

South East Wales Unitarian Society
District News – First Edition of the year, February 2021



Message from District President, Alun Watts

It has now been almost a year since most of us have been able to worship in our own Chapels or Churches. All our congregations have kept in touch with their members either by Zoom, a recorded service, telephone or by letter. Hopefully, within the next few months, we can again hold services in our buildings.

The District held a very successful carol service at the beginning of December, via Zoom. I am extremely grateful to Steven Wilson, Hilda Dumpleton and Lis Dyson- Jones for preparing and hosting this event.

I was pleased in our January Executive meeting to welcome our new Honorary Member, Ken Morgan. Ken has served not only his own Chapel at Cefn Coed with distinction but has given many years of service to Unitarianism in Wales. For many years, he was co-editor of our District News, also, President of the District in 1985-87 and one of our representatives on the Welsh Department committee. Ken joins the Reverend Eric Jones as our second Honorary Member.

It was agreed at the January executive that we should delay this year's A.G.M. until June. If we are still not able to hold it in June because of Covid 19 restrictions, we will try to hold it later in the year.

Currently, the District does not have a Vice President. As a result of the pandemic, I have agreed to carry on as President until April 2022. However, we will be required to elect a new President at that meeting. I understand that, in the past, the Vice President would assume the office of President, not having held the office before. However, we may now have to revise this and consider electing an individual to the post, who has held the post, previously.

Finally, I hope that everyone, who is eligible for the vaccination, has now had the jab made available to them.

So, stay safe and best wishes to you all

Alun

Gwasanaeth Zoom Dydd Sul, Chwefror 28ain
am 6 yr hwyr
SEWUS Welsh Language Service Sunday
February 28th at 6 pm

Bydd y Gwasanaeth yng ngofal Diana Bianchi gyda chynhorthwy Dewi Owen. Os hoffech chi fod yn rhan o'r Gwasanaeth, danfonwch nodyn at Diana (dianabianchi47@hotmail.com) er mwyn derbyn y linc ar gyfer y gwasanaeth. Bydd y linc yn cael ei ddanfôn ar y Dydd Gwener neu'r Dydd Sadwrn.

Welsh speakers and learners are all welcome to join in a zoom service in celebration of St David's Day. The Service will be conducted by Diana Bianchi with support from Dewi Owen. Please send a message to Diana to request the link (dianabianchi47@hotmail.com).

News from our congregations

Cardiff Unitarian Undodiaid Caerdydd

Weekly online worship, led by our Minister, has continued since April and the Committee recently made the decision to continue with this until the early summer. It has been a great pleasure to welcome visitors, several of whom have become regular faces on our screens. We have a monthly discussion following the service, where we share thoughts on the theme of the month. We have visited the congregation in Godalming and our partnership congregation in Belfast, Maine, USA. It was good to share worship and fellowship with both congregations; a practice we hope will continue on each second Sunday of the months ahead as we broaden our connection with other Unitarian communities.

Our charity support continues, the current choice being Welsh Women's Aid.

We happily joined fellow congregations for the online District Christmas Service in December.

Our new Connect Group meeting on Thursday evenings once a month is an opportunity to meet and support each other as a community and all are welcome.

Each month on Wednesdays, gatherings for contemplative prayer, '*Meeting the Beloved*' led by Stephen Lingwood explores prayer and the mysterious 'something more'. All are welcome.

Warmest New Year Wishes from Cardiff.

Lis Dyson-Jones

Cefncoed

We have not come together as a congregation since early March but we keep in touch with phone calls and, to a lesser extent, emails. The idea of hosting Zoom services was not entertained as so few members are on-line. The opportunity to attend zoomed services offered Unitarian chapels in SE Wales and elsewhere, has been welcomed by members who have the necessary equipment, but some of them have failed in their attempt to execute the link.

At a few of these Zoom services it has been good to be joined by Arthur Saunders who, as reported in the last news-sheet, now lives with his daughter in Surrey. Unfortunately, Arthur recently suffered a TIA-stroke and was taken to hospital for assessment. He is now home and speaks highly of the care and speed with which he was treated. We send him our best wishes.

Sadly, Hen Dŷ Cwrdd has lost another member of its small congregation. Mrs Janice Farr, who came from a family that had a strong connection with the chapel over a number of generations, died, as a result of Covid, at Prince Charles Hospital on 31 January, aged 69. The funeral, with Rev Eric Jones officiating, will take place at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. We send our sympathy to Janice's husband Bernard, to her children Karen, Meryl, Ceri and Gareth, and to other members of the wider family.

The health of Mrs Vera Tomsett has been a cause for concern since she was admitted into Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil in early December. It is good to hear news of an improvement in her condition which means that, when a bed becomes available, she will be transferred to Ysbyty Cwm Cynon at Mountain Ash for physiotherapy.

Christmas and the New Year came and went in a very different, subdued way this time round for Phil and Margaret Griffiths. On Boxing Day they both tested positive for Covid and were told to self-isolate. Margaret emerged from her battle with the coronavirus feeling drained and tired. It had a much greater impact on Phil, leaving him feeling "pretty rough." His 'long Covid' symptoms 'brain fog', with exhaustion and a lack of concentration—still linger, though the effect is not so severe and his energy level is improved. He found it a very unpleasant experience and he regards anti-vaxxers, and those who proclaim that the pandemic is a hoax, as being dangerous and very misguided. His hope is that the take-up of vaccination will be sufficient to result in a global 'herd immunity' to the virus.

Ken Morgan

Gellionnen

Taking all safety measures into consideration it was decided, despite all Covid precautions being in place, not to continue opening the chapel for Sunday worship.

The Christmas Story Pageant was filmed before the last lockdown and it was released and shown on December 20th 2020.

The newly formed Gellionnen Youth Group 'Blessed' is doing well and over the Christmas period we were immensely proud of the group's outreach work in writing letters and delivering food hampers to local isolated people.

We hope to return to physical chapel services at Easter.

We were very pleased with the Dechrau Canu Dechrau Canmol programme shown on S4C and as a result of filming at Gellionnen another programme will be filmed with Melda Grantham delivering a sermon in Welsh from our pulpit. It is heartening to see Unitarian chapels being featured.

Sandra Beynon

Highland Place, Aberdare

Members of Highland Place have been kept in touch with a monthly (sometimes fortnightly) Newsletter with news of members and wider Denominational events of interest locally. This is distributed to 97 addresses. Members were encouraged to keep in touch by telephone and many are still keeping up that good habit.

From August to December, Services were held at the church and taken by six of our own members in turn. We were able to accommodate up to 14 with social distancing. With the further lockdown in December, we have now arranged Zoom Services with an average attendance of between 18 and 25. Unfortunately, Zoom Services are not available for at least 8 of our regular attenders and about the same number miss out when we meet in person at the church.

It seems likely that when we return to some normality, both church gatherings and Zoom Services will be continued with an organized timetable

Our best wishes to Richard who is recovering after a nasty fall and to Arthur Saunders who is recovering after a stroke.

Workmen are at the church, beginning on an eight week renovation programme costing £50,000. Work has to be done on the outside and inside of the building.

Anne Jones

Nottage General Baptist & Unitarian Chapel

The decision was made back in early December to return to online worship. I record a service for the 2nd and 4th Sundays each month. During the original lockdown I recorded a service each week. Pastorally, I catch up with as many people I can, every week or two, concentrating on those who are alone or are particularly vulnerable.

Various members of the congregation have also formed little 'friendship' groups to keep each other's spirits up. Members continue to support the work of the local Foodbank with regular donations.

Our thoughts are with Mrs June Pattimore, who has been a little under the weather recently, and Avril Protheroe's brother, Phillip for his forthcoming hospital appointments.

We have appointed a new officer group: Mr Harry Hales as Chairperson; Mrs Helen Bhanaut as Treasurer; and Ms Katrina Bateman as Secretary.

Blessings,

Rev Lewis Rees

Swansea

The congregation has continued with online services and we are grateful for those who have taken services and to Stephen Wilson who has hosted so competently. His tremendous knowledge of music, bands and singers during our 'Fun Nights' and the quiz masters for their searching questions can't be underestimated and we are definitely improving our general knowledge.

'Unity in Diversity', a refugee charity, returned to our church in September. They have been awarded money to improve the graveyard and land at the back of the church. A professional garden designer was consulted and has been working hard during the last 4 months. We hope to hold a safely distanced grand opening to show the raised beds of herbs, fruit bushes and fruit trees which have been planted at the side of the graveyard. The entire inside of the church has been spring cleaned and the vestry has been painted.

Rory Castle-Jones continues his Ministry Placement with us giving some thoughtful services and the Christmas service welcomed many family member and friends who took part. We joined the Dundee congregation for both their Christmas services, some parts of which involved their members actually inside Dundee Church. We were also pleased to host the District Christmas Service and welcome a really good congregation. Our Christmas Crib brought some Christmas cheer to those passing the church.

January saw the start of an eight week course '*Living Spiritually*' led by Rory and this well received course is open to everyone.

Love and friendship from us all.

Hilda Dumpleton

Wick

Members of the congregation keep in touch as the pandemic continues to bring restrictions. We have not held any physical services but I send a written service to all members every two weeks and include a quiz which is very much enjoyed.

We are pleased that Mansel Lalis has settled into his new home in Cowbridge.

I'm told by those able to visit the graveyard at Wick that snowdrops, primroses and crocuses are now all blooming, making a lovely show in the grounds.

Best Wishes from all Wick members.

Julianne Morgan

Other News

A new website for the UK movement has been launched.
You can visit this at www.unitarian.org.uk

The Annual Meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches will be held online this year on Saturday 24th April. Attendance is free. Registration will be required and more details will follow.