

NEWSLINK

DECEMBER 2025 - JANUARY 2026

CANTON UNITING CHURCH



A Malaysian Nativity

Hanna Varghese, *God Is With Us*, 2006. Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 in.

Canton Uniting Church Deacons in May, 2025

Alison Walker (Chair)	Chair@cantonuniting.org.uk
Audrey Takle	Bookings@cantonuniting.org.uk
Barbara Morgans (Minutes Secretary)	
Eva Elliott	Garden@cantonuniting.org.uk
Fiona Harding (Secretary)	Secretary@cantonuniting.org.uk
Megan Atherton	
Alan Farnham	
David Smith	
Ex officio	
Andrew Wilson-Dickson	Music@cantonuniting.org.uk
Kenneth Woods (Treasurer)	Treasurer@cantonuniting.org.uk

Dear Friends,

December 2025

'It's Christmas!!!!' Well, not quite, but it will be Christmas in the blink of an eye. When we moved to the UK, and discovered we had to pay to watch television, we started listening to Radio 2. No one told us that as early 30 somethings we should have listened to Radio 1. The radio given to us was tuned to Radio 2, so we have always listened to Radio 2. Now, as 60 somethings we should probably listen to Radio 4 or Classic FM, but we still predominately listen to Radio 2.

As we write, it is not Christmas, but it is the BBC Children in Need annual fundraiser. For those who don't listen to Radio 2, each year a radio presenter takes on some athletic challenge to raise money for Children in Need. This year Sara Cox is using her feet to travel over 130 miles in five days across the Northeast of England.

Wednesday, as Martha drove across Cardiff, Sara spoke of her friend, Gethin Jones, joining her for part of the run. She said, 'He is a true mate. I can say I'm just going to run with my pods in (and not talk) and he will just join me.' It struck Martha that this is exactly what we celebrate at Christmas.

God sent someone as our true friend--Jesus. Jesus is the person who shows the world the love God has for all people. Jesus is that someone who comes alongside us when we need to run, walk and stumble through life. He simply joins in as a friend who knows us and does what we need in that moment. As we read the Bible, we see this story of love in his birth, life and ministry.

But, you say, 'We see that then, but what about now, when Jesus is not physically present?' Well, that is where the Gethin Joneses come into play. Gethin was the friend, who in that moment, gave Sara what she needed to keep running. We, you and I, friends and strangers, are the 'mates', who come alongside people now as they walk, stumble, run through life together. We show that love and support to others--as they also show it to us.

At the end of his life, Jesus called his followers his friends. John 15.15: 'I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.' We have learned from Jesus and we are friends to those we meet. We are the ones who help each other keep going. When life is tough, we rely on each other to be the love of God now, today. When life is good, we share the joy.

At Christmas we celebrate the baby being born once more. As the family settles into their accommodation, we lean in to hear the whispers of love. In the face of the cruelty of empire, our breathe is taken away by the inclusive nature of God's love, heard in the angel's message to the shepherds and the visit of the magi. As we celebrate, we listen for the promise of light that overcomes darkness. The light that is seen in Jesus, we see in people who are true friends.

May we watch for opportunities to be 'mates' to those around us embodying God's love. May we listen for God's presence with us in the 'mates' who surround us and stumble with us into a new year.

Nadolig Llawen,
Martha and David

Church Life Review

In the middle of November the General Assembly of the URC gathered for an extraordinary session to affirm the work of the Church Life Review. Not heard of the Church Life Review? You probably aren't alone. Over the last couple of years a variety of folks from across the denomination have talked to each other to try to determine what some of the challenges are and how to support local churches so they might 'thrive.'

Following these consultations a number of resources are being developed for us. These resources include support with accountancy (lots of churches need bookkeeping skills, though you still have to have a named treasurer), compliance i.e. making sure we have policies and procedures, and other types of admin. While this support will be significant, the most exciting prospect is the development of a fund which will primarily support the employment of lay people to work alongside churches. These workers will develop the mission and community work of the church. Some examples might be a youth and children's worker or a parish nurse. The fund for these posts is being created with money from each of the 13 Synods. Much of how this will be done is still to be developed, but the ideas emerging are exciting opportunities for the whole URC.

Martha attended this session of GA and was left wondering, 'What kind of creative post could we create to link church to community?' Are there some skills that we could use to serve our neighbours? If you have an idea, she would love to hear it!

CELEBRATING OUR FUTURE

On the evening of Friday 21st November, we hosted the long-awaited celebration of the go-ahead from Cardiff Council for us to redevelop our church site which includes the significant expansion of our community garden.

It was a cold evening, and we wondered whether people would want to do anything but keep cosy at home at the end of a long working week. But we were all over-joyed at the support of both neighbours and organisations that have expressed an interest



in working alongside us.

We wanted people to mingle, as creating connections informally can be an important part of creating a supportive social network. So, we provided tasty nibbles and non-alcoholic drinks and encouraged people to meander, look at the plans and meet some of our potential partners who had their own tables with information about what they do. These included

- Isla Horton from Grow Cardiff, who aim to inspire the development of community gardens throughout Cardiff and also encourage the use of gardens as a resource for social prescribing. They are currently developing a toolkit with Cardiff University for schools to develop their own green spaces in a way which fits in with the National Curriculum.

- Lisa Williams and Lucie Taylor from Social Farms and Gardens, a UK wide organisation which also provides a focus for Wales. They encourage and support people in their aspirations for community gardens and provide practical support. They recently set up the Edible Cardiff network which we have found to be an invaluable way to share resources and ideas with other community growers in Cardiff.



- Mags Lyons, Louise Gray and Steve Lyons from Action in Caerau and Ely (ACE) based in the Dusty Forge in Ely. An inspirational community anchor organisation that runs three community gardens and also runs Yourspace, which is a social prescribing programme commissioned by the primary care clusters in Cardiff. Gardens are clearly a valuable

resource for physical and mental wellbeing, and we are excited to play our part in it in its future.

Also, Lucy Robinson, a church member and an important contributor to the development of our garden, was able to promote and share her magnificent cookery food, The Grain-free Vegetarian. Beside her was her son, Alex Vines who is a chef by trade and



is passionate about the connection between growing, cooking and eating. Previously he has worked with Cegin Y Bobl (formerly Cook 24) in Carmarthenshire in an effort to reconnect people with the food system and aiming to inspire a more positive food future in Wales. He hopes to build on this experience for people in Canton through the garden we create. We also look forward to the opening of his restaurant Ogof on Kings Road.

Then we had the speeches, which started with a film made by Isobel Harding, part of our Teen Church, who had made a beautiful and poignant film about the garden, interviewing some of the people who have been involved.

One of our ministers, the Reverend Martha McInnes, welcomed everyone to Canton Uniting Church and expressed delight at the numbers of people who had joined us that evening. We were then delighted to hear from our Senedd representative, and former First Minister, Mark Drakeford, who gave an



impassioned talk about our persistence and enthusiasm for taking our plans forward, noting that this area in south Cardiff is the most densely populated area in Wales and in need of green spaces both for the environment and local people. Councillor Jasmin Chowdhury then recounted a wonderful story about her mother finding friendship and joy through a community garden when she first came to Wales from Bangladesh and had, at that time, little English.



Finally, Kenneth Woods described the plans and whilst acknowledging that this was a celebration of our collective achievement there was still work to do

before the work could begin. On the screen was the vision which we hope will guide us through the process and keep us moving far into the future:

Growing Together Community Garden will be created by the community, for the community, as a place of welcome, learning, peace, sharing and healing and will be a model of biodiversity in the service of our planet.

Finally we would like to thank all the church members who gave selfless service in setting up, welcoming visitors, serving refreshments, and clearing everything away in readiness for the next day.

Eva



Concerts at CUC Autumn 2025



14th Sunday 3pm

Recital by Italian international prizewinning pianist Giordano Ferla. 'From Romantic to Contemporary' Suggested donation for entry: £10 adults/ £5 full-time students. Supporting CUC building fund.

19th Friday 6-30pm

silent films accompanied by Andrew Wilson-Dickson at the piano. Free entry, retiring collection
Supporting CUC building fund.

'Be a Scrooge!'

WILLIAM ERBERY (1604 - 1654) was the radical puritan who founded one of Canton Uniting's parent Churches, Trinity chapel (presbyterian with a lower-case 'p'), later called New Trinity English Independent chapel and then New Trinity URC. Erbery would not have agreed with our celebration of Christmas, which really has more to do with the Roman 'Saturnalia' celebration of the winter solstice than it does with Jesus.

Scrooge was so vilified by Dickens that even today people know what you mean when you say, 'Don't be a Scrooge!' Scrooge came from a long line of Congregationalists.

Scholars suspect, but no one really knows, that Jesus was born around April. Making the birthday of Jesus of Nazareth coincide with the winter solstice was a move the Church made when it had assumed enough political clout that it was able to take over the raucous

Roman mid-winter Saturnalia festival and say all that hoopla was really about the baby Jesus.

The hoopla endured. Saturnalia won the game. The merchants knew where the money was. So did the Church. What sense would there be in celebrating the birthday in April? It would be like living in Australia.

The pressure that solstice anxiety puts on us at this time of the year is enormous. Jewish families put up what they call “Hanuka Bushes” for their kids. I know Moslem families down the street who have Christmas trees. No one wants to be a Scrooge.

Karen Armstrong in her Book, The Case for God, laments that we are allowed to grow up out of our infant belief in Father Christmas to realize that our parents embody the deeply human grace of giving gifts, but we do not grow up from the infantile beliefs about God. Or Jesus.

We still live in a three-decker universe in which Jesus “comes down” from heaven. Susan Dunbar, a friend of mine and fellow URC minister, writes about how the real virgin birth is our virgin birth, when we are born again, in a birth not fathered by a human father but in a re-birth as children of God and brother and sisters of Jesus Christ. This is the adult mystery behind the biblical story, which no serious adult should be taking literally.

In Cardiff’s city center, alongside the Christmas stalls and shopping frenzy, there is always a “realistic” acting-out of the Christmas story, as if we wanted people to know the true meaning of Christmas in this literal take-away from the Bible. But isn’t this only the husk of the story, not the kernel? Are we asking people to throw off their critical thinking in order to believe in stars that move, virgins that give birth as alternative facts?

Or do we ask people to believe in a truth that is confirmed in the heart, truth as allegiance to something bigger and other than ourselves, being true. That involves a re-orientation of who you most deeply are and your loyalties. Our personal experience of re-birth and resurrection teaches truth far beyond fundamentalism.

So celebrate the true meaning of a Christmas that can happen at any time of the year. And happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night. – Tom Arthur

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

<p>So have a joyful time in the Lord, and may the birth of Christ take place in the renewal of your hearts.</p> <p>Happy Christmas! from Tom and Marieke</p>	<p>Wishing our dear church family a Christmas full of light and hope at this dark time - may we share that light and hope with the people we meet.</p> <p>With love from Ceri, Phil and all the Georges. xx</p>
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<p>Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year! Love, Ann xxx</p>	<p>Merry Christmas to all of the church family, Love, Audrey T</p>
<p>Megan, Chris, and family would like to wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.</p>	<p>Wishing everyone at Canton Uniting a very happy Christmas and a healthy New Year. God bless. Jan Richens</p>
<p>I wish all my friends at Canton Uniting Church a very happy Christmas and New Year. Ken Woods</p>	<p>Joy & Dave would like to wish you all every blessing for Christmas & the New Year</p>
<p>Wishing a peaceful and happy Christmas and New Year to everyone at Canton Uniting. Love Alan.</p>	<p>Merry Christmas Everyone! Love from, Cindy, Tom, Arwyn, Nye and Caian</p>
<p>Wishing you all a joyful Christmas and a peaceful New Year. I give my love to all friends and members of CUC and a heartfelt thank you to all those who have given service to our church and our community. The world is suffering but we shine in the dark clouds. With love, Eva</p>	
<p>Boldog karácsonyi ünnepeket! Nadolig Llawen lawn i Chi Gyd! A Merry Christmas to all the church family! Cariad mawr, Hugh, Barbara a Bence</p>	<p>Wishing you all a happy, relaxed and blessed Christmas! Thank you for your hard work and commitment over the past year. We look forward to the coming year with hope and anticipation. With love from Alison x</p>
<p>Christmas greetings from Fred and Rowena May the spirit of Christmas bring you peace. May the joy of Christmas bring you hope, and may the message of Christmas reveal God's amazing love.</p>	<p>Merry Christmas from the Munniks - Katie, Leo and Tait worshipping with you here in Cardiff and Mike with Isla out on the west coast of Canada. Best wishes for a brighter 2026, with God's grace.</p>

Two thoughts ...

A CHRISTMAS POEM

At Christmas little children sing and merry bells jingle,
the cold winter air makes hands and face tingle
and happy families go to church and cheerily mingle
and the whole business is unbelievably dreadful if you're single.

— Wendy Cope

The birth from above, the virgin birth, can be ours.

If you ask, 'Do you believe in the virgin birth?', I want to tell you first about what God is doing in my life, to make something radically new happen in me.

And now I see that Christmas is about a birth, not only of Jesus but of each of us, and it can happen any time.

It's not about the winter solstice.

Christmas is about the potential re-birth of ourselves because, as John's gospel says, we who welcome him may be born, not of the flesh, but in spirit and truth.

Susan Dunbar



Canton Uniting Church Services Rota December 2025 - January 2026

If you cannot do duties, please find someone to replace you. Thank you.

Sunday 7th December 2025 Advent 2

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 11.1-10; Psalm 72.1-7,18-19; Romans 15.4-13; Matthew 3.1-12

Worship Leader: Drs Phil and Ceri George

Welcome Deacon/Steward: David

Deacon on notices: Eva

Readers: Marieke and David

Refreshments: Hugh and Bence

Sunday 14th December 2025 Advent 3

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 42.1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10.34-43; Matthew 3.13-17

Worship Leader: Revd David Dean or Revd Martha McInnes

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Jan

Deacon on notices: Ceri

Readers: Members of the Congregation

Refreshments: Marieke and Alison

Sunday 21st December 2025 Advent 4

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 49.1-7; Psalm 40; 1 Corinthians 1.1-9; John 1.29-42

Worship Leader: Young people/Junior Church

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Audrey

Deacon on Notices: Alison

Readers: The Young People

Refreshments: Ann

Thursday 25th December Christmas Day (Communion)

Worship Leader: Revd Martha McInnes

Welcome Deacon/Steward: To be decided

Communion Preparation: Marieke

At the communion table: Fiona

Sunday 28th December 2025 (Communion)

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 63.7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2.10-18; Matthew 2.13-23

Worship Leader: Revds Marc and Alison Dummer

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Megan

Deacon on Notices: Fiona

Readers: Sian and Alan

Communion Preparation: Alison

At the communion table: Alison and Marieke

Refreshments: Abi

Sunday 4th January 2026

Lectionary Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9),10-18

Worship Leader: Revd Tom Arthur

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Ann

Deacon on notices: Megan

Readers: Taiwo and Megan

Refreshments: Sian and Josh

Sunday 11th January 2026

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 42.1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10.34-43; Matthew 3.13-17

Worship Leader: Revd David Dean or Revd Martha McInnes

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Alan

Deacon on notices: Ken

Readers: Becky and Ceri

Refreshments: Megan

Sunday 18th January 2026 Communion

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 49.1-7; Psalm 40; 1 Corinthians 1.1-9; John 1.29-4

Worship Leader: Revd David Dean or Revd Martha McInnes

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Steve

Deacon on notices: Eva

Readers: Eva and Abi

Communion Preparation: Audrey

At the communion table: Eva and Audrey

Refreshments: Hiroko

Sunday 25th January 2026

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 9.1-4; Psalm 27; 1 Corinthians 1.10-18; Matthew 4.12-23

Worship Leader: Bethan Trott

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Abi

Deacon on notices: Ceri

Readers: Ken and Fiona

Refreshments: The Munniks

Sunday 1st February 2026

Lectionary Readings: Micah 6.1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1.18-31; Matthew 5.1-12

Worship Leader: Revd Tom Arthur

Welcome Deacon/Steward: Sian and Josh

Deacon on notices: Alison

Readers: Jan and Hugh

Refreshments: Fiona and Rob

CANTON UNITING CHURCH was established in 1995 when New Trinity United Reformed Church joined with Llandaff Road Baptist Church and in 2013 joined with Grand Avenue United Reformed Church Ely which in 2005 had united with Saintwell URC. We are committed to ecumenism through our links with Cytûn, the Covenanted Churches and Churches Together in Canton. Our previous minister was the Chair of the Committee of the Covenanted Baptists which, with the Church in Wales, the Presbyterian, Methodist and United Reformed Churches seeks to bring about the goal of uniting together.

CONTACTS

Ministers: Revd. Martha McInnes - Tel.: 07519 831405
Revd. David Dean - Tel.: 07772 714388

Secretary: Mrs Fiona Harding Email: Secretary@Cantonuniting.org.uk

Treasurer: Kenneth Woods Email: Treasurer@Cantonuniting.org.uk

Chair: Mrs Alison Walker Email: Chair@Cantonuniting.org.uk

Website: www.cantonuniting.org.uk

USUAL WEEKLY DIARY & MONTHLY EVENTS -

The Wednesday evening prayers on Zoom have finished.

CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

AND FINALLY ... Please hand in material for the next Newslink to Hugh Morgans by the end of the Morning service on **Sunday, 18th of January, 2026.**

Email address: hughmorgans@hotmail.com

