



South East Wales Unitarian News

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April 2015

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 10 May – District AGM. 10.30am at Highland Place Church Aberdare. [See below]

Saturday, 30 May – Copy deadline for the next issue of South East Wales Unitarian News.

DISTRICT AGM

The SEWUS Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 10th May at 10.30am at Highland Place, Aberdare, during which Tony Foster will become President of the District for the term 2015–17. A short service will be led by Julie Nedin, followed by the business meeting. Lunch will be arranged by Highland Place at a charge of £3 per head.

NOMINATIONS

We would be pleased to receive nominations for the post of Vice President for the coming term of office to the secretary, Diana Bianchi, by Monday 20th April.

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 23 & 24 JANUARY 2015

1. Ministerial Competency Framework

The Executive Committee considered a report from Rev Daniel Costley, Chair of the Ministry Strategy Group, on Ministerial Competencies and Ministerial Training. It was agreed:

- a) that the Ministerial Competencies and Assessment mechanisms (the “Ministerial Competency Framework”) be approved; and
- b) that external, expert support will be brought in to assist the development of the next stage of the review of training.

The EC thanked everyone who had been involved in the development of the Competencies which represented a major step forward for professional Ministry.

2. 2020 Congregational Development Programme

Members of the 2020 Leadership Team – Rev Andy Pakula, Alexandra Zglinska with Christina Smith – updated the Executive Committee on progress with the Derby rekindling project announced at the last Annual Meetings. The co-operation with the East Midlands Unitarians (EMU) was proving very valuable and there was joint funding of the project.

Christina outlined the work that had already been initiated and the plans for the future. The EC considered how best to support the 2020 Leadership Team with the project and also the dissemination of learning about congregational growth to other parts of the country.

3. General Assembly Roll of Ministers and Lay Pastors

The Executive Committee was pleased to add the following to the Roll with Full status having completed their period with Probationary status:

Rev Sheena Gabriel; Rev Nicky Jenkins; Rev Sue Woolley.

The following were approved for Ministry training:

Claire MacDonald to be trained for the ministry based at HMCO over two years commencing 2015.

Andy Phillips to be trained for the ministry based at HMCO with a flexible training programme likely to commence in 2016.

4. Honorary Membership of the General Assembly

Honorary Membership is the highest honour that the General Assembly can bestow and is awarded to an individual for long and consistent service nationally who has thereby made a significant contribution towards the furtherance of the GA’s objectives. The Executive Committee, following extensive consultation with Districts, has agreed to nominate Dawn Buckle as an Honorary Member at the forthcoming Annual Meetings.

5. Vice President of the General Assembly 2015/16

Unfortunately no proposals were received for the position of Vice-President for the year 2015/16 and no nomination would be made to the Annual Meetings this year. Invitations normally sent to the Vice-President should be sent to the Chief Officer who will discuss with the President how they would be dealt with and Past Presidents may be called upon to assist.

6. Executive Committee membership

The Executive Committee is pleased to announce that, after nearly three years without a permanent Treasurer, Peter Hanley agreed to be co-opted immediately and will be nominated as Honorary Treasurer at the Annual Meetings for the year 2015/16.

It was with regret that the Executive Committee accepted the resignation of Louise Rogers. We would like to thank Louise for all her work on the Executive Committee over the last two years. She has agreed to continue as chair of the Local Leadership Strategy Group.

7. Executive Committee Elections

A report of the outcome of the Election was received with only two candidates - Marion Baker and Gwynn Pritchard - nominated for the four positions. They were declared elected unopposed and would take up post in April 2015. The General Assembly Constitution places a responsibility on the Executive Committee to fill the two remaining vacancies by co-option until the next Election (2017). As part of this process the EC will, at its next meeting, undertake a trustee skills assessment to identify any gaps that should be filled.

8. GA Representative on the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) Council

Dr Jacky Woodman was appointed to one of the two positions to join the Chief Officer on ICUU's Council.

9. Consultation on Nominating/Volunteering Group

The Executive Committee has been aware of the increasing difficulties of securing nominees to serve in various positions. The EC also faces a difficult balancing act of having formally to decide on appointments and nominations and how to encourage people to come forward. It has been suggested that a Nominating/Volunteering Group be established, with involvement of Districts who are more likely to know talented individuals, to help encourage and identify suitable nominees and a consultation paper will shortly be issued to Districts for views. A workshop will also be held at the Annual Meetings on the idea.

10. Annual Accounts 2013/14

The Annual Accounts of the General Assembly and the Nightingale Centre were approved and those of the Sustentation Fund received (the latter has its own trustee body).

11. Robin Hood Tax Campaign

In 2010 the Annual Meetings approved a Resolution supporting the "Robin Hood Campaign" for a tax levy on international tax transactions. Since then the campaign has made considerable progress in Europe. An appeal for financial support to take forward the work has been received and it was agreed to donate £100 as a contribution.

Executive Committee

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

As I rapidly approach the end of my time as District President I find I have much to reflect upon.

I have learnt a lot over my term of office and have developed in my understanding and experience of Unitarian community. It has done me good—I mean that most sincerely!

I'd like to thank you all for your support and encouragement. I will continue to actively support the District as this wider community has become most important to me, indeed I feel its strength will be essential to our survival as a movement in South East Wales.

I am hugely impressed by the talent and commitment in our ranks. Amongst the joys of the past two years has been seeing the work of our youth leaders, becoming more closely linked to West Wales colleagues, and getting to know SEWUS District members and congregations far better.

Presently all our congregations are, in one form or another, engaged in discussions about making paid appointments, with the aim of sustaining our communities and promoting growth. During this process I hope that all of us will recognise that our individual efforts for personal development and learning must never cease and are the bedrock of successful nurturing of our whole faith community.

Julie Nedin

THOUGHT FOR NOW

(We are indebted to Anne Jones for bringing the following to our attention)

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.

George Fox

MINISTRY

Rev Linda Phillips, GA Director of Ministry met with representatives of Aberdare, Cefncoed, Swansea and Trebanos congregations at Highland Place, Aberdare on 17th March. She detailed various types of ministry and the procedure to be followed in seeking/appointing a minister.

ABERDARE

The year 2015 began quietly but the different groups in the church met regularly. Every week a Monday Morning Coffee Break is arranged with 12–18 people calling in for Toast and Tea or Coffee and putting the world to rights.

MEN AND WOMEN'S GROUPS: The Women's League meet every week and have been enjoying talks and Quizzes from Anne Watts, Anne Jones, Joy Foster and Rev Eric Jones. There was also a Flower arranging Demonstration. The League is ably chaired by Joan Harlow and they have an attendance of around 18 members every week. Members will attend the General Assembly Meetings in Birmingham when Joy will be installed as President of the Women's League. We wish her well during her year of office.

The Men of the congregation enjoy their monthly joint event with Cefncoed and Cardiff men and have a very interesting programme.

EVENTS IN MARCH: St David's Day was celebrated with a Cawl Lunch after the morning Service. Thanks to Angela and others who prepared the food. We are looking forward to the next. Unfortunately, only a few of us made the service at Cefncoed on March 1st due to last minute illnesses. Better luck next time.

WEDDING: We were pleased to witness the wedding ceremony of Rhys, son of Merrilee and the late Mike Jones to Kristina, a native of Lithuania. The reception was also held at the schoolroom, beautifully decorated and an enjoyable meal.

PEOPLE: Congratulations to Dyfan Jones on his winning an Award in the Welsh Theatre Awards Ceremony in Cardiff for the best sound (music) for a play. Dyfan is also going to Patagonia in August to Direct a Musical Show to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Welsh People who emigrated there. Dyfan's son, Dafydd has also been chosen to take part in the Urdd's presentation of Les Miserables, a show which will be performed in October.

We were pleased to have a visit from the Rev Carie Johnsen from the USA in February, taking a service and addressing members of the Women's League. We look forward to a visit from the Rev John Clifford on Easter Sunday, when John will take the service for the first time as President of the General Assembly. We wish him every happiness for the year.

ANNUAL LECTURE: We are hoping for a good attendance to welcome Rhodri Morgan, former First Minister of the Welsh Assembly on June 11th. Please keep the date.

The Annual General Meeting of the congregation was held at the end of March when officers were appointed and the Financial Report was presented. We look forward to placing three new double glazed windows in the schoolroom in the near future.

As we go to press, we've heard of the death of Mrs Iris Davies, Harlech Place Aberdare at the age of 95 years. Iris was a popular District Nurse in the area and after retirement she and her husband regularly attended services at Highland Place. Our sympathy is extended to their sons David and John and grandchildren in their loss.

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

As we enjoy some welcome sunshine following a wonderful partial eclipse of the sun and the spring Equinox, we send greetings to our friends in the district. Let us hope that it's not raining when you read this!

We were happy to welcome the Rev Carie Johnsen to our worship in January and to hear about her successful ministry in Maine, USA. Despite choosing the coldest and wettest couple of months for her visit to Wales, Carie embraced Welsh life as she discovered more about the ancestors she had researched so diligently. She also spent a happy afternoon with Sarah visiting St Fagan's Museum and she has been in touch with Lis since her return to the United States. She hopes to visit again later this year.

We are delighted to welcome Marjorie back to our services after her period of poor health in recent months.

The Cardiff Children's Club will meet monthly, on the first Sunday of the month, starting in April.

As corporate members of the United Nations Association, some were pleased to attend a political discussion with local MPs on the subject, 'Europe and the rise of the Right'. This took place on 25th February and was a joint meeting with the Welsh Centre for International Affairs. On 11th March, a joint meeting with Côr Cochion dealt with the situation of women in violent conflict and this lecture, 'Violence against women in combat' drew speakers from various universities. There will be a Corporate Members meeting held at the Temple of Peace on 21st April.

Sarah and Lis will attend the GA Annual Meetings in Birmingham as Cardiff delegates, Caroline Boyce will also attend as part of the national youth team and Gwynn Pritchard will be formally inducted as a new member of the Executive Committee during the business meetings on the final day.

We all send our congratulations and very best wishes to Gwynn as he begins his work as a member of the EC. He will be a wise advocate taking with him to the team, a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills. We also wish Joy Foster (Highland Place) a happy and successful year as National Women's League President.

Following a meeting with the Rev Linda Phillips, GA Director of Ministry, the church committee continues its work in preparation towards advertising for a Minister for Cardiff.

Something to think about....

'The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary can speak' (Hans Hofmann) ... and from the Dalai Lama....

'This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.'

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

Women's League

We started back to our League meetings on 4th February 2015. It was nice to see everyone. We voted to make Ann Lewis our President for the time being in Gwen Everitt's absence.

We were pleased that everyone agreed to alter the downstairs in the Vestry. It was decided to have it ready for the Joint Service on Sunday, 1st March. Marian Lewis very kindly offered to hold our second meeting on 18th February at her home as work was then in progress in the Vestry. It looked lovely when it was finished. As usual everyone donated to the lovely afternoon Tea, I personally was very disappointed that only 8 visitors decided to stay after the Service.

A Fish & Chip Supper was held on Saturday 21st March, on Ken's 80th Birthday – it was a great success.

We attended the Women's League District Meeting at Aberdare on 1st April. It was decided to hold a Buffet Lunch in June at Cefn Coed Rugby Club. We were pleased to be able to offer to hold the next District meeting at Cefn in October.

We wish Barbara Hopkins a speedy recovery after her recent knee replacement and hope to see Gwen back in League soon.

Vera Tomsett

Service at Highland Place

We joined Highland Place congregation for a morning service conducted by American visitor, Rev Carie Johnsen on Sunday 8th February. We enjoyed the service and lunch afterwards at the Marquis Hotel.

Building work

On 16th February work started on demolishing and rebuilding part of the graveyard wall. The project will replace a 30-metre stretch of the wall which has shown signs of imminent collapse for some time. Work is of a high standard and has now reached about the three-quarters stage.

On the same day, work began on making the ground-floor of the vestry more suitable for our needs. A remarkable transformation was achieved in record-quick time and the new Meeting Room has already proved its worth on a number of occasions.

Sadness

We are sorry to report the death of Ken Murphy at the age of 70 years. Ken was the brother of Donna Borja-Edwards. Rev Eric Jones conducted the funeral service on 21st February at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, followed by interment at Cefn Cemetery.

We are also sorry to report the death of Mrs Eirwen Evans (née Griffiths) aged 96 years. On returning to the village in the autumn of 2006 after a lengthy period away, Eirwen happily attended chapel and Women's League regularly until ill-health necessitated her moving into a nursing home. Her funeral at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on 27th March was conducted by Rev Eric Jones, followed by cremation at Llwydcoed Crematorium. Our sympathy is extended to both families in their loss.

Joint Service

We were pleased to welcome Melda Grantham to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on 1st March to conduct a Joint Service for the congregations of Aberdare Cardiff and Cefncoed. Melda had previously conducted a very effective studio-service for BBC Radio Cymru—but this was her first experience of a 'live' congregation. She did exceedingly well.

Surprise! Surprise!

Problem: How do you get someone to attend a Surprise Birthday Party when it's their own birthday?

Solution: Dupe the unsuspecting person into thinking the function celebrates some other event!

This was the subterfuge adopted by the 'ladies of the League' when, on Saturday, 21 March, a Fish-and-Chip-Supper, ostensibly to celebrate the opening of the redesigned ground floor of the vestry, was used as a cover for the *real* reason—the Eightieth Birthday Celebration of the Chapel Secretary.

Of course, when Judith Cullen's wonderful creation bearing the inscription '*Happy 80th Birthday Ken*' was unveiled, it all became clear – and an evening of conviviality (to the accompaniment of the popping of champagne corks) was enjoyed by all, (*Not least by the unsuspecting recipient—Thank you all very much!*)

Now, if you're going to celebrate – do it properly!

So, TWO birthdays were celebrated as 21 March was also the birthday of Morgan (*slightly* younger than Ken) and Phil received a gift to mark the opening of the new Meeting Room.



It was a shame to destroy this work of art—but, you can't have a cake and not eat it!



Cutting the cake was done with great care and precision.



Mog, Ken and Phil think Christmas has come early this year!

Photos: Keith Lewis-Jones

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

We were delighted on Friday 30th of January to be the venue for the marriage of Robert Pattimore and Mo De Quant. The groom is the son of June and the late Barry, who have been members at Nottage for many years. The Reverend Eric Jones officiated, and the organist was a family friend. It was a lovely service, and Mo's family travelled from Holland and Texas to help make their day a very special one. Mo's daughter and grandchildren accompanied her down the aisle, and Robert had James and his father to support him. They celebrated the event at the Fairways Hotel, and we all wish them many happy years together.

We have recently had the pleasure of Elizabeth Rosenberg's company in service, she was home for "reading week". We are very pleased that she is settling into student life so well. Enjoy!!

At the same service were Janet & Harry Hales, who had come specially from Carmarthen on that date to celebrate the 51st Anniversary of their marriage. The Reverend E.J Williams officiated, and their wedding reception was at The Farmers Arms, Nottage, where they went for lunch after the service.....nothing changes! We wish them many more happy years together.

It was with great sadness we heard of the passing of Norman Downs, he was Rosie Owen's grandfather. He and his wife had moved to Porthcawl to be near Rosie and her family, I'm sure having family so close was a great comfort to his widow. Rosie wrote and read a poem at his funeral service, what a "little star" she is. We send all the family our best wishes.

Eileen Howarth has been attending services with us for a few years, and is a much loved member, but she was ill over Christmas, and has decided that the journey is now "too much" for her. We miss her, and just hope she will look after herself and keep in touch with us.

Julianne Morgan conducted a lovely "Mother's Day" service for us. We were small in number, but that did not detract from the message of love, not just to us, but to mothers all around the world. Jonathan Thomas delighted us all by presenting us bunches of daffodils, because he does not have a grandmother to give them to. What a lovely young man he is, we are so lucky to have him in our congregation and as part of our "chapel family".

Wishing you all a happy and peaceful Easter

Avril Protheroe

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

The visit from the Mari Lwyd team now seems a long way back but I must record that Huw Jones stood in for the company's joker at very short notice and excelled, though the be-ribboned joker's jacket fitted a little too snugly.

We have been very fortunate to have the services of Lawrence Bowen a number of times on the keyboard and this has given us the opportunity to try out a few more of the songs in the purple hymnbook.

The Rev Carie Johnsen, over from America, visited with us in the company of Melda Grantham. She took part in the service and presented us with a lovely ceramic chalice.

Anne Watts has taken her first service with us and we look forward very much to her return. Once again we must thank our visiting speakers and those of our own number who bring worthwhile contributions to our special times spent together in this ancient spiritual place.

Very best wishes to Dolores Morgan and Mair Evans who are both on the road to recovery. We look forward to seeing you back with us soon.

Sandra Beynon's montbretia, planted last year against the boundary wall, is showing life. The montbretia will make another splash of colour to add to that of crocus, daffodil, and in the summertime, clover.

Last Sunday morning we arrived to discover that a letter had been posted through the chapel door—more news about that when I find out more myself.

Marian Littlepage

[In the January newsletter we inadvertently referred to Norma Phillips as 'Menna' Phillips. Norma, of course, is the widow of the late Rev Eirion Phillips and we congratulate her on having become a great-grandmother. Editor]

WICK

The daffodils and primroses are in abundance all around our chapel grounds, making our graveyard so attractive that several young bullocks decided to 'invade' us and Mansel our treasurer was called for to assist in removing them. Luckily they were too busy eating to do any serious damage but we will have to install new fencing.

We are so sad to announce that our oldest and most faithful member Mrs Eva Morgan has died. Eva had been very ill and moved to a rest home in Derbyshire to be near her son but sadly she passed away. After cremation in Belper her memorial service was held in Wick conducted by Julianne. Our chapel was full of relations and friends, her son Roger spoke so did her nephew Windsor and great-niece Megan, and another of her great-nieces Liz read a beautiful poem she had written about Eva. Her ashes were interred in the family grave as was her wish. Eva was a wonderful lady, with a very distinctive character. Our chapel was so dear to her. She used to walk to chapel from their farm Cae Caradog as a child, was a Sunday School teacher and notably the first female traffic warden in Bridgend ... with many tales to tell!

Eva's favourite poem was Abu Ben Adhem which Julianne read as part of her service and the words will always remind us of her. We miss you Eva and hold your memory in our hearts.

Julianne Morgan



W A N T E D

(This item was held over from the January issue of the Newsletter due to lack of space.)

Do you recognise this man? He has been wanted in the Swansea area for some time for services to music. More recently he has been wanted for 'services'—since he now features on the SEWUS Pulpit Supply List!

He is, of course, Stephen Wilson of High Street Unitarian Church Swansea, but you will be forgiven if you didn't recognise him—his moustachioed appearance in this 'selfie' is not one with which many of us are familiar.

Steve explains that his changed appearance was in order to raise money for a charity—the Movember Foundation, a leading global organisation committed to changing the face of men's health. They are working to improve the lives of men affected by prostate cancer, testicular cancer and mental health issues. Steve committed to growing a moustache during November 2014 and collected £225 altogether.

Steve is a member of a Welsh male voice choir, "The Gwalia Singers", many of whom also grew moustaches for the charity. Together they raised in excess of £3,000 for the charity.

Many of his sponsors are readers of the District Newsletter and so Steve thought this article would be a good way of thanking them for their support.

DEATH IN SWANSEA

We were all sad to hear recently of the young policewoman who lost her life at Swansea's Kingsway. Louise Lucas was stationed in Cardiff but was off duty at the time, spending the day at Swansea. Louise was the daughter of Geoff and Mary Payne in Cardiff and her grandparents, Capt. Peter and Mrs Beryl Payne attended West Grove Church. Our sympathy is extended to the family, parents, her three children and husband and brother Robert in their sad loss.

MEN'S GROUP

To open our 2015 season we gathered at Cefncoed RFC on a beautiful sunny early-February morning. After a leisurely stroll across the nearby Cefn viaduct we returned to the clubhouse for a talk by Gwynn Pritchard on interesting places he visited as a director of documentary television programmes. This proved to be an absorbing account—and one to be continued at future gatherings. An excellent meal at the clubhouse rounded off a most enjoyable visit.

For our March gathering we did a little valley-hopping and ventured into the Rhondda valley, with Arthur Saunders acting as our tour guide. The itinerary included a visit to *Bethlehem* a former Unitarian chapel at Clydach Vale, now experiencing a re-claimed religious existence with the Welsh Baptists.

We concluded our Rhondda visit with an enjoyable meal at a lakeside café—and where one of our party only narrowly avoided causing an international incident (*slight exaggeration!*) with a Welsh-Italian lady.

We look forward to our next expedition at the end of April – a visit to Llanwonno with a meal at the Brynffynnon Inn.

Ken Morgan



Noddfa Welsh Baptist Chapel Clydach Vale
(Originally Bethlehem Unitarian Chapel 1895–1917)

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News is **Saturday 30 May**. Items for publication should be sent by to:- kenneth.morgan25@tesco.net or Ken Morgan, 25c Holford Street, Cefn Coed y Cymer, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 2RW. Tel: 01685 379016