (MHA) and Action for Children;
- the issue of assisted dying, and whether further work is required in this area.

### Fun of the Fair



In spite of showery weather, the second Clydach Village Fair was again a success. For years the first weekend in August has seen the announcement of the 'Clydach in Bloom' competition. The idea of a Village Fete grew from this, in an attempt to bring the community together more. The 'Village Green', a large grassy area near the Cricket Club, was taken over for stalls, a dog show (including a display by police dogs), bouncy castle and other attractions for children. This year Ty Croeso took a stall, both to raise money and raise the profile of the project.

Our new roll up banner, almost literally 'hot off the press', had its first outing, and leaflets children were handed out liberally.

On the Sunday there was an interdenominational community service in the marquee, followed by a cream tea provided by members of the Parish churches. The service was organised by Rev. Pam and Alan Cram, on behalf of CYTUN Clydach, and included an invitation to organisations to bring items forward symbolising their contribution to the local community or society more widely. These included the Guides, Brownies, Rainbows; the Clydach Historical Society; Calvary Pentecostal Church; Wesley Guild; the Parish children's group 'Acorns'; Ty Croeso; Townswomen's Guild; the Apostleship of the Sea; and the Christian Aid group. Alan also brought items to represent themes such as environment, health, and education. The overall theme was 'Partnership' and Pam illustrated it using two banners from Capel y Nant, one with many hand shapes and the words Gyda'n Gilydd, Gyda Duw (with one another and with God), and the other naming several important 'values' which should underpin our partnership – Forgiveness, Care, Loyalty, Support, Purity, Respect, Love, Friendship. A small group of people from the Parish presented the 'Open the Book' version of The Widow's Mite in dramatic form, complete with coins dropping noisily into the 'Temple coffers' – emphasising that all contributions to our partnership are valuable and all to be celebrated.

The service was attended by members of the Community Council, including the Chair, Julie Davies, who has supported Ty Croeso as her project for this past year.



Pam Cram

*My main ambition in life is to be on the devil's most wanted list*

*Leonard Ravenhill*



Forget Me Not Dementia Day Clubs were formed 4 years ago to provide much needed support for dementia sufferers and their carers. The clubs provide a space where couples can share experiences and be stimulated by social interaction in a safe, positive environment, with the emphasis being to improve quality of life.

The clubs were launched at Siloam Chapel, Killay on April 14 2011 and the Mumbles branch was opened in the Victoria Hall in January 2012.

We provide a friendly atmosphere where we play table games, carpet bowls and enjoy a cup of coffee/tea and toast together. We also regularly arrange short trips followed by lunch.

The Forget-Me-Not Charity was selected as a recipient for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service 2015 (QAVS) and has received permission to use the official QAVS Logo.



A signed certificate from Her Majesty The Queen and an English Crystal with the logo insignia was presented by The Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, Mr D Byron Lewis. The presentation was made at Sketty Hall on 14<sup>th</sup> July.

We were informed by the Lord Lieutenant that the award is the equivalent to an MBE.



*David Moss MBE with the Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan*

**Chris Capel**

## LOCAL PREACHERS NEWS

**A presentation will be made to Mrs Anne Gregson on completing 40 years as a local preacher at Clydach on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October at 3.00 p.m.**

### Sunday Evening Youth Groups

**Murton** – 7.00 p.m. *Am I Bovered* meeting at The Lamplighter Bookshop, Bishopston (meeting as per plan - see back page)

**Mumbles/Sketty** – meeting weekly 6.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. in Mumbles Youth Room. For year 6 and upward.

All Welcome.

Contact Cerys Davies Tel 07900 921581

***God changes caterpillars into butterflies, sand into pearls and coal into diamonds using time and pressure. He's working on you too***

***Rick Warren***



## Laptops for Tanzania



Some months ago I sent out a request for unwanted laptops, which I take out to Tanzania. Thanks to those of you who were able to help: they have been delivered to very grateful people, mainly students. There is always a demand for more, so if you have a laptop gathering dust, or you know of anyone who might have one, please get in touch. I can arrange to have the hard disc wiped clean. Many thanks. **Alan Cram. (01792 845942)**

### Zimbabwe Methodist Fellowship in UK and Ireland

Dear friends,

I would like to give you brief information about Zimbabwe Methodist Fellowship in UK. This is because a lot of people have been asking me about ZMF and the significance of our red uniforms after seeing some pictures I posted on my facebook and twitter from our recent Convention at Yarnfield Park Conference Centre in Staffordshire.

I attended a very successful Zimbabwe Methodist Fellowship Convention in Yarnfield Conference Centre in Staffordshire. This was held from the 6th to the 8th August 2015. It was a warm and wonderful time we shared together in Fellowship and worship. Normally women have their own Convention separate to the men's but this year it was a combined Ruwadzano/Manyano and MCU men's Fellowship because it was also a farewell for the Chaplain.

Convention is the time when all recruits who have gone through trial and have passed their tests are made full members of these uniformed Fellowship. Therefore it is a very emotional time when recruits say their allegiance to the Fellowship organisation. To worship God, by praying every day, reading the bible, teaching children to know God and love and respect elders in the community and to follow all the stipulated rules and regulations on the Ruwadzano/Manyano and MCU.

The ladies' uniform is a black skirt which represents the sins of mankind; the red blouse represents the Blood of Jesus which cleanses the sins. The white collar and white

hat represent the cleansing that is done by the Blood of Jesus. On the blouse are 4 white buttons and the belt also has one button making them 5 white buttons. These represent the 5 wounds on the body of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. This uniform is very special to us Zimbabwe Methodist Women's Fellowship Ruwadzano /Manyano. Every member yearns to wear it.



Therefore at the annual Convention there is a special time when vayedzwa/converts are bloused. This is a very special time for all members. This year there were 36 new women converts and 6 men. All the Ruwadzano/Manyano and MCU members, do participate in competitions for dressing, singing and drama. For dressing they look for whether the members keep their uniforms, shoes and hats clean. Those who win are given trophies. The drama for this year was on the parable of the prodigal son. The song was on the Convention's THEME. "God's agents of Transformation" (Romans 12: 2)

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On the first day the President of the Ruwadzano/Manyano, Mrs Nyawo, started the Convention with devotions with a lot of songs of praise and worship to warm up the people as they arrived. This was followed by the Theme exposure led by the Chaplain, Revd.Nyawo.

The topics covered throughout the Convention were, Financial Management in the Home. Christian Fellowship, What is in the name of God, Cultural Integration, Grieving, Gender roles in the home/family, Sacrificial Relationships, Our children identifying as Zimbabweans in UK. The final topic was "Being Ambassadors for Christ to the World." There was a session of praise and worship in the morning, afternoon and evening of each day. There was time for intercession and testimonies from the new members telling their journey with Christ. Also there was a plenary session for members to ask questions directed to all the ministers present. The whole Convention was a blessing to many including myself. I have only written the highlights of what took place.

Zimbabwe Methodist is a product of the British Methodist in UK. Methodist Missionaries went to Zimbabwe and converted many Zimbabweans into this wonderful denomination among others. However with the situation in Zimbabwe a lot of people left the country following their former colonialists. Like everyone else Methodists were also among these people. On coming to UK, Methodists were warmly welcomed into the churches where ever they were. However many Zimbabwean Methodists felt that even if they attended the main stream church services they felt they wanted to worship in their own mother tongue and have fellowship with each other. The British Methodists were very understanding to the requests to a point of allowing the Zimbabweans everywhere in UK to hold their Zimbabwe Fellowship Services. This has been taking place in 28 churches where there are Zimbabwean Methodists. As a result of this there was a great need of co-ordinating of all the Zimbabwe Fellowship members in UK and Ireland.

A request for a minister from Zimbabwe was made and the British Methodist agreed to pay 50% of the Stipend. It was agreed that the

minister would also have to save in the circuit where he is stationed for the 5 years he is there. This has been happening now for 10 years. It was announced that the British Methodist have reduced their contribution to 25%.

There are 900 Zimbabwe Fellowship members and of these 250 are youth. This is encouraging that there is a base for the future .However all these are also members of the Methodist Church in Britain. Ruwadzano/ Manyano is the main base of the fellowship boasting strong 400 women members. We have 8 Ministers in the British Conference. That includes 2 deacons. There are 5 who are in training with the British Conference.

Preaching is made easy because there are 13 Local preachers and 13 who are still in training and 21 worship leaders.



There will be more news and pictures about the Zimbabwe Methodist fellowship in the next magazine.

Yours in Christ

**Rev.Siperire Mugadzaweta**

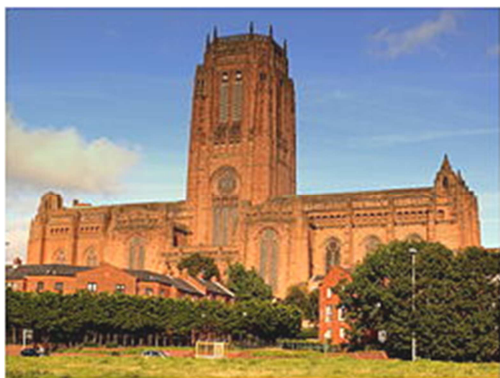
### **Action For Children**

There are 8 Action For Children projects in the Swansea area.

Contact Gill Worrall Tel: 405277 for further details

## **Ordination of Rev. Bruce Sawyer The Journey Continues**

I was due to stay with my daughter near Liverpool when I found it coincided with the ordination service of 13 Methodists in Liverpool Cathedral. This included our friend, Bruce Sawyer.



Julia Allison, Dave Boakes and I set out in Dave's car for the long journey – in excess of 220 miles, which took from 10am to 4pm.

I met my daughter and went to an 'interesting' veggie café and called for a taxi to the Cathedral. The taxi driver did not know where it was even though it is the largest Cathedral in the UK! However, I got there eventually and well in time for the 6pm service.

Entering the building was overwhelming. The sheer scale was vast and yet because of modern lighting, cameras, screens and sound, it was quite intimate as well.

I sat next to a retired Minister from Cumbria, who I had met on a 'Walk to Emmaus' retreat and met several other people I knew during the evening. Suddenly the largest church seemed to be a very small Methodist church family.

There were several announcements which were helpful and then the entrance of all those leading worship, the Ordinands and their Assisting Ministers. The Minister who was assisting our friend was known to me and it was wonderful to talk to him after.

The roof was then 'taken off' as we sang 'Ye servants of God', Charles Wesley's great hymn.

There were several bible readings including the epistle read in French by the World Church Representative.

There was a good amount of congregation participation and some very moving moments with the President and Ministers laying their hands on the head of each Ordinand and the presenting of a bible to each of them.

After the sombre part of the service we were able to let rip with loud clapping and cheering.

This was followed by communion – for 1,000 people! Quite a logistical feat – but one that went pretty well. I felt a bit anxious that some people were going to be missed or some be given it twice but I need not have felt concerned. It all happened - smoothly.

During the communion there was singing with a small band accompanying, with the words of a number of hymns and songs printed in the order of service. This was enjoyable although we did not know all the tunes - even as seasoned Methodists.

With the help of the cameras and screens we were able to see the Ordinands and their families take communion which gave an intimacy to the whole event.

A meaningful note about communion in the order of service – 'Christians of any tradition are welcome to share communion and receive the bread and wine'. Perhaps as Methodists we take this for granted, but should feel very grateful that we have that opportunity.

When I took communion I queued up for what is a routine event. Took the bread from one of the Ministers standing in a group at the side of the rows and took the chalice of wine. I remember looking into the chalice and having a dizzy spell. It was a very poignant moment.

We ended with Charles Wesley's hymn, 'O Thou Who Camest From Above'. After the

*(continued on page 15)*

***We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope  
Martin Luther King Jnr***



blessing, the cheering, clapping and 'ululation' started again and then the organist played Widor's Toccata to great applause from an appreciative congregation.

So two hours on and with a feeling of exhilaration and exhaustion the service ended.

I then 'bumped' into a number of people that I knew which was brilliant – including our newly ordained friend.

The overall feeling was one that we will never, ever experience anything quite like it again.



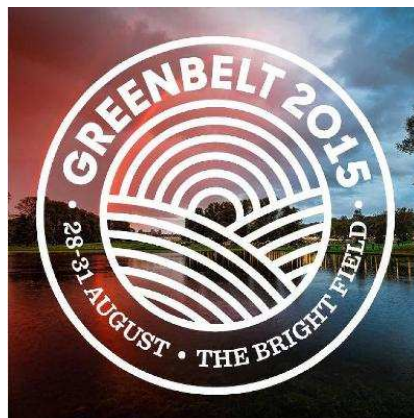
(Revd Bruce Sawyer, Caroline and family)

**Caroline Buckler**

## Ogof Adullam Drop-In Centre

**Working with the homeless at Brunswick Methodist Church. Contact Huw Davies for further details [ogofadullam@gmail.com](mailto:ogofadullam@gmail.com) or 07919 053732. Volunteers required.**

## Greenbelt 2015: "where faith, art and justice meet"



This annual Christian festival took place once again in the beautiful grounds of Boughton Hall, near Kettering, over the Bank Holiday weekend. This year, the overall theme was "The Bright Field", from a poem by the Welsh poet R.S. Thomas. Thousands of people, including a number from our Circuit and other churches in Swansea, braved the increasingly muddy conditions to listen to, and be challenged by, talks delivered by a plethora of speakers: theologians and clergy including Paula Gooder, Giles Fraser, John Bell, Lucy Winkett, "Gogglebox" star Kate Bottley, and the Muslim scholar Mona Siddiqui; journalists such as Paul Vallely, Peter Stanford and Cole Moreton; authors including Matt Haig, A.L. Kennedy and DJ Simon Mayo; activists from charities such as "Embrace the Middle East", "Christian Aid", our own "All We Can", and "The Israeli Committee against House Demolitions". There was an art exhibition by the Bogside Mural Artists, reminding us of the dark days of the Northern Ireland troubles, but linked with sessions on scapegoating and reconciliation run by the Corrymela Community; music provided by Garth Hewitt, Martyn Joseph, Duke Special, The Unthanks and many others; theatrical acrobatics by Ockham's Razor; a performance by Riding Lights Theatre Company, and circus acts; and, of course, worship, the highlight being the Sunday morning Communion service led by the Franciscans of Hillfield Friary, Dorset. A truly ecumenical, family-centred festival. Look it up on-line, or talk to those of us who went: tickets are already on sale for next year!

**Pam and Alan Cram**

**A prayer**

Heavenly Father,

you are the source of all goodness,  
generosity and love.

We thank you for opening the hearts of  
many to those who are fleeing for their  
lives.

Help us now to open our arms in welcome,  
and reach out our hands in support.

That the desperate may find new hope,  
and lives torn apart be restored.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ

Your Son, Our Lord,

who fled persecution at His birth and at His  
last triumphed over death.

**Amen**

**Howard**



(Tel: 01792 363803)

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Please contact 90 Bishopston Road,  
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**All our profits go to charity**

**Pause to Ponder**

I have lived with the conviction that unearned  
suffering is redemptive. There are some who  
still find the cross a stumbling block and others  
consider it foolishness. But I am more  
convinced than ever that it is the power of God  
to social and individual salvation.

**Martin Luther King Jr**

***Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!***

***1 Chronicles 16:11***

## Amelia Trust Farm

This year Brunswick Women's Fellowship planned to spend a quiet day at Amelia Methodist Trust Farm. Swansea and Gower Circuit has it as their 2015 Mission Project, which is to care for the less advantaged children and adults with learning difficulties.

A good number of the Women's Fellowship members from Brunswick signed up to visit the farm. Unfortunately, Sheila the leader, and Alice were unable to join us on the day, as they were not feeling well. The summer season itself also affected the number of those who could attend, as some Women's Fellowship members had gone away on holiday. As a result, only five members (Jennifer, Sandra, Kath, Win and myself) managed to visit and enjoy a quiet day filled with fresh air and surprises.

Amelia Farm is a quiet place to visit and enjoy while being at peace with nature. We took in the beautiful scenery; a lovely view of vegetables in the fields, white lambs in the pastures, donkeys waiting to be stroked by the children, various types of geese in the ponds, many different furry rabbits and some guinea pigs in cages. In addition, we saw two very large Pigs that were donated for the children to see and marvel. It was a delight to see parents and children enjoying the farm as much as we were.



There are also lovely gardens teeming with organic green vegetables that you can buy, as well as free-range eggs.

Personally, the best part was the prayer area in the labyrinth. As I entered, I read the words "Be still Listen!" "Look up and count 7, breathe in, then count 11 and breathe out". Throughout the labyrinth were words to feed you as you journeyed through. Likewise, life is a journey, we need to be still and listen!

**Rev. Siperire Mugadzaweta**

The farm, this year, is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It has set up a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary appeal, asking for regular donations e.g. monthly, or one off donations, which can be gift aided (contact Janet Neilson for more information). The farm is always looking for more volunteers to help in the cafe, with animal care and maintenance. There are also opportunities for people who work in large organisations such as banks, utility companies etc., to ask their managers if a volunteer team can spend a day at the farm.

The farm has recently set up a new website – [www.ameliatrust.org.uk](http://www.ameliatrust.org.uk) Sadly there is not one photograph nor any mention of the prayer labyrinth on the website!!!!

As a circuit we have raised £3,470 this year. This is a fantastic effort. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this amount.

**Janet Neilson**

## Muscular Dystrophy UK

### Fashion Show

There will be a fashion show on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October at 12.30pm at Norton House, to raise funds for research into neuromuscular diseases. The show will feature the winter collections of SOLO and CREAM (Mumbles). Tickets are £17, which includes a two course lunch. If you would like tickets please contact Janet Neilson (202085 or E mail [iverbrustad@btinternet.com](mailto:iverbrustad@btinternet.com))

### Coffee Morning

There will be a Coffee Morning at Uniting Church Sketty (Bethel URC campus, Sketty Green) on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October – 10 until noon, in aid of Muscular Dystrophy UK. There will be stalls and a raffle. Admission £2 (to incl tea/coffee and biscuits).

**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



## 'Khuda yahan hazir hai, Uski hazoori humare saath hai'

That's what Urdu speaking people might say. We would say 'The Lord is here, his Spirit is with us'. And the Lord was with us when on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August we held a very special service at Uniting Church Sketty. For the last few months the Urdu-speaking congregation, led by Rev Irfan John has been worshipping at Uniting Church Sketty once a month on a Sunday afternoon. After the success of a similar congregation in Cardiff, Irfan, who is appointed by the Wales Synod to work with culturally diverse communities, felt the time was right to start a similar venture here in Swansea.

Families come from across Swansea. They are mostly Urdu-speaking from Pakistan, and attend their own English speaking churches of various denominations in the morning. However there is a real desire to worship as well in their mother tongue in ways which are culturally familiar, and this is where the Urdu-speaking congregation comes in.

To mark the success so far, and as a launch to the congregation now moving to worshipping twice a month, a joint service was held with Uniting Church Sketty. We worshipped in English and in Urdu (with Rev Leslie doing a reading in Urdu) and Rev Irfan preaching in English and in Urdu, with hymns in English and in Urdu. It was an uplifting time together, and afterwards we shared fellowship over some extremely yummy Asian food.

We hope there will be many other opportunities in the future to share together like this.

**Rev. Leslie Noon**

### Pause to Ponder

If you keep watch over your hearts, and listen for the voice of God and learn of him, in one short hour you can learn more from him that you can learn from man in a thousand years.

**Johann Tauler**

## News from Wesley

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August Wesley Church held a "Ladies' Day" Afternoon Tea in aid of Breast Cancer Care. We were pleased to welcome friends from our local area and from across the circuit. As you can see the ladies' day theme enabled us to dust off and wear once again that expensive wedding hat or fascinator. Homemade sandwiches and cakes were served, however, not always as professionally as one would wish. At one point gasps of horror were heard as the chocolate gateau slid gently off its cake stand, luckily it landed to the left onto the trolley and not to the right onto the floor!! More practice is needed I think.



The afternoon was a great success and £266.40 was raised for Breast Cancer Care and the stalls and donations raised £96.40 towards our building fund which (including pledges) stands at a tremendous £47,000!! Now we are working to raise our last £5,000 and want to thank everyone for their very generous support over the last eight months.

*"If we ask anything according to his will, He hears us". 1 John 5:14.*

**Elaine Davies**

### Pause to Ponder

Inner healing is simply this:

Jesus can take the memories of our past and heal them. And fill with his love all these places in us that have been empty for so long, once they have been healed and drained of the poison of past hates and resentment.

**Francis MacNutt**

*Today I woke up with some aches and pains and the first thing I did was to thank God that I'd woken up.*

## Accreditation service 20<sup>th</sup> August 2015 in Pitton ~ To God be the glory!

May I say thank you very much to everyone who braved the weather to come to my accreditation service and to those who left phone messages or sent emails. I was overwhelmed by the support from around the circuit. It was such a wonderful evening and is still very much, a happy blur. I'm aware that I didn't get an opportunity to speak to everyone after the service, which was a shame, but thank you so much for coming down to Pitton to share that special time.

I share with you my accreditation service.

What a tremendous night! I can't believe that it's finally here and I am one of Mr Wesley's preachers! How great is that????

Thank you so much for making the effort to come and share what has to be, the most significant night of my life...

You really have no idea how overwhelmed I am, at the number of people who have come and from so far away...but I always knew that it was going to be a special time.

Over the last couple of months, talk of tonight has become a bit of a long-standing joke because Mum said that she was going to treat tonight, as if it was my wedding day, since it was unlikely that I am ever going to get married now, (thanks Mum)! No seriously, she said that she wanted to buy a cake, so I agreed, providing that I could choose the wording (it says "To God be the Glory") and the colour scheme of cream and burgundy, which June kindly picked up on with the beautiful flowers.

And I think that God must have a great sense of humour and enjoy a good laugh, because what I hadn't anticipated, were the three men (not necessarily wise in this case), who knocked on my door shortly before 1 o'clock this afternoon, telling me that they had come to erect the marquee for my wedding reception.

I checked the address, it was mine and the man assured me that it had all been paid for and was needed for my wedding on Saturday!..... well, I've got the flowers and I've got the cake and by my reckoning that

leaves me a little over 36 hours to find a groom... mmmm I suppose it's possible...

Well, with God, nothing is impossible... and that's something that really has struck a chord with me when I look back over the last 15 years or so.

I moved to Rhossili in 1999 and started coming to this little Chapel. From the first time that I lifted the sneck on the door and stepped inside, I felt that I'd come home. I'd had faith before, but not one which I'd actively embraced or lived out. Part of my preacher training encouraged me to look back through my life to recognise God's influence and I can see foundations that were laid in childhood never left entirely and although I may have wandered off the path many times, God never gave up on me.

When I came to live here I was travelling over 140 miles a day to work and back. Over time I got to thinking about the way Jesus wanted me to live and the way that my professional life conflicted with that. One Sunday during the service, we sang *Dear Lord and Father of mankind*, where the words *take from our souls the strain and stress* jumped out at me and I prayed that if God would help me to find a different way to work, that I would dedicate my business to Him. In February 2002 an idea came to me and I became self-employed the following August and I realised that when you put your life in God's hands to use for His purpose, He can make possible, even what seems unrealistic at the time.

Being able to regulate my own working hours enabled me to do things which I wouldn't have been able to do before and so in 2003 I attended the Alpha Course in Mumbles and in one of the sessions Nicky Gumbel was speaking about God taking the things which you didn't want to do for Him and making them your desire. We were then prompted to write on a slip of paper something which we wouldn't ever want to do for God. Being a shy person and finding even small crowds intimidating, I wrote "I could never stand up in front of a crowd of people and preach."

(continued on page 19)

***Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die; another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity***

***Horatius Bonar***



Then followed what seemed to me, to be a ridiculous year or so when I trained as a Worship Leader and during which every other person seemed to be telling me to preach. I can't count the number of times I dismissed the idea, but finally in 2005 I gave in and started preaching, only to give up again in 2008 because time was ticking on and I hadn't done any assessment work at all. At the time I rebelled, thinking that the course was too difficult and that I didn't have enough time. Do I have more time now? No, not at all, I now realise that it was my commitment that was lacking. God doesn't demand that you understand everything, but rather that you make Him your first priority.

2013 was an absolute nightmare for me, with one adversity following closely on the heels of another, until I got to the point where I was waiting for the next calamity to occur.

I was stagnating as an individual. I had no work to do because of the recession and my mind was inactive. I felt worthless, I had no self-confidence at all, I was a mess...but it was in the middle of 2013, that I began again and received my note to preach.

This time I threw everything into it. I became a recluse, dropped out of village life and reached the midway point of the course one year later. I was interviewed at the Local Preachers meeting and it was an excruciatingly painful interview. If I'd been them, I would have thrown me out. I was sat with everything crossed, the body language saying it all, saying that really, I never felt that preaching was something that I should do and that I was only doing it because it seemed to make everyone else happy... yet God never ceases to surprise me... Would you believe that He took my ridiculous, nonsensical ramblings and used even them for His purpose? How amazing is God?

But actually changes had already started to surface when I'd been studying the Holy Spirit in March 2014. Since then I have noticed time and again that when I give my all to God, even though it may not be very much, He blesses it and uses my efforts to glorify Himself. At times when I don't give 100% the outcome is very, very different.

Before I started training in 2013, I told Howard that I was scared of losing my simple faith because of depth of the course. He said three words: That won't happen.

There's no doubt that the course has been testing. It's expanded my thinking and perception beyond my wildest imaginings and grounded and strengthened my original beliefs.

There's been some really, really high points and some really low points...and some things which will always stick with me, like when I was racing against the clock to get my last assignment in for marking. I was really tired and went to bed at 10pm, setting the alarm for 2am the following morning. I got up and finished the first draft by around sunrise. I looked out of the window and saw the sun coming up over the hill and the words "heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee" came into my mind and I started to cry. At 9:40 I sent my assignment off for marking and looking out of the window, realised that it was actually darker outside than it had been a few hours before. My first thought was "this is typical, I finish the course and now the end of the world is coming!" In my rush against the deadline, I hadn't been listening to the news and I had heard nothing at all about the solar eclipse!

And yet even now, inexplicably strange things happen and catch me off guard. But this just makes me more convinced that it's absolutely vital to keep Jesus as my first priority because when that slips, the devil gets a foothold.

I'm certainly not the person that I was in June 2013. I've never felt so alive. I'd go as far as to say that I believe that God has saved my life through this course. A friend of mine said that when I'd finished the course, I "would have my life back". I know what she meant, but actually, when I look at where I was back in 2013 and where I am now, I'm sorry, but I don't want it back.

So what's next? Who knows? A few months ago I thought that I did. I thought that I had the future tidily planned out but now I'm not so sure. I said at the start that God must have a sense of humour... maybe He's smiling again...

So, I'm left with five questions:

1. Can I preach? No. Not under my own strength.

*(continued on page 20)*

***Smart men walked on the moon, daring men walked on the ocean floor, but wise men walk with God***

***Leonard Ravenhill***

2. Am I worthy of God's love? Never, but He loves me anyway.

3. Am I blessed? Always.

4. Is God glorifying Himself? I hope so.

5. Any regrets? Only that there are so many who supported and encouraged me who should have been here tonight, but whom God has called home. They may be gone from our sight, but I've been remembering them and giving thanks.

And there are so many in this Chapel who I also need to thank. So many in fact, that I don't want to mention any names in case I miss someone out, so thank you all for your support and encouragement throughout my training and in preparation for the service tonight. I couldn't have done it without you...

But there is One whom I do need to thank, without whom none of us would be here tonight... and that's God Himself. It's not my night, it's His night and all the glory needs to go to Him.

I'm going to pray and I hope that you'll feel able to join me.

### Loving Father

I thank you that you have never let me go, that you have come alongside even me, touching my life and transforming it in such a way that I barely recognise myself. I pray that you would touch the hearts of everyone; not just in this chapel, or even this country, but everyone on earth; that you would touch their hearts and give them the same joy that lives inside of me, that all of creation may praise Your holy name. To You be all glory and honour, now and forever. **Amen.**

Selina Taylor

## Around the Methodist Connexion

### Locked out - Abergavenny Methodist Church, Wales

A Methodist congregation was locked out of their church building in a service of solidarity with persecuted Christians whose buildings have been destroyed or confiscated. The special service began outside of Abergavenny Methodist Church with the doors locked. Signs declaring that worship was

'forbidden' were taken down before people moved inside to watch a DVD detailing some of the persecution experienced by Christians in India.



The service was to raise awareness of Release International. The charity works to support Christians who suffer persecution for their faith and encourages congregations across the UK to hold annual Great Outdoor Services to remember those less privileged than ourselves who are not able to worship freely.



On Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September Wesley Methodist held a special fundraising evening and the guest speaker was Kevin Johns. Kevin is a radio presenter, actor, author as well as chaplain to Swansea City football club.

The church was full of laughter as Kevin recounted stories of growing up in Plasmarl, receiving his exam results, time spent training for ministry, receiving his MBE from the Queen, that famous day at Wembley with the Swans and the legendary story of Aberberthi Street!

Over £500 was raised for the church redevelopment fund. Thanks Kevin!

*The way from God to a human heart is through a human heart*

*Samuel Dickey Gordon*



**The Alpha Course at Wesley Methodist Church, Brynhyfryd on Tuesday mornings 10.30 a.m. from September 22<sup>nd</sup>**

The Alpha Course is a short practical introduction to the Christian faith. It started in the early 90's in Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Brompton and has been a huge success, so much so 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 video 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.

Jesus Christ who was executed at the tender age of 33 didn't even write a book and had little or no followers when he died according to the Encyclopedia Britannica now has 1,900 million followers or 34% of the world's population and his influence on the human race has been nothing short of staggering. How can this be? The Alpha Course asks these big questions.

If you are interested contact Rev Howard Long Tel: 366712 or Elaine Davies Tel: 521681

**Christianity Explored – At Mumbles  
Methodist Church - Thursday October 15<sup>th</sup>  
at 7p.m**



Christianity Explored is an informal 7-week course for people who'd like to investigate Christianity, or just brush up on the basics. Looking at Mark's gospel, it explores who Jesus is, why he came, and what it means to follow him.

Christianity Explored gives time and space to think about the big questions of life. By focusing on Mark's Gospel, it allows people to explore the person at the heart of the Christian faith - Jesus Christ.

#### **Course outline**

Week 1 Good news: What are we doing here?  
Week 2 Identity: Who is Jesus?  
Week 3 Sin: Why did Jesus come?  
Week 4 The cross: Why did Jesus die?  
Week 5 Resurrection: Why did Jesus rise?  
Week 6 Grace: How can God accept us?

#### **Day Away**

- The sower: Listen carefully
- James and John: Ask humbly
- Herod: Choose wisely

Week 7 Come and die: What does it mean?

Interested?

Contact:

Ken Allison Tel 401620 [k.allison@ntlworld.com](mailto:k.allison@ntlworld.com)  
or

Rev Howard Long  
Tel 366712  
[hdlong@btinternet.com](mailto:hdlong@btinternet.com)

***Don't compare yourself to other Christians. Compare yourself to Christ. He's the one you're following***

## The Theology of Dry Rot

Rev. Leslie reflects on the dry rot situation at Uniting Church Sketty....

We are approaching the season and festival of harvest – that time of year when we give thanks for all that has grown. Except this year in Uniting Church Sketty, we are certainly NOT thankful for all that has grown.

It is hard to be thankful for the dry rot, which clearly has been growing and spreading over many months unbeknown to us. Whilst we are glad it is being dealt with, it seems as if it is taking much longer than we had ever thought, and we must gird ourselves with patience and tolerance until we are able to worship and use the Wesley building once again. In the meantime, we plan to be using our Bethel building until at least Christmas.

But all this means I know far more about dry rot than I ever did (or indeed wanted to). So here are just some personal musings on... the theology of dry rot. The quotes (*in italics*) are taken from the report that was given to us after the dry rot expert visited the church.

*“Dry rot spores are omnipresent in the environment and will therefore be present in all properties.”* Omnipresent is one of the words often used to describe God (as well as dry rot spores). God, present in all places and in all times – or in other words, there is nowhere we can go where God is not. This is an awesome, humbling, comforting understanding of God’s presence (echoed in the words of Psalm 139 - *Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence*). It suggests that God is beyond time and space, beyond any dimension we can fully understand. In other words, God is beyond our comprehension whilst at the same time being nearer to us than our next breath.

*“For an infection to be initiated there needs to be a spore and suitable conditions (oxygen, a susceptible food source and water).”* What are the conditions needed in order for our faith in Christ Jesus to be initiated? If we assume that there is a divine spark in us all (*God has made us in his image* – Genesis 1:27), then what do we need in order for that spark to turn into a flame? I would suggest

we need the opportunity to explore what the word of God is saying to us today (oxygen); the fellowship of other Christians (food source), and a prayer life so that we may tune ourselves into God (water). You may need different conditions for your faith to grow – it would be good to have a conversation about it. But whatever conditions you identify, the fact remains – faith does need certain requirements in which to grow and flourish.

*The first evidence of the existence of an outbreak of dry rot is often the sudden appearance of a fruiting body.* And this is true. We realised that we had a problem when a mushroom like thing was discovered near the organ. But what evidence is there to others that we are Christians? What are the fruits by which we are known? (*You will know them by their fruits* - Matthew 7:16). This is a challenging question for us all and I cannot answer it for you. But I invite you to think about it. Would someone – would anyone, know that you are a Christian by the way you live or speak or act? And what are the fruits of our own churches? These are things that we must continually bear in mind if we are to fulfil our mission.

So there you have it. The very beginnings of a theology of dry rot. Not sure it’s been done before – but it just goes to show that God can be found in all things!

Rev. Leslie Noon

### Mumbles Methodist Church Walking Group

Come and join us as we explore the area, enjoy fellowship time and relax over lunch.

For more information contact:

Sue Weekes - 850569  
Jennifer Mountford – 404654  
David Jones - 359008

***The Christian life is a life of paradox's. We must give to receive, realise we are blind to see, become simple to be wise, suffer for gain and die to live***