

**The Magazine of
The Swansea Pastorate of
The United Reformed Church
Christ Well, Manselton /
Temple, Gowerton
February 2020**



FAIRTRADE

Fair Trade Fortnight – 24th February-8th March

Living in Love

You are love, Lord God,
offering us more than we can fathom.

As we celebrate love this Valentine's Day
with flowers and cards and chocolates
You remind us that love is demanding
as well as lovely.

We have responsibility to You and to each other
To honour one another.

Love isn't temporary pleasure,
One more disposable item in our shopping basket:
Love is for keeps, like Your love for us.

As we celebrate human love this Valentine's Day,

We remember:

You are the source of love.

We honour You, Lord God, as we honour another.

On the up...

Reflection on attendance at Advent and Christmas worship was fascinating this year...not least because numbers were 'up' at every key service. Both the Village Carol Service in Gowerton and Christmas Day worship in Christ Well saw a discernible increase in numbers; over 80 attended Christingle at Christ Well on the Friday before Christmas – and for the main carol service at Christ Well, we had to open the screens at the back of church and put out extra chairs left, right and centre. Folk commented that this was likely to have been the largest attendance at such a service for over 20 years.

All of this begs the question. 'Why?' We are not alone in experiencing this and commentators/analysts offer a number of points on which to reflect. People are tiring of a one-dimensional secular festival; the 'nostalgia' factor continues to grow year on year – people are wistful and want to recapture something of a 'lost' past; a generation is growing up who know very little about church and faith and are curious about what goes on; the churches are waking up to the fact that key services don't have to happen on a Sunday and need to be 'family-friendly'; there is more variety in the Christmas 'diet' of worship now; churches are now much better at advertising what they offer...and so the list goes on. No doubt you will have your own thoughts on all of this; a key question emerges – how do we ensure that we make the most of the precious opportunities that come our way over the Christmas period?

Neil

First Christmas Holidays Abroad

In the UK as well as in Germany, Christmas is seen as a family holiday. Still, Nina and I decided not to go home, but to stay in Wales for that special season, mainly because we wanted to get to know the Christmas traditions you have here. The first thing that surprised us were the Christmas carols, as there were many occasions where people would get together especially for singing them. Some of the songs were familiar, either because we had a German version of them (O little town of Bethlehem, for example) or because they were just so famous (such as In the Bleak Midwinter or Hark! the Herald Angels Sing).

We learned about mince pies and tried them – well, they are very different from typical German Christmas food. Some of you may know *Spekulatius* or *Lebkuchen* (gingerbread) which is very popular in Germany.

One of our ‘highlights’ was helping Cynthia and Robert to find a Christmas tree for the church. It was a very nice place we went to: They had a lot of animals there, including some sheep and lambs. Especially the latter were very distracting. Later on, we helped putting it up and decorating it.

In contrast to that, our own flat did not look very festive. So we were very happy that as soon as the holidays began, we could borrow the little tree that was used in the playgroup.

On the 23rd, my sister arrived in Swansea and spent the Christmas time with us. In Germany, the 24th is actually the most important day for Christmas, so we unwrapped most of the presents (in the evening) and had the typical food for

Christmas Eve: potato salad with sausages. Nina was the only one to eat everything, though, as my sister is vegan and I am vegetarian. After that, we met with Robert and went to St Michael's for the midnight service. It was very interesting for us to see how different that service was from the ones we are used to in Christ Well. But there were also some similarities to our 'typical' services in Germany.

Christmas Day then started with another service followed by a short rest in our flat. After that, we went to Helen who had kindly invited us. She had made an effort to prepare something for all of us despite our different eating habits.

There was a lot of very good and tasty food, so we had a lovely meal and a little chat and some tea afterwards. Boxing Day and the rest of the year were very quiet and calm for us. We would say that all in all, there are some differences between British and German traditions, but rather small ones. The essence, the main things about Christmas are the same: celebrating the birth of Jesus, eating a lot and spending time with family and friends.

And we would like to say thank you very much for all the gifts we received for Christmas!

Nina and Andi (Time for God Students)

Memorial Plaques in St John's Garden

When Carmarthen Road URC closed last year, their two WW1 memorial plaques found a new home at St. John's Day Centre, and on the 28th November a service of dedication was held there with tea and cakes served afterwards.

Unfortunately Neil had a hospital appointment on that day, but the vicar of St. Michael's, Rev. Ian Drew-Jones kindly

stepped in to take the prayers. Among the guests were local councillor and Lord Mayor, Peter Black, Deputy Mayor Mark Child, and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Helena Herklots.

Several children from Gendros School also attended. It was lovely to see them chatting with the clients and exchanging stories, and two of the children read poems during the service.

The memorial plaques now take pride of place in St. John's garden...

by Helen Smail



The following is part of a letter of thanks received from Helen Inglis, Church Engagement Officer of Alabare Christian Care and Support, for the contribution of £320 sent to them following the Remembrance Weekend.

'Thank you so much for your generous contribution towards our work with homeless and vulnerable people. Across our services Alabare last year supported 1,950

and the support of the Churches makes a huge difference to the support we can offer, through prayer, volunteers and donations.

328 Veterans were supported through our Homes for Veterans, and I have ensured that your donation has been ring-fenced for our H4V in Clydach.

Please continue to support our work with your prayers.'

Christian Aid Christmas Appeal

Thank you to all who donated so generously to this appeal. The amount raised totalled £759.75. A very pleasing result.

Thank you...

...to everybody who helped with the Christmas Fayre at Temple, Gowerton. The remarkable total of £1060+ was raised. This represents a great deal of hard work before the day – and on the day of the fayre itself. There was a genuine 'buzz' about the event, with plenty of people of all ages present.

Additionally, charitable giving over the Christmas period amounted to over £400 – again, many thanks.

Conversations in the sauna



I had a conversation with a young man who was spending the week in Swansea with his work – he was an engineer working on wind turbines in South and West Wales. We often think of people struggling to find work...but it was clear that prospective employers were effectively fighting for the services of this young man and others like him; he was able to ‘cherry pick’ when it came to work, since he was able to provide skills and expertise which were in short supply...even though the growth of so-called ‘green energy’ had been regarded as inevitable and desirable for a considerable period of time. He felt that he would never have to worry about work, since the provision of training (certainly here in the UK) was not keeping up with the growth of the industry. He had a ‘skill set’ which was in very high demand indeed.

What are the most important components in our ‘skill set’ as Christians? Familiarity with the basics of the faith? An understanding of the most important elements in living a Christian life? The ability to talk about faith with a measure of confidence? An informed conviction that faith continues to be relevant? An ability to balance ‘believing’ with a lifestyle which bears out what we believe? Questions which need urgent consideration.

From 2000...

Whilst sorting through some old papers, I came across a cutting from a copy of 'Reform' in 2000; the words are by Tony Burnham, who was then the General Secretary of the URC.

Stop going to church – ***Start*** being the church.

Stop sending out the children when we worship – ***Start*** worshipping God together.

Stop teaching the children – ***Start*** teaching the adults.

Stop moaning about our elderly congregations – ***Start*** rejoicing that so many live for so long.

Stop filling our chapels with pews – ***Start*** putting out only as many chairs as there are people.

Stop sitting for sermons – ***Start*** standing to hear the Good News.

Stop worrying about decline – ***Start*** listening, thinking, doing and praying.

I don't expect you to agree with everything that he says/suggests, but the point that he makes about having a demonstrably positive attitude is an important one.

Neil

Jerusalem? Really?

A BBC poll conducted by 'Songs of Praise' revealed that the 2019 top hymns, as voted for by the public, are as follows:

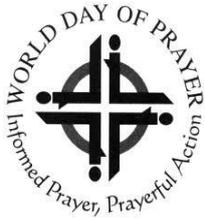
1. Jerusalem
2. How Great Thou Art!
3. In Christ Alone
4. Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind
5. Abide With Me
6. I Vow To Thee, My Country
7. Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer
8. Amazing Grace
9. Be Still, For The Presence Of The Lord
10. I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky

Interesting that there are now three broadly 'contemporary' songs in the list... which in itself could well say something about the continuing popularity of 'Songs of Praise'.

ADVANCE NOTICES FOR MARCH

Lent Group 2020

Advance notice of the dates for this year's Lent Group...in the diary already, because it is getting pretty crowded! The group will meet at 7.30pm on a Monday on 2nd March, 16th March, 30th March and 6th April. It is highly likely that we will meet in the lounge at Christ Well, since a lot of the big furniture at the manse will be disappearing at the end of January.



Friday - 6th March at St John's, Gowerton
Women's World Day of Prayer – Zimbabwe –
Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk

**Christ Well Church Meeting – please note change of date:
Wednesday, 18th March – 7.30 pm (not 11th)**

Safeguarding Training...

... will take place at Christ Well between 10am and 3pm on Saturday 14th March. This is aimed at all those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, and will take account of recent changes/expectations. It is not a 'congregational' event, but is open to all those who are interested or who feel that it may be relevant; for some, it is effectively compulsory! Listen for further details... but there is no charge and it is suggested that you bring a packed lunch. An opportunity to receive all the relevant training on a single day on your doorstep!

Church flowers at Christ Well

Many thanks to everyone who contributes during the year to the purchase of Sunday flowers in the Church. If there are any alterations please contact Christ Well URC.

CHURCH CALENDAR

Date	Christ Well URC	Temple URC
Sun 2 Feb	10.30 am Rev Dr. Noel Davies 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches – Communion	10.30 am – Rev Neil Riches - Morning Worship and Communion
Tues 4 Feb	7.30 pm Elders Meeting	
Sun 9 Feb	10.30 am Rev Neil Riches 6.00 pm Rev Linda Woollacott at Eaton Road Methodist	10.30 am – Morning Worship
Thurs 13 Feb		10.30 am Communion and Coffee Morning
Sun 16 Feb	10.30 am Rev Neil Riches Communion 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches	10.30 am – Morning Worship
Thurs 20 Feb		10.30 am – Communion and Coffee Morning
Sun 23 Feb	10.30 am Rev Neil Riches 6.00 pm Rev Siperire Mugadzaweta, at Eaton Road	10.30 am – Morning Worship

Date	Christ Well URC	Temple URC
Thurs 27 Feb		10.30 am – Morning Worship and Coffee Morning
Sun 1 March	St David 's Day 10.30 am Rev Linda Woollacott 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches – Communion	10.30 am – Morning Worship

Cycle of Prayer for Churches in the Swansea Region

Feb. 2 nd	Hill Chapel
Feb 9 th	Tabernacle, Mumbles
Feb, 16 th	Temple, Gowerton
Feb 23 rd	Uniting Church, Sketty
March 1 st	Christ Well
March 8 th	Hall Street,
March 15 th	Hill Chapel
March 22 nd	Tabernacle, Mumbles
March 29 th	Temple, Gowerton

Items for the next issue of the Magazine should be received by 19th February, please. If you wish to send in contributions by email the Church email address is :
christ.well@ntlbusiness.com

WEEKLY ACTIVITY SCHEDULE FOR CHRIST WELL URC

MONDAYS

TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.45 am	Playgroup (term time only)	Hall
7.00 am – 8.00 pm	Singing for Fun (2nd Monday of the month only)	Worship Area

TUESDAYS

TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.45 am	Playgroup (term time only)	Hall
11.00 am – 1.00 pm	Café	Concourse
11.00 am – 12 noon	Musical Memories Choir	Worship Area
2.00 pm – 4.00 pm	Health Support Group	Lounge
6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	Tuesday Club (term time only)	Whole building
7.15 pm	Table Tennis (term time only)	Hall

WEDNESDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.30 am	Carers and Toddlers (term time only)	Hall
11.00 am – 2.00 pm	Time to Meet	Lounge
11.00 am – 1.00 pm	Café	Concourse

THURSDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.45 am	Playgroup (term time only)	Hall
9.30 am – 11.30 am	Welsh Class - University (University term time only)	Lounge
10.00 am – 12 noon	Welsh Café	Concourse

FRIDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	Brownies (term time only)	Hall



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2020 IS COMING!

The focus this year is on the people, particularly women, who grow and harvest some of our favourite goods, and highlighting why they deserve Fairtrade.

Calling all chocolate fans and fighters for fairness!

In 2020 we will continue our mission to ensure that all farmers are paid fairly for their work and are able to earn a living income, starting with cocoa farmers.

Please remember to buy Fair trade goods when you shop, or you can place an order with Elaine (Jones) at any time. Catalogues are available.