

South East Wales Unitarian Society
District News - Special Edition, August 2020



Message from District President, Alun Watts

Dear all,

It has been about five months since we have been able to attend a normal service at our Church or Chapel. Although the Welsh Government has now giving permission for our buildings to reopen, there are many restrictions that we have to observe if we hold any services. We are unable to sing, we must keep the two metres distance, sanitisers must be provided and we are unable to have fellowship before or after the service.

Sadly, we have lost Unitarian members during this period and we extend our deepest sympathy to their bereaved family and friends.

I believe fellowship is a very important part of our collective worship as it gives us not only the opportunity to enjoy refreshments together but it, also, enables us to share our joys and sorrows with other members of our congregations. I am sure we all miss that sense of a physical community, at present.

I know that, during the lockdown, our congregations have adapted to different ways in worship and in contacting members. Some of our churches hold a weekly Zoom Service, whilst others issue periodical newsletters and also, keep in touch with others by telephone.

At this time of the year, we would normally be planning the format of the service to be held at Penrhiw in September and also, deciding the location of the District Carol Service. Certainly, we will not be holding a service at Penrhiw this year, but hopefully, we will be able to hold a Carol Service in December 2020, subject to any rules in operation, at that time.

I hope that you all have kept safe during this unprecedented time in our history and that we may meet again as a District, sooner rather than later.

Alun

Traditionally, the South East Wales Unitarian district congregations would meet physically for a Christmas Service on the first Sunday in December. This year, we are as yet unsure what the position regarding the current pandemic will be. However, it is hoped that the President and District Officers will be able to organise some sort of gathering for our congregations on Sunday 6th December. Once we have a clearer picture, details will be sent to all congregations.

Lis Dyson-Jones, SEWUS Secretary

News from our congregations:

Cardiff Unitarian Undodiaid Caerdydd

Well a lot has happened since March! After one Sunday with no service we have held online worship every Sunday since lockdown using zoom. It's been really wonderful to welcome friends from other congregations in the district (and beyond!) to these services. We still welcome all and would be happy to welcome more friends from the district. Once you get used to the technology it's not too intimidating!

I've also produced a video for our Facebook page every Sunday, and have been able to share Welsh language reflections coming each week from Parch Wyn Thomas. It is a great irony that though this time makes us more disconnected in some ways, in other ways it makes us more connected than ever before across Wales and beyond.

Sadly in July we lost Lyn Davies, a lifelong Unitarian who for many years played the piano for us in Cardiff. We send our condolences to her family and all who knew her.

None of us know what the future will hold but it feels to me like faith, and faith community is more needed than ever. Though we are disconnected, we must hold each other in the connection of our thoughts and prayers and love. Sending love to you all.

Stephen Lingwood

Cefncoed

We were sorry to hear of the death, at St Andrews, Scotland on 23 May, of Professor David Brynmor Thomas, aged 89 years. David had been associated with Yr Hen Dŷ Cwrdd all his life: he was a member and a Trustee of the chapel. During the lockdown period we have also mourned the deaths of David Chambers, brother of Morgan, Marian Saunders, wife of Arthur, and Paddy Tomsett, husband of Vera. We express our sympathy to the respective families in their sad loss.

The Government's enforced closure, in mid-March, of all Places of Worship, left us deprived of our regular weekly communal boost of religion at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. On Sunday afternoons since 5th April those of us with the necessary electronic devices have been 'attending' a Zoom service led by Stephen Lingwood for the Cardiff congregation. We thank Stephen and the congregation for the welcome with which we have been received and we very much appreciate the spiritual enrichment gained from our weekly 'visits'.

There has been some easing of the imposed restrictions, but it's a bit premature to '*let one's hair down*' and celebrate. Even so, most of the ladies of the congregation have taken advantage of the recent re-opening of hair salons and have had their hair 'done' (this behaviour has not been confined to the female gender – the writer, too, has had his cascading locks cut to a more presentable length – but no 'perm' or tints!).

The lifting of some restrictions regarding Places of Worship has also triggered thoughts of a possible resumption of services. A cleaning operation has recently been carried out – but no further action has yet been planned.

Ken Morgan

Gellionnen

Zoom services have taken off big time for Gellionnen with visitors joining us from all over the globe, e.g. North Wales & America to name just two places. Rory Castle Jones is officially our Student Minister, the contracts have been signed and he starts in September for six months.

Sandra Beynon

Highland Place, Aberdare

Greetings to our friends across the District.

It has been a difficult time for many during the last six months. During this period of lock-down we were saddened to receive the news of the death of Marian Saunders at her home in Tylorstown at the beginning of June. Marian had suffered a stroke 18 months ago and she was looked after tenderly by Arthur and his sister Jean during her illness. Marian was a gentle lady with a friendly smile and a friendly greeting for everyone. She and Arthur had been married for 57 years and both attended services at Cefncoed and Aberdare. Our condolences go to Arthur, daughter Rhian Angharad and granddaughter Megan.

And on the 25th June, we heard of the sudden death of Loraine Cole, 14 Valley View, Godreaman at the age of 65 years. Loraine had not been well for some time, but the end came unexpectedly, and our condolences are sent to Michael, and son Gareth and daughter in law Alex in America. Rev Eric Jones officiated at both funerals.

Highland Place Church opened its doors for services on Sunday 9th August for the first time since the beginning of March. Social distancing rules were followed, with hand sanitising stations at the entrance and exit doors. A one-way system was employed. Rev Eric Jones took the service which was in a different format to what we are used to. There was no hymn singing and no playing of the organ, but Grace played the piano and CDs were used.

The decision was taken to continue services on a weekly basis at 11:00 am every Sunday and this will be reviewed in 6 weeks' time.

Tony Foster

Nottage General Baptist & Unitarian Chapel

Lockdown has been a testing time for many of us. However, it has brought the congregation closer together, with pastoral support being shared by the minister and membership. The minister has provided a video service each week, which has been appreciated by those that can access the internet. The services have been watched not only by people throughout the UK, as we have also had messages from people in the USA, Canada, the Philippines, Spain, India, Australia, and New Zealand who have joined us in worship. Whilst shielding, the minister had the unusual honour of conducting a 'Zoom' committal of ashes for the late Mrs Rose Owen, who passed away shortly before lockdown measures were enforced.

Rev Lewis Rees

Swansea

From March, the Swansea church was under lockdown. However it was not all doom and gloom.

The congregation learnt to use social media! First, Melda sent us some brilliant video clips on WhatsApp to finish her Ministerial Placement. Then we learnt how to zoom and our Sunday Services were resumed in a different format. Thanks must be given to all the preachers who have taken a service for us and also to Stephen who has done a fantastic job enabling us to meet and spend spiritual time together and also have the opportunity to chat to each other.

We liked the chat so much we have started a club night. On Thursdays we have shared tastes in music and our interests, as well as having some quizzes and photos of when we were young. It has given great enjoyment to all.

We were also pleased to have Zac join us from Brussels where he has been stuck during the lockdown but it was really nice to see him back in Cardiff last Sunday!

There has also been a grand clear up of 5 months of rubbish thrown into the front of the church. Our thanks to Lynn for organising this and ensuring we maintain a good presence in High Street.

The Swansea congregation sends everyone their best wishes and hopes that our fellow Unitarians will stay safe in these troubled times.

Hilda Dumpleton

Wick

Wick congregation has been kept in touch by means of regular mini- worship get together by post. This is because Julianne is not on line but the system is working well. Some quiz questions are always included and have proved very popular so we are keeping the telephone and post office busy.

We are keeping together and looking forward to the time when we can physically get together again.

Julieanne Morgan

CROWDFUNDING TO BRING STORIES OF THE MABINOGION TO A NEW GENERATION

The myths, fables and legends of The Mabinogion have been rewritten for a new generation of young people to discover. It is called 'The Mab'.

This project to finance publication was the idea of Matt Brown, children's author, radio and TV presenter (and son of Lis Dyson-Jones) and is being led by Matt and Children's Laureat Wales, Eloise Williams.

The Mabinogion stories are the earliest known prose stories of Britain, compiled in the 12th to 15th centuries in the Welsh language of the time.

The Mab will feature eleven updated stories, each written by different children's authors from Wales. Each tale will be written in English and then translated into Welsh by Bethan Gwanas and prospective readers will enjoy stories from a cultural touchstone for many writers, musicians and artists. To quote Matt Brown: "These stories are part of our heritage and should be in every classroom and every home. By crowdfunding the book, we're making it part of everyone helping to get it made."

Should anyone be interested to pledge to the Mab crowd-funder, please visit:

<https://unbound.com/books/the-mab/> (also see article in The Western Mail, Friday 31st July 2020)

Best Foot Forward
A Journey by J. Eric Jones



Lockdown has deprived many of us of a copy in person of this newly published book by Eric. All is not lost as you can obtain your copy by post!

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.

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

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