



## South East Wales Unitarian News

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April 2020

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### IMPORTANT NOTICE

**Our district congregations have, for the time being, suspended Services of Worship and other activities associated with their buildings.**

Please be aware that some reports in this issue were submitted before the above decision was made and, as a consequence, they could contain references which are now incorrect / no longer apply.

In particular: the District AGM scheduled for Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup> is postponed.

—oOo—

In these unprecedented times, as a growing number are confined to their homes or in care, or dealing with changed circumstances at work, Unitarian Universalist minister Lynn Ungar offers some positive ways to deal with the corona-virus.

#### Pandemic

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Centre down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

*Rev Dr Lynn Ungar lives on the east side of the San Francisco Bay. She is minister for lifespan learning for the Church of the Larger Fellowship, an online congregation for Unitarian Universalists and other religious liberals.*

—oOo—

### VISIT OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT

On the morning of 1<sup>st</sup> March, having been entertained by Ceredigion Unitarians on the previous evening, GA President Rev Celia Cartwright arrived at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed where she was welcomed by District President Alun Watts.

After expressing her thanks for the invitation to visit SE Wales, Celia conducted a service of worship for the gathering, which included members from other District congregations. Her message, "Love is the Doctrine of this Church", together with her choice of hymns (two from Hymns for Living and two from Perlau Moliant Newydd), was much appreciated. Musical accompaniment was provided by Hen Dŷ Cwrdd organist Marian Lewis.

Following the service a delicious Sunday Lunch was enjoyed at Cefncoed Rugby Club.

[ See also – 'From the District President' and other reports, below. ]

## **FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT**

Despite the threat of Storm Dennis, representatives of five of our congregations met on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at our Nottage Chapel to participate in a workshop on 'Safeguarding'. The workshop was ably led by our District Secretary, Lis Dyson-Jones. Booklets from Essex Hall were given to representatives of each congregation and then, Lis guided us through it, highlighting the relevant responsibilities that each chapel or church had to adopt in safeguarding.

It is imperative that all the checks and procedures should be in place by each congregation to enable them to apply for Charity Status in 2021.

This was a very fruitful meeting. Lis is to be congratulated upon the hard work and the excellent way, in which the workshop was presented. Thanks, also, to the Nottage congregation for their warm welcome and refreshments

On St David's Day, we had the pleasure of welcoming the GA President, the Rev Celia Cartwright to our District. Celia led a service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed and the theme of the service was "LOVE". This was a very inspiring service and was enjoyed by all who were present. At the end of the service, I presented Celia with a Welsh Lovespoon, which she was thrilled to receive.

I also presented her with the book that Eric Jones had just written "BEST FOOT FORWARD". This book is a light-hearted look at Eric's life from his parents' farm in Ceredigion, via Carmarthen College, to his ministry, over 40 years, in Aberdare and later, in Cardiff and Cefn Coed. Furthermore, it relates Eric's community, educational and other activities, and his huge contribution to the wider Unitarian movement.

Following the service, many of us proceeded to Cefn Coed Rugby Club, where we had a wonderful Sunday Lunch. Grateful thanks to Mog Chambers for arranging the meal and to the officers and the congregation at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for allowing us to host the service at their chapel.

When I was installed as District President last April, I promised I would visit every congregation in the District. I am pleased to say that has now been accomplished as Anne and myself visited Wick on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, where we, jointly, took the service. Many thanks to the Wick congregation for their warm welcome.

It is almost a year now since I was appointed as District President but I am concerned that there is still not a Vice President in post to succeed me in 2021. If there is anyone interested in the post, could they please inform their church/chapel so that their nomination can be considered at our AGM on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2020 at Nottage.

If anyone, who is interested in the post, wishes to know what is entailed in the post, please contact me.

*Alun Watts*

## **FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT**

As the reality of the Covid-19 virus impacts on our lives, many of us by now are in self-isolation, or at the least, practising social distancing. It is now day four for me, and the thought of continuing with this way of living for possibly another three months fills me with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it seems very unnatural not to be out and about, rushing from one meeting to another, racing around trying to get everything done, on the other – it is a welcome opportunity to do things differently.

Whilst we may need to distance ourselves from each other physically, this in some ways can serve to bring us closer together, as we take the time to check on each other by phone, or through the use of technology. There are so many ways to communicate with each other nowadays, and the time that we can save by not getting in to our cars and driving for miles, can be used to phone our families, and our friends from the congregations for a chat. Less driving also has the added benefit of being good for the planet.

These are anxious times for many, but we must remember that we are still part of a community, and I'm heartened by the way that our communities are responding. Sunday services may be cancelled, but many congregations are providing services on-line, as well as organising regular contact with each other. People are looking out for each other, showing care and compassion in very practical ways, by delivering supplies and medication, and by offering support to those who are vulnerable. We can all do our bit – being confined to our homes does not mean that we're no longer valuable to our communities. And I'm hopeful that this may be the beginning of re-discovering our sense of

community, an opportunity to take stock and slow down, to help each other and together to create that kinder, better world that we would all like to live in. Keep safe, and please do remember that you can contact me at any time on [mgrantham@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:mgrantham@unitarian.org.uk) or on 07495 761961.

*Melda Grantham*

## **THOUGHT FOR NOW**

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

Plan for the difficult while it is easy; act on the large while it's minute.  
The most difficult things in the world begin as things that are easy.

*Lao Tzu (604 BC - 531 BC)*

## **ABERDARE**

Rev Eric Jones took our first service of 2020. It was a Communion Service and he explained the background and some interpretations of the traditional Communion Service. This service is usually held once a year.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> January, following a short service by Tony Foster the congregation shared lunch in the schoolroom. It is always good to come together and share a meal, and it was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. Our thanks to Angela and Richard for the food preparation.

Seven members of Highland Place joined friends from across the district for the well-attended service held at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed, which was led by GA President, Rev Celia Cartwright. Following the excellent service, we all gathered at the Cefncoed Rugby Club for a delicious Sunday Lunch. Our thanks to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and to Morgan Chambers for all the arrangements at the Rugby Club.

The decision had to be taken on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, that all church services, group activities and lettings had to be cancelled for the foreseeable future due to the Coronavirus crisis. Unfortunately, it looks as if this is going to be for quite a long time. Members' telephone numbers have been circulated so that we can all keep in touch and to check that everyone is well.

On a happier note, congratulations go to our organist Grace Jones. Grace was judged the best instrumentalist at a competition arranged by the High Sheriff for young musicians. She has also been offered a 3-hour recording contract. The prize was presented by First Minister, Mark Drakeford. Well done Grace!

On 10<sup>th</sup> March, Highland Place held the launch of 'Best Foot Forward – A Journey' the new book written by Rev Eric Jones. Friends and members of Highland Place joined together to fill the hall. The MC for the evening was Chair of the Congregation, Humphrey Evans. The speakers were Alun Watts (District President), Tony Foster (Chair of the Welsh Department), D L Davies (Local Historian) and of course the author himself, Eric Jones. It was a thoroughly entertaining evening which included a buffet and wine, coffee and tea. Copies of the book are available by post; details can be found in this issue of the District News.

There was also a box for donations for those in the Cynon valley who had suffered from the devastating effects of storms Ciara and Dennis. Over £200 was raised. Thank you everyone.

Finally, keep safe and well at this difficult time.

*Tony Foster*

## **Aberdare Women's League**

Our thoughts must be with the flood victims, who have suffered so much from the stormy weather, which was unleashed upon us. We wish them well.



Eric and Alun display Eric's new book  
Photo: Joy Foster

At our planning meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January, members decided to no longer meet fortnightly but to meet, formally, once a month, with e.g. a speaker and otherwise, informally.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, a Knit and Natter session was enjoyed by all present.

On 29<sup>th</sup> January, members relaxed with a musical session featuring their CD choices.

On 5<sup>th</sup> February, Margaret Abrahams, from Women's Aid, gave us a very informative talk about the harrowing and alarming aspects of violence meted out to domestic violence victims. These are women and children, who arrive at the Women's Aid Refuge, distressed, traumatised and sometimes, with no possessions other than what they are wearing. Also, she spoke of how victims can develop physical, emotional and psychological problems. Worryingly, some children may carry out future domestic abuse because of their upbringing.

A shocking statistic is **2 women are killed every single week from domestic violence.**

Our speaker informed us that, upon their arrival, victims are given a bag of personal items, e.g. deodorants for adults and children are given a bag of toys, e.g. crayons.

At this juncture, I, on behalf of our Branch, would like to thank all contributors to our appeal to aid Women's Aid by donating personal items for adults and new toys for the children. It was an amazing response and much appreciated!

On 12<sup>th</sup> February, members enjoyed hearing of our favourite books and poems and the next week, participated in board games and social chat.

On 26<sup>th</sup> February, we had lunch at 'The Bute' in Aberdare to support a local business.

On 4<sup>th</sup> March, I gave a topical talk on 'Royal Newcomers,' which was well received and the next week, members delighted in a 'Craft & Chat' session.

Now, we look forward to our District AGM to be held at Cefn Coed's Women's League Branch on March 18.

With Coronavirus about, please stay safe and healthy.

*Anne Watts*  
*Secretary of Highland Place Women's League*

## CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

In addition to our usual Sunday services, and monthly discussion group, we have now begun Twelve Steps to Spiritual Health, with a large group of Unitarians and non Unitarians.

Members of the congregation have also been taking part in a Multifaith Prayer Vigil for Climate Justice outside the Senedd (in rain and shine!). Joining with a prayer vigil being held outside Westminster 24/7 for the whole of Lent, we are joining together every Friday afternoon to pray that the Welsh and UK governments respond to the climate emergency. Anyone is welcome to join us. More details below.



Members of the congregation at the Multifaith Prayer Vigil for Climate Justice at the Senedd.

You are invited to a multi-faith prayer and meditation vigil outside the Senedd, Cardiff on Friday afternoons in Lent.

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February to Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April, Between 2pm and 6pm

We will be holding the people and the planet in our hearts and praying for humanity to have the wisdom and strength to survive the climate emergency. In concert with others praying outside Westminster, we are praying for the transformation of our politics to create a post-carbon world of justice and peace.

People of all faiths and none are welcome to come along on one or more Fridays. There will be periods of silence, and times for talking/ singing/ ritual. If you would like to offer a prayer, a guided meditation, a song, a choir, a brief talk, a ritual or anything else appropriate, please let us know. Or feel free simply to join us.

This is a peaceful, non-violent, and prayerful event, organised by Christian Climate Action Cymru, but open to all faiths and spiritual perspectives.

*Stephen Lingwood*

## **CEFNCOED**

### **Coronavirus**

At the close of our service on 15<sup>th</sup> March the congregation decided that, due to the pandemic, all services and activities at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd would be suspended for the foreseeable future.

### **Women's League**

We had been looking forward to hosting the District Women's League AGM at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on 18<sup>th</sup> March but unfortunately this has now been postponed due to the coronavirus, and all League meetings have been cancelled for the time being.

### **Disruption**

On Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> February it was thought wise to cancel our service due to the arrival of Storm Ciara, and on the following Sunday we were again forced to cancel—this time due to the ravages of Storm Dennis.

### **Visit of GA President**

On 1<sup>st</sup> March we were pleased to welcome friends from other SE Wales congregations for a service led by GA President, Rev Celia Cartwright. Following the service an excellent Sunday Lunch was enjoyed in convivial company at Cefncoed Rugby Club. The weather was good and, as the club is not far from the chapel, some made the short journey on foot in preference to the use of a car.

### **Men's Group**

On 27<sup>th</sup> February the Men's Group met on 'our patch'—at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd vestry. A pleasant hour was spent as Phil Griffiths recalled various incidents from his professional life as an architect.

*Ken Morgan*

## **NOTTAGE**

A warm hello from Nottage.

I don't know about you but we are very much waiting for the arrival of Spring.

It has indeed been a very wet and dark winter and we hope that everyone has been able to keep themselves well as it has truly been a winter of many nasty viruses.

We also hope that no-one has been affected by the storms that have hit our shores over the last few weeks.

We would like to say a big thank you to Jan and Harry who delivered a grand amount of donations to the Porthcawl Foodbank recently; a cause we have supported for many years now. It saddens us greatly that in 2020 there are families and individuals who are in need of such a service.

It was lovely to see David return safely from his month long trip to the Philippines – Welcome Home David.

Our Friday Club/Meditation group is continuing to grow with us seeing new friends most weeks, some return regularly others pop in when they can. Meditation is at 10:30am followed by Coffee and Chat from 11:00am. Do come and see us when you can, you will be most welcome.

We are very pleased that June is recovering from her recent knee operation and hopefully we will see her back in chapel when she is fit enough, she is indeed desperate to return.

Congratulations to Tanya Bhanaut who along with her mother Helen has been attending services over the last few months. Tanya will soon be moving away from the area as she has accepted a job in Bristol and will be taking up the position shortly. Her presence in chapel will be missed, and we wish her well for the future. We hope to see her when she comes home to visit.

We are pleased that Jan and Avril's brother Philip has now come out of hospital for the moment, I'm sure this eases a little of their worries.

The recent visit of GA President, Celia Cartwright to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed y Cymer was attended by our minister, Lewis. Unfortunately illness prevented others attending, however Lewis fed back to the Nottage congregation Celia's message of love being the doctrine of our church.

It has been a quieter few months than normal at Nottage due to the viruses and other ailments that have struck. We hope and pray for a better few months of good weather, excellent health and lots of sunshine for everyone.

With love from all at Nottage.

*Cheryl Rees*

## **SWANSEA**

We are pleased to report that Hilary has had her operation and has recuperated well. We were delighted to have her back in church last week.

We have had two interesting and thought provoking services given by Maria Pap and Ant Howe in February. It was good to hear Maria talk about playfulness and Ant on Unitarian belief.

Igor and Rita are now married. Rita was granted a visa and has now come to join Igor in Swansea. She says that he now has to keep the flat tidy! It was lovely to see them both in church.

We held our formal AGM on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Elections were held including the following: Chairman- Lynn Evans, Secretary- Igor Ranchynskyi, Treasurer- Hilda Dumbleton. Each member of the congregation was allocated a responsibility. It was agreed by all that Igor is to become a member of the church. We were delighted.

As far as the building is concerned we have had the higher roof guttering cleaned out on both sides of the church and the scaffolding has also been taken down. The next step is to replace the downpipes on the lower roof but we are waiting for the planning officer to tell us whether specific downpipes are needed. We have also had a winter bat report completed. Thank you must go to Lynn for his tenacity!

We were sorry to hear how poorly Melda's husband has been and wish him well for a speedy recovery.

Swansea Church was represented at a very informative training on safeguarding at Nottage. Thanks go to Lis for arranging and leading it.

On a sad note it was agreed by the congregation to close our church from 17<sup>th</sup> March due to the danger from Covid 19. All lettings have stopped and there will be no more services until it is considered safe to hold them. A very tragic day for Swansea.

We wish everyone the strength to get through this traumatic time, thinking of the day when we will all be able to meet up again.

Take care and keep safe.

*Hilda Dumbleton*

## **TREBANOS**

### **GELLIONNEN**

A loud knocking on our door in mid January announced the arrival of the Mari Lwyd, and a very special visit it was, as always. The collection that day amounted to £169, so together with our Christmas collections of £639 we had £808 to donate to our two charities – Unity in Diversity and Ysgol Maes y Coed which needs to revamp its scented garden. The mischievous antics of this Mari Lwyd team are well known and their reputation has grown over the years. They are much in demand, but bless them, they continue to support us.

Chris Williams and Doug Alexander have announced their engagement and will be married here next year by Dr Rory Castle Jones. Congratulations Chris and Doug and all good wishes.

There have been two big birthdays, first Hayley Rowden Cooper and secondly Lynne Williams. May this be a very good and happy year for you both.

The Rev Maria Pap has taken service for us and we all stayed on for lunch in the chapel before Maria left to take service in Swansea.

Rory Castle Jones led the celebration of St David's Day in a chapel decked with daffodils. We had readings in Welsh and English from Rhys Castle Jones and Sarah Rowden Cooper. Sean Walker sang two songs, his beautiful voice filled the building. We finished up with tea and Welsh cakes.

Usually, tea is poured by the very efficient Gwnne Williams, she never flaps whether it be for five, fifty or a hundred, but she has recently taken one of our readings. It is good to hear so many different voices – or accents for that matter – taking part in the services. And on the subject of voices, young Aidan attended recently with his Dad and contributed well to the singing. It is good to be able to watch "our baby's" progress.

Many thanks to those who have taken, or contributed to, services.

Julie Nedin transplanted some of the daffodils in the graveyard last year and they are all nodding in abundance. We continue to have weekday wanderers and it is good to know that we have weekday visitors as well as those on Sunday.

Time was when we were often flooded when the rain was heavy but this is no longer the case. The ground immediately in front of the gates is very, very muddy and sections of the approaching track have been washed away, but we remain dry!

*Marian Littlepage*

## **MEN'S GROUP**

Our first get together of 2020 was on 27<sup>th</sup> February at the vestry of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed. Philip Griffiths gave a very interesting talk on his life as an architect. Many thanks Philip. A tasty lunch followed at the nearby Cefn Café, at a special price negotiated by Phil.

We don't know when the Men's Group will meet next, but we have plenty of time to make a list of places to visit.

*Tony Foster*



## Best Foot Forward A Journey J.Eric Jones

Now that the G.A. Meetings have been cancelled and other meetings postponed when the book would be introduced, we are attempting to find other avenues for the sale of the book.

The story includes some of Eric's early years and his involvement in Denominational and local campaigns as well as his time as Minister in the District.

It is meant to be a light hearted journey, containing memories of early upbringing, not starting school until he was nine, with references to the now closed Presbyterian College in Carmarthen, as well as touching upon some language campaigns in which he has been involved over the years. Eric was made a member of the Gorsedd of Bards in 2005 for his service to the community and the Welsh Language and was made an Honorary Member of the South East Wales District and of the General Assembly .

Ambell i stori ddigri a digwyddiadau gwerth eu cofio ac ychydig o atgofion chwe deg mlynedd fel Gweinidog yn y Cymoedd a dyddiau cynnar ymhlith amaethwyr canol Ceredigion.

The book is available at £6.95. or £9.00 by post  
from Tony Foster: [tony.foster@talktalk.net](mailto:tony.foster@talktalk.net)  
8 Unity St, Aberdare (07828 777 573)

Or from District Secretary  
Lis Dyson Jones : [elisabeth.dysonjones@gmail.com](mailto:elisabeth.dysonjones@gmail.com)