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The

Messenger

Thank you to Judith!
Following His Call
BUW Missional Discipleship
NEW: Esgyn Plus
and more....

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ISSUE 34

Editorial

SPRING 2026

note

In this special edition of the Messenger, we celebrate the Rev. Judith Morris's 11 years as General Secretary of the BUW. We give special thanks to Judith on the occasion of her retirement in April (p.5), and we also hear some of her reflections as she looks back over a decade of BUW life – and considers the changes, challenges and encouragements that have marked the period...



"In September 2014 I was interviewed for the post of General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Wales. I remember well the welcoming and kind faces of the interview panel as I tried to respond to the challenging questions. Although I don't remember everything I was asked that day, one question remains in my memory, which is: "Where will the Union be in ten years?" How did I respond? Well, to be honest, I stumbled through some sort of completely inadequate answer! But, now in 2026, the question can be answered.

Although the number of our churches and membership is smaller, there is a new energy among us, and different expressions of mission have been established. The team in the office has increased and more support is therefore available to our churches. I very much hope that the creation of the regional Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) will be a means to stimulate mission work in our communities. We also give thanks for Esgyn's new work with children and young people, and for the ongoing work at Glyn Nest Home with the elderly.

Although there are fewer candidates for ministry, God has continued to call ministers and workers over the years to serve in each of the Associations. The relationship between the Welsh and the English Language Wings has strengthened, and this collaboration has been facilitated by the meetings of the Joint Council. The ease of holding meetings over Zoom, such as the Ilston Service and the monthly ministers' meetings, has proved particularly convenient. As I say farewell to the work of the BUW office, the Associations and the Churches, I would like to give thanks for the opportunities, the joyful collaboration, and for all the support that I have received. I wish God's rich blessing on my wonderful successor, the Rev. Simeon Baker, and I know that you will show him the same steadfast support as he leads the Union through the next chapter of its history."

O.N Read on to hear about: the Rev. Simeon Baker being welcomed as the new General Secretary of the BUW, the story of two women being called to mission in Wales, the establishment of 'Celebrating Age' Sunday, new opportunities for young people within the BUW, and much more!

In Christ,

Judith Morris (General Secretary of the BUW)
Sioned Graves (Mission and Digital Communications Officer)

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THE MESSENGER is produced three times a year by the Baptist Union of Wales. However, viewpoints expressed in this magazine should not be taken as representing the Union's official stance on any given matter.

MISSION COLUMN:

Following His Call

Over the past two years, it has been wonderful to **welcome many new members** into our new **Missional Ministry Learning Community**. As we have heard their stories, we are reminded once again how the Lord is continuing to call people to the work of His Kingdom here in Wales. Here, we hear Ruth and Donna's stories of following God's call to mission...

Ruth's Story - to Mission in St David's

Ruth began her journey to ministry in Wales whilst at Bible College in Horsham. Ruth had attended Bible College after experiencing burnout from her very busy role as a Youth and Children's worker in Essex. Ruth shares with us: "I burnt out mainly because I loved 'doing'... and disregarded the importance of prayer."

During her time recovering at college, Ruth's parents moved to St David's. When Ruth visited them during her holidays she met

Ruth... "had absolutely no intention of moving to St David's"

people from the newly formed Y Groesfan Church. When she returned to carry on her studies in Horsham, things began to change. According to Ruth, she "had absolutely no intention of moving to St David's" but something happened in a prayer meeting that she could only describe as "a God moment".

Ruth very strongly felt the love God had for the people of St David's, and the Bible verse: "Never will I leave you or forsake you" (Heb 13:5) came into her mind. She also saw a clear picture of a signet ring going on a hand (similar to Haggai 2:23) and a clear sense of calling to relocate to St. Davids.

Shortly after this, a friend who was praying for Ruth said that she had seen a picture in her mind of God putting a ring on Ruth's hand – and that God was saying to her 'Never will I leave you or forsake you'. The friend asked if it meant anything to her. Another friend who was praying for her shared that she felt God was calling Ruth to do something, and that she "should do it"! Ruth eventually gave in to the clear sense of God's calling. She joined the fledgling

Y Groesfan Church and helped co-lead it voluntarily from 2011-2024, as well as working locally in a variety of jobs to get to know the community better.

Although Ruth has currently stepped back from immediate ministry in St David's - after feeling that God had asked her to pass on the baton of the leadership of Y Groesfan Church - she describes how this current season has been very fruitful in terms of mission!

As a step of faith, she has reduced her work to 3 days, which has given her time to be more involved in the local community. Like many of us, she has found in many conversations that people are becoming ever more open to discussing matters of faith. Ruth has also returned to the first calling of prayer, and continues to go on prayer walks at least twice a week in the area.

The change in season has also meant that Ruth has been able to engage with the new BUW Missional Ministry Training, and continue to explore her call to mission – wherever God might lead her!

Donna's Story - Into the Word and into Mission

Donna's story into mission in Wales also starts in Pembrokeshire. She was raised in Bwlch y Groes, Crymch. Donna attended the Sunday School and was baptized at Blaenffos Baptist Church, before returning to the original chapel of the family: Star Baptist Chapel. Donna was fully raised in church – but she shares with us some of her own personal journey of faith and calling over the past few years.



*"Never will I leave you or forsake you."
(Hebrews 13:5)*



Donna started feeling a strong sense of calling mainly as she read the Bible. Some of the words that hit Donna strongly were the words of the Lord Jesus on the cross in Luke 23:46 when He speaks the words “into your hands I commit my spirit”. Even though these are Jesus’ own words to the Father – Donna felt that there was an invitation for her to pray the same words for her own life. She felt a calling to give her life fully into the hands of God. Another important passage that contributed to the sense of calling has been Revelation 2:1-7, where John describes the vision of the 7 stars and lampstands. Donna heard an application of it which touched her deeply: that we, as Christians, are the stars in the hands of Christ, and that there is an

invitation or us to shine His light in the nations. With this sense of recent calling, Donna has been exploring the call to missional ministry. Part of her passion and enthusiasm as she looks forward is that Christians come to understand that they are to be mirrors of the work of the Lord, and that there is a call for us to reach out to those who are outside the community of faith. She also sees the importance of faith in terms of mental health – and is exploring how to encourage others to see faith as a critical part of our communities.

Donna felt there was an invitation for her to pray the same words for her own life



CELEBRATING Age

During her **BUW Presidency**, **Rev. Maggie Rich** has championed God's heart for all ages - including the elderly among us. Here, we hear of a wonderful new initiative: a day to mark and celebrate the faithfulness of the older believers among us, titled '**Celebrating Age**'. We also hear reflections on the significance of the day from Rev. Peter Thomas...

“Celebrating Age”: Rev. Maggie Rich

Several years ago, Revd Peter Thomas introduced the Caleb Project; the focus being older people. During my term of presidency of the English Wing, my focus has also been on the older people, both in our churches and in our communities.

This year we have been privileged to run pilot projects for BUW, entitled “Celebrating Age”. We chose October 5th, as this is the day that Age Cymru designates “Silver Sunday”.

The older people of three churches where I am minister, and a Free Church which joins us regularly, came together on the Sunday afternoon for a café style service. We considered the theme of “faithfulness”, both in their faithfulness in prayer and service over the years, and in God’s faithfulness. We looked at the account of Simeon and Anna in the Temple: God’s faithfulness in His promise to Simeon that he would indeed see the Lord’s Christ, and Anna’s faithfulness in fasting and prayer over many years. The Eleanor Farjeon poem “Mrs Malone” was read: the

service to those in need which goes on quietly and unnoticed, but which God sees. We also considered youth ministry and the importance of these “roots” within the church to sustain and support that ministry.

After the service, the older people were served a full afternoon tea by the younger people, and shared stories around the table.

Our older people are so important and it is good to take the opportunity to thank them and to show appreciation of what they have done in the past and in many instances are still doing.

“We considered... the importance of these “roots” within the church to sustain and support [youth] ministry.”

Rev. Peter Thomas

This Sunday is an opportunity for us to realise the value and potential that belong to each of us as we grow – an opportunity for us to celebrate what we are and what we

can continue to contribute in community and church.

The Word of God gives value and prominence to old age: Psalm 92:13 reminds us: "Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age."

Abraham was an old man, 94 years old when God told him that he would become the father of a great nation – and his wife Sarah would give birth to a child at the age of 92. God chose Moses and Aaron to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity when they were both in the throes of age. When the reins were handed over to Joshua to lead the nation into the land of Canaan, he too had crossed the age of promise and continued to lead that nation until his death at the age of 110. The Apostle Paul refers to himself in his letter to Philemon as "Paul, now an old man", and yet we know that he was still busy penning letters to the churches at Ephesus, Colossae and Phillippi, while in prison. There are many other examples of the way God

used individuals in the golden years of their life to be of service and to bear fruit in their old age.

The prophet Isaiah states that "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; They will run and grow weary, they will walk not grow faint." God's sustenance and strength do not diminish as we grow older. We can continue to be of service in the years of our old age because God gives us the power and ability to do so, He will renew us and empower us to keep going!

This Sunday is not only an opportunity to celebrate old age, but a challenge for us who have reached that season in life to consider the privileges and opportunities that God continues to offer us and the doors that he continues to open in our story. We trust him and direct our lives to serve for the praise and glory of his name.

"God's sustenance and strength do not diminish as we grow older!"

DIOLCH to JUDITH!

With the **Rev. Judith Morris** finishing her role as General Secretary this April, we give her a huge 'diolch' / thanks for her invaluable support to the family of churches across the Union...

With the retirement of our General Secretary, Judith Morris, as BUW President I would like to express our sincere gratitude to her as a Union for ten years of faithful service and strong leadership. During her time as Secretary, she has shown complete dedication to the mission of the Baptist Union of Wales, working tirelessly for the benefit of our churches, to foster collaboration, and to encourage Christian mission within our communities.

Through her wisdom, kindness, and faith, she has been a leader who encourages others to serve for the sake of the Kingdom. Her contribution has left a lasting influence on the life of the Union, and her vision has guided us through periods of change and renewal in our structures as a Body.

We thank her for her energy, her warm heart, and the way she has been a faithful witness to the love of Christ in all aspects of her work. We wish all of God's blessing – peace, joy, and satisfaction to her in the assurance of knowing that she was a faithful servant to the Lord and a devoted friend to the whole Union.

A huge thank you Judith, and every blessing to you for the future,

Rob Nicholls,
President of the BUW (Welsh-language Wing)

It seems a lot longer than eleven years since we sat round the table in Carmarthen and interviewed Judith for the post of General Secretary to the Baptist Union of Wales. What impressed me then was the careful listening, the measured response, the intent to connect with the person and the question.

Since then, we have watched Judith grow into the role and make it her own: stamp it with her personality. She has been gracious in the many different settings in which she has found herself and has never lost the ability to be totally approachable. We have indeed been blessed to have Judith represent us so ably, and to further the good name of the Baptist Union of Wales. We thank Judith for all that she has done, and pray a blessing on all that she will yet do for the sake of the Kingdom.

Maggie Rich, President of the BUW
(English-language Wing)

From all of us across the Baptist Union of Wales family...



Diolch!

New General Secretary: Rev. Simeon Baker

We are delighted to announce that the Rev. Simeon Baker has been appointed as the new General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Wales!

Simeon has 35 years of ministry and leadership experience in a Christian context, both on a local and a national level, and has been serving the Union as the Director of Mission since 2012. The appointment was approved by a unanimous decision by the BUW Joint Council and was further approved by the churches of the Union.

Simeon was brought up in Drefach Felindre, Carmarthenshire, and was a pupil at Llandysul Grammar School. After working in IT and Computing, Simeon sensed a call to ministry. This was followed by a period of training and ministering in Ruislip, London, before returning to Wales as Minister at Bethel Baptist Church, Whitchurch.

Simeon says: "It is an honour and privilege to be appointed to this role and I deeply appreciate the trust and support of the churches within the Baptist Union of Wales. As Baptists, we face many challenges but also significant opportunities for continued mission and ministry in Wales that invite

us to be strong in faith and bold in action." As he outlines his priorities. Simeon says: "In the middle of change, whatever our vision, strategy and structures, we need to ensure we treasure our people and shepherd one another.



Buildings, structures, and finance will come and go but God's love will remain as we remain in His love. In the words of Hebrews 10:23: "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

We pray every blessing upon Simeon as he prepares to take on the role during the month of April. You can see a full statement on buw.wales.

Prayer '26: 12 Hours of Prayer across Wales!

At the end of March, we came to the end of the Prayer '26 Season of Prayer...

Many across our BUW family of churches had felt at the end of Autumn that there were a growing number of calls to prayer, as well as a general desire that the Lord wanted to deepen our prayer life together as a family of believers. The result was our first 'season of prayer' as the BUW across January to March. On the 26th of each month, a different group gathered twice in the day to pray - for our churches, for our regions, our leaders, and for Wales. The



season of prayer culminated with 12 hours of prayer from 7am until 7pm on the 26th of March. We are delighted to say that we did fill the 12 hours together across Wales - with 20 different groups or individuals taking part: from individual private prayer in houses, to church group chats being filled with written prayers, to churches being opened for prayer throughout the day. We look forward to seeing where the Lord will take us next as a Union as we continue to deepen our prayer life together!

New Esgyn Plus Weekend for 16+



As the BUW continues to build upon the success of the first three weekends of Esgyn (the BUW's new youth initiative), we are excited to share that the provision is expanding this year to older ages! Having initially started with 11-16 year olds, Esgyn Plus will be launched this year: a new branch of Esgyn for 16s and older. The first Esgyn Plus weekend will be held at St David's Bunk Barns from the 18th - 20th of September. The Esgyn Weekend for 11 - 16s will return this year to the Summit Centre, Treharris on the 20th - 22nd of November. Keep an eye out for bookings, which will be opening soon for both weekends.

Promising Signs - Baptisms and Children

Although the Bible Society has had to withdraw 'The Quiet Revival' report recently because of problems with the original dataset provided by YouGov, there seem to be reasons in their latest report "The Quiet Revival: One Year On" to cautiously believe that there are indeed still promising signs of growth in the Christian faith across the UK. As a family of churches, we have seen an increase in baptisms from 2025-26, as well as a small increase in the number of children attending our churches. As with statistics in general when it comes to our faith, we hold these numbers and reports lightly - but continue to look to the God who has promised in His Word to build His Church - here in Wales and in every time and place!

New: BUW Missional Training Discipleship Year!

We are delighted to share that the BUW is launching a new pilot training scheme this year, called 'Missional Discipleship Training Year'. This scheme comes a few years after our last Team for Wales scheme, and having observed lower uptakes of internships and gap years across the board in general. This year, however, seems to present an opportunity to trial a new 'training year' scheme: with one Training Year based in Gwent Baptist Association (English Language), and the other at Caersalem Baptist Church (Welsh Language). You can find out more on buw.wales or contact carwyn@ubc.cymru.



Don't forget to book your tickets for Momentum this year (early bird tickets end April 19th). We are looking forward to welcoming Dot Tyler from 24/7 Prayer, and a host of other inspiring voices as we gather together as a Baptist family across Wales on the 6th of June...

EBF: Hope amidst War

We are glad to be able to share the impact of the generosity of our churches and members in Ukraine, in the midst of ongoing war. We are pleased to share that we have raised a total of £8,031.02 over the last few months for our 'Hope Heats' Winter Appeal in partnership with EBF (European Baptist Federation). The funds have gone directly to support churches in Ukraine that have been operating as a refuge, places of safety, and warm spaces during the winter, as the war continues. We have been partnered with four churches in Ukraine. Those churches are: The Ark of Salvation, Evangelical Christian Baptist

NEWS FROM ACROSS *the World*

Church 'Golgotha', Evangelical Christian Baptist Church of the City of Khmilnyk, The Ark of Hope. Please do remember these churches and ministers in your prayers as they continue to minister and offer critical support to their communities. A huge thank you once again to all who have supported this appeal so generously!

There continue to be areas of need, pain and suffering as many conflicts in the Middle East continue. We are privileged to be able to stand again with our brothers and sisters in Christ at EBF who are directly ministering to those affected by conflict in the Middle East region through their new appeal: 'For Every Life Affected'. You can find out more about work in the region, how you can pray, and how you can give to the appeal at: ebf.org.uk/give.

Getting to know...

Dot Tyler

We are looking forward to be welcoming **Dot Tyler from 24/7 Prayer** to share with us at our annual conference: Momentum! Here, we get to know her and some of her journey so far, including some of her experience growing in prayer....



Tell us a little about yourself, Dot!

My name's Dot! I grew up in Manchester, but have lived in Cardiff with my husband and two boys for the last 13 years. I do admit to feeling very conflicted on rugby days, but am deeply passionate about Wales! I feel like I've been "adopted" as Welsh in many ways - that's what I often feel! (*A dwi'n dysgu Cymraeg!*) I have the great privilege of leading the team for 24-7 Prayer here in Great Britain. Our vision is to see the church revived; for prayer, mission and justice; and for culture to be rewired to become more like the Kingdom of God!

Tell us a bit about the journey that has got you to where you are today...

It's a great privilege to sit here and to see the hand of God in every phase of my life so far! I grew up in a family who were not Christians, but believed that to teach a child to be good - you send them to Sunday school because 'it's the right thing to do'. I believe I'm not the only one who has had that experience! I got to the grand old age of 10 or 11 and decided *I didn't like it anymore*. So I learned to lie to my parents about what I was doing on a Sunday. However, I remember being 16 and getting to a point in my life where I was not particularly happy with the person I was becoming. An amazing friend who I'd met in Sunday school faithfully kept inviting me back. I owe so much of my journey to her - someone who did not give up praying for me, who did not give up inviting.

The Bible is full of examples of persistents, persistents, persistents, and then... suddenlies! I had a "suddenly"! This friend invited me back to something at church. Because I had nothing else to do, I went! I heard the message of Jesus, and I heard the invitation... that it is only in the person of Jesus that I will fully discover who I am supposed to be. And there, I gave my wholehearted "yes"! I went to university, and discovered that prayer could be more than just liturgy or something on a Sunday. I went to a 24-7 Prayer Room on my campus at the University of Leeds.

And I encountered the reality that God wants to meet me, personally, Dot! In my own words, in my own time... and I've never looked back.

What would you say to those who want to deepen their prayer life?

The first thing that I always have to remind myself is that there are no expert or professional pray-ers! What I often heard growing up about prayer is that prayer is "my duty". It's an obligation that I should fulfil because Jesus died on the cross for me to be able to have a relationship with God. And there's beauty in that... I do indeed have a specific chair and I'll go there in the morning, and it's my 'be still' chair! But, what I've also learned is there is an invitation to really intentionally be unhurried with Him, in His presence. Something I try and do in those moments in the beginning of the day is try and remember that my posture is *towards the face of Jesus*.

What I'm also learning is there are people that have just *practiced the presence of God*, and you see it on them. And that's my heart's desire - as I spend more time in prayer, in my normal everyday life, and in my quiet times, and in prayer rooms - that people would see the presence of God...

How would you challenge or encourage churches across Wales today?

I think my encouragement would be that I am seeing God move in ways I have not seen him move in ways before! I personally believe there is a wave coming in our nation - of God on the move. But, I don't want to look back at my life in years to come and go, "I missed it!". And I don't want that for you, and I don't want that for the bride of Christ - the Church - either.

There's an old saying: that we come to Jesus with dirty knees and wet cheeks. We have wet cheeks because we have seen what's happening in our land and our world and it has brought us to tears. And we have dirty knees because we have fallen at the feet of Jesus and asked: *what can I do?* I believe, when we come and we kneel and we weep in prayer... He also gives us something to do: to participate in the Kingdom. And so, my challenge would be: please, bride of Christ - let's have dirty knees and wet cheeks.