

# **NEWSLINK**

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2023

## **CANTON UNITING CHURCH**



### **Canton Uniting Church Deacons**

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Dear Friends, August 2023

It's August. Time for holidays. It's halfway through the year--how can that be?!

What will the next few weeks hold? Holidays, change of routine, visits from friends, trips to the seaside, working to cover others' holidays, trips to hospital, difficult news, weddings to attend?

When we look in our diaries, we may find all kinds of entries and options for events. On the other hand, we might have a slightly quieter month. Many of us have meticulously planned ahead so we think we know what is happening most days; however, life is full of surprises. Things crop up that aren't in our diaries, and we respond.

I am a planner, so as a young mum it took me awhile to realise I could only plan a bit for each day. My children dictated that life did not always go to my plan. Before I learned this lesson and let them guide me, I would get grumpy when my plans did not work out. I learned that on a good day, I had a very simple structure, but let the kids guide me the plan. They were happy and I was happy. They taught me to be a bit more open to change and other people's desires.

As we face into our summer schedules, with the possibilities and potential for the month ahead, with our plans and surprises, perhaps we can face into what comes with grace and openness for God's presence in the midst of it all. Where is God in our schedules, in the people we encounter? Some of the surprises that pop into our schedules will be gifts to us. Others may be challenging or stressful. They may cause us to take a different direction or stop dead in our tracks until we figure out what is next. Still, we can take a deep breath, give ourselves permission to take the time we need to respond to the surprise and move forward with graciousness. When we read the story of the disciples after Jesus' death, they did just that. They spent a bit of time together, in a room, sometimes locked away, before they took their next steps in a different direction. We can do that same.

This summer may be a wonderful time filled with making memories. It might be a quiet time recovering from illness or a very busy schedule. It may be the same as always. Whatever the days ahead hold, may we remember that we are loved and supported by God and God's people. We can respond to life, plans and surprises, with that same love guiding us.

May you know God's blessing:  
as the sun warms our bones;  
in the planning and sharing with family and friends;  
in the unexpected twists and turns of life's road;  
as the routine of your load lightens slightly;  
as garden draws you outside to delight you with colour.  
As the summer passes, may you know you are loved and supported.  
May you embody love and bless others with that love.

Blessings on your summer,

Martha (and David)

## CONCERTS AT C.U.C.

We've had a superb series of classical concerts recently (called Sundays at 6), attracting up to 75 people. They've been put on in CUC because of its impressive ambience for music. The sanctuary is (I think) a very calming place through its simplicity - quite unlike many other churches whose designs are more or less fussy and cluttered - though there are exceptions! And the piano is a huge bonus, of a quality which matches the best instruments in the Music College or the University Music Department. The concert series has been put on at CUC by James Brookmyre, a professional musician himself, with useful connections in the musical world. He has used CUC for the concerts because he likes the space so much, and for good reason, I believe.

James is taking a pause in his promotion of concerts - apart from anything else, he is the artistic director of the Brecon Baroque Festival; this happens in October and if he was to take on any more he would blow a fuse. So this gives me the opportunity to present our very own series of concerts between September to December, which I hope will interest you all. It doesn't exist yet, but I hope it soon will, so please watch out for emails and notices with details. My hope is to raise money for the church development - I already have some musicians who are willing to sacrifice their fee for the purpose, and so CUC will be able to take the door money and revise the rear of the church with it.

The first concert is scheduled for **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October at 3pm** 'Skittles and Dances'. The skittles refers to a delightful piece of Mozart for clarinet, viola and piano, supposedly written in a bowling alley (but probably not!) and some Polish Dances by Lutoslavski. I am joined by Ania Leadbeater (viola) and John Cooper (clarinet). Tickets are available from Eventbrite and refreshments are included...

Getting new people through the door is really important: it connects our fellowship with the 'outside' world, in a parallel activity to the Church Garden, offering balm for the soul. According to Psychology Today, there are three main ways music soothes the soul: 'The sympathetic nervous system is suppressed while the parasympathetic nervous system is heightened, indicating relaxation. Blood flow volume tends to rise when listening to classical music, demonstrating a relaxing effect.'

So there you have it! Heighten your parasympathetic nervous system and your worries will just drift away - what's not to like?

Andrew W-D

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This report was found by Marieke in the storeroom. It's worth another read!

In the mid 1980s the children of the Sunday School at Llandaff Road went camping for a weekend, usually the Whitsun Bank holiday. We went for a few years to Merthyr Mawr, then to Tresaith, west Wales, where we stayed on a farm arranged by Barbara Evans's bother, and one very hot and sunny weekend to a campsite near Rhossili on the Gower. We borrowed tents from Cardiff County Council Leisure Department, a minibus from Barnardo's or Boys' Brigade. On all of these occasions the weather was in our favour, and adults and children had a fantastic time. We took all of the food we thought we would need. At the first camp, this included a bag of oranges for the children to eat. In the morning at breakfast, orange juice was handed out - powder mixed with water. Paul Ballard complimented the cooks on the delicious orange juice. Had we squeezed all those oranges? Yes, of course, we said! The following year, Paul was given his 'special' orange cocktail for breakfast.

Keith John, who worked with the young people for some time at Llandaff Road, came to the camp at the Gower. However, he was the reluctant camper, preferring to sleep in the minibus. He was rudely awakened in the morning by the other campers who rocked the minibus until he got out of the bus.

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### **"As I lay dying"**

Death is part of life. One of the first novels I read as a teenager was William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying* (1930), the story of the death of Addie Bundren and her dysfunctional family's quest to honour her wish to be buried in her hometown, Jefferson, Mississippi. The story begins with Addie still alive watching out the window as her son Cash builds her coffin. The family's wagon journey with Addie's non-embalmed body in the coffin, husband Anse and five children becomes a metaphor for the journey of life. Jewel, the middle son, wants to leave but can't turn his back on them. Cash breaks his leg and has to spend the journey riding on top of the coffin. Trying to cross a river where the bridge has been washed out by recent flooding, they almost lose the coffin. By the time they arrive in Jefferson after the nine-day journey, the stench of the coffin is on the noses of everyone they pass. The story is one of death accompanying life, and life accompanying death, and the sometimes comic, sometimes tragic, sometimes noble and sometimes selfish ways the family copes. It is a universal story.

Mary Evans and I were keeping vigil at a dear old Grand Avenue URC member's bedside in Llandough Hospital. She was clearly in her last hours, in a deep sleep with rough, rattling breath, when she suddenly sat up in bed, opened her eyes and said, "I never thought it was going to be so hard to die!" And then just as suddenly she fell back into that deep sleep, and never woke up again, bless her. She had been working all her life in domestic service, until the age of 70, when her employers turned her out without a pension. Her life had been hard as her death had been hard.

When I first met her two years or so earlier she was living in a small, spare council flat, one of the smallest flats I had ever visited, but just the right size for her diminutive stature. I remember in getting to know her on that first visit, that I shared that I had been teaching literature before I entered the ministry, so our conversation turned to poetry. I was amazed when this ancient, barely educated woman began reciting Longfellow's poem, "Excelsior":

The shades of night were falling fast,  
As through an Alpine village passed  
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,  
A banner with the strange device, Excelsior!

Then after telling her that my home town in Indiana had been the birthplace of the American “children’s poet”, James Whitcomb Riley, I was even more surprised when she began reciting one of his poems, “Little Orphant Annie”.

Kathryn Mannix, in *With the End in Mind: Dying, Death and Wisdom in an Age of Denial* (2017), speaks of the importance of continuing to experience new things in our final days, making new friends, learning and growing (p. 277). Dying should not be a barrier to the richness of living. Mannix reminds me here of another church member, when he was in Holme Towers Hospice, sending cards to fellow hospice patients, not, of course, get-well cards, but messages with the kind of wisdom Mannix would have us be living by, were we not so bent on denial.

What the lady’s life who was dying in Llandough Hospital tells us, of course, is that a life practised in such learning and growing even in the experience of hardship, is a life well-prepared for the sometimes hard experience of dying. Olivia Laing, in *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* (2016), describes a Chicago janitor, Henry Darger, who posthumously became one of the world’s most celebrated “outsider artists”. Darger lived alone in a boarding house, unwillingly giving up his room at the age of 80 to die in a Catholic mission home, the St Augustine Catholic Mission. By all accounts he’d led a sad life. His mother died when he was four and his father was quite disabled. Sent to a Catholic boys’ home at the age of 8, then to the Illinois Asylum for Feeble Minded Children, he worked all his adult life in Chicago Catholic hospitals, folding bandages and sweeping floors. When he moved out of his second-floor room in the rooming house, they cleaned out the debris of decades of hoarding and dumpster-raiding, among which was discovered writing



and artwork of what Laing calls “almost supernatural radiance” (p. 137). Here again is a story of a life transcending its circumstances, a life dominated by the forces of death, we might say, magnificently challenged by Darger’s hidden creativity. “Do not go gentle into that good night,” Dylan Thomas wrote. Certainly that was Darger’s life passion. His written work, titled “The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What is Known as the Realm of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion”, runs to 15,145 pages.

Life and death are intertwined throughout our existence.

Dying does not have to be a barrier to living, in the sense that Kathryn Mannix describes, but there is also the will to live creatively and flourish in the face of death experienced in the midst of life, not just at its end. Think of the ordinary experience of living and dying in life, the challenge of losses that will never be regained. What is the Christian understanding of such experience, in terms of living the resurrection story. Rebirth is often a response to such losses, which then paradoxically become gifts that enable us to live on a deeper, richer level, in greater solidarity with others who have experienced such loss. The ordinary experience of living and dying in life can enrich its meaning if we meet it as a gift.

The world we live in tells us that first we live and then we die. Like leaves that emerge from the material of creation to flourish for a while and then fade back into the stuff of the world from which they came, our lives come to be, flourish and fade. In a God-centred (as opposed to human-centred) universe, our life cycle is essentially no different from that of asparagus or hedgehogs or galaxies. "You are dust," Scripture says, "and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). As Nicolas Berdyaev puts it in *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1962), our humanity "is one of the phenomena of the world, one of the things caught in the maelstrom of all things" (p. 59).

A friend, to cheer me up, once shared with me a poem by Rose Milligan on this theme:

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better  
To paint picture or write a letter,  
Bake a cake or plant a seed,  
Ponder the difference between want and need.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind,  
Old age will come and it's not kind.  
And when you go—and go you must—  
You, yourself, will make more dust.

But humans don't just live for a while and then die. Our experience of the life cycle is infinitely more complex. We are, says Berdyaev, "a break in the world of nature"; we cannot be contained within it, and our creativity turns dead-end experience into occasions of resistance and re-birth. We experience beginnings and endings without end.

Some of our life/death experiences belong to our natural programming, like our emergence from our mother's womb, which is a kind of death as separation as much as it is birth. Genetically programmed to break away from our parents, the struggle to know ourselves we call adolescence is another kind of birth that is also a death.

But there are also characteristically human experiences, like those of abuse and betrayal, physical trauma and impairment that may all be forms of dying but in the human experience can know healings that are like re-birthings. And so are experiences like falling in love and making new commitments and engaging in acts of generosity forms of dying, because in them we learn to deny ourselves in the interest of others.

These are also experiences of birth, of new life, creative acts. T. S. Eliot describes the ambiguity of such birth and death in "The Journey of the Magi":

. . . were we led all that way for Birth or Death?  
There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt.  
I had seen birth and death  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

Tom Arthur



## Ministry And Mission Fund - Annual Letter To Local Churches

**To: All members and adherents of United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships**

**Dear Friends,**

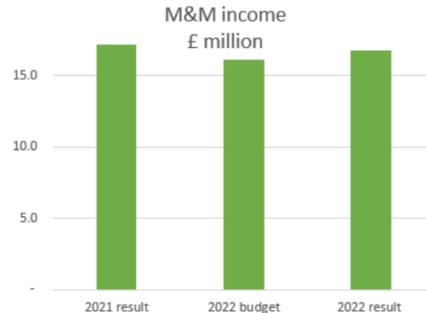
### **When will normal service be resumed?**

As we are writing this letter and closing off the URC's accounts for 2022, the country is still torn with industrial disputes, mostly notably with Health Service workers, rail industry workers, teachers etc. etc. Whatever your view as to the wisdom or justice of such action, we suspect all of us are affected by the disruption to some degree.

In church life too, are we back to "normal life"? Some churches no doubt have returned to something like their pre-Covid level of activity and attendance numbers. Quite a few have recommenced their activity but find their numbers have reduced. Some churches have found re-opening too difficult and have decided to close.

Whatever the "new normal" was to be, we suggest its arrival has (like many trains) been disrupted, delayed, or cancelled all together.

The URC's finance officers had concerns that the late arrival of the return to normality would impact very significantly on the giving to the M&M Fund in 2022. However, the churches responded magnificently and the giving to M&M was £600,000 ahead of budget. It was also only 2.5% down on 2021's result.



So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2022 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

With normal service not yet resumed, 2023 is not going to be an easy year either. We now have the added disruption of high inflation, pushing up wages and overhead costs. As the Spirit directs and as our means allow, can the churches once more respond to the call of our gracious, loving and ever-generous God?

Again, thank you all!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

**Ian Hardie (Immediate Past Treasurer)**  
**Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)**

## Prayer Call

<b>August</b>			
1st	Marc and Alison Dummer	2nd	Abigail, Matt, Brooke and Toby Powell
2nd	Gareth Dyer	3rd	Our daily work
3rd	Hiroko, Richard and Emily Edge	4th	Julie Richards
4th	Toni Edwards	5th	Janice Richens
5th	Eva Elliott	6th	Lucy Robinson and Andrew Wilson-Dickson
6th	Those on holiday	7th	Barbara Smith
7th	Calum Ellis	8th	David and Malou Smith
8th	Alan Farnham	9th	Audrey Takle
9th	Ceri and Phil George	10th	Racial justice
10th	Linda Gibbs	11th	David and Joy Thompson
11th	Rachel, Kate, Evan and Emily Gill	12th	Alison Walker
12th	Bronwyn Gregory	13th	Liz Williams and family
13th	HIV and Aids	14th	Kenneth Woods
14th	Rob, Fiona, Isobel and Alistair Harding	15th	Rita, Francis, Gloria, Gabriel and Michael
15th	Jean Hawkins	16th	Tom and Marieke Arthur
16th	Barbara Jones	17th	Farmers
17th	Sian, Joshua and Harri Jones	18th	Chris and Megan Atherton
18th	Elinor Kapp	19th	Geraint Atherton
19th	Olaide, Taiwo, Ore, Korede and Nifemi Kassim	20th	Gwyn Atherton
20th	Retail and office workers	21st	Lowri and Amelia Baldwin
21st	Jenny Keenor	22nd	Keith Bick
22nd	Beverley, Christopher, Ioan and Evelyn Kibble	23rd	Doreen Cassam
23rd	Cindy Lim, Arwyn McCabe, Nye Buckle and Caian	24th	Food banks
24th	Ann and Tom Lloyd	25th	Debbie Cheshire, Paige and Lola
25th	Angie Luther	26th	David Cooke
26th	Millie McQuade	27th	Clive Curtis and Constantino Dumangane
27th	Our discipleship of prayer	28th	Fred and Rowena Davies
28th	Audrey Morgan	29th	David Dean, Martha McInnes and family
29th	Barbara, Hugh and Bence Morgans	30th	Ann Dobbins
30th	Michael and Katie Munnick, Isla, Leo and Tate	<b>October</b>	
31st	Danielle Phillips, Laura, Will, Cian and Ruby	1st	Our neighbourhood
<b>September</b>		2nd	Marc and Alison Dummer
1st	Mandy and Steve Phillips	3rd	Gareth Dyer
		4th	Hiroko, Richard and Emily Edge

## **Canton Uniting Church Services Rotas: August/September, 2023**

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

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 55.1-5; Psalm 145.8-9,14-21; Romans 9.1-5; Matthew  
14.13-21

Worship Leader: Revd Gareth Dyer  
Deacon/Steward: Fiona Harding  
Readers: Ken Woods, Alan Farnham  
Refreshments: Hugh and Bence

### **Sunday, 13th August 2023**

Lectionary Readings: 1 Kings 19:9-18 Psalm 85:8-13 Romans 10:5-15, Matthew 14:22-33  
Worship Leader: Revd Martha McInnes or Revd David Dean  
Deacon/Steward: Sian and Josh Jones  
Readers: Alison and Ken  
Refreshments: Ann Lloyd

### **Sunday 20th August 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 56:1,6-8 Psalm 67 Romans 11:1-2a,29-32, Matthew  
15:(10-20),21-28

Worship Leader: Revd Martha McInnes or Revd David Dean  
Deacon/Steward: Ceri  
Readers: Alan and Ceri  
Refreshments: Katie M and family  
Preparation of communion: Alison Walker  
Serving at Communion table: Steve Phillips and Audrey Takle

### **Sunday, 27th August 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 51:1-6 Psalm 138 Romans 12:1-8, Matthew 16:13-20  
Worship Leader: Rev Dr Tom Arthur  
Deacon/Steward: Ann Lloyd  
Readers: Jan and Taiwo  
Refreshments: Sian and Josh Jones

### **Sunday, 3rd September 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Jeremiah 15.15-21 Psalm 26.1-8 Romans 12.9-21, Matthew  
16:21-28

Worship Leader: Megan  
Deacon/Steward: Rob  
Readers: Hugh and Steve  
Refreshments: Fiona

### **Sunday, 10th September 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Ezekiel 33.7-11 Psalm 119.33-40 Romans 13.8-14, Matthew  
18:15-20

Worship Leader: TBA

Deacon/Steward: Hugh and Bence Morgans

Readers: The Munnik Family

Refreshments: Abigail

### **Sunday 17th September 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Genesis 50.15-21 Psalm 103.(1-7),8-13 Romans 14.1-12, Matthew  
18:21-35

Worship Leader: Revd Martha McInnes or Revd David Dean

Deacon/Steward: Ken

Readers: Fiona and Ken

Refreshments: Megan

Preparation of communion: Marieke A

Serving communion at table: Eva E and Alison W

### **Sunday 24th September 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Jonah 3.10–4.11 Psalm 145.1-8 Philippians 1.21-30, Matthew  
20:1-16

Worship Leader: TBA

Deacon/Steward: Jan

Readers: Richard and Hugh

Refreshments: Hiroko E

### **Sunday 1st October 2023**

Lectionary Readings: Ezekiel 18.1-4,25-32 Psalm 25.1-9 Philippians 2.1-13, Matthew  
21:23-32

Worship Leader: Revd Craig Gardener

Deacon/Steward: Megan A

Readers: Andrew and Lucy

Refreshments: Marieke A

**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  
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## **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, the 17th of September, 2023.**