

CARE

Y CYNGOR AR ALCOHOL A
CHYFFURIAU ERAILL
ELUSEN AR GYFER DIBYNTIAETH,
ADFERIAD A GALLUOGI

THE COUNCIL ON ALCOHOL
AND OTHER DRUGS
THE CHARITY FOR ADDICTION,
RECOVERY AND EMPOWERMENT

WALES RECOVERY SUNDAY SERVICE

25 October 2026

Written by **Siôn Aled Owen**

The last Sunday in October will be Wales' 15th Recovery Sunday. Again this year, here is a gift for you from Cynnal and the Living Room in the form of a service prepared for us by Siôn Aled Owen.

You are welcome to use this service in your churches to remember those who are recovering or who are still addicted to substances or harmful behaviors, and to pray for them and for those who offer them help and support.

And consider this, aren't we all recovering from something or other?

Recovery Sunday Service 2026

Introduction:

Welcome to this special service for the fifteenth Recovery Sunday service in Wales. This annual occasion is our opportunity to remember everyone who is entrapped by any substance, any inclination, any relationship, and to celebrate the freedom to which many have been guided over the years, through the work of organisations such as the Living Room and Cynnal. Importantly, it's also an opportunity for anyone who remains unfree, and who maybe hasn't even admitted that to themselves, to take the first step on the path to freedom, a path which is often difficult and steep, but which is the way of a potentially life-changing adventure. So we pray for blessing on our remembering, on our celebration and on the freedom we have gained:

Our Father, in this world of wonders, despite all the good things you have created for us to enjoy, we are so often also ensnared by addiction – sometimes to things which are inherently evil, sometimes to things which you created as good but that we have misused. We remember before you today all those who have been caught, and who remain caught, in addiction's web, and especially for those who have not yet recognised their captivity and who are not therefore seeking help. We pray that you will enable organisations such as the Living Room and Cynnal to offer that help and the ongoing support which offers and sustains freedom.

We celebrate the fact that so many of those who were entrapped have found freedom. We give thanks for those who accompany them on the path of freedom and who encourage them when the going is hard, as it will be for everyone in various circumstances throughout their lives. We celebrate hope. Lastly, we pray that you would sustain our own freedom, and if we remain entrapped in any way, give us your strength, because our own strength can avail nothing without you, to dare to seek the help that can release us. And if we are blind to our true situation, open our eyes to dare to see.

All this we ask in the name of the One who bought our ultimate freedom, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn:

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing,
if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us:
all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
lone and dreary, faint and weary,
through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy:
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

My own experience (Wynford Elis Owen): One of the most dramatic things that happened to me, and that led to experiencing that amazing peace that this service speaks of, was when self-seeking fell away. Up to that point I had been very competitive, jealous of other people's success and, I might as well admit, I was willing to do anything to achieve worldly, material success, and those ego-centric things like power and self-esteem, which were so important to me at the time. And then suddenly, I was set free from it. It felt like I'd come off the back of some wild horse I'd been trying to ride for over fifty years. And then, all of a sudden, I realised that I'd never been in competition with anyone else! It was as if my path through life had been pre-arranged. The tragedy is that I didn't know that. Life would have been far, far easier and better otherwise. I'm telling you this so that you know that character flaws can become a release for our best qualities to come to the surface. But first, of course, we have to accept ourselves as we are, the good and the bad. We have to accept our imperfection. If we don't do that, then we will suffer from that terrible state of hypocrisy. Looking good and virtuous on the outside but unable to do anything about the corruption inside us. It is the Energy (call it what you like, God, Power greater than ourselves) that transforms us into better people – but only after we first accept our imperfection.

So by accepting our imperfections, the good and the bad within us, we find a torch, if you will, to illuminate our path to a spirituality that suits our imperfect state, and which protects us from the hard places and dangers that come our way on life's journey. It is spirituality that is essential but also different: essential to enable us to discover what it means to be human, but different from the traditional and familiar biblical interpretation. It is not a religion. Furthermore, this spirituality has nothing to do with a magical deception – 'a glass of whisky will solve all my problems' – but has everything to do with the wonder that is implicit in all mysteries and miracles. And it is also something open-ended – which cannot be owned or grasped – and which comes, as our daily bread, one day at a time. The flame must therefore be kindled anew every day – and it must touch every aspect of our life, whether that's cheating the inland revenue or watching pornography on the sly, or else it will touch nothing.

But these are insights that came from action – I myself and others learned from experience. And as has been the case for all recovery – discovering for yourself is the only way to achieve contentment. You can't read, imagine, think, or talk your way to it. The only way is through action – what you are encouraged to do through this service for example. It is the same kind of 'suggestion', by the way, as the 'suggestion' that you should open your parachute after jumping out of a plane!

Accepting our imperfections, then, is the one act that in my experience connects us to that limitless Energy, which creates and directs and sustains – and which gave me respite from the wild storms of my deranged attachment to alcohol and other drugs.

Reading: John 8:31-36

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?' Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'

Meditation:

Addiction can be depicted in many ways. I've already used the image of a trap, and others have spoken of being under siege, and of struggling through a choking smog.

But one of the most powerful images that conveys the agony of addiction was a poster in France back in the eighties. It was a very simple picture, of a clear glass wine bottle with a man trapped inside it. A simple picture, but one that conveyed so much. The man could see everything that was going on around him in the world beyond the bottle, but he couldn't be a part of it. He could move, to some extent, within the bottle, but its narrow neck would never allow him to escape. While the poster was obviously referencing alcohol addiction, I now see in it a poignant picture of all addictions, including those that are more 'acceptable' (or worse still, to be approved by some), such as overwork and avarice.

But above the image, in French of course, was a verse from the reading we heard today: 'So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed'. And Siôn Aled Owen, who's written this service, arranged to publish a Welsh version of the poster with that quote. "I have a copy somewhere," he said, "but somewhere means so many places by now!"

Among the long-forgotten hymns collected by Llewven Steffan, there is one that begins with a very striking image: 'I was at the gate of hell / seeking to be let in' and many of us who have experienced the agony of addiction can identify with that scene. But although starting with that terrible image, the hymn goes on to offer the hope of walking through another door to freedom.

And the key to that door is hope - as long as we hold on to that, no matter how deep our captivity is, the door will always be there and it can be opened. And that's not only a message for those who remain entrapped, but for those who wish to see others freed as well: the message that hope must be maintained because that's the unfailing key.

Mixing metaphors: what a poet, writer or preacher should never do, but in the case of addiction, it is inevitable. The snare, the bottle, the door of hell, searching for the key and much more. Because addiction takes hold of us in so many ways. But freedom is simpler, somehow, and at the same time broader. I won't venture to offer an image of freedom, just invite us all, whatever our situation, to step through that door, and experience the blessing that lies beyond.

In our increasingly busy lives and noise-filled world, let's spend a minute in silence to reflect on what we have been considering today.

A period of silence.

Hymn:

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease:
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
but God, who called me here below,
will be forever mine.

Dismissal: From every captivity we experience, O God, deliver us, and for every freedom we have had, receive our gratitude from the depth of our hearts, and in every opportunity we have to share the gift of freedom with others, give us the will to share that gift to the fullest. And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all from this hour and forever more. Amen.

You can contact us through our websites:

www.recovery-council.org

www.living-room.uk

www.cynnal.uk

By email info@recovery-council.org

or by calling 029 2063 0993

“There has never been a night so dark
that there weren’t stars.”

