

# THE



# INE

Autumn 2022

## WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

by Joanna Saunders

I remember singing a song when I was in Sunday School that I particularly liked and which I'm sure many of you will know; here's the chorus:

*"I know who holds the future,  
And he'll guide me with his hand.  
With God things don't just happen,  
Everything by him is planned.  
So as I face tomorrow  
With its problems large and small,  
I'll trust the God of miracles,  
Give to him my all."*<sup>1</sup>

I loved this song at the time mostly because of the melody, but even though I was just a little girl, I completely and utterly believed every lyric.

As we said a fond farewell to our retiring Superintendent Presbyterian Rev Sue Lawler this summer, I know she was extremely grateful for and touched by everyone's good wishes, heartfelt messages and words of appreciation and love.

Because of the various "interesting" circumstances in our circuit over the last few months, Rev Sue stayed well beyond her remit, unobtrusively steering the ship, so to speak, as we awaited the beginning of an exciting new chapter with our new Superintendent Presbyterian Rev Catherine Brobbey. By the time you read this, we will have welcomed Rev Catherine fully into our

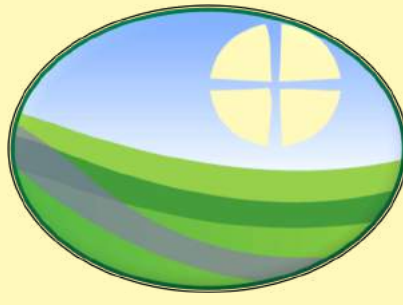


Rev Sue and worshippers at her Farewell Service  
in Castle Street, 31<sup>st</sup> July  
Photograph: Hilary Gregg

Circuit with much rejoicing! (There will be a full report on that occasion in the next issue.)

Forgive me for briefly waxing lyrical – I'm taking shocking advantage of my editorial position here – but I am so struck at God's abundant provision as I contemplate the Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit and our faith journey together. From 2009, when Rev Cathy Gale led the way through the "marriage" of five circuits; our time with Rev Sue and now the next leg of our pathway with Rev Catherine, God has worked among us, sometimes in ways that have caused us to rejoice, sometimes mourn, and sometimes shake our heads in confusion!

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## DATES FOR THE DIARY...

**6<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

**PENARTH METHODIST CHURCH**

Monday–Friday: 10am–12noon; 2–4pm

Saturday: 10am–12noon

Free entry

**“The Human One” – Art exhibition of 30 paintings of the life of Jesus by Abergavenny-based artist Jeremy Thomas**

**14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022, 10.30am**

**PONTYPOOL INDOOR MARKET**

**Harvest Celebration**

**20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022, 4pm**

**BLACKWOOD METHODIST CHURCH**

**Circuit Service**



Thought it would be fun to “photo-bomb” the information page with a pic of Rev Sue at her retirement party being presented with some lovely artwork created by the Castle Street Sunday School!

*Photograph: Martha Holman*

## GWENT HILLS AND VALES CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE

Every Sunday evening, 6pm. Here's the link:

<https://zoom.us/j/94168420492?pwd=cjFTbzZUejhwTFBtVXdnL1lFVkdIdz09>

Meeting ID: 941 6842 0492

Passcode: 831858

*All material in this publication shared with permission*

### The Vine Team:

Rev Catherine Brobbey

Rev Steve Boxall

Celia Price

Peter Millward

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*Deadline for items to be included in the Winter issue: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022*



by Gillian Timm

I would like to thank everyone in the circuit for your prayers and support during my recent trip to Senegal with Mercy Ships. I had an amazing experience during my three-month stay on the **Africa Mercy** and was able to use many of the skills I had learned during my 40 years of experience as a hospital pharmacist, from compounding liquids and packing powders to helping review some of the clinical treatment plans.

As I expected, the scariest part was travelling all that way by myself however, once on the ship, I soon settled in and made lots of new

friends – I was sharing a cabin with eight other ladies. The ship had crew from 40-plus nations, and it was great to chat with them over mealtimes. On Sundays we had a worship service together on the dock.

I was working 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, and on call one week in three. During that week I could not leave the ship in case any extra medicines were required. There were two other pharmacists – Vinnie the senior pharmacist and Gunther, a community pharmacist from Germany (pictured with Gillian below). We took it in turns to attend ward rounds, top up medicines in the operating theatres and wards and fill prescriptions for outpatients, crew and patients being discharged.

The surgeries being conducted on the ship included women's health (mainly to cure incontinence after a traumatic childbirth), maxillofacial (cleft palates and facial tumours), plastics (dealing with burn contractures) and general adult and paediatric surgery (hernias). There were two or three wards of 12 – 18 patients using two theatres at any given time. Patients often came with a carer who slept on



*Gillian and the Africa Mercy,  
her home for three months in Senegal.*



*Gillian (centre) and her fellow pharmacists,  
Vinnie (left) and Gunther (right).*

a mattress stored under their bed. There was a local day crew who helped to translate when we wanted to speak to the patients, and chaplains to help the patients cope in a strange environment and pray with them. The patients also had at least an hour each afternoon on the deck in the fresh air, and I am sure this helped in their recovery. When the time came for them to leave, they were waved off the ship by the crew on the upper decks and had fantastic smiles on their faces, profoundly grateful to have received life-changing surgery.

*(Continued on Page 11)*



# PLATINUM JUBILEE

Thought it would be fun to share some of the photographs from the various Jubilee celebrations around the GHAV Circuit over that particular holiday weekend, at least ones for which I have pics! Proceedings kicked off on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> June in Pontypool Market...read on to discover more...



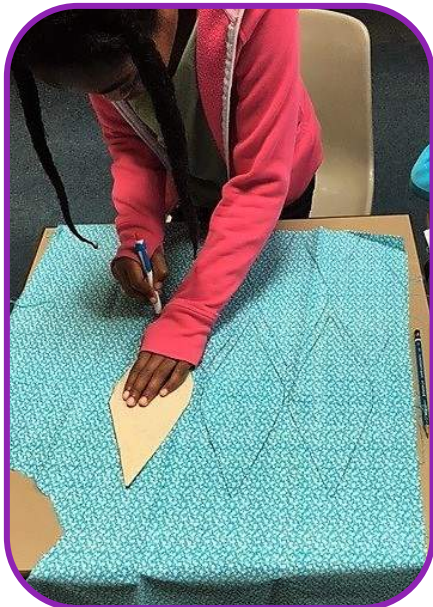
*Above:* Two of our intrepid Chaplains, **Celia Price** (left) and **Julie Blake**, leading a service of Thanksgiving for our Queen's Platinum Jubilee *and* the 7th Birthday of Pontypool Market Chaplaincy!



*Above right:* **Annmarie Miles**, one of the Deacons at Upper Trosnant Baptist Church, supplied musical accompaniment. Many of the local churches were represented at the service.



*Right:* Supporter of the Chaplaincy, **Larry Howser**, reading a Bible passage.



Castle Street's Friday Club met on Wednesday afternoon 1<sup>st</sup> June, to prepare some bunting for the weekend's celebrations!

*Left:* **Jessica Asante**, carefully using as much of the fabric as possible as she draws around her template.



*Right:* Careful with those scissors **Tanaka**!





*Left:* Is it just me, or do these look more like shorts than bunting?

*Above:* **Florence Asante** joyfully displays the beautiful finished product!



*Left:* Castle Street had this beautiful cake made for their Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June Bring-and-Share Lunch.

*Right:* **Rev Sue** cut a lot of cakes this summer! Here she is slicing into Trinity's at their celebrations, 11<sup>th</sup> July.



*Right:* A very well-fed crowd enjoy some beautiful Tongan dancing at Pontnewynydd's Jubilee Hog Roast on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> June. The dancers are **Kelzeta Talamai** and **Taufa Tu'ipulotu**.

Photographs credited as follows:  
Pontypool Market and Pontnewynydd – Joanna Saunders  
Castle Street – a church member  
Trinity – Janet Sanders





# sesquicentennial:

## a 150th anniversary or its celebration

On Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> July, Trinity Methodist Church celebrated their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary *and* the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, with a strawberries and cream afternoon tea. Close on 100 guests watched Nick Thomas-Symonds, MP open the proceedings, browsed our fascinating collection of photographs and artifacts, listened to Rev Steve Boxall's account of our history and joined in Maureen Tuckwell's royal quiz and sing-along.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed in any way to the success of our celebration, and we are very proud to announce that £820, the total sum made, has been donated to the Alzheimer's Society.

**GAYNOR JONES, Trinity Church**



***There was quite a crowd...***

*Photograph: Joanna Saunders*





**Top Left: This beautiful cake was the centrepiece of the strawberry afternoon tea (top right).**

**Above left and right: There were memories galore – pictures of special events and a collection of wedding photos.**

*Page 7 Photographs:  
The Cake and the Food – Clive Furnell  
Wedding and Special Events Collections – Joanna Saunders*



# PLATINUM JUBILEE – GLASBURY SUPPLEMENTAL

*After the Jubilee celebrations, I (Joanna) was delighted to receive the following report, written by a member of Castle Street, who accompanied three young ladies to one of the events. It's quite a lot of words I know, but it was so frank and charming, I could not resist including it for you, only slightly edited for space. I personally found it very insightful regarding both how we come across as Christians to those who may not be as familiar with our ways of saying and doing things, and also some of the effects of the pandemic that we may not have considered. Enjoy...*

Tanaka Holman, Holly Asante and Jessica Asante attended a Platinum Jubilee Strawberry Tea at Glasbury Methodist Church on Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> June. They travelled on the bus from Castle Street with other Castle Street folk. It was the first time they had travelled together on a church outing like this, without their parents. They were excited, but also a bit nervous about meeting people they didn't know, and they didn't really know what a strawberry tea was going to be like, because they hadn't attended one before.



*Ladies in the balcony, left – right: Holly Asante, Tanaka Holman and Jessica Asante*

environments. Not for them the quickly growing flow of birthday parties, school discos, communal dining, sports days, Christmas plays. Not for them the Brownie packs, music lessons, sports, drama clubs, movie and theatre trips. Not for them the new encounters, the widening circle of new friendships made on buses on school excursions. All the opportunities to meet new people, to stand in front of adults, to start to find their feet and their voices. Maybe 20 – 35% of their lives so far has been restricted to very limited personal and social outward engagement.

For those of us in our 50s, 60s and 70s, the equivalent might be the past 10 – 20 years being in isolation and lockdowns.

On arriving at the chapel, they swayed between being excited to be there, wanting to take part, and not wanting to mix with strangers. After a few minutes where I was saying hello to a few people I knew, I went upstairs to find all three girls hiding under the pews! A mixture of feelings here, of fun and new things, of exploring and playing games, but also wanting to hide away from the unknown and have their own private space. Apart from things, yet still a part of things.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 they were just 8, 7 and 6 years old, when Covid-19 was emerging. Now they are 11, 10 and 9. More than 2 years of lockdowns and distancing: withdrawing, opening up, stepping out, being encouraged, then re-withdrawing, closing down and re-emerging. It has been a huge proportion of their young lives, and at a stage when they would normally be gaining confidence in school, family and church



*Jessica choosing the contents of her plate...*



Imagine that. At least we older folk would have had 40-plus years of varying experiences prior to lockdown, including warm and wonderful memories to comfort us, plus many years of faith, to help us regain our confidence when we step out again. Their shyness and reticence is understandable, when reflected upon. We must remember and acknowledge this as we move forward, without letting it become something that holds them back.

Back to our story. They wanted to eat their tea upstairs, not with the others. They wanted to not be greedy and take too much at once. Cue half a dozen trips down and up the stairs for just one bowl of strawberries, one Welsh cake, one biscuit, one slice of cake at a time in case they took too much. After eating, from their viewpoint on the balcony, they felt that they saw 'no-one' they knew, except the Minister. (Castle Street folk were mostly under the balcony.) They considered that they had travelled together on a bus with the congregation, and not that far...but some people there might have travelled a longer way, might not know anyone yet, might be on their own, might be feeling lonely, might be glad to have someone say hello to them...

Having suggested they go down and meet new people, the initial response was *"But we don't know them, so what can we say to them?"* Chatting about this, they agreed that giving information is a good way for someone to feel safe about talking to you. Because once you tell someone something about yourself, they feel a bit better talking back. Not many people like to be asked questions by strangers. I suggested they start by saying 'Hello, my name is So-and-So, I'm from Castle Street, I like doing..., have you travelled far...?'

*"That's a good point. I think I'll be the one called So-and-So, what do you want to be called...?"*

*"Umm.... I'll be called Somebody Else..."*

(I couldn't tell if they were confused, taking me literally, or relaxing a bit and joking...)

*"Is it ok to give our real names if we don't know them...?"*

Hmm.... Church is a "safe space" for us adults who know each other... but is it still safe if it's far from home, your parents aren't there, and you don't know anyone? I assured them that this time it definitely was safe, and anyway, I would be with them. Did they need me to introduce them to anyone first?

*"No, you can stay up here, we'll do it together, on our own."*

I smiled at the contradiction, and the growing confidence. And they peeked over the balcony, agreed on their initial 'targets', and asked for paper and pencils. They wrote down a few questions under the heading "How to make new friends" and trotted off downstairs together. And that's how folk in the front side pews were pounced upon by three young girls suddenly saying "Hello!" and asking where they had travelled from. Thank you all for engaging in that so gently and pleasantly.

Verdict by the girls immediately after? *"That was FUN! Those people are from Cwmbrân, these are from Llanelly Hill, these came together in one car, I think that gentleman came with those ladies... I don't know if they're married or anything, or friends, or just in the same car... they were all really nice and friendly!"*

We had previously discussed if they might like to be 'junior reporters' at the Strawberry Tea and write a report on who they met and what they thought, perhaps to be published in The Vine. Emboldened by the response thus far, they returned upstairs, asked for more paper and pencils and set about writing lists of questions to ask more people.

They enjoyed it all very much. The food was 'wonderful', the strawberries were 'delicious', the people were 'kind and very friendly', the service was 'very good', and they would like to go to something like that again. Although one of the girls was disappointed that they weren't actually served any 'cups of tea made from strawberries', which is one of the things she was anticipating by the term 'strawberry tea'... (and I have to say I can't fault the logic in assuming this...).

They liked the way people gave thanks in the open prayer time that we have a good Queen. And found it thought-provoking to hear how important it was to our members that we not only have a Christian Queen, but one who speaks openly about her faith. They found that interviewees were very patient with their questions, kind and helpful in answering them, especially spelling difficult words and being generally complimentary.

The thought that their new friends might visit Castle Street for Rev Sue's

*Continued on Page 11*

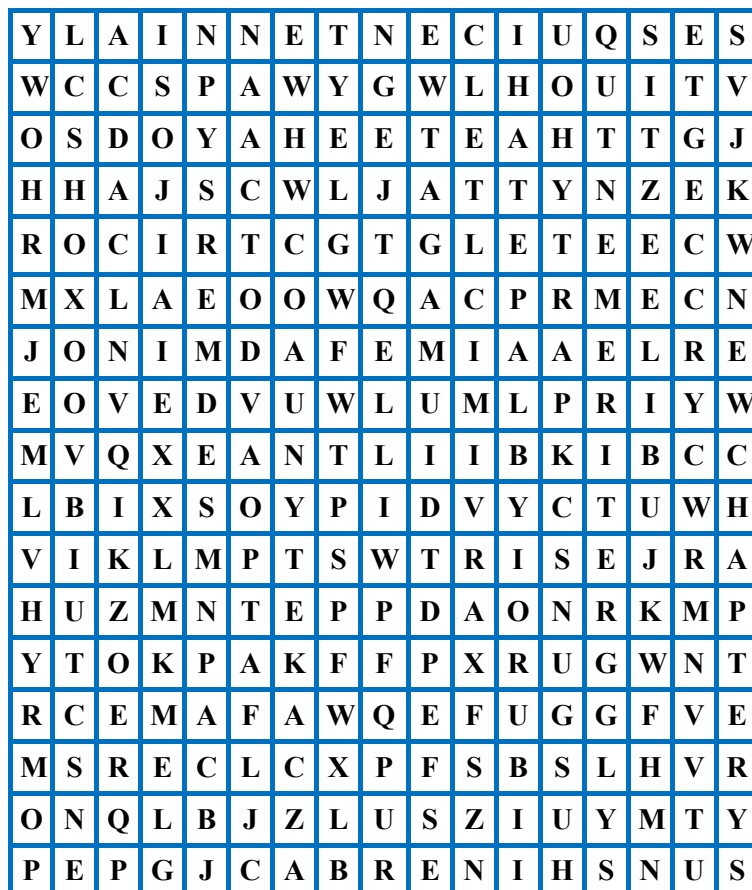
## AUTUMN WORD SEARCH



CAKE  
COMMONWEALTH  
COST OF LIVING  
DROUGHT  
GRATITUDE  
HEATWAVE  
HOLIDAYS  
JUBILEE

MONARCHY  
NEW CHAPTER  
PARTY  
RETIREMENT  
SESQUICENTENNIAL  
SUNSHINE  
WELCOME

*Puzzle created by Joanna  
using wordmint.com*



There is no such thing as too much cake! In another photo-bomb, here's Rev Sue, slicing hers on 31<sup>st</sup> July.



## WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

*(Continued from Page 1)*

What a joy and a comfort it is to know that nothing that has happened, is happening or will happen is a surprise to our Heavenly Father! He reigns supreme, and never loses control.

***“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”***

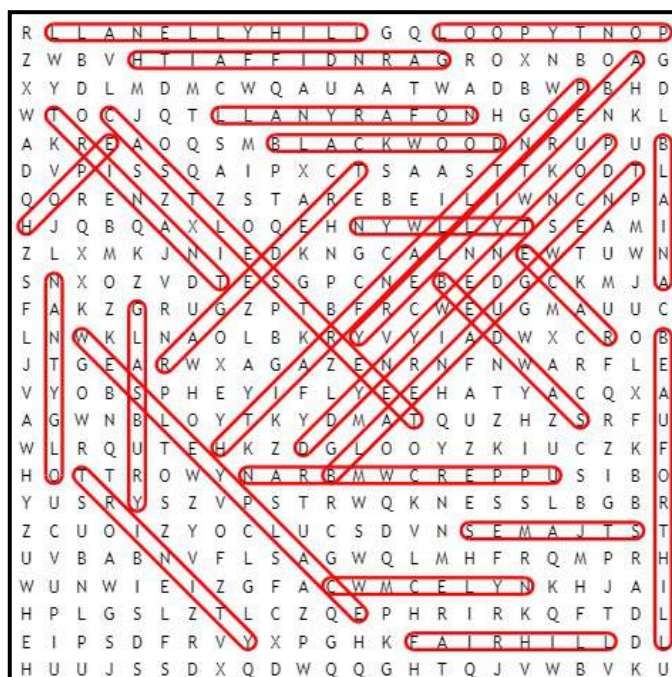
*Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)*

Our Father knows the way ahead. Let us, in unity, take his hand and trust him as we move forward in faith!

**JOANNA SAUNDERS**

<sup>1</sup> *“I Know Who Holds the Future” by Albert B Smith*

## SPRING WORD SEARCH SOLUTION (with apologies for the confusion – better late than never!)







Before the ship arrives in a country, teams of volunteers have gone out to invite suitable patients to attend screening for surgery. These people then come to stay in the Hope Centre on land. Prior to surgery they are transported to the outpatient and pre-screening tents on the dock to be assessed. After their surgery, they go back to the Hope Centre until they are fit enough to be discharged and go home.

Covid has obviously had an impact on the number of surgeries being undertaken however, despite there being several crewmembers who came down with the virus, none of the patients caught the disease and all the surgeries planned were completed. I especially valued your prayers during this period!

It wasn't all work, and when able I managed to explore Dakar and the surrounding area, sampling the local food, visiting beaches and a safari park. I also took in some art exhibitions – part of the biennial African art festival that was taking place – and visited Gorée Island.

The other big event during my stay was the arrival of the **Global Mercy**, the brand-new hospital ship which is still in the process of being fitted out. This was for the celebration of 30 years of Mercy ships working in Africa. There was a conference and a declaration signed by eleven nations promising to improve access to surgery for all over the next 10 years. There was a commissioning ceremony for the

**Global Mercy**, and it stayed for a month to provide training programmes for local nurses and medics. These activities are all part of the reasons that I support the Mercy Ships – they aim to do themselves out of a role in the future, as countries will have the capacity to do their own surgery. However, there is still a long way to go.

Next year the **Africa Mercy** will go for a refit before going to Madagascar; the **Global Mercy** will go back to Senegal, then on to Sierra Leone. Please continue to pray for their mission to be fulfilled, and for the people who work to make it possible.

Gillian Timm, Fairhill Church



## PLATINUM JUBILEE – GLASBURY SUPPLEMENTAL

Continued from Page 9

leaving service, and they would all see each other again before long, was exciting. And they decided that, if the chance arose, it would be nice for them to bake their own cakes for the leaving party, especially so that Glasbury folk in particular might be able to try some in return. We shall have to see how that turns out.... **Thank you to Glasbury folk and everyone there who said hello and chatted back!**

**Words and pictures submitted by a member of Castle Street Church**

(In the December issue, we have a chance to get to know the members of Glasbury and their Jubilee guests a little better, with a full report on the girls' interviews!)



## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

Heavenly Father,  
You call us to love you with all our heart  
and soul and mind and strength;  
So when our hearts are troubled and our  
souls weary,  
When our minds are confused and our  
strength seems gone,  
Surround us with your all-sufficient grace  
And remind us once again how your  
power is made perfect in weakness;  
In the one who comes to walk with us,  
In Jesus, your son.  
Amen

Rev Dr Stephen Wigley  
Wales Synod Chair  
Methodist Prayer Handbook 2022/2023

*Creawdwr, Gwaredwr, Cynhaliwr, Ysbryd  
goleuni a chariad,  
Agor ein calonnau, ein heneidiau a'n  
meddyliau I'th egni a'th ras  
adnewuddol di;  
Rwyt yn ein llenwi â'th fywyd, Ysbryd  
bywiog, fel y gallwn ni,  
Uwchlaw dim, dy garu di, ein cymdogion a'n  
hunain, fel rwyt ti'n ein caru ni.  
Amen*

Lord of creation, saviour, sustainer, spirit of life  
and love,  
Open our hearts, souls and minds to your  
renewing energy and grace;  
Vibrant Spirit, fill us with your life, above all  
else, that we, even we, may love you, our  
neighbours, and ourselves,  
As you love us.  
Amen

Rev Jennifer Hurd, Synod Cymru Chair  
Methodist Prayer Handbook 2022/2023

- For our new Superintendent Presbyter Rev Catherine Brobbey, as she begins her appointment with us.
- For her husband Deacon John Brobbey, as he takes up his appointment in the Manchester and Stockport District.
- For Rev Sue Lawler, as she settles into retirement.
- For Rev Paul and Mrs Mary Donnison.
- For Rev Andrea Sims and her family.
- For Rev Steve Boxall's mum Audrey, as she settles into her new home.
- For all refugees and those displaced by war.
- For all those who serve in positions of leadership – world, national, local and church.
- For the recently bereaved, and those dealing with loss.
- For those still struggling with the effects of the pandemic.
- For all of us, as we grapple with the effects of the cost of living crisis.
- For the Church, as we seek to live out our role as the Body of Christ in this world.