



South East Wales Unitarian News

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January 2012

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 11th March – Sponsored District Hymn Singing at Capel y Graig, Trebanos, commencing at 3pm. This event commemorates the 350th Anniversary of the Dissenting Movement (1662–2012). A total of 50 hymns will be sung and the money raised will be given to the Ministerial Students' Fund of the GA. Please come, and encourage as many others as possible to attend.

Tuesday 3rd—Friday 6th April – The 2012 GA Annual Meetings at Keele University

DR ROY SMITH

It was with great regret that we learnt of the sudden death of Dr Roy Smith on 11th December 2011 at the age of 75 years. Roy was the General Secretary at Essex Hall for 20 years from 1974 and made several visits to South East Wales churches. He was a popular General Secretary and no task was too much for his considered attention. Carole and Roy have lived in Tenterden in Kent for the last 10 years and Roy was the Lay Leader at the Tenterden Church for the last 3 years. Our sympathy is extended to Carole, their three children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild in their loss. The funeral was held in Tenterden on 30th December, the Rev Eric Jones officiating, assisted by Rev David Usher, the London District Minister. Also taking part were Dr Ann Peart, General Assembly President and Christine Hayhurst who had been Roy's assistant at Essex Hall. The service was attended by around 150 people and was followed by Cremation at Charing Crematorium.

SERVICE OF READINGS AND CAROLS

The 2011 District Christmas Service of Readings and Carols was held at Nottage General Baptist and Unitarian Chapel at 11am on Sunday, 4th December. The sense of occasion provided by the splendidly decorated Christmas tree and floral displays was heightened as District President Phil Griffiths lit the Chalice Flame and bade all welcome. In addition to members from each District congregation it was pleasing to have the company of Dr Carwyn Tywyn, with his wife Kathryn and daughter Heledd, and also the Rev Martin Whitell.

Representatives from each congregation presented a reading, and seven Carols (in English, Welsh and German) were sung - with the expert accompaniment of Steve Wilson at the organ. Further musical inspiration was provided by instrumentalists Isabelle Rosenberg (bassoon) and Carwyn Tywyn (knee-harp) who charmed all present with their playing.

The service was about 'advent' but a *departure* was also noted. Soon, due to duties as the GA National President, and her forthcoming marriage to Martin, Lis Dyson-Jones will no longer remain with us in SE Wales. Acknowledging this loss, District President Phil Griffiths paid tribute to the contribution Lis has made to the life of the District through many years of service. At the close of the service we enjoyed a Shared Lunch.

We thank Nottage congregation for hosting this successful event and making us so welcome.



Carwyn Tywyn performing on the knee-harp



Lis Dyson-Jones receiving a bouquet from Phil Griffiths

Photos: Keith Lewis-Jones

GETTING TO KNOW YOU ...Informal interviews with local Unitarians

We begin the year with an interview with the Unitarian Welsh Department Secretary, Dr Carwyn Tywyn, who prefers to be known as Carwyn. Appointed early in 2011, Carwyn came into post at the beginning of April, just in time for The General Assembly Meetings in Swansea where both his journalistic experience and musical talents were a valued part of the event. He lives in Burry Port and is married to Kathryn and they have a young daughter, Heledd. When he has the time Carwyn runs marathons to raise money for various causes. He is also a devoted player of the Harp and regularly plays in various venues around Wales.

Ella Lewis-Jones

What has drawn you to Unitarianism?

I had been raised in a liberal Christian family - C of E when I lived in Leicester, and then *Annibynwyr Cymraeg* (Welsh Congregationalist) when we moved to Wales. Previously, my Grandfather, Rev. Iorwerth Jones, had been Secretary of the *Annibynwyr*. As a teenager, I was quite a committed chapel attendee, and had even dabbled with the idea of becoming a minister with the *Annibynwyr*. During my honeymoon trip to the southern states of the U.S.A in 2003, I became very aware of Christian fundamentalism. I also started to question parts of the Bible, and became concerned with evangelical Christianity in Wales. In 2005 I typed "Unitarian" into an internet search engine and was very impressed with the UK Unitarian website. I opted to join the Unitarians as an individual member of the National Unitarian Fellowship.

In what way(s) did your parents influence you?

Looking back, both of my parents were very independent-minded (to the extent that they eventually separated from each other!). My Dad (who died in May 2011) could look at things with a slightly quirky humour, and I am also able to look at the world in a slightly "off-beat" way. I owe much of my musical interest, and my ability to speak Welsh, to my Mam. She maintained a strong sense of Welsh culture and identity in the household even when we lived in Leicester.

What is your earliest memory?

It's difficult to pick one out. I think I remember it snowing around Christmas 1978 or 79. Other than that – just pottering around Leicestershire with Dad or Mum.

Did you make the best of your secondary schooling?

I went to Ysgol Penweddig in Aberystwyth. I was very diligent from age 11-14 (Forms 1-3). However, I had quite a slump around the ages 15-17. I became unhappy and rebelled quite a bit. I scraped through my GCSEs and struggled badly in the lower sixth form. However, the incentive of studying at university made me buck up my ideas. I studied hard in the last few months and ended up with good A Level grades (B,B,C). I really do regret the unhappy phase at school. However, I did channel a lot of this negative energy and loneliness into folk music, and learned to play the harp at this time. Looking back, in the time I was sulking in my bedroom with my harp as a 16-year old, I was also analysing folk music to an advanced level of understanding, without even realising it!

What do you 'expect' from your friends?

An annual round of golf! We hack round a 9-hole course at Capel Bangor Golf course near Aberystwyth, between Christmas and the New Year. We've done it every year since about 1996. The 2011 meet-up was due to take place on December 29th. Hopefully we'll adjourn for a curry at "Shilam" restaurant in the railway station at Aber. I'm lucky to be part of a small group of friends that has stayed in touch since our school days at Aber. Our friendship seems to remain constant – and renewed by our annual golf match – despite the ebbs and flows that have occurred in our separate lives, and the geographical distances between us during the year.

What would make the world a better place?

It would be nice if the needs of children, old people and disabled people were put at the centre of the human agenda around the world. I'm sure a lot of other good things – such as care for the environment – would flow from this if we built our world around the needs of the most vulnerable people.

What most delights you?

Being with my wife, Kathryn, and my daughter, Heledd, they are very precious to me. All the more so as we have had two close bereavements in the past couple of years which we have come through and which have strengthened us as a family. On a more positive note – it is always a satisfying feeling when I manage to execute a tricky solo piece on the Welsh triple harp.

What are you grateful for?

My whole life! Despite some occasionally unhappy times in my personal life, I really have been blessed on the whole. For example, I have been able to follow a varied career, based on my own personal interests. This has led to me living in a beautiful part of Wales with Kathryn and Heledd.

What makes you angry?

For better or worse, my time as a political journalist means that I tend to observe even the most upsetting things in a fairly neutral way, rather than getting angry as I did as a teenager. I'm deeply concerned with many issues, particularly the destruction of our environment, and the ever-present threat of a nuclear conflict. However, I'm not one to throw things in anger at the telly. I prefer to analyse the issue.

If I had to pick one thing, I do get quietly angry at ignorance and hostility towards the Welsh language. Unfortunately, this view still exists in a minority of Welsh society and, crucially, among some decision-makers in Wales. This attitude has stifled initiatives to develop the language. For example, Welsh-medium schools clearly have the support of parents of all political persuasions, and ethnic / linguistic groups, including parents from England. However, it only takes a small, anti-Welsh minority to whip up a view that Welsh is "elitist" or even "racist", and years of hard work and consensus-building around the language can be set back for several years. On this point, I'm very impressed with the mutual respect that the two Unitarian districts in Wales have for each other, including respect for the two linguistic traditions.

Was there a significant turning point in your life?

Too many to mention! I've lived a very varied life with several different twists and turns. If I had to pick one, I'd take the decision of my parents to move from Leicester to Aberystwyth in 1984, when I was 9. This meant that my formative years were spent in Wales, and this has influenced everything that has happened since.

What has been your biggest contribution to your local community?

My career to date seems to have been geared to the national public life of Wales. However, I have shamefully little to show on a local level. I suppose I am one of "Thatcher's children" in that I pay more attention to my individual life than my local community, though I would put this down to things like the development of the internet, rather than the ideas Mrs. Thatcher herself.

Do you have a 'favourite' place?

Again, too many to mention! For some reason I am fascinated with the landscape and culture of the Appalachian Mountains of America. Also the area of England that was once known as "Wessex" – the expanse of plains around the boundaries of Hampshire / Wiltshire / Somerset / Dorset. For some reason that area seems to have a special aura about it.

Have you achieved your dreams or ambitions?

Yes, I have been very fortunate to achieve more or less all of my young dreams and ambitions. I am currently pursuing one of them – to be a professional folk harpist. It would be nice at some point to contribute back to the wider society. Perhaps this is why I am particularly proud of a major research report I wrote on disability advice services in Wales (for the Disability Law Service charity) in 2010. It was very fulfilling to use my research expertise on behalf of disabled people in Wales, and I hope new opportunities to serve society will arise in the future.

SING YOUR FAITH CDs

UMS (Unitarian Music Society) has produced several tapes and CDs for use by congregations without musical leadership. The latest (a set of 4 CDs) features the singing of one hundred hymns from the new (purple) Unitarian hymn book, Sing Your Faith. (Contact: David Dawson, cdawson3@hotmail.com)

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR LAY MINISTRY (UALM)

On the last weekend in November I attended the Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry Conference which took place at The Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre, Great Hucklow. There were twenty two members present, from all parts of the country. Those present had a variety of roles in Lay Ministry including some who were Lay Leaders with direct responsibility for a specific congregation, others who had been conducting services for many years and those, like myself, who had more recently started to take services.

Among the objects of UALM are:

To support all those involved in delivering worship in Unitarian churches and chapels.

To support all those involved in lay leadership of a Unitarian congregation

To promote and share best practice in Unitarian worship and lay ministry.

The cost of membership of UALM is a modest £10. There is an Annual Conference and two newsletters are published each year. There is also a network of individuals who are willing to share their ideas, materials and experiences to help others

My reason for attending the conference was to gain more information about the Worship Studies Course. The course was the focus of a discussion on the Saturday afternoon when both of the course leaders, Dawn Buckle and Sue Woolley, for the first stage of the course were present. Also in attendance were Tutors for the second and third stages of the Worship Studies Course (Dr Alex Bradley, Dr Vernon Marshall and Rev Ernest Baker.)

The initial stage of The Worship Studies Course is run, on a bi-annual basis, by the Manchester District Association and the Midland Association. For example in 2011, the Manchester District, with Dawn Buckle as course leader, facilitated the course. In 2012 the Course will be run in Birmingham by the Midland Association with Sue Woolley acting as course leader.

For anyone who is involved in taking services UALM is a really worthwhile organisation to join.

If you are interested in joining UALM, contact David Arthur (Treasurer) at davidarthur_uk@yahoo.co.uk

Or, for The Worship Studies Course, Winnie Gordon (Course Administrator) at gordonwinnie@yahoo.com

Ella Lewis-Jones

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 6th January 2012)

1. Safeguarding

The Executive Committee would emphasise to all congregations their responsibilities under Safeguarding legislation for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It recognises its own responsibilities arising from the National Youth Programme, for ministers and ministerial students and for the Nightingale Centre as well as in advising congregations, districts and other Unitarian bodies. Safeguarding is assessed by the EC as the top risk to the Unitarian Movement in the General Assembly's risk register.

Arrangements for safeguarding need to be improved particularly as legislative requirements are changing. The General Assembly's policy framework is being revised. Funds have been set aside to provide training and awareness sessions for members of congregations and discussions initiated between the Local Leadership Strategic Group and the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) who act as advisers for the GA and also process CRB checks. Up to date information on safeguarding issues is available from www.ccpas.co.uk/Information.html#quickreferenceguides

2. 2020 Congregational Development Programme

The 2020 Congregational Development Programme was given the go-ahead along with the establishment of a 2020 Board. It includes a range of possible models with lots of room for creativity locally; new planting, restart, side-by-side (parallel congregation in the same location to existing one), satellites and spin-offs and social responsibility starts.

The report on finances was considered which looked at the likely costs and possible funding opportunities to start and grow the programme. The financial modelling indicated that to establish a total of seventeen new congregations the net cost would be approximately £1.3million. There were several options outlined for raising this considerable sum. The programme would work alongside current initiatives such as the Future Ministry pilot in Scotland.

It was also recognised that in the eleven year time period it is likely that some current congregations may close and that the support to the General Assembly from the Bowland Trust will then be at an end. This was therefore a "window of opportunity" to promote growth to arrest the serious numerical decline of the Unitarian Movement.

3. Legacy Received

A substantial legacy of £45,000 has been received which will be matched by the Bowland Trust. The Executive Committee agreed to allocate the £90,000 as follows:

Congregational Development Programme (as start-up grant) £50,000
Ministerial Students' Fund £20,000
General Assembly Budget (as planned) £20,000
Total £90,000

The thanks of the General Assembly have been expressed.

4. Strategic Group Updates

The Ministry Strategic Group met in early December and considered the pressures on the Ministerial Students' Fund arising from the potential increase in ministerial student numbers and the impact on the funding of training. The Executive Committee was supportive of the draft mission statement to be approved at the next group meeting. The need for close co-ordination with the Local Leadership Strategic Group was emphasised along with learning from other denominations. Further work was undertaken on the content of ministerial training and how it is delivered in conjunction with the two colleges.

The Local Leadership Strategic Group met in early December and agreed to establish two action groups to oversee 1) modular training and 2) facilitation and support plus a pool of facilitators and trainers who could be called upon when needed. Volunteers are being sought for the groups and the pool with "new faces" encouraged. The modular training scheme was set out in detail with two new events in 2012; Conflict Resolution training and Safeguarding training (see above).

The Visibility Strategic Group had placed an article in The Inquirer on 7th January 2012 to seek the views of grassroots Unitarians.

5. Changing Annual Meetings from Easter to the Summer

At recent Annual Meetings there has been discussion about moving the event from Easter to the Summer. The Executive Committee explored the advantages and disadvantages and had listened to the various views expressed at the last Annual Meeting. They considered that there had not been a strong desire for change from the Movement and would not be recommending any change at the moment.

6. Search for Honorary Treasurer Continues

It was reported that to date there had been no volunteers for the post of Honorary Treasurer following the decision of the current post holder not to seek re-appointment. The Chief Officer and Honorary Treasurer agreed to prepare material for publication on what the role involved in practice to support the role specification. Interim arrangements were discussed in the event no one had been identified.

7. Annual Accounts Approved

The Executive Committee (as "trustees") approved the Accounts of the General Assembly and the Nightingale Centre and noted those of the Sustentation Fund. They will be presented to the Annual Meetings. The consolidated statement for the three bodies shows a balance of £4.95million of which £3.56million is in restricted or endowment funds. The General Assembly ended the year to 30 September 2011 with a deficit of £9k in day-to-day spending.

The full minutes of the EC meeting in **November** can be found online.

Derek McAuley, Chief Officer

FROM THE PRESIDENT

One of the advantages of being President and Printer is that one can edit reports into the space available!

The Christmas Carol service at Nottage was enjoyed by the forty who attended with numbers exceeding the pre-service opinion poll; however support for District Events continues to decline and is a concern.

The Away Day at Glyneath on Congregational Assessment, Constitution and Publicity was most constructive raising numerous issues for delegates to take back to their congregations.

The photographs of the Nativity Play at Aberdare speak volumes for a future for our faith.

While Cardiff who hope to finalise the post of Development Officer are to be congratulated on this bold initiative to arrest decline. Unitarians and other faiths nationally and locally will be closely monitoring.

Philip Griffiths.

ABERDARE

End of year Reflections

As we are at the close of the year and at a time when many of us reflect on our experiences, I thought it might be enlightening, for once, to reflect on the events of the whole of 2011 as they unfolded in Highland Place.

The heavy snow which fell in December 2010 closed the doors of Highland Place for several weeks, causing the rearrangement of the long planned Anniversary Service to March 2011, and the cancellation of the Christmas Eve Service.

In January, Carwyn Tywyn was appointed as Welsh Department Secretary to replace Rev Eric Jones who was retiring at the end of March. Carwyn took up post in April and was much in evidence at the General Assembly meetings in Swansea. In the months that followed Carwyn has attended various meetings and events in the District which has provided a mutual opportunity to become acquainted. Early in the year Carwyn will be taking services in Gellionnen, Swansea and Aberdare which we look forward to.

In the spring, our Secretary of many years, Paul David, died after many months of illness and hospitalisation. Many people including the Member of Parliament, The Assembly member for Cynon Valley, local councillors and other dignitaries attended his funeral service at Highland Place and/or the crematorium.

The General Assembly meetings in Swansea were attended by various members of the congregation. This year, Highland Place agreed to take responsibility for designing the 'quiet room', which is a space provided for private reflection and meditation. Joy Foster, Hazel Jones, Barbara Hughes and Anne Jones made a splendid job of this. There were many words of praise for their excellent work which will be a challenge to equal.

Also at the General Assembly meetings Rev Eric Jones gave the annual John Rely Beard Lecture. He recounted his initial training and long experience of ministry with its challenges and light-hearted incidents. Presentations were made to both Eric and Anne for their services to Unitarianism in Wales.

In July the District Rally was held in Aberdare. Those who attended had a short conducted tour of Trecynon and the Park and were reminded of the contribution made by the Unitarians of Aberdare who brought about the establishment of the park for the health and welfare of the residents of the town.

In December more than eighty people attended the church for the Nativity Play which was performed by the children who attend the UNI-Club which was established this year by Joy Foster, supported by Dilys Evans and Anne Watts. The play, the props and costumes were all designed and produced by Joy who is to be congratulated for her diligence and creativity.

(Photographs relating to this event appear on the back page of the Newsletter.)

Unlike 2010, which due to the 150th celebrations was a very busy year for the church, 2011 was somewhat quieter. However the year's events have included a mixture of 'endings' and 'beginnings' which will shape the future.

Ella Lewis-Jones

Women's League

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy New Year!

We at Highland Place Women's League ended 2011 with our usual festivities and a very successful Christmas Fayre – thank you to everyone who worked so hard, as always. We would like to say a warm thank you to Jean Thomas for the knitted Nativity Display. It is a work of art and it was appreciated by all who saw it in the church vestibule over the Christmas Season – especially the children.

We are very pleased to have Nina Lloyd back with us. We are also very pleased that Celia Evans was home from a long stay at hospital in time for a lovely Christmas for her, Humphrey and their family. Well done Celia, keep up the hard work! We look forward to your return to League shortly.

The sad news of the sudden death of Dr Roy Smith was a shock to us all. He visited Women's League many times to share his knowledge and love of music with us all, which we always enjoyed. We shall miss him: he was a lovely person. Our sympathy and hand of friendship continues to be extended to his wife Carole.

We've already held our first meeting of 2012. It was a 'Planning Session', and what PLANS we made!! There are to be the usual fundraising events, fayres etc, guest speakers, quizzes and so on. In addition, we plan to hold fortnightly coffee mornings with a Books-For-Sale stall – all welcome, by the

way. We also plan an Open Day, and of course 'Our Trips'. Oh, yes! – something to suit everyone. I would recommend that if you do not have a Women's League branch at your church, to start one. It is like having another family and makes such a difference to the life of all who attend, and to the church and those charities we support.

Love to Cardiff and Cefncoed Women's League branches.

Until the next time –

Good Wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2012 from us all at Highland Place Women's League.

With Love,
Joy Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

Members of Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd will be meeting after the service on Sunday 15th January 2012 to discuss the setting up of an interview for candidates who applied in December 2011 for the post of Development Officer. We look forward to this.

We are starting up our Children's Club on Sunday 22nd January 2012 and also plan to set up a club on the second Sunday of the month from February to coincide with our Welsh medium service.

We have said goodbye to two of our members at the end of the year. Sheila and Simon Cousins have moved to Penybont in Carmarthenshire following Sheila's retirement from work. A presentation and special thanks were given to Sheila at a service on Sunday November 13th and the congregation had a goodbye cup of tea at the last service given by Sheila on Sunday 16th October 2011. We will be keeping in touch and see Sheila at Welsh department events. We also said thank you and see you soon to Lis Dyson-Jones at the last service she gave on December 18th 2011 with a presentation and tea after the service. We will see Lis before she moves away from the area but she will be very busy in the near future when she takes on the role of GA President at the GA meetings in Keele in April. We hope that members from Cardiff will attend the GA meetings in April.

We thank Sheila and Lis for their huge contribution to Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd as members, Officers and Committee members and will miss them. Both have served as Chair of the Committee and as Secretary. We are grateful to Gwynn Pritchard for now taking on the role of Chair of the congregation.

We send our very best wishes to Ivy Thomas who was unwell in hospital but has now returned home and is convalescing. We also send best wishes to Pat and her family who have been busy supporting Ivy in hospital and at home. We were glad to have news at Christmas from William Morgan who lives in London but used to visit our congregation when he was in Cardiff.

As corporate members of United Nations Association Cardiff and District we are all invited to a talk by Julie Morgan, AM Cardiff North and Moe Bu, Campaigner in Exile on Burma: Continuing Problems, New Prospects? on Thursday 26th January 2012 at 7pm in the Temple of Peace, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Sarah Boyce

CEFNCOED

Women's League

The Car Boot Sale mentioned in the previous Newsletter turned out to be very successful and we made £120 in less than 2 hours. From then on we got cracking organising the chapel Christmas Raffle. League and chapel members kindly donated lovely prizes and we made £120 for chapel funds.

We held our league Christmas Dinner at the Station Hotel in Cefn Coed on 14th December. The night was organised by Marian Lewis. Marian's friend who owns the pub made us a traditional Christmas Dinner – it was lovely!

Having met only once in December, and with no meetings planned for January, we now look forward eagerly to our re-start in February.

Vera Tomsett

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

On Sunday, 13th November Ken Morgan conducted the 11am wreath-laying ceremony at the village War Memorial followed by the public Service of Remembrance held at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

A number of us travelled to Nottage on 4th December for the District Christmas Service led by Phil Griffiths and at which Vera Tomsett presented a Reading on behalf of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

Our service at 11am on Christmas morning once again featured *Only Hallowed Men Allowed* (Phil, Morgan and Ken) who presented a variety of Christmas Readings to a gathering of members and friends.

ken Morgan

SWANSEA

The cads have been taken down and decorations put away for another year, so what memories remain? On Sunday 20th November we had to give way to Father Christmas arriving to switch on the city lights. The event closes down the city centre and makes it impossible to get to church. From then into Christmas we have enjoyed delightful Advent services with lighted candles, a crib inside the church, a Christmas tree and familiar well loved carols whilst our large crib in the forecourt delighted passers-by. Gifts of chocolates and a tree decoration from Julianne were well received as she conducted these service and afterwards mince pies and cake enjoyed with the warmth of friends being together. A winter without all this would be miserable, even if there is stress involved as families prepare for Christmas.

Mother Nature seems to be confused by the mild weather. Plants such as geraniums, fuchsias, marguerites, begonias and arum lilies were still blooming in my garden during Christmas week and whilst staying in Cornwall I saw swathes of daffodils in full bloom alongside the road on 28th December!! However the sight filled me with surprise but not the usual joy. One feels things are out of order. I expect to watch for snowdrops and crocus first and for daffodils in March for St David's Day. There needs to be a space between Autumn and Spring, and as one who always considers herself a lover of long summer days and light summer clothes, I suddenly realised that I need Winter as well, not a freezing, white one, but a time to be dormant, like the trees, and rest.

We are delighted to report that Mrs Mollie Jones has been out of hospital for some weeks and is doing well at home. She never ceases to amaze – she rises at 6.00am and cooks herself a hearty fried breakfast – that's not a bad start at 94!

We try to welcome 2012 with some optimism despite gloomy predictions. We wish everyone a much happier year than is expected.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

CAPEL Y GRAIG

Christmas at the Graig 2011 was celebrated on the 18th December following major repairs to the chapel's heating system and refurbishment of the chapel's interior lighting. The Chapel had also been cleaned and decorated by volunteers.

Our Christmas was shared with mince pies and tea for a congregation of fifty who enjoyed traditional and modern carols with Lawrence Bowen at the Pipe Organ. Worshipers from the Graig and Gellionnen chapels contributed Readings and Stories; Lewis Rees, our student Pastor, led the devotional part of the service. All in all it was a very uplifting and enjoyable service, which was complemented with festive music on the organ by Lawrence Bowen.

The grandfather of 2-year-old Hari Kieft created interest when he spoke about Hari's illness—he has Deplegic Cerebral Palsy with a serious heart condition, called Wolf Parkinson White Syndrome. Hari has been accepted for surgery by a hospital in St Louis, Missouri, USA for an operation called Rhizotomy, which has revolutionised treatment of many patients having Hari's ailments. To enable treatment to proceed the family are raising the necessary funding, which is in excess of £60,000. A voluntary collection at the carol service, together with tax concessions, realised £179.20 which was passed on to the *Hari Fund* on behalf of Eglwys Undodaidd Gellionnen and Graig Trebanos.

(For more information on Hari's condition there is a website- www.harrisfirststeps.co.uk)

Colin Morgan

GELLIONNEN

We heard towards the end of last year that our Jamie Nemeth had obtained his doctorate and so to Dr Jamie Nemeth we say congratulations, we are all so proud of you.

The year 2011 saw slow improvement to the building. We are still waiting for repairs to the big chapel windows and in the meantime our kitchen window has been damaged several times. We commend the patience of those striving to get the situation dealt with, and much appreciate the fact that it is possible these days to brew a pot of tea on the spot rather than bringing up flasks.

Christmas Eve Service was moved from 11.30 to 11pm and we decided to leave for home a few minutes after midnight. Needless to say, we overran but it was worth it!

As usual we had decorated the chapel a couple of Sundays before, this year foregoing the Christmas tree. Many thanks go to Sarah Jones for arriving with a magnificent young holly cut down that morning. It had to come down because it was growing in an impossible spot. Our decorations consisted of holly, ivy, mistletoe and more – all green and very beautiful.

And what of the musicians on the night? We had Aneurin, Jamie, Julie and Martin on violins, Caradog in the aisle playing his harp, Huw and Johanna on tenor and treble recorders, Hywel on trombone and Josie and Pepe on euphoniums. It was great, and to add to the pleasure, Johanna taught us to sing her grandfather's favourite German carol. We weren't very good but we much enjoyed it and Johanna will have to come back next year to refresh our memories and improve the performance. Many thanks to our singers Angela and Sandor and Lynnford Jones, all of whom can be depended upon to bring a musical offering. The collection of £100 is to be divided equally between ourselves and a local charity.

We have stepped into 2012 with many thanks to those who have supported us in many ways and we send our love and very best wishes to Betty Williams, Eirion Phillips and Eileen James.

Marian Littlepage

The November issue of the Newsletter contained a poem by Colin Morgan that asked Where Have all the Helpers Gone? Here Colin gives us a follow-up ...

A RESPONSE TO OUR PLEA FOR HELPERS

Many helpers answered our call,
And our standards did not fall.
Our two chapels were cleaned - ***spic and span!***
For Carols in Praise of God and Man!
Decorated too in red and green –
A celebratory Christmas Scene.
We sang praises for the Prince of Peace,
Led by our Pastor Lewis Rees

Oh! It was good to give thanks to all,
A joy that made us walk proud and tall.
Christmas was shared with mince pies and tea,
And we all thanked God for we were free.
A child born in obscurity with love,
May change the world to heaven above,
It is possible with every new born,
Hope for the world, but never forlorn.

Colin Morgan, January 2012, Rhos ,Cwmtawe

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Every year I live I am more convinced that the waste of life lies in the love we have not given, the powers we have not used, the selfish prudence that will risk nothing, and which, shirking pain, misses happiness as well.

Mary Cholomendeley.

HIGHLAND PLACE UNI-CLUB NATIVITY PLAY



Photo: Joy Foster



Photo: Joy Foster

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Copy may also be e-mailed to kenneth.morgan25@tesco.net or to Philip@philipgriffiths.co.uk

South East Wales Unitarian Society members receive the Newsletter free of charge.
The annual SEWUS membership fee for 2012 remains at **£5**.