



South East Wales Unitarian News

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April 2017

FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 10 April to Thursday 13 April – GA Meetings at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole.

Saturday 20 May – Concert by *The Eclectics* at Gellionnen at 7pm. (See Trebanos news.)

Sunday 21 May – District AGM at Cefncoed at 11am. Installation of Diana Bianchi as President.

Saturday 27 May – Copy deadline for the next issue of the District News.

Thursday 8 June – Annual Highland Place Lecture at 7pm. (See Aberdare news.)

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

This is the last message I will be writing as District President, but I am sure you will see my name as a contributor in the pages of the District News in the future. The two years have positively flown by. I would like to thank Ken Morgan for the gentle reminders about deadlines for the District News and his gentle suggestions for the wording of some of my contributions. It has been much appreciated.

I have managed to visit our chapels in our District on more than one occasion, giving services at some and being in the congregation for others. The exception is Wick, which I hope to visit before the end of my presidency. Joy and I intend to continue visiting our chapels in the future. Transport has been a major problem with my car being off the road more than on it this year!

As you may know, Wales will be welcoming the delegates to this year's General Assembly in the Opening Ceremony. The script, which has the title 'Walking On', has been written by Dylan Iorwerth, Ceredigion. At the time of writing this article rehearsals have already been held in Carmarthen, with further rehearsals at Highland Place (clashes with the Wales v France international!!) and Carmarthen. My thanks to all SEWUS members taking part for the commitment shown to this ambitious project, as it has involved a lot of travelling.

I look forward to seeing you all at this year's AGM, which will be held on Sunday 21st May at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Cefncoed, where Diana Bianchi will be installed as District President.

With my thanks and best wishes to you all.

Tony Foster

FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT

The clocks have gone forward, which is always a reminder that the GA Annual Meetings can't be far away. As most of you know, this year Unitarians Wales will be presenting the Opening Ceremony on the Monday evening. We have been fortunate to have Dylan Iorwerth prepare an excellent script for us, we have amazing actors and singers and a brilliant band – so it should be a great event. Good luck to everyone taking part and – don't forget to learn the words!

We will also have a stand at the GA and I would be very grateful if those attending would consider lending a hand during the breaks. If you are willing and able to help then please let me know. Together – we can make this a GA to remember.

A few more dates for your diaries – Saturday April 22nd there will be a "clean-up" day at Cwmwrdu chapel, Gwernogle. Please come along and bring your gardening/cleaning equipment and materials with you.

Penrhiw chapel, Sain Ffagan has been booked for two Sundays – June 11th and September 10th. The Food Fair is also on at the museum on that weekend in September as well as the Unitarian Sunday School Festival. The children from the Sunday Schools will be holding a Harvest Festival in the chapel (time to be arranged) and have agreed that the Rev Wyn Thomas will also be allowed to take part. If you can show your support of the children by coming along please bring as many children or grandchildren as you can with you (with parental consent of course.)

Melda Grantham

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 20 FEBRUARY 2017

1. General Assembly Roll of Ministers and Lay Pastors

The Recommendations of the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel were approved and we are pleased to announce:

a) that the following were approved for Ministry training commencing September 2017:

- * Michael Allured – to be trained for the ministry based at Harris Manchester College, Oxford over 3 yrs
- * Melda Grantham – to be trained for the ministry based at Harris Manchester College, Oxford over 3 yrs.

b) that having successfully completed their probationary period; Rev John Carter, Rev Dr Maria Curtis, Rev Jo James, Rev Anna Jarvis, Rev Matthew Smith and Rev Kate Whyman have been added to the Roll of Ministers with Full Status.

2. Training and Education Development (TED) Project

An update report was received from Rachel Skelton, Project Manager. "Ministry in all its forms" is a key element of "From Vision to Action: Next Steps" with the aim of ensuring the provision of the best possible ministry for congregations. The objective of the TED project is to develop a modular framework for training, education and professional development that will be accessible to a larger number and variety of people than before. Some, but not all of these, may then go on to seek entry into professional Ministry. Since the last EC meeting discussions have taken place on the development of a framework describing a Unitarian approach to learning and development for all. This has focused on learning pathways and an overall governance structure. A workshop will take place at the Annual Meetings.

3. Web Project

The objective of the web project is to develop a web site as a one-stop landing page for Unitarians seeking information as well as to provide a resource for spiritual browsers and seekers on Unitarian perspectives. An initial workshop has taken place to develop and clarify the ideas behind the proposal into a brief prior to meeting the web development company who will be assisting the General Assembly in creating the site. A "soft launch" will take place at the Annual Meetings.

4. Identity Project

The identity project forms part of "Next Steps" and is intended to assist Unitarians create a clear message about who we are and what we believe. Following a tendering process and interviews a Consultant has been appointed to provide professional support. The process will involve engagement with a number of key stakeholders from across the denomination and participation in a workshop at the Annual Meetings.

5. Executive Committee Membership

The Executive Committee agreed to initiate a process of co-option for the three vacancies that are the result of insufficient candidates being nominated to fill all the positions up for election. This will involve a skills audit of the new Executive Committee in order to identify gaps that could be filled by co-option. It is hoped to make a decision at the first meeting of the new EC in May with the new co-opted members attending their first meeting in July 2017. Look out for further information soon.

The Executive Committee spent some time considering the issues underpinning the inability to attract sufficient candidates to fill all the vacant places on the EC. It was felt that this reflects the position at every level of the denomination; congregational, district and national. There is a clear need in this context to look closely at issues affecting Volunteering which has been identified as a priority in "Next Steps".

6. Ministry Strategy Group

Rev Daniel Costley was thanked for his service as Chair of the Ministry Strategy Group following his decision to stand down.

7. Annual Meetings

It was reported that arrangements are in hand for the 2017 Annual Meetings. As part of the agenda there will be short reports on what action has taken place as a result of three recent Resolutions.

8. European Unitarians Together (EUT) Ulm/Neu-Ulm, June 2–5, 2017

British Unitarians are encouraged to support the first pan-European meeting of Unitarians, Universalists, Free Religious and Humanists which will take place in Germany from 2–5 June 2017. The Executive Committee agreed to fund two bursaries for young adults to support attendance. Further information is available from the [Chief Officer](#)

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that's all.

Oscar Wilde

ABERDARE

Women's League

Our Planning Meeting in early January brought a wealth of inspired ideas for our spring programme: **Expressing** 'Bucket Wishes' gave us a lively afternoon with lots of foreign travel dreams and meetings with exciting individuals; there were lots of participation and cries of 'Oh yes, me too!' We have enjoyed learning about Opera Singers from the Cynon Valley and also the benefits of including 'Aloe Vera' in our lives, although for some, that was an expensive afternoon. Trying not to cheat (!) during a quiz and listening to favourite CD music gave us more quiet afternoons and watching the film 'Suffragette' gave us all time for reflection and appreciation for the courage of women whose struggle and bravery gave us the opportunity to live free lives.

I think one of the most enlightening meetings involved members naming three favourite people they would like as dinner guests. What a range of choices we had, from David Attenborough, Ken Dodd, Andre Rieux, Roger Federer, Alan Titchmarsh, John Hurt, HH The Dalai Lama, Shakespeare, Matt Monro, Terry Waite, Desmond Tutu, Paul Robeson, David Jason, Barack Obama, and Chefs, James Martin and Nigel Slater to Annie Lennox, Marie Curie, Boudica, Jane Austin, Mary Berry, Historian Mary Beard, Cleopatra, Joan of Arc and one member's nearest and dearest. The male/female ratio was interesting but we all agreed that perhaps we should have a banquet and invite them all. What an event that would be!

We still have plenty to look forward to at our weekly meetings. We have two talks from Charity representatives, a craft demonstration, a Fund Raising Coffee Morning and an afternoon of reminiscences as well as two AGMs to fit in before the summer!

So we continue, totally connecting with our suffragette ancestors and we keep up the fight!

Good Wishes from us all.

Lis Dyson-Jones

The Worship Group at Highland Place met earlier this year and decided that once a month we would have a different type of service. So, it was on February 19th we had the first of these services. A shared lunch service. We had a short service in the schoolroom, conducted by Ken Morgan of Cefncoed. The congregation sat around the tables enjoying a cup of tea whilst Ken delivered his service. Then we shared lunch supplied by the congregation. An unfortunate motorcyclist who had broken down outside the church joined us for a cup of tea whilst he waited for the RAC.

It was a very successful event, enjoyed by everyone and our thanks to Ken for being our 'guinea pig' and delivering a very apt service. We look forward to some very interesting services during the year, with First Minister Carwyn Jones speaking at one. Our next alternative service will be a musical service with invited musicians taking part and it will be arranged by our former organist, Jacob Jones.

The Annual Women's World Day of Prayer for the churches of Aberdare town, was hosted at Highland Place on March 3rd. It was a well-attended event with Rev Eric Jones playing the organ.

A very special wedding was held at Highland Place on March 10th. It was the wedding of Cinderella and Prince Charming, arranged by the Special Needs Class of Caradog Junior School. The school choir was present and treated us to some fine singing. The Groom, Best Man, Usher and the 'Father of the Bride' were immaculately dressed and waited for the arrival of the Bride, who was traditionally late. She arrived at the church in the Headteacher's car which was decorated with balloons. The suits and dresses had been provided by the parents. Rev Eric Jones officiated and Mrs Tuck the Headteacher gave a reading. After the ceremony, the register was signed and then it was back to school for the Wedding Reception. The children were very well behaved and were a credit to their school.

This was an excellent opportunity for the children to see one aspect of church life and it continues the links Highland Place has with the wider community.

Please add the following date to your diaries. The Annual Highland Place Lecture has been arranged for **June 8th 2017 at 7:00 p.m.** The lecture will be given by **Nick Thomas, MP for Torfaen**, who will speak on **Aneurin Bevan and the NHS**. It will be the 120th Anniversary of Aneurin Bevan's birth. Our grateful thanks to Alun Watts for arranging this event.

Tony Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

We have continued to receive excellent services from Rev Maud Robinson and are saddened by her decision to leave us. She will conduct worship for the last time in Cardiff on Sunday 26th March at 4pm. We wish her well for the future and happiness on her journey. We will remember her guidance for a long time to come. As a result of her departure Sarah has agreed to take responsibility for our website and for producing the Calendar.

In March we had a special collection for the East Africa Famine Appeal.

Building improvements to the Friends Meeting House continue. Fortunately, our services have not been compromised but security seems to be a recurring problem.

We were delighted to hear that after many months in hospital, Marjorie Collins was able to return home in January. With a comprehensive Care Package in place, she is managing well and looks forward to a brighter future. She welcomes having Unitarian news from here and from around the District.

Four members from Cardiff will attend the General Assembly Annual Meetings in Birmingham just before Easter and two will take part in the Opening Ceremony presentation.

We look forward to hosting and welcoming friends from Highland Place and Cefncoed for a joint summer service at the Friends Meeting House on Sunday 25th June at 4pm.

Another date for the diary:

There will be a joint meeting between the United Nations Association (Cardiff and District) and PSC at the Temple of Peace Cardiff, on Wednesday 18th October at 7pm. There will be a talk on 'The Balfour declaration of 1917; its legacy for Israel and Palestine'. The speakers will be Oxford Emeritus Professor Avi Shlaim and former Vice-Chair of PSC, Professor Kamel Hawwash.

'If your mind is still, you can sense the peace that emanates from the earth: seek out a tree and let it teach you stillness.' (Echart Tolle)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

Women's League

For most people in this country 2017 began on 1 January, but for league members at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd it began on 1 February—we had January 'off' as usual and this was the date of our first meeting of the year. The charity collection box which is placed in the chapel over the Christmas-New Year period was opened and revealed the goodly sum of £120: a cheque for this amount has been sent to Tŷ Hafan Children's Hospice.

Perhaps it was the romantic vibes generated by St Valentine's Day, or just nostalgia for our 'younger days', anyway, for whatever reason, the idea of a trip to Cardiff to see the show *Dreamboats and Petticoats* caught our imagination. So, on 16 February, eight of us boarded a minibus and excitedly set off for a matinee performance at the New Theatre. We arrived in good time and had lunch at a nearby restaurant before making our way to the show which featured some of the greatest hit songs of the Rock 'n' Roll era. Though we were not quite "*rockin' 'n' rollin'*" ourselves—the seating arrangements, and our age, weren't conducive to that—we all admired the energetic dance moves and confined ourselves to enthusiastically singing-along to well-known favourites from the fifties and sixties. For almost 2½ hours we were transported back to a time long gone – it was an altogether enjoyable experience.

Funeral

Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was full to capacity for the funeral of Mrs Annette Dummett (nee Bush) on Wednesday, 1 March. All seats were quickly taken and many had to stand—on the gallery or outside on the chapel forecourt. A Public Address system was rigged-up for the benefit of those outside. The services at the chapel and Llwydcoed Crematorium were conducted by Rev Eric Jones.

Joint Service

We were pleased to welcome friends from Aberdare and Cardiff congregations for a joint service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on Sunday, 5 March. The service celebrated the arrival of Spring and readings on this theme were presented by six chapel members.

Following the service our guests were invited to the vestry for a Tea served by the chapel ladies.



The photos by Joy Foster show 91-year-old Margaret Edwards in full flow delivering the First Reading and a section of the congregation singing with gusto.

In Our Thoughts

We send our best wishes to Thelma Davies, Megan and Julie Lewis, Iris Morris, Hetty Corcoran and Arthur Saunders.

A fond farewell to Joyce Jackson who is moving to Thornbury to be near her family—we wish her well.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Sadly, our congregation numbers have not yet recovered from illness this year. Rose Owen and June Pattimore are very much missed by us, they have both been in our congregation every week for some years. We have two candle holders on our organ, and Lewis started lighting those as a symbol of their 'presence' with us, and now the first thing we do each week when we open up the chapel is to light 'their' candles.

Our heaters, like the building (and congregation) are getting older! and we are very grateful to Harry Hales for buying and installing a new heater at the back of the chapel.

Jeff Protheroe went to Scotland to watch the Welsh rugby team recently and, as 'sightseeing' was a safer option, joined the congregation of Glasgow Unitarians on the Sunday morning. The theme of the service was 'Prayer' and the address began with the thought that it was the power of prayer that secured Scotland's win the day before!! He was most impressed by his reception, and inclusion in a shared lunch after the service.....one day he'll take his wife!!

We had the pleasure of Stephen Wilson taking a service at Nottage for the first time recently. Not only did he lead us in worship, but he played our organ for the hymns. It was wonderful to hear it at its full power, it reminded Jean Thomas of her youth and our organists of many years ago, although I have to say we are grateful for the live music we have now.

We send Robert and Mo Pattimore our love on the loss of Mo's mother, at this sad and difficult time.

Best wishes to all our friends in the District.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

It was a quiet start to the New Year in our church with most of the congregation on holiday in January – I think we managed to cover most continents! At this point, we must send our best wishes to Hillary Jenkins who was bowled over by a wave whilst paddling in warmer climes and severely damaged her foot. Hope all is going well with the recovery.

As ever, we make mention of the ongoing work to the grounds at the back of the church. Many of you won't be aware of how far back the church grounds go to the rear. The work carried out, and supervised, by Lynn Evans continues at a pace and the once-neglected and very overgrown land is being tamed. Some fascinating, very old, tombstones are to be seen.

Thank you to those who came to the joint service we carried out with Gellionnen. A well attended service was conducted by the Rev Wyn Thomas and Melda Grantham. It was lovely to share some social time after the service.

Kirsteen Reed

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

A great deal has happened over the last few months; Ken published a photo taken in Gellionnen for the last District Service, then in early March we were given three-quarters of page 3 in the Evening Post (lovely photographs taken at the marriage of Rhys and Rory) and an account of the wedding. (*See back page of this newsletter.*) Also, on the back page of The Inquirer there is a photograph taken on the day we observed the Holocaust Memorial. On that day, one of our three visitors was Robin whose home is in Israel.

For many years when there are special occasions, Sandra Beynon has treated us to a batch of her delicious Welsh cakes. Her spices she obtains from a shop in Singapore where she is always recognised and welcomed when she calls. But things are changing, Sandra's daughter and son-in-law have now relocated from Singapore to Australia, we'll keep you posted. Our new small tea urn is serving us well.

Joy Foster took her first service with us recently, thank you Joy, it was well received (she lives up to her name.)

Someone has asked on a number of occasions that we might celebrate communion. We have not done this for many years. Eric was approached and the communion set cleaned up. The service was beautiful, thank you Eric.

.A huge graveyard clearance has taken place revealing swathes of Pembroke daffodils. Previously they were hidden by well-established and fearsome bramble. Several people turned up with their own gardening tools and put in many hours of hard work.

Our Fairtrade service was taken by Rhys Jones accompanied by Lawrence Bowen. Our rendering of "One more step" from the purple hymnbook was impressive! Soups were made by Julie Nedin and Steph John and bread baked by Martin Edwards. The lunch was charged at £2 per head but people were much more generous and we raised £110 (plus 28% Gift Aid) for Fairtrade

The shared service at Swansea was well worth attending. The Rev Wyn Thomas and Melda Grantham made an effective and thought provoking team. Also, we heard the good news that Melda is to study for the ministry. Our good wishes go with you Melda, may you savour and enjoy the challenges ahead. It has given us great pleasure to share the news and anticipate the future. God bless.

Coming Events

Concert by *The Eclectics* at Gellionnen, May 20th at 7pm. This local *a cappella* group are well known throughout the valley and always well received. The concert will also feature Mr Lawrence Bowen who is, of course, our accompanist at The Graig and Gellionnen chapels—a wizard on the keyboard, and Ann Jameson, cellist, who kindly stepped into the breach for our daytime Christmas Service.

Folk Service at Gellionnen on August 20th, conducted by Rev Alun Wyn Dafis.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

Greetings to all our friends in the district.

This has been a quiet time for us. We have held our annual special service when we think of our past members, and consider our present and of course our future members, we noted that...

Recently, there have been quite a few letters and articles in the *Inquirer* about our falling numbers and seemingly disinterest in Council nominations.

We have always been one of the smaller denominations but with great contributions throughout our history.

There is a story about Alexander the Great which should give us all encouragement and hope.

Alexander decided to give away some of his possessions, and he did this at a big ceremony.

To one man he gave a fortune in rubies.

To another he gave a whole province to govern.

To another a high position at court; to yet another highly decorated elephants.

'If you keep on doing this,' said a friend, 'you will have nothing left.'

'Don't you believe it,' replied Alexander, 'I have kept the most valuable thing of all for myself...

— My hopes for the future.'

Julianne Morgan

MENS GROUP

It was a cold windy morning on the 14th February when the men's group travelled to Penarth. Those from Cefncoed travelling by car and the Aberdare contingent travelling by train. The venue was the home of Gwynn Pritchard.

We were treated to a showing of one of Gwynn's BBC Wales documentaries from 10 years ago. As well as revisiting the first devolution referendum, with clips of discussions during the campaign, the film showed Gwynn travelling from the Point of Ayr colliery and Talacre in the North down through Wales to Cardiff Bay. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the film after which there was a discussion on the reasons why the Welsh Valleys voted for Brexit.

We then went to a nearby restaurant for lunch. Our grateful thanks go to Gwynn for a very enjoyable morning and for his hospitality.

Our next visit is to The Royal Mint in Llantrisant.

Tony Foster

THE VERY MODEL OF A MODERN UNITARIAN

Adapted by Elizabeth McGregor of Sharon, Maine, USA. With apologies to W.S.Gilbert

I am the very model of a modern Unitarian
Far broader than a cath'lic, Hindu, Jew or Presbyterian
I know the world's religions and can trace their roots historical.
From Moses up to Channing, all in order categorical
On existential questions I am always wholly logical
About most any problems I am teeming with a lot of views;
I'm full of fine ideas that should fill our churches' empty pews;
I quote from Freud and Jung and all the experts ecological –
In short, in matters spiritual, ethical and material,
I am the very model of today's religious liberal.

I use the latest language: God is never 'Father' or the 'Lord',
But 'Ground of Being', 'Source of Life', or almost any other word;
I never pray, I meditate; I'm leery about worshipping,
I serve on ten committees, none of which accomplish anything.
I have good UU principles (although I'm not sure what they are)
I'm open to opinions of profound or broad variety,
Unless they're too conservative or smack of religious piety.
I can formulate agendas and discuss 'em with the rest of 'em,
But don't ask me to implement – I leave that to the rest of 'em.
In short, in matters spiritual, ethical, material
I am the very model of today's religious liberal.

(We are indebted to Lis Dyson-Jones for bringing the above to our attention)

MEET THE FIRST EVER GAY COUPLE TO MARRY IN A RELIGIOUS VENUE IN SWANSEA OR NEATH PORT TALBOT

(Courtesy: South Wales Evening Post)

Tying the knot can sometimes seem like an endless list of decisions. But for one Swansea couple finding the right venue was a doddle. That's because Rory and Rhys Castle Jones had their big day at the only religious venue in Swansea or Neath Port Talbot to allow same-sex weddings.

As the inaugural gay wedding held at Gellionnen Chapel, found between Clydach and Pontardawe, they believe they are the first same-sex couple to marry in a religious building across the two counties.

"It was brilliant," Rory said. "It was hard to know what to expect, I'd never been to a same-sex wedding before let alone had one. There's certain things to think about like not having a bride to walk down the aisle, but it went really well." He said that while growing up getting married "wasn't even on my radar" because it "just wasn't possible". But the landmark law change which came into force on March 13, 2014, changed everything. It came just as the couple, both 29, were thinking about spending the rest of their lives together. But Welsh Government worker Rhys was keen to have their nuptials in a traditional chapel, reflecting the Welsh culture he loves.



Rhys, Rory and Rev Eric Jones

Photo: Stephanie John

Their search for a suitable venue wasn't easy. They scoured an online database and narrowed the list down to the handful of places available to them in Wales. Amazingly, the only one in Swansea or Neath Port Talbot was very close to their Craigcfnparc home.

"We wondered if they'd find it quite strange, would they think we just wanted to use them to get married? Because we didn't go there much before," Rory said, "but they were really welcoming, they're really open minded, which is not always the case with chapels, but this is a really special place."

The hillside chapel gave the pair the perfect wedding – all topped off with the reception in the King Arthur Hotel in Reynoldston on Gower.

"My family come from all over and they had an amazing, fully Welsh experience," Rory said.

The pair were married on August 8 in a bilingual ceremony conducted by retired minister Rev Eric Jones, the first man to officiate a gay marriage in Wales. They described him as "more forward thinking and progressive than most people in their 20s."

Rory, who has a PhD and works at Swansea University, said chapels might be slow to get on-board with offering same-sex marriage because of the paperwork involved, but those at Gellionnen made a "conscious decision" to allow it.

Now Rory wants to tell other same-sex couples that there are plenty of options out there for wedding venues. "There must be a lot of people who were like us, looking at options and struggling to find a place," he said, "but a church wedding is an option. I think the chapel we used deserves credit for what they have done, I really want to thank them."

Julie Nedin, committee member at the chapel, said: "We are delighted to be the first faith community to hold an equal marriage ceremony in a religious setting in Swansea or Neath Port Talbot. Gellionnen chapel is in a glorious location and we welcome all enquiries from couples who would enjoy a simple religious wedding in a unique place."

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News: **Saturday, 27 May 2017.**
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