

**South East Wales Unitarian Society**  
**District News - Winter Edition, November 2020**



**Message from District President, Alun Watts**

When I wrote my last message in August, we were coming out of the Covid 19 lockdown. Unfortunately, we had to return to further restrictions and of course, this has impacted greatly on the District's operations.

However, the Executive committee were able to hold a Zoom meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September. At that meeting, it was decided that we should hold a District Carol Service on Zoom this year.

Each congregation will be asked to provide a reading and carols will be played in the service. The service will be held on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> December at 6 pm with Rory Castle Jones, our trainee minister, leading us in prayer. I understand that some of you are not on Zoom, but, sadly, we are left with no other option, this year. Hopefully, next year, we can hold the Christmas service, in person, at one of our Churches or Chapels, once more.

Two of our congregations are now holding services in their buildings, whilst, others are meeting on Zoom or providing services on YouTube.

I know that many of you are on your own during these unprecedented times, but, remember, as Unitarians, you are in our thoughts and if you reach out, we are always there to support one another at all times.

Take care. Be safe. God Bless.

*Alun*

**SEWUS Christmas Service December 6<sup>th</sup> 2020 at  
6 pm on ZOOM**

District Congregations will gather together in a celebration of readings and Christmas music on 6<sup>th</sup> December at 6 pm.

The service will be hosted on line by the Swansea congregation via ZOOM. A link will be circulated to chapel secretaries for distribution beforehand.

## **From the Secretary**

### **Honorary Member**

It is with enormous pleasure that I can report we have a new Honorary Member. Following the last meeting of the SEWUS Executive Committee, members took the unanimous decision to award Honorary Membership of South East Wales Unitarians to Ken Morgan, Hen Dy Cwrdd Cefncoed.

Recently, Ken has resigned as District News Editor after many years of providing the opportunity for shared news and interest among our district congregations. He has left huge shoes to fill but as many will know, Ken is known not only for his Newsletter Editorship. He has been an active and valued member of the Executive Committee, a past District President, a willing participant as part of a team of the Pulpit Plan leading worship in district congregations and much more. His service to Hen Dy Cwrdd chapel has lovingly held the congregation at Cefncoed.

So we salute you Ken and look forward to the time we can all meet together to really celebrate in a style worthy of your achievements.

### **A Thought for current times**

Throughout all our lives we are faced with difficult challenges, but 2020 has provided us with a tsunami of difficulties. It has been said that December is the month of lights; not only on our trees and streets but also in glorious winter skies and in the human spirit and that hope shines brightest in December.

So, let us make this a season of hope; a season of giving and forgiving, thoughtfulness and harmony. May it be a season for friendliness and fellowship to overcome loneliness, face separation, accept change and be sustained, finding courage through these times of hardship.

My hope is that love enter our hearts, charity speak to us and loving kindness become our mantra.

With love and warmest seasonal wishes.

*Lis Dyson-Jones, SEWUS Secretary*

## News from our congregations:

### **Cardiff Unitarian Undodiaid Caerdydd**

In August we made the decision that we would continue with online services for the rest of 2020, and so we continue with weekly worship on zoom at 4pm as well as videos of services on Facebook.

We managed to hold our Annual General Meeting on zoom, and have thanked those leaving the committee and welcomed new members coming on to it. We have also held a "Introduction to Unitarianism" event as well as a book group discussing "Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race" by Reni Eddo-Lodge. We have also now re-started our monthly discussion groups and have discussed "Reason and Science" in September, "Community and Hospitality" in October and will discuss "Forgiveness" in November.

*Stephen Lingwood*

### **Cefncoed**

The previous issue of the District News-sheet reported the sad news of the death of Paddy, husband of Vera Tomsett. His funeral at Llwydcoed Crematorium on 31<sup>st</sup> July was conducted by Rev Eric Jones. Sadly, Vera has suffered a further loss as on 11<sup>th</sup> September her daughter Janice died, aged 60 years. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Vera, son-in-law Graham and granddaughter Emily.

Sadly, we also have to report the death, on 30<sup>th</sup> September, of Harry Crandon, aged 91 years. Harry and his late wife, Megan who died in 2014, were members at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for a number of years. Rev Eric Jones officiated at the funeral service held at the chapel on 14<sup>th</sup> October and the interment at Cefncoed Cemetery. Our sincere condolences go to son Marek and daughter-in-law Gail in their loss. We are grateful to Phil Griffiths for ensuring that guidelines regarding numbers, distancing, etc, were observed, and, in the absence of our regular cleaner, to his wife, Margaret, for carrying out the cleaning duties.

Under Covid 19 restrictions, the above funerals were for immediate family only, so we were unable to attend the services. Instead, we positioned ourselves at convenient locations along the route to pay our last respects as the cortege passed by.

We have not come together as a congregation since early March but we keep in touch on the phone and, to a lesser extent, via e-mail. Our homes are in relatively close proximity to those of other chapel members so, even under the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, our paths sometimes cross as we go about our everyday life in the village.

Those of us with the necessary equipment have continued to 'zoom' in order to participate in a Sunday service. This usually means attending Cardiff congregation's virtual service, and we are grateful to Stephen Lingwood and the Cardiff members for the welcome with which we are received.

Arthur Saunders has decided to leave his home in the Rhondda valley and has moved to Redhill, Surrey to be with his daughter Rhian Angharad and granddaughter Megan. It was always a pleasure to have his and Marian's company with us. We send him our very best wishes for the future.

*Ken Morgan*

## Gellionnen

We've had three weddings this year, each a small gathering, conducted by Dr Rory Castle Jones. We wish them all well and every blessing.

Our ZOOM meetings turned out to be very successful. We were joined regularly on a Sunday by two friends from North Wales and two from Cowbridge. Tuesday night discussions have brought in a few with no previous connection to the chapel, and twice a lovely older couple from their home in America. Pub club is now every Thursday night at home.

Our return to services in the chapel meant a few people putting in a huge amount of preparatory work. Distancing rules required the opening up of the second big door and the stairs leading up to the gallery. Repairs were undertaken by skilled local craftsman, Jeff Pullen, who has worked on Listed buildings. Since reopening attendance has been good, although it is strange to see people scattered around the pews like currents in a bun!

The lovely harvest service, conducted by Rory, brought in generous supplies of dry goods for the local food bank. Sandra Beynon's animal service was covered in the TV programme Prynawn Da and there were many well-behaved dogs present including some newcomers. Sandra's hydrangeas should give us all pleasure over the coming weeks. Lawrence Bowen continues to give us at least one lovely musical offering each week and recorded music is included.

We are very proud and pleased to have Rory as a student minister over a six-month period. He's worked so hard with us already this year and is strongly supported by his husband Rhys. Three new members have been welcomed.

We are aware of recent bereavements and our condolences go to Rhian and Aaron Jones on the loss of her sister-in-law, to Laura and Josh Davis on the loss of their mamgu, and to Bernadette and Robert Williams on the loss of her father.

We will dress the chapel for Christmas as usual, on 13<sup>th</sup> December in the morning. Chapel will remain open during the afternoon for visitors.

To all our friends-we wish you good health and God bless.

*Marian Littlepage*

## **Highland Place, Aberdare**

Services at Highland Place had to be suspended for three weeks due to the 'Firebreak' introduced by the Welsh Government. Services will restart on November 15<sup>th</sup> and we are grateful to members of the congregation who are taking the services during these most difficult of times.

Over £150 and several bags of food were donated to the Merthyr Cynon foodbank at this year's Harvest Service. Thank you to all who contributed so generously. Our thanks go to the family of Marian Lewis (the last surviving member of Hen Dy Cwrdd, Trecynon), who donated a number of her embroidery works. These will be displayed at Highland Place and also at Hen Dy Cwrdd when refurbishment is completed.

We are pleased to announce that a grant of £10,000 has been awarded by the Church Acts Fund towards the cost of £30,000 needed for renovation at Highland Place. We are able to start with the work on the front wall of the church early January 2021, weather permitting. We understand that the rendering at the front of Hen Dy Cwrdd, Trecynon will be removed and will be replaced with lime-based mortar.

Dechrau Canu, the Welsh Hymns of Praise, will be televised on S4C in the near future. The programme on Unitarianism was filmed in Ceredigion, Gellionnen and Hen Dy Cwrdd, Trecynon.

Anne Watts has had to visit Prince Charles hospital recently, but she is home and on the mend. Our best wishes go to Arthur Saunders who has left Tylorstown to live with his daughter in Redhill, Surrey.

Finally, early 'Seasons Greetings' to everyone and hopefully a New Year that will see a return to some normality and safety for all of us.

*Tony Foster*

## **Nottage General Baptist & Unitarian Chapel**

The last few months have been very difficult for everyone. However, the minister and members of Nottage continue to look after each others needs. Sadly, after returning to face to face worship for one service, the Welsh Government announced the 'Fire Break' lockdown, and we resumed YouTube video worship. It was disappointing not to be in chapel for Remembrance Sunday, as this has always been an important date in our congregation's calendar. We look forward to resuming in person worship shortly, and hope that we will be able to hold our traditional, although reduced Christmas Service.

We look forward to seeing our friends in SEWUS at the District 'Zoom' Christmas Service.

Blessings,

*Rev Lewis Rees*

## **Swansea**

Swansea congregation has continued with the services on zoom. Thanks go to the people who have taken our services so well and to Stephen who has hosted so competently. Stephen has also showed us his tremendous knowledge of music, bands and singers during our funclub nights. Thanks too to the quizmasters for their searching questions which are definitely improving our general knowledge.

Our church was opened for a same sex wedding at the end of August. Thoroughly cleaned, decluttered, and plenty of signs showing one way systems. It was our first wedding for a number of years and although stressful at times the two brides were very happy. We are very grateful to all the people who helped make it such a success.

Unity in Diversity, a refugee charity, returned to our church in September. They have also been awarded money to improve the graveyard and land at the back of the church. A professional garden designer was consulted and they have been working hard during the last 2 months. There is a raised bed of herbs with fruit bushes and fruit trees being planted over the next two weeks. We will have to have an opening ceremony with 2m distancing of course! Inside the church we have had the vestry painted and a good spring clean (in Autumn!) throughout the church building.

Rory began his ministry placement with us in September. He has given us good services, in particular a very moving remembrance Sunday talking about the members who lost their lives in the two world wars giving many details about each life lost.

We are now looking forward to Christmas. It was good to be asked to host the District Christmas Service and we are looking forward to seeing you all once again even if it is on Zoom.

May we wish you all the very best, in friendship and love from the Swansea Congregation.

*Hilda Dumpleton*

## **Wick**

Wick congregation haven't been able to physically meet but stay in contact by mail. Julieanne sends out twice monthly mini worship sheets which comprise a combination of stories, readings and prayers, and a puzzle page. Here's a flavour, you can have ago too:

Who wrote 'at the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them'?  
What is common name of the plant hederas? What animal lives in a 'form'?

Our Treasurer, Mansel Lalis, has at last been able to make his move from Ogmores to Cowbridge. We wish him every happiness in his new home and in the community there.

We are keeping together and looking forward to the time when we can physically get together again. Christmas greetings from us in Wick to all our friends in The District.

*Julieanne Morgan*