



Issue 6 – Summer 2025

The Grapevine

Taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8)

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*Faith
Hope
&
Love*

**“I am the vine; you are the branches”
(John 15:5)**

Shining a light on the Church in the 21st Century



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Welcome Everyone

Welcome to the 6th issue of The Grapevine! This is produced by the 3 Churches in North Cardiff with contributors and an audience from the wider community – both near and far.

The content reflects 'faith, hope and love', in the 21st century. Church is more than a building; it's a community & it's people. One body in Christ.



The world we live in is crying out for peace: e.g. Gaza & Israel; Ukraine & Russia; parts of Africa, and closer to home. This issue calls for greater unity and taps into videos, poems, podcasts, your curiosity and answered prayer.

Contact us: grapevinepublication@gmail.com

Prior issues are on: www.3churches.org or enjoy reading and sharing via the QR code.

Through the Roof

This is a charity that works to transform lives through Jesus with disabled people and communities globally.

It offers international ministries, accessible holidays, disability awareness and UK Church inclusion. Discover more by clicking on the video or on: www.throughtheroof.org



School of Sanctuary



Susan Miles, Headteacher of Christ the King RC Primary School, Cardiff, wrote, last year, of a special Welcome Mass and that the school had been awarded a 'School of Sanctuary' status. Both events are still relevant given our often uncaring and divisive world...

We celebrated our Welcome Mass last year which proved to be a fantastic occasion. The Mass was made even more special as it was celebrated by Archbishop Mark O'Toole assisted by Canon Matthew Jones and Fr Andy Bord . The singing from the children and the congregation was excellent as were all the ministries . Our two new altar servers were led by an ex-pupil, who had come from Corpus Christi. The singing was beautifully accompanied on the piano by Mrs Mary Affley and Year 6 led the way with maturity and grace. The Welcome Mass is always a wonderful time to welcome new members of the community into Christ the King School.

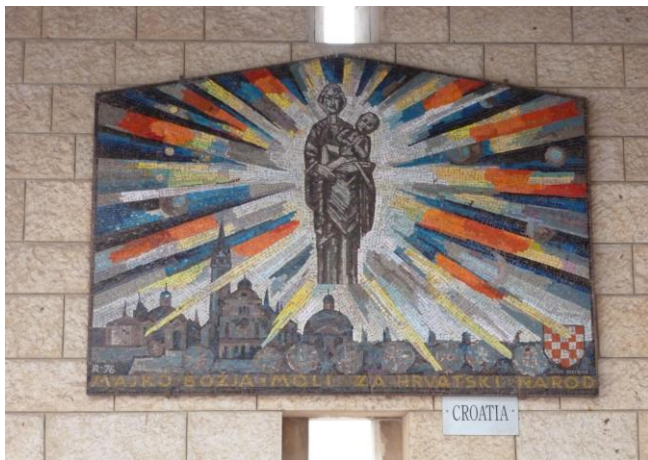
We want them to feel part of a nurturing, warm community that includes all and displays God's love . This welcome had an even more special significance as the school had been awarded '[School of Sanctuary' status](#)' (click for info.). This award works to build a movement of welcome in the UK, standing in solidarity with people seeking safety. We want a school where people seeking sanctuary feel safe and have a sense of belonging. They are able to thrive and succeed and their voices are centred and heard. This is aligned with our Catholic Social Teaching and the principles of dignity, common good , solidarity and subsidiarity.



Archbishop Mark toured the school. He spoke to our young learners about his vocation, and they asked thoughtful questions. It was a special visit and time that we will all remember.

Everything Black and White?

Ian Shelley of Vineyard Church, Cardiff writes...Several years ago, my wife and I visited Nazareth in the Galilee region of Israel. We arrived on a Sunday when almost everything was closed yet in the dimly lit streets, on a quiet winter's eve, we found something incredible. Before us was 'The Basilica of the Annunciation', a Catholic church celebrating the angel Gabriel's message to Mary about her virgin birth - Jesus, the Light of God, coming into the world (Luke 1; John 1).



Entering the church building, we discovered mosaics from a diverse multitude of countries offering different cultural and artistic impressions of the same 'Madonnas': portrayals of Mother Mary and Baby Jesus.

From my own church tradition, I was drawn to reflect on Jesus as the main focus of these icons. **What do you think of when you encounter the name 'Jesus'?** Some believe he is black, others white; for some he has lighter skin and others darker. **Does it matter?**

Many of us perceive Jesus through our own 'cultural lenses'. Through these, we might imagine Jesus very differently (carrying with it a mixed blessing)!

As we looked around, we saw: an Asian mosaic of 'Madonna and Child' from Japan; a South American depiction involving Colombian national clothes; also, a white mother holding her child. We continued to reflect on many more diverse mosaics before arriving at the Ethiopian portrait of a black Jesus and Mary. There, I paused to consider how a black Ethiopian Orthodox believer might perceive Jesus and Mary and **what significance could this have for me as a white Western Christian?**

Everything Black and White?

I recalled themes of dignity and heritage found in further artwork from Ethiopia and how these connected with this scene. I also contemplated Jesus' ancient Ethiopian name (translated roughly as 'Lord of tribe and nation'). I imagined how, through this cultural lens, Jesus was perceived as the one who'd led African tribes and nations with power and authority - while, in contrast, he also came to us as a vulnerable baby (Philippians 2). Considering differing feelings about the countries represented here, I also reflected on conflicts and division due to 'tribalism' today – wondering what Jesus, the Prince of Peace, might say or do.

I remembered that Jesus: meets people where they are (Luke 24); is accessible to everyone (Mark 8); engages with them, knowing the language and cultures they'd understand (John 4), honouring and redeeming every believer to be who they were always intended to be (Psalm 139) - in the exact times, places and situations in which they live (Acts 17)!

Ultimately, I'm sure we agree that when Jesus walked the Earth he was a Jewish man, born in Bethlehem (modern-day Palestine), raised in Egypt (Africa), growing up in Nazareth (Israel) and so he was from those exact places in time. For me, this is the most helpful way to imagine Christ when I converse with him.

And yet, as verified through the virgin birth, Jesus is more than a mere human: He is not created in our image – rather, Jesus created us in his image. Therefore, everyone from every tribe and tongue, in all their diversity, bears something of the image of Christ Jesus.

**When all of God's children
gather together, like pieces of a
mosaic, then we will see more of
God's image revealed through
his unified Church.**

And so, how do **YOU** love those who look, speak or think differently to you?

Aleppo: The Pleasure of the Eyes

Syria has been in the news recently with the fall of the Assad regime in December. Syria, officially the Syrian Arab Republic, is a country in West Asia, located on the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea, bordering Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon.

Of the 25m population, the major ethnic groups are: Arabs (90%), Kurds (9%), Armenians, Circassians and Turkomans. The main religious groups are: Sunni Muslims (74%), Alawis (12%), Christians (10%), Druze (3%) and small numbers of other Muslim sects, Jews and Yazidis.

It was into this melting pot that Linda Slater, a relatively new parishioner at Christ the King Church, North Cardiff, and mother of Naomi Goodwin, went to Syria, with her husband, in 2009. The poem below records a real incident during a perfect day in Aleppo but is also about memory. Civil War followed and during the Battle of Aleppo between 2012 and 2016 much of the old town was destroyed...



Ahmed the Armenian

Young and handsome

Lounged against ancient iron-bound
doors

In the very centre of the souk

In Aleppo, in the dim heat that day,
Waiting for tourists to entrap.

Snap! He saw us coming!

Wandering past vegetables and fresh
fruit, herbs and multi-coloured spices,
Drugged by the moment.

Come to my shop," he said. "I show you
jewels. Good price. No hassle."

Of course, we argued.

"We're not buying," we said,



Aleppo: The Pleasure of the Eyes

"We're not interested; we don't need
jewellery."
"Then come," he said, "for the pleasure
of the eyes."
And how could we resist?

The shop, cell-like,
He flung open to display its treasures.
He gave us his full attention
And diamonds, emeralds
To touch and hold, cold in the hand
Pouring through the fingers,
vivid, exotic, enticing
Beyond our price.
And, of course, we bought
a little necklace of pale moonstone
beads with a silver tag,
Engraved, he said, with the Ugarit
alphabet, the oldest in the world.

...Ugarit tugs at my memory now
– a mound, behind a triangular tunnel
entrance,
Chunky outlines of ancient buildings
bedded in turf.
A whole Bronze Age city
Silted with the sand of millennia.

A port city stranded inland.
Its account books survive, our
Famous Archive of their civilisation.
A few chairs in the shade serve as a
café for the few tourists.

And so, I own a pale moonstone
memento with a maybe silver tag
engraved with possibly the oldest
alphabet in the world, from that other
lost civilisation.

I wear it sometimes,

Its warm beads
Caress my neck like a memory.
"What a pretty necklace," they say.
"It came from Aleppo," I say-
From a shop now lost
Under a mound of rubble.

And where is Ahmed now?



Persecuted Christians

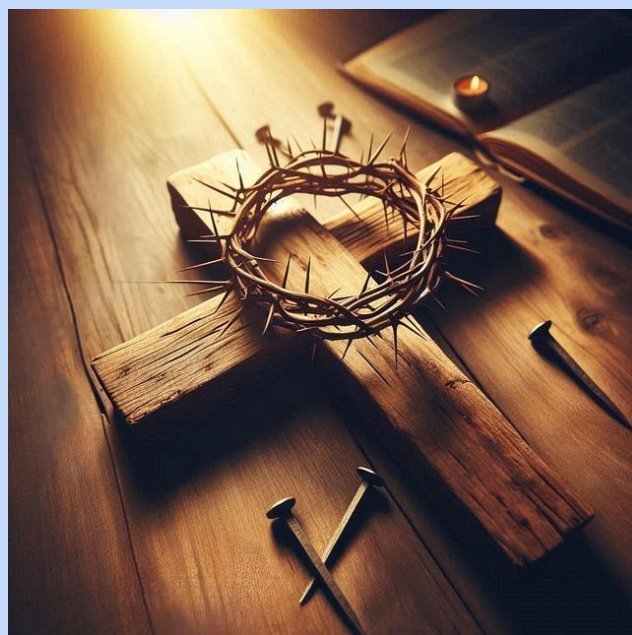
The world we live in is dominated by the 24/7 news cycle, mobile phone content competing for our attention along with numerous good causes. It is timely to recall, given Easter, that Christians were persecuted over 2000 years ago; however, how often do we hear about their plight, now?

Simon Brockway, from [Christ The King Church](#), North Cardiff, is passionate about drawing attention to the current situation...

Sean Nelson serves as Legal Counsel for global religious freedom with 'Alliance Defending Freedom International', where he advocates on behalf of Christians. In his written report he points out;

"There are a large amount of persecutions facing Christians around the world today. Over 365 million Christians experienced high levels of persecution and discrimination worldwide in 2023."

Sean adds: "Nigeria, is the most dangerous country in the world for Christians. In 2022, roughly 5,000 Christians were murdered for their faith – more than the number killed in all other countries combined. For 2023, one estimate put the number of Christians killed in Nigeria at over 7,000."



Aid to the Church in Need is a Pope linked Foundation of the Catholic Church, supporting all Christians where they are persecuted or in pastoral need.

Each year they fund over 5,000 projects in more than 140 countries around the world.

Persecuted Christians

One such project is a report on Christians oppressed for their Faith. During 2020-2022, for example, in 24 countries where religious freedom violations against Christians are of particular concern, the following key findings were noted:

- In **75% of the countries** surveyed, the oppression of Christians increased.
- In **Africa**, the situation worsened in all the countries reviewed amid evidence of a sharp increase in genocidal violence.
- In the **Middle East**, continued migration threatened the survival of three of the world's oldest Christian communities located in Iraq, Syria and Palestine.
- In **Asia**, state-authoritarianism has been the critical factor causing worsening oppression of Christians in Burma, China, Vietnam, North Korea, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Douglas Murray, a thought provoking and to some, a controversial, British political commentator has challenged the Christian Church to speak out more about these issues. Click on his 'Christian Massacre' You Tube video, below, to hear more:



Closer to home, organisations like: Christian Concern, Catholic Unscripted, Christian Legal Centre, The Christian Institute, Don't Divide Us, Christian Legal Society, Free Speech Union and The Culture Forum report that it is increasingly difficult to hear Christian voices in the workplace and wider Society

Ed. - Why is it difficult to hear Christian voices, today? How do you react when Christianity is silenced or minimised?

Angel in a Van



Anne-Marie Taylor (Coastlands Church, Barry) writes: It was a cold Thursday morning at the end of November, several years ago, when I set off for work, not knowing how I would be able to meet the demands of the next three days. As a Foodbank manager, I was coordinating a collection over the following three days in two Tesco stores in South Wales.

I was grateful that I had 72 volunteers signed up to cover two-hour shifts in both stores. The volunteers would be asking customers to donate an item or two of food from the 'shopping lists' we would be handing out with the Foodbank's most needed items, which included Christmas food. This food would be distributed locally to those in need in the run up to Christmas.

The response from the public has always been truly amazing and we expected to collect several tonnes of food over the next 3 days.



The difficulty I faced that morning was moving the food collected each day from both stores to the Foodbank warehouse. The Foodbank didn't have its own van or driver at the time, and we were entirely reliant upon volunteers.

I would be borrowing my dad's small van, and a volunteer would be using her small van which we hoped would be enough to move Thursday's food collection from one of the stores to the warehouse.

Once we had dropped off the food to the warehouse, I would then drive to the second store where I would meet another volunteer who had access to a minibus.



Angel in a Van

I drove to work on that Thursday morning knowing that, despite my best efforts, I only had a plan for that day. I had no idea how we would move the food on the Friday and Saturday. I felt overwhelmed before the collection had even started!

I had been praying about the collection for weeks but in the car that morning I prayed one last prayer – ‘Father, You’re going to have to help me because I don’t know what else I can do!’

Thursday’s collection went really well. At the end of the day, all went to plan as we loaded the vans in the first store and delivered the food to the waiting volunteers at the warehouse. I then drove to the second store to meet the volunteer with the minibus. It was as I was loading one of the last boxes into my dad’s van, a larger van pulled up. The driver wound down his window and asked if I needed a hand.

The man explained that he was a landscape gardener. He said he would be happy to help out and could be at that store for the next two days to load up and take our food to where needed.

By the time I arrived at the warehouse on Friday the gardener had collected and unloaded the donations. On Saturday, the same thing happened. Again, I quizzed the volunteers about more details of the mysterious stranger; after all, I had only briefly spoken to him in a dark car park. Although it would have taken at least 20 minutes to unload the food from his van into the well-lit warehouse, no one had taken any notice of what he looked like. No one could remember his name. **I reflected upon these unusual events...**

That was a miracle, I thought. **Thank You, thank You Jesus.** I never did find the gardener’s business card or heard from him again. Nothing is impossible for God. If you don’t know what to pray, **‘Help me, Lord’** is a great place to start.

Being Curious

We are all creatures of habit. If people weren't curious, however, then the world would be viewed as flat, 3M would not have invented Post-It notes and an NHS trial AI app would not enable people to diagnose skin cancer in 5 minutes.

To what extent are you curious about growing your faith or finding out more about Christianity?

The Editor's on-going faith journey, like many folk, has gone through a variety of stages: from being a 'cradle-Catholic' and 'treadmill Christian' (purely rituals and repetition) to being guided by the Holy Spirit to be more curious and more focused on relationship, exposure to other Christian churches & a revitalised Catholicism.

This journey was transformed 10 years ago, when at my lowest point. Our daughter suffered from ME / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; our son ground to halt given anxiety and depression and one of my closet friends took his life.

Three things then happened, Firstly, a visit to an evangelical church (to support our deceased friend's wife), introduced us to the power of testimony: people publicly sharing how God had touched their lives in small and not so small ways. Secondly, I heard a worship song called 'What a Beautiful Name is Jesus'. This reinforced to me that Jesus was a real person. You can hear NZ born Brooke Fraser's song on Spotify or clicking on the play button below:



Thirdly, a painting was shared at a Catholic retreat that depicted Jesus with his friends. These three events made me reflect on how, when, where, why and what I shared with my friends. This led to a realisation that if I wanted a 'living' faith then I had to see Our Lord as my closest friend. Relationship was the focus & not rituals (which do have a place).

Being Curious

Fast forward to the current season. As 2024 drew to a close we worshipped at our home Catholic church and other Christian churches. This included the Synergy city wide prayer evening at Rhiwbina Baptist Church, which involved prayer through song and dance (for all ages!). Not long before that we joined an open-air service, in the car park of Thornhill Community Church (opposite our local Sainsbury's and petrol station – we were filling up with a different kind of gas!), jointly hosted by the 6 churches of the North Cardiff Alliance.



Our curiosity to discover more led us to another joint service, involving the Alliance. In between pastors speaking to the congregation, at the latter, we were invited to break into groups, of mixed church members, to discuss different themes and scripture the pastors related, including Christian unity.

At the same time, our local Catholic churches have seen more multi-cultural faces (e.g. from Ukraine to Nigeria) and this also recognises one Christian body.

A more compelling example of being open-minded was when I met a Muslim man whilst some of us were gardening outside our Church Foodbank. This person had been in 20-30 churches but never witnessed a service. He also wanted his 10 years old son to be exposed to Christianity. I mentioned our family Masses and offered to accompany him. Currently, I've not heard anymore but how many of us are prepared to go beyond the familiar to grow in faith?



In summary, we sometimes travel to enhance our experience of different cultures or explore new jobs and interests to develop. Why not see 2025 as **the Year of Curiosity** to grow your faith?

Miraculous Medal



Usain Bolt attributed his world record victories to wearing it. **Mother Teresa** gave one to every person she ever met with a smile, saying that whatever problem there was simply pray ‘Mother Mary help me now’ – and many healings ensued...

Over the centuries there have been thousands of healings in mind, body and spirit of children, teens, and adults from anxiety to incurable diseases and injuries including an entire warship of soldiers hit by a kamikaze plane saved... graces for every possible mental, physical, emotional suffering: minor or major.

A parishioner, who wishes to remain anonymous, notes being blown away by the discovery of the Miraculous Medal. A friend had asked her to help box them up for prisoners and she put one around her neck. Little did she know how much she would need it in the next few years.

The sheer power of the special graces flowing from the small beautiful sacramental item lifted her high in prayer through tough circumstances. An invisible hand continually holding hers...

The hand of the Blessed Mother who is - when asked - forever present, loving and powerful in her access to Jesus.

“It was the sweetest moment of my life”, said Catherine Laboure, in the Rue du Bac Chapel, Paris, 1830...The Blessed Mother appeared to Catherine but of such extraordinary beauty that it was utterly impossible to describe her. Mary’s face was partly uncovered and under her feet lay the globe. Her hands gently held up another globe and her eyes turned towards Heaven as if offering all to God. Suddenly there appeared on her finger’s rings adorned with precious gems sending off rays of light in all directions.

“The globe that you see stands for the entire world. The rays emanating from the palms of my hands are the symbol of the graces for all those who ask for them.”

“Have a medal struck (over one billion to-date) according to this; all those who wear it will receive great graces. I shall bestow many graces on those who put their trust in me”. Mary can intercede for us if we have recourse to her. Amen.



Victory in Survival

Sadly, wars continue to dominate the world stage. Often accompanied by both heroic and horrific stories. VE Day, on the 8th May, reminded us that wars do end, and people can hope for better times...

Marlene (above, with her husband Terry, on their first anniversary, in 1960), from Ebbw Vale, recounts her family story from VE day 1945, when she was there – on her father's shoulders, hearing the crowds roar and cheer! She didn't know what it was all about, aged 3, just that it was noisy and later that she had lost her new doll!

Marlene's Mum was from Ebbw Vale and Dad from Pontypridd. They had both gone to London to get work. Her Mum went straight from school and her Dad had worked in a mine for a few years.

They met at a dance in 1936 and married in 1937. After WW2 broke out in 1939, they had to move house three times, twice because of bomb damage and the third when the house they were living in had a direct hit (her Mum had to be dug out after a few hours – lucky to be alive). They lost everything but were taken to a Red Cross

station where they recovered for a while.

Marlene's Dad went back to see if he could retrieve anything. He found one small, green alarm clock, still ticking.

They were asked if there was any where they could go – but there wasn't so they were advised to return to Wales. As a result, they went to Pontypridd to stay with her Dad's sister. That gave time for cuts and bruises to heal and for her Mum's hair to grow back – it was cut very short when they had to dig her out.

Marlene also discovered that her parents had slept in the Underground and that her Mum helped with first aid and babies being born. Her Mum also worked in a munitions factory. A bomb, probably intended for the factory, dropped on a nearby school, with very few survivors.

Marlene baptised in All Saints Church, Ebbw Vale, aged 3 weeks old. Her Mum was received into the Church and confirmed on the same day she was, in 1951. Her Dad was brought up a Catholic with Irish parents. Like their clock, her parents survived WW2 and Marlene, too.

UK Christian Project



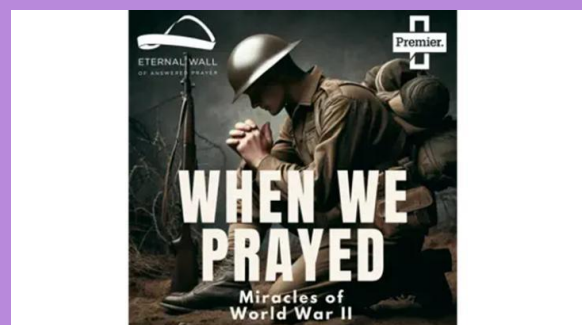
The **Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer** is a national Christian monument being raised in the heart of the UK (Coleshill, the Midlands), reaching 50m into the sky. It will be a wall with 1 million bricks reflecting 1 million stories of answered prayers. The aim of the project is to **Make Hope Visible**. Find out more here: www.eternalwall.org.uk or click on the short video below:



The infinity loop structure will be 2.5 times the size of the Angel of the North and have the footprint of a football pitch, when you look down, from above. Amazing!

The land has been obtained, planning permission granted and an access road built. The aim is to open the structure by 2028 but we still need your donations, voluntary help and answered prayers...

People from 125 nations have begun to share their or someone else's stories of answered prayer. Equally, historic answered prayers from organisations ranging from the Salvation Army to the Ffald-y-Brenin Christian retreat, near Fishguard are being collated. All prayers will be accessed virtually (e.g. by searching on prayers linked to a location or a theme). **Please record your answered prayers, on the website**, for all generations to be inspired and **Make Hope Visible**.



The Eternal Wall landmark has partnered Premier Christian Radio, looking at the history of WWII through the lens of answered prayer. These episodes are out now on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#).

Bible in 4 Minutes

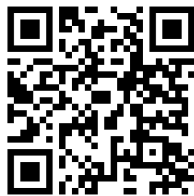
Ever wanted to briefly understand the story of the Bible?

You may or may not have read this whole issue of the Grapevine and want to put it down. Likewise, you may feel that 100 other chores and things are trying to grab your attention. In either case, click on the link below or play button, on the phone, and then download the video to discover the incredible 4-minute spoken animation, written and narrated by poet and storyteller Dai Woolridge, for the Bible Society.

This can be accessed at:

www.biblesociety.org.uk/resources/the-bible-in-four-minutes





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