

# THE



# INE

Summer 2022

## WHAT IS LOVE?

by Reverend Andrea Sims

*"What's Love Got to do With It?"* Tina Turner asks. *"What is love anyway?"* are the lyrics of a Howard Jones song. What is love? The more I have delved into the question and the more I have pondered, the more difficult the answer seemed.

If you google the question *"What is love?"* you will be given lots of scientific answers such as: *"love is most likely influenced by both biological drives and cultural influences"*, alongside details of how the brain releases chemicals and how the heart responds by beating faster etc. But it seems to me that these fall desperately short of an answer.

What is love? A question posed by so many love songs and poets. It seems such a simple thing that even children understand, and yet it is so complex. In our culture when we speak of love, we say that we *"fall in love"*; we *"fall in love at first sight"*; *"the course of love never runs smooth"* and *"love breaks hearts"*. I was struck by a line by **R.S. Thomas**, the wonderful Welsh Poet and clergyman born in Cardiff with a ministry based in North Wales. He wrote in his poem *"Evening"*:

*"Let us stand, then,  
in the interval of our wounding,  
till the silence turn golden  
and love is a moment  
eternally overflowing."*

*"Love is a moment eternally overflowing."*

What a powerful and profound thought! Love is eternal. Love is forever flowing. Love is beyond boundaries. Love is never forgotten. Love is never put out. Love is never dead. Love is never quenched.

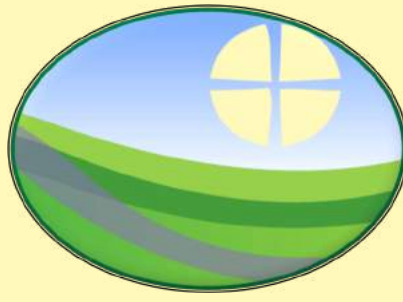
Love is the essence of God. God is Love; Love is God. The two are the same. Which is why we can't just explain love away, any more than we can explain God away. Love is Jesus' dying wish. At the last supper, the last meal that Jesus eats, he shares this: *"Love one another."* Not only that: *"Love one another as I have loved you."* What is love? Love is the embodiment of God. Love is an encounter with God. Christ is the embodiment of love. To encounter God is to encounter love.

I wonder what **you** think love is? I wonder what springs to mind when you hear the word "love"? Although love is difficult to explain, we know it when we see it. Jesus says *"Love as I have loved you. I call you friends. Greater love has no one than*



Photo: Rev Andrea Sims

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## DATES FOR THE DIARY...

### 9<sup>th</sup> JULY 2022 – TRINITY

3pm 150<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary Celebration

### 31<sup>st</sup> JULY 2022 – CASTLE STREET

4pm Farewell Service for Rev Sue Lawler

### 1<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022 – CASTLE STREET

7pm Welcome Service for Rev Catherine Brobbey

### 8<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022 – CASTLE STREET

7pm Circuit Meeting

### 20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022 – BLACKWOOD

4pm Circuit Service

## CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE...

**Debbie Allen** has served as copyeditor, proofreader and, for a while there even printer for **The Vine** – thank you Debbie, for lending us your expertise and time so willingly for so long. She has now “passed the baton” to **Peter Millward** – welcome to **The Vine** Peter, and thank you for your invaluable help!

Our beautiful logo was custom-designed by **Geoffrey Allen** – thank you Geoffrey for sharing your gift so generously!

And thank you, **Dear Readers**, for so much lovely feedback! As always, please get in touch if you would like to receive **The Vine** by email or contribute content.

## 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

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### **The Vine Team (so far!):**

Rev Sue Lawler  
Joanna Saunders  
Peter Millward

Rev Steve Boxall  
Celia Price

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

# Introducing...

## REVEREND CATHERINE BROBBEY and DEACON JOHN BROBBEY

As you know, we will be bidding a fond farewell in July to Reverend Sue Lawler as she retires. This seemed like a good opportunity to introduce you to our new Superintendent Minister, **Reverend Catherine Brobbey**, and her husband, **Deacon John Brobbey**.

Catherine grew up in Pontypool and came to faith at The Mission in Pontymoile. She did a degree in French and Italian at Swansea University, where she also trained as a teacher.

After working for 13 years as a lay worker, first in the Bury St Edmunds Circuit (East Anglia District) and then in Redditch (Birmingham District), Catherine candidated for ministry and began training in 2010. It was during this time that she met John, and they were married in 2015.

Catherine has been a minister in the Wales Synod since 2012, serving in the Cardiff Circuit and currently in the Vale of Glamorgan.

John Brobbey is from Manchester. In 2008, he was appointed as Ministries and Development Worker at Manchester Central Hall. Drawn to a practical life of serving, in 2009, he candidated to become a Methodist Deacon. In 2012, he began his first circuit appointment in Peterborough.

He currently serves in the Vale of Glamorgan, where as part of his responsibilities, he is Chaplain to the **Amelia Trust Farm**<sup>1</sup>. For John, it is quite a change in setting from the communities of Manchester and Peterborough; but there is a similar vision behind it, which is all about reaching out to people '*on the margins*'.

From September, John will begin a two-year appointment in the Manchester & Stockport District, as District Mission Enabler and as Officer for Social Justice.

Catherine's family all live in or near to Abergavenny and John's family are in Manchester. In their spare time, they enjoy walking, gardening, eating out, going to the theatre and travelling when possible.

They are looking forward to their new appointments and hope to meet as many of you as possible in the months ahead. In the meantime they keep you in their prayers as you say farewell to Sue, and Sue as she looks forward to a well-earned rest!

**John and Catherine Brobbey**

<sup>1</sup>**Home - Amelia Trust Farm**





# FAIRHILL COMMUNITY GARDEN

On Saturday afternoon, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2022, we were blessed with wonderful sunshine for the opening of **Fairhill Methodist Church's Community Garden**! Crowds gathered, a choir of local school children sang, there were burgers and hot dogs to eat, along with squash, tea and coffee, even the local MP, **Nick Thomas-Symonds**, was in attendance. Enjoy our photo-report and some words from Church Trustee **Jan Jackson**...



*(Above)* Church Trustee Jan Jackson speaking to the assembled crowds *(left)* to open the event



*(Above)* The all-important ribbon-cutting, performed by children from the combined schools of Blenheim Road Community and Coed Eva Primary.

*(Left)* Jan with local MP Nick Thomas-Symonds





(Left) Alfie Desmond planting a sunflower seed

(Right) Rev Anthony Gregory enjoying the sunshine



**A VERY BIG THANK YOU** to everyone who came and assisted at this event – it wouldn't have been so successful without you.

I would particularly like to thank the hospitality gang – **Mae, Mavis, Gwynneth, Helen, Amanda, Steve and Chris**, as we discovered that there were going to be many more people than originally anticipated. Some were expecting a little washing up and instead ended up doing an awful lot of cooking! Thanks also to **Mary** for her bread-bun-moving and **Rev Paul** for his keeping an eye on numbers to ensure we kept safe.

It was wonderful to see so many people there, and they stayed and seemed to enjoy sitting in the garden – let's hope they return again sometime – 30 prayer flags were made (thanks **Ruth and family**) and around 20 pots of seeds were planted (thanks **Martin**) – not all sunflower ones, quite a few wanted French beans, so we hope these grow well!

Despite my trying to evict the school's executive head from the worship area – well he wasn't wearing a staff badge – the school was grateful for the opportunity the garden opening gave them. Joining Blenheim Road and Coed Eva schools together hasn't been without its challenges, *"but seeing the one choir in uniform and everyone mixing together was really great,"* was the verdict of their deputy head.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds MP**, was impressed with what we had achieved. **Rev Cath Lewis** sent her apologies but **Revs Jack and Lynn Healey** and **Rev Cathy Gale** were delighted to see how far we'd come since their time with us.

An unexpected bonus was that many people made a donation for their food and so there will be a little bit more in the garden fund. Having said all this – it won't be happening again in a hurry!

**Jan Jackson**



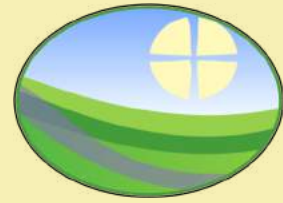
Some of the intrepid hospitality crew: **Chris Timm at the barbecue (left)** and (above right, left to right) **Mae Ford, Mavis Williams and Amanda Timm**



Photos:

Joanna Saunders and  
Amanda Timm

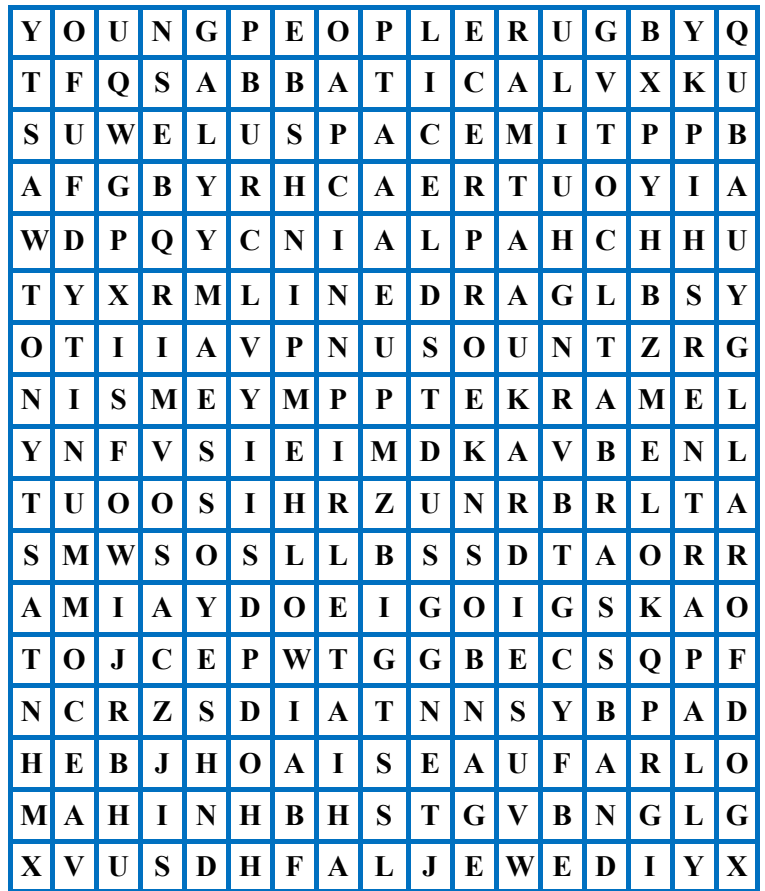
# SPRING AND SUMMER ROUND-UP WORD SEARCH



Just to check how well you've been paying attention to what you've been reading, here's a little recap of the contents of our first two editions!

BRASSBAND	MISSION
CHAPLAINCY	MUSIC
COMMUNITY	OUTREACH
FOODWASTE	PARTNERSHIP
EVANGELISM	PRAYER
GARDEN	RUGBY
GOD FOR ALL	SABBATICAL
MARKET	SENEGAL
MERCY SHIPS	TASTY NOT WASTY

*Puzzle created by Joanna  
using wordmint.com*



## DO YOU REMEMBER THE TIME...?

*by Janet  
Pratten*

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2022, we at Cwmcelyn Methodist Church had a special service to reflect on and give thanks for 20 years of our Sunday School. Obviously there has been one here for many more years than that, as I can remember coming here as a four year-old and have been a member of the chapel ever since.



The idea of putting together a time capsule first came up when we were looking forward to the Millennium and the children were excited at the thought of it being opened in 10 years time. In January 2000 our first capsule was completed and



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*“The way rugby is wrapped up in Welsh nationhood is unlike any other sport. If anything, rugby helped **create** Welsh nationhood. When the game took hold in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thrived in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup>, Wales embraced this relatively new sport because it gave a small nation the chance to be on top of the world.”*

So says journalist, broadcaster and author **Carolyn Hitt** in her online article **“Why Rugby Unites Our Nation.”** Notwithstanding some recent misfortunes for our men’s team, most of us who grew up here in Wales **love** our rugby!



Not only has it allowed us to be visible on the global sporting stage, it has also attracted to our shores rugby talent from around the world. I refer in this instance to the group of rugby players that came here around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, fresh from playing for their national team of Tonga, all with contracts to play for British clubs.

Though the members of the original group that came to play for Pontypool have now retired from professional play, they and their families still live in south Wales, with a large contingent based at **Pontnewynydd Church** since 2014. One of them, **Manu Tu’ipulotu**, (he’s the tall guy in the photos!) has become involved with local rugby clubs around the circuit, coaching the very youngest players – 5–13 year-olds – and talking with them about his faith whenever he gets the chance! He says, **“As a former rugby player, knowing about the sport, I began thinking about how to involve the kids**



**with the community.”**

Right now, these sessions happen in the school holidays – they begin with a prayer and Manu teaches the disciplines of rugby. The youngsters know he comes from a church and he has been joined on occasion by **Rev Steve Boxall**, and even England’s **Mako and Billy Vunipola** and Wales’ own **Taulupe “Toby” Faletau**.

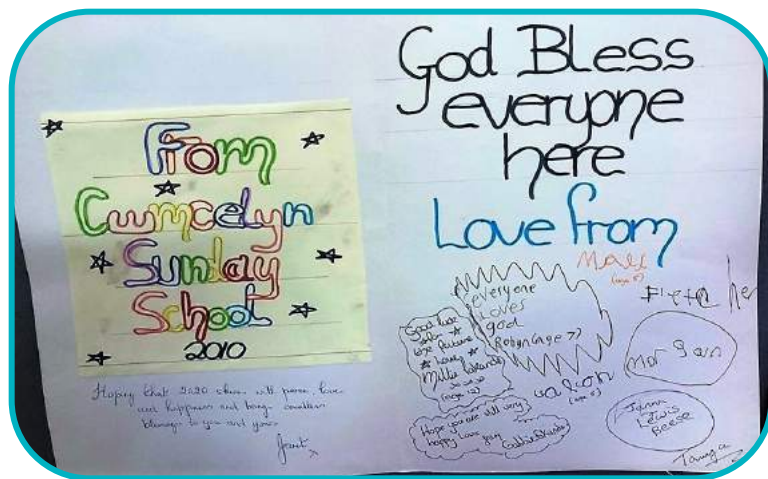
**“I use the gift God blessed me with to work with these young people.”** Manu’s witness comes through building relationships with these young players, helping them to develop their love of the sport. The Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit is supporting this venture and Manu has great plans for expansion. He would love to involve players from different teams in the project and reach more children in more clubs.

It’s always exciting to hear about activities like these – let’s join Manu in praying for God to bless this outreach with success, the young players with open and receptive hearts, and of course, for the expansion of the programme.



**Joanna Saunders,  
in conversation with Manu Tu’ipulotu**





## DO YOU REMEMBER THE TIME...?

(Continued from Page 6)

reopened at a special service on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2010. It was a lovely event with old and new Sunday School children coming together with Sunday School teachers, members of the chapel, and families celebrating with photos, readings and lovely music.

It was such a successful project that we decided to do it again in 2010, but this time, we did things a bit differently, with the children adding items throughout the year instead of all in one go, along with messages (*pictured above*).

Like many things, the planned opening in 2020 had to be delayed because of the pandemic, hence the special service this January. Just like last time, we had readings and poems from the special Sunday School services throughout the year.

It was a privilege to be part of so many children's lives and to see them grow up to be talented, amazing young people. We are fortunate to have such wonderful memories to treasure. Unfortunately we don't have a Sunday School now, but we hope and pray that we will be blessed again to make more time capsules. At the start of 2010, I wrote that I hoped that the year would shine with peace, love and happiness, and would bring countless blessings. I pray this again to you and yours today.



Janet Pratten, (contributor) pictured above on the left, with fellow Church Trustee Joan Price

## WHAT IS LOVE? (Continued from Page 1)

this – to lay down his life for his friends.” We see the love of God in Jesus' life; his compassion, his open welcoming heart, his vulnerability, his forgiveness, his willingness to listen.

St Paul describes love in this way:

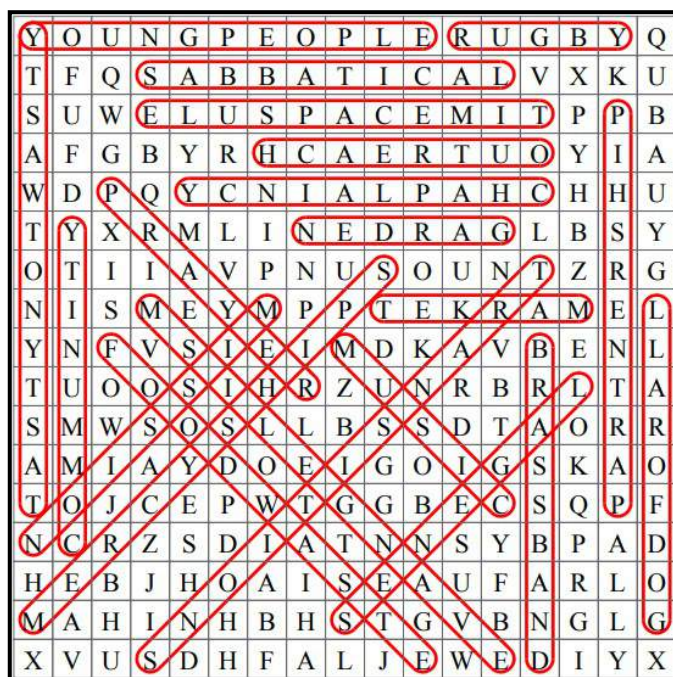
“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others. It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

I Corinthians 13: 4-8

**We know love when we see it.** Every human being yearns to love and be loved. Scientific study has shown that babies who are

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## SPRING WORD SEARCH SOLUTION





# WHAT IS LOVE?

(Continued from Page 8)

raised without love are left dramatically traumatised for the whole of their lives. Love is the essence of our being because **God** is the essence of our being. Each and every one of us is made in the image of God. It may be easy for some to dismiss the existence of God, but love is all around us proving that *"Love is come again like wheat that springeth green."* Just like the resurrection, love cannot be held down by death. The resurrection **is** love.

Love reaches into the past and gives hope for the future. Love holds the other person with honour and respect; it doesn't belittle, dishonour or expose the other. Love forgives, protects and trusts, and has the best interests of the other at heart.

The more I think about love, the more I feel that it is connected to loss. **Colin Murray Parkes**, the esteemed bereavement psychologist, claims that the loss of a loved one is the greatest teacher about love. Love and loss are interwoven. Is it possible to have one without the other? R.S. Thomas said *"Love is a moment eternally overflowing."* Love reaches into the past and gives hope for the future.

For me personally, the death of my brother Joe brought about a deeper understanding of love. Death and loss bring a desperate longing for connection, relationship, restoration. They bring an understanding of the importance of the present moment. I know that nothing will ever separate me from my brothers Ben and Dave, because whatever happens, it is always viewed through the lens of the realisation that life is short, and that nothing is worth the pain of separation – hence we ensure that if there

are misunderstandings and hurt between us, we rectify them as soon as possible.

Love is patient and kind, it is not proud, it does not keep records. It listens, it is vulnerable, it forgives. It prioritises the other and keeps them safe. Love is about staying with – even when remaining is painful. It is about being present to the other. It is about beholding. It is not about running away, or hiding, or being detached. Love says *"I will be with you always."* We abide in love. Love is a moment eternally overflowing.

Love brings about mixed emotions of joy and pain in remembering but these memories can be a gift. The poet **Rumi** wrote: *"The wound is the place where the light gets in."* R.S.

Thomas again, *"Let us stand in the interval of our wounding."* In

other words, let us be with our pain, our memories, our loved ones, so that this moment may be one of love *"eternally overflowing"*.

Love is captured by beautiful memory, and longs to be reunited in life beyond death. Love means standing in that difficult, painful place and being transformed by its power.

You will know this if you love someone with an illness that progressively diminishes them. Loss is part of everyday and yet the pain is worth it because love transforms the moment. Every moment is precious. Every memory made is love that will sustain us.

*"So let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."* I John 4: 7

May you know that love is with you and within you. May you open yourself up so that God's love may flow through you. Love is a moment eternally overflowing. What's love got to do with it? Everything.

*"Abide in my love."*

Reverend Andrea Sims



Photo: Rev Andrea Sims



## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

- For Rev Paul and Mrs Mary Donnison
- For Rev Stephen Wigley (Chair of Wales Synod) and our own Rev Gareth Edwards, both of whom are on sabbatical.
- For Rev Steve Boxall and his mum Audrey.
- For all ministers in the Methodist Connexion preparing for transitions to new pastures, including of course Rev Sue Lawler, Deacon John and Rev Catherine Brobbey.
- 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 the ministries and endeavours highlighted in this issue of **The Vine**.

**Molwn di, Dduw, a ddaith atom yn dy Air, am  
gyfoeth iaith,  
tafodiaith a phriod-ddull.  
Diolch am y gallu i ddusgu  
a defnyddio iaith –  
mamiaith ac erraill –  
ac am sut mae byw iaith Newydd  
yn arwain at ddealltwriaeth ddyfnach o'n  
hunain, eraill a thi.  
Uwchlaw dim,  
llawenhawn yn iaith dy gariad di,  
iaith y tu hwnt i eiriau.  
Amen.**

**Jennifer Hurd, Synod Cymru Chair,  
Methodist Prayer Handbook**

### **A PRAYER FOR UKRAINE<sup>1</sup>**

Loving God, your Son Jesus Christ, wept over Jerusalem.

Today, we weep over Ukraine.

We weep for those uprooted from their homes and lives.

We weep for those cowering in basements.

We weep for those who have witnessed death and destruction on their streets.

We weep for those separated from parents, from children, from spouses and siblings.

We are amazed at the resilience of people seeking to comfort those in need and so we pray for

Governments opening up borders so that Ukrainians can have safe passage.

We pray for churches and individuals providing food, clothing and shelter.

We pray for medical workers ensuring that shattered bodies are put back together again.

We pray for ordinary Russians demonstrating

and voicing their disapproval of the military actions in Ukraine.

May the Holy Spirit give us the willpower to turn our tears into action also.

May we, through our words, prayers and example pursue the things  
that make for a just peace in the world today and especially in Ukraine.

**In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.**

**Amen**

<sup>1</sup>[Toolkit for churches responding to the crisis in Ukraine \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://methodist.org.uk/toolkit-for-churches-responding-to-the-crisis-in-ukraine)