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The Messenger

New CIOs: Hope and Challenge
Esgyn Plus: Going Deeper
Remembering Helen
Igniting Prayer across Wales
and more...

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Editorial note

AUTUMN 2026



Our hearts can feel so many things when we hear news of what is happening across our nation, and world. Things feel chaotic and dark at times - as we hear headlines about 'rumours of wars', dangers posed by new technologies and illnesses, or the persistently difficult economic times that we live in. At the same time, we may feel a tenacious hope rising within us...

...in response to stories of God at work in powerful and amazing ways in our day – we hear stories of young people coming to faith in profound ways in the UK, of influencers who've struggled with depression and their mental health finding faith and healing in the good news of Jesus, and encouragement from the faithful ways that our churches are witnessing to the love of Christ in our communities.

How do we make sense of seeing these extremities of darkness and light, of dread and of hope, of fear and faith... especially when we might feel and experience all these things all at once sometimes? A verse that has been coming back to me has been Isaiah 43:2: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you."

I find this verse to be incredibly powerful, not simply because it promises that God's presence will be with us, but that the promise comes in the midst of great adversity. I believe that sometimes real courage comes not from believing that things will get better and challenging circumstances will recede: but that in the midst of those things, we will encounter the presence, power, and love of God.

This edition of the Messenger holds these things in tension: while looking to an exciting new season as a BUW family, Marc Owen invites us to have the courage to name the difficult reality that we see, but also to look beyond our temporal vision to the One who is higher and greater (p.3). We also hear stories of people doing exactly this: we hear of young people at Esgyn Plus, being willing to face their fear of the power of the sea, and encountering the presence of God as they do so (p.4). We hear Maggie's story of life and faith, and some of the challenges of poverty and bereavement that she has experienced – which have become springboards for the blessing of many in this season of her life in Caernarfon (p.8). We remember Helen (p.5) – and her courage in facing very difficult days, but holding fast to her faith in the Lord, and inspiring many throughout her life. Praise God for these stories of light in the midst of darkness, of courage in the midst of fear, and of healing in the midst of the broken-ness. They remind us ultimately of the One by whose "wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

In Christ,

Sioned Graves (Mission and Digital Communications Officer)

MISSION COLUMN:

CIOs: Hope & Challenge



On the **28th of September**, a group of newly appointed CIO trustees met in Aberystwyth for a day which marked a key milestone in the BUW's journey.

In 2021, a report was written called '**the 2041 Report'** which examined current trends within the BUW family. While the report was sobering in terms of the challenge facing us, it was also a catalyst for a different kind of response: one of prayerful faith as those who believe in a God who is still very much at work in His world and in His church. A key response to that report has been the process of setting up **4 new regional bodies (CIOs)** who will be set up to strategically support our associations and churches in mission. The meeting of the new trustees in Aberystwyth marked a key moment in that process. **Marc Owen,** who was present, shared some of his reflections on the journey ahead of us as a BUW family...

We can spend a good deal of time thinking: about Wales; about our churches; buildings and finances; structures and governance... Those are important things. They are not unspiritual things. Indeed, part of Christian faithfulness is being willing to look reality in the face. The prophets of Israel did that; Jesus did that; The apostles did that. The Bible is remarkably unsentimental about reality.

> *"Part of Christian faithfulness is being willing to look reality in the face."*

Christian faith has declined; The number of people identifying with no religion has increased; our Churches are ageing. There are enormous challenges. But perhaps, at times, we need to step back from that. Because there is a danger for some of us, especially those in positions of responsibility, that we can begin to imagine that the future of the Church rests on the quality of our responses to those challenges.

In John 15:1–8, in one of Jesus' key final addresses to his disciples, Jesus doesn't say: "Work harder"; "Get the strategy right"; "Understand every part of the future". He says: "Remain in me".

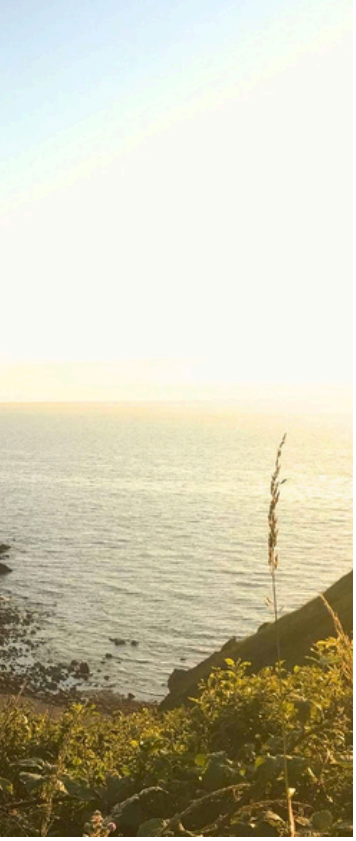
Hope doesn't require us to pretend that decline, or failure, or death, or fear or hard things are not there. Think about Ezekiel standing in the valley of dry bones. God doesn't say to him: "Don't worry, Ezekiel. The valley isn't really that dry!" He asks him to look. To see. To name what is actually there. And then God asks: "Son of man, can these bones live?"

And Ezekiel gives a wonderfully 'cautious' answer: "Sovereign Lord, you alone know." We don't know what the next ten years will look like; we don't know where the next generation of leaders will come from; we don't know what God may yet do in communities which currently seem distant from the Christian faith. But we know the One who does! And that changes things hugely. God is often at work in ways which are hidden from us. A seed disappears into the ground before anything appears above it. The cross looks, to human eyes, like catastrophe. But - God is at work! We must see reality clearly, but never confuse what we can 'see' with the whole reality.

That brings us back to Jesus' words: "I am the vine; you are the branches". It's a beautiful image, and also a humbling one because branches aren't responsible for making the vine live. The branch's 'calling' is to remain connected to the vine, which is the source of its life. We *are* responsible for remaining faithful to God and His purposes. We are not responsible for making the Kingdom of God happen! Jesus says: "Remain in me". Not: "Control the future." Remain. Pray. Listen. Discern. Act faithfully. (Repent when necessary!) Have courage when courage is required.



> *Remain. Pray. Listen. Discern. Act faithfully. (Repent when necessary!) Have courage when courage is required.*



required. Have patience when patience is required. And trust God.

There's also something significant in the language of pruning. Jesus says: "Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful". Pruning is **not failure.** Pruning is something the gardener does precisely because the plant matters.

There may be things we have inherited as a BUW family which cannot simply continue because they have always been there. There may be assumptions which need to be questioned. There may be structures which served a previous season but no longer serve today's mission as effectively. There may be things we love which we nevertheless have to release. That can be painful. Jesus also says: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples". There is the promise of fruit.

And this brings us back to some of those statistics. The statistics speak about people - particularly a younger generation - for whom organised religion may have no personal relevance. Instead of asking: "Why aren't they coming to us?" perhaps we might ask: "Where are they, and how might we go to them?" God loves them! Not as statistics, not as a demographic, but as individuals.

Perhaps one of the significant prayers we can be praying in this day is: "Lord Jesus, give us eyes to see the people whom you are already working in, and send us to them." The Spirit of God ***is*** at work in Wales. Jesus ***is*** Lord. And we are being invited to join what God ***is*** doing.



Going Deeper

***In September** this year, the first ever 'Esgyn Plus' Youth Weekend for 16-21 year olds was launched. **Sioned Graves** gives us a small glimpse of the weekend...*

"At first, I was terrified - and genuinely thought I was going to die! But then I prayed, and kind of... surrendered to God, and then I wasn't so scared any more! After that, each time a wave came towards me, it was like I knew I was being held in His hands., and I knew I was safe with Him!"

What happens when 9 young people from 3 different churches go for 3 days to somewhere they've never been before, do daring things they may never have had the chance to do before, and ask questions they may not normally ask in their day to day lives? What about when they go with the intention of going deeper in their journey with Jesus? The answer - if you asked some of those young people - is that God seems to show up!

"I wasn't so scared any more. Each time a big wave came, it was like I knew I was being held in His hands..."

In September this year, a crew of young people and leaders did exactly that. 17 of us turned up to St David's for the first ever Esgyn Plus.

Esgyn was first launched in 2024 by a bilingual team formed from across the BUW family with the intention of giving young people the space to have a great time together, to build friendships, and to explore the adventure of knowing Jesus. This 'exploring', it turns out, does not just include encountering God through great times of teaching or worship or group activities, but has often included some pretty amazing (and sometimes terrifyingly intense!) experiences in the Great Outdoors, where it seems the Lord still loves revealing His glory and His goodness – long after the disciples experienced something not too dissimilar in a Galilean storm-tossed boat!

Esgyn Plus was no different – with the distinction of it being a time dedicated to 16-21 year olds who want to go deeper in their journey with Jesus.

"It seems the Lord still loves revealing His glory and His goodness [in the Great Outdoors] – long after the disciples experienced something not too dissimilar in a Galilean boat!"

One of the songs that was sung on the final day of Esgyn Plus was "My Jesus, My Saviour". The words "mountains bow down and the seas will roar" took on a whole new meaning for some of the young people and leaders who a day previously had ventured out to the coast of North Pembrokeshire with a team from TYF Outdoors to *literally* experience the roaring and tossing of the sea as they were led over cliffs and through sea to navigate the bays of the St David's Peninsula.

That being said, Esgyn Plus wasn't all intensity! The weekend at St David's this year included experiences as varied as: marshmallows and guitar around the fire, times of stillness and reflection in a wonderful venue, being welcomed by the leaders of the local Y Groesfan Baptist church with home-cooked lasagne, heading to the local beach (7 mins away!), and wandering around St David's with an ice cream.

> *"The young people [had a] genuine desire to explore... what it means to live as disciples of Jesus."*

The times that were low in intensity were certainly made up for in quality, and in the young people's genuine desire to explore more of what it means to live as disciples of Jesus in this generation. We were incredibly blessed to not only learn from some of the real-life experiences within the Esgyn team itself, but we were also able to hear some amazing perspectives and experiences from BMS World Mission, as we heard from Orla, representing BMS. Some of the richest, and most wonderful times of learning over the weekend, however, was when the young people were able to freely explore some of their own thoughts and feelings, particulary on how God was speaking to them – whether through the Bible, through times of worship, or through some of the amazing experiences in the wind and the waves during the Saturday coasteering session. That was when we heard from some of the young women - who had never done anything like this before but (literally!) took steps of faith to overcome their fears, discovering in the process that the Lord really meant what He said when He said that when they would "pass through the waters" (Isaiah 43:2)... He would be with them.

Was Esgyn Plus a weekend to remember for those of us who were there? Certainly.

REMEMBERING HELEN



It was with great sadness that we announced the passing of our beloved friend and colleague **Mrs Helen Wyn** who passed away peacefully on 26 July 2026. *Here, Dr Christian Tucker-Williams, who worked closely alongside Helen over the past few years, remembers and gives thanks for her life.*

Helen was a valued member of the BUW Office team and highly respected among the Baptist family. As Corporation Co-ordinator, Helen provided valuable support to minsters, churches and members across Wales – and her wise advice and friendship were a blessing to many. One of Helen's greatest strengths in the work was her pastoral heart and sincere compassion for the cause of Jesus Christ and his people. In the weeks since she passed away, we have received a number of messages from ministers, churches and congregations expressing appreciation of the way Helen had assisted and **cared** for them – often in the most difficult of circumstances.

It's fair to say that the small BUW office team is more of a family than a team. Helen was an integral part of that family. It was a privilege and a blessing to work with someone who was completely dedicated to her work and colleagues. Helen has already been missed in the office – her warm company, humorous conversations and especially the devotions she prepared for the Staff meetings with scriptural reflections, prayers and hymns that never failed to inspire and encourage. Helen was a person who was full of energy and enthusiasm who tried to make the most of every opportunity and the best of every situation in faith. We thank God for her attitude and example and she remains an inspiration to us all.

As a Baptist family we extend our deepest sympathy to Eirian, Fflur and the family as well as the church family at Siloam, Brynaman (where Helen was a devoted member, deacon and secretary). We give thanks for Helen's faith in Jesus Christ - whom she served so faithfully.

We pray that the hope of the faith which she professed will be a comfort and strength to her family in the days ahead.



Right: Helen with some of her colleagues in 2024.

NEWS FROM across

UBC BUW



Croeso, Natalie!

A joyful crowd gathered in Penuel Newydd Baptist Church, Loughor at the beginning of October to welcome the Rev. Natalie Morgan as their new minister.

A sermon was given by the Rev Irfon Roberts. Natalie was introduced on behalf of Bethania, Cardigan by David Peregrine and on behalf of the Carmarthen and Ceredigion Association by Rhidian Evans. Several representatives from BUW, Cardiff Baptist College and the West Glamorgan Association were present - and of course, a good crowd from the Penuel Newydd Casllwchwr family. Natalie's roots are originally from Pembrokeshire, but she has been a blessing to many as she has preached across churches in West Wales over the past few years. We pray that she and the Penuel Newydd family will be blessed as they venture into a new era together!

Missional Training Discipleship Year 27/28

BUW is launching the Missional Training Discipleship Year for 2027/28, and is receiving applications!

This scheme follows the launch of an initial proposed model last year, a few years after our last 'Team for Wales' programme. One Missional Training Year will be based at Caersalem Baptist Church (Welsh Language), and the second with Gwent Baptist Association (English language). Both programmes will run from September 2027. If you know any young people who have a heart for mission, the local church, or want to spend time investing in their skills and calling – refer them to carwyn@ubc.cymru or head to buw.wales.

Application Deadline: 9th April 2027

7 Cities Pilgrimage Launched in Cardiff

Eglwys y Bedyddwyr Tabernacl, Cardiff played a key role in launching the 24/7 Prayer 7 Cities Pilgrimage in October, with many Christians from across the city taking part in a day of prayer, praise and witness in the city centre.

On the 2nd of October, the 7 Cities of Wales Pilgrimage was launched – a series of days of prayer, worship and witness across the cities of Wales, headed up by 24/7 Prayer. The journey began in the capital, and many were welcomed to Tabernacl for a joyful day of praise, prayer, and coming together as Christians from many different streams. It was an exciting day as many raised up prayers, gave thanks, and interceded for the region – that the Lord's purposes would be realized in the city and beyond. There was also an opportunity for passers-by to come in to experience the prayer room, receive prayer, and find out more.

At each site in the cities across Wales, an 'Ebenezer' stone / monument will be erected to mark the occasion, but also – much more than that – to act as a catalyst for the city's residents to learn about the region's rich spiritual heritage, and have the opportunity to pray their own prayer. The 'Ebenezer' stone was erected outside the Tabernacle in the evening, with praise and prayers in Welsh and English being heard across the Hayes.

After similar days in Swansea and Newport in October, the pilgrimage will continue in the cities of West and North Wales in the new year *(dates to be confirmed on 24/7 Prayer channels).*





Prayer '27

The BUW family extends an invitation to join a season of dedicated prayer over the first few months of 2027.

After launching a season of prayer earlier this year (Prayer '26), many among the BUW family have felt that there is a call to continue with something similar as we look to 2027:

(cont.) with an awareness that there are many new beginnings in our midst, evidence of God at work, as well as challenges, and a firm belief in a God who wants to strengthen us, and heal our nation.

We will come together on the dates below to pray:

- January 27th
- February 26th *(please note that the Cant i Gymru: Day for Wales event takes place on the 27th of February)*
- March 16th *(prayer chain - hours tbc).*

Do save these dates, and look out for more information soon on official BUW channels.



Momentum 2027

BUW invites you to Momentum 2027!

Join us on the **26th of June 2027** for an exciting day for all ages as we gather together as a Baptist family in Wales to consider what it means to be "Pursuing Jesus Together". This will be the second installment of the "**Finding His Way**" series.

This year we will focus on what it means to be growing in our faith and journey with Jesus as a family of believers - in our own church contexts, and across Wales, with para--llel streams running during the day for 4-16 year olds, We are looking forward to be partnering once again this year with 24-7 Prayer, BMS World Mission and Cardiff Baptist College. *Keep an eye out for ticket sales in the New Year.*

NEWS from across the World







From Our Sister Unions: BUS

The Messenger is starting a new series: 'From our Sister Unions'. This series gives us a chance to hear from our brothers and sisters in Christ across different parts of the worldwide Baptist family. This time, we start close to home with the Baptist Union of Scotland (BUS), and hear how God is at work among younger generations...

While Scotland faces many challenges, not dissimilar from many of the ones we face in Wales, there is no doubt that God has been at work.

A particular encouragement has been hearing how the Lord has been at work among younger generations. In July, c, 1,900 young people gathered at Lendrick Muir for a five-day youth festival called Magnitude, centred around worship, Bible teaching, times of fellowship and prayerful response. The BUS family plays a key role in this festival each year, with many church leaders, youth groups and volunteers taking part. At a local level, too, there seems to be something stirring among the younger generations – particularly in the area of worship. Oliver Fourie, a young adult who hosts a worship night at Westwood Baptist Church shares: "I really feel like there's a longing for more worship in Scotland. At so many church events, I keep hearing how more and more people are coming to faith, and wanting more worship, more teaching... just more!"

This is one example of many such worship nights hosted by young adults in the BUS family. Others include Presence Worship Night in Glasgow, a monthly worship night that has been running since Covid, hosted by young leaders Marc and Abigail. Awaken Worship Night in Aberdeen was also birthed out of a vision of one of the young adults in the local church, and has a vision to gather people from across the city to worship and pray together for the region.

Oliver shares more of his heart for the worship night at Westwood: "I wanted this to be a place where it would just ignite that flame within us to want to worship God more, and just keep that fire burning!" *We pray indeed that the Lord would continue to ignite fires in the hearts of young people across Scotland!*

Getting to know...
Maggie Hughes



In this edition of 'Getting to know', we sat down with **Maggie Hughes** from **Caersalem Baptist Church,** and heard a little of her journey - from Liverpool, to Bangor, Pontypridd - and then back North! We also hear a little about the 'Cawl a Chwmni' ministry...

Shwmae, Maggie! Could you tell us a little bit about yourself, and your journey of faith so far?

I was born in Liverpool, and was brought up in a Christian family. I went to an evangelical church growing up – and, to tell you the truth, there hasn't really been a time in my life when I haven't been living 'in God'! Of course, like everyone, I've had periods when I've struggled with my faith over the years. In those times, I would continue to go to church – but sometimes I'd become aware of the layers that have been 'added' to the faith, as it were. Then I'd try to sort out in my head what was important, what was true etc. In the end – I came to the conclusion that you can get rid of a lot of things, but you can't get rid of the person of Jesus Christ! I came to believe that there was so much evidence that he lived and was a real person – and my faith was then built on that foundation.

I went to study Psychology in Bangor where I met my husband Dewi. We continued to live there for several years, where he was a perpetual student. That was a difficult time financially as we only had a little grant money to live on. There wasn't much money at all at the time – and it was hard to live on so little. I'd sometimes ask: 'Why isn't God providing more for us?'. Nevertheless, we came to learn more deeply in that period what really mattered in life!

Quite suddenly, Dewi was offered a job as a lecturer in Pontypridd – and our world changed a lot. After moving to Pontypridd, we got to know a group of young people who were still at college and had recently come to faith in Christ. Looking back it felt a bit like a revival! That was an encouragement for us in terms of our faith.

Your husband, Dewi, was well known as a Tearfund worker in Wales, and as a theologian. How did that affect your life?

I first came into contact with Tearfund as a volunteer in Pontypridd. That was key – because eventually the family then became involved with Tearfund for many years. Dewi then started working for Tearfund, and was eventually asked to be their theological adviser. We learned a lot about the richness of global Christianity, those from different church backgrounds to us, and learned a lot about God's heart for those living in poverty (and identified with them a little after our own hard experiences in Bangor!). We were greatly blessed as a whole family through the experiences we had with Tearfund.

You were then bereaved, with the loss of your husband. How did you feel God's hand guiding you afterwards?

After Dewi passed away in 2017, I never imagined that I would leave Pontypridd. Nevertheless, family circumstances opened an opportunity for me to move back to the North, and live closer to my children and grandchildren. It was interesting how a few doors closed in Pontypridd, but the door opened for me to buy a house in North Wales. I moved to Caernarfon, with the intention that I would only live there temporarily. I didn't have many connections in North Wales, but there was a family connection with Rhys and Menna – who lead Caersalem Baptist Church (*Eglwys Caersalem*). So, I was very happy joining the community there. Soon after, Covid-19 came, and thoughts of leaving disappeared!

What has been an encouragement and focus for you since then?

During Covid, when things started to get difficult for many people with the emerging energy crisis – Menna posed the question whether we as a church could do something to help those in the community. We considered what we had as a church, and how we could bless others with what we had – and I came up with the simple idea of cooking soup (or 'cawl'), inviting people to join us, and offering company and a warm place. That's how the Church's 'Cawl a Chwmni' (Soup and Company) ministry began, which has been running now for 4 years.

Serving there has been a great blessing, and a kind of community has formed around 'Cawl a Chwmni' – some from the church, and others from the community. We've seen a lovely response from the church in terms of support and volunteers, and those who come communicate how much the community means to them.

Although we're not pushy, there have been opportunities to share our faith naturally, through conversation, an invitation to Lent meditations (we had a lovely response to that last year!), or offering prayer. Going forward, my prayer is that more people who don't really know Jesus would come to know Him, and that more would be drawn to His heart through this ministry!