



South East Wales Unitarian News

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January 2013

FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 16th March – Copy deadline for the next issue of South East Wales Unitarian News
Thursday 11th – Sunday 14th April – The 2013 GA Annual Meetings at Nottingham University

OUR FAITH / EIN FFYDD

Can you come up with ONE sentence that sums up what your Unitarian faith means to you? If you *can* then Dr Carwyn Tywyn, Secretary of the Unitarian Welsh Department, would like to hear from you with a view to adding it to an edited selection of sentences he is gathering with the intention of publishing a small booklet in time for the GA Annual Meetings. Your sentence may be in Welsh or English, bearing your name or remaining anonymous.

There is not much time—so put your thinking cap on now!

(Your contribution may be sent to ctywyn@unitarian.org.uk or by the means listed at the end of this newsletter.)

DISTRICT CHRISTMAS SERVICE OF READINGS AND CAROLS

The weather was bright – though a little chilly – when members from congregations in the South East Wales District gathered at 11am on Sunday 2nd December at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed for the annual District Service of Readings and Carols.

The service was led by District President Phil Griffiths who spoke of his pleasure at having the opportunity to officiate at a district event at his own place of worship before his presidential term of office expired.

The format of the service followed the usual pattern with a representative from each chapel presenting a reading or musical item and introducing a carol on behalf of his or her congregation, and with Mrs Marian Lewis providing the organ accompaniment for the carols. The enthusiastic carol-singing in Welsh, English and German, together with the varied and interesting readings, provided a splendid introduction to the advent period and to the spirit of Christmas.

The service was followed by a shared lunch in the Schoolroom, giving everyone the opportunity for a pleasant chat with friends –both old and new– over a cup of tea and an enjoyable repast.

We thank the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd congregation for hosting this successful event and making us so welcome.

ASSISTED DYING – THE ISSUES INVOLVED

There are not many people, outside academic circles or the medical and caring professions, who have an opportunity to discuss the issues involved in assisted dying. The South East Wales Unitarian Society recently held a workshop on assisted dying at Highland Place, Aberdare to which Unitarians and the general public were invited.

The aim of the workshop was to give all those who attended, an opportunity to be better informed regarding the moral, medical, legal and theological issues which need to be considered in the assisted dying debate.

The workshop was facilitated by Rev Professor Paul Badham from Trinity St David, Lampeter who began the session with a presentation entitled “A religious approach to the issue of assisted suicide”, in which he covered all the main points of concern. These included outlining the current legal position, explaining why palliative care is not enough, discussing the various “sanctity of life” and “slippery slope” arguments. Most helpfully, he was able to present evidence from other European countries including Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and also Oregon in the United States which demonstrates that in

countries where assisted dying is permitted within the law, the rates of assisted deaths do not rise. It seems that, if the choice to end one's life is freely available, it takes a worrying burden from many dying patients who nevertheless decide not to avail themselves of this option. Prof Badham was also able to present research which shows that the relationship between doctors and their patients is not undermined as a result of the permissibility of assisted dying.

Having researched and written on the theology of death and dying for well over thirty years, Paul Badham has proved himself a leader in this field and we were extremely fortunate to have him with us. The presentation was followed by a lively and interesting discussion to which almost everyone present contributed. This began with a question concerning the negative effect of "the Shipman Case" on the medical profession and the greater scrutiny under which doctors currently perform their duties. There was also a pertinent question from a former senior nurse who wanted to know how those doctors and nurses who enact this legislation were affected by it? The answer being that the research reveals that those who are involved in assisting death are affected by it, but choose to continue, out of compassion and a belief that they are relieving suffering. The moral and clinical issues surrounding persistent vegetative states was discussed at some length.

Towards the end of the discussion a straw poll was taken on the views of those present being, in support, or not of assisted dying. The majority being in favour of supporting a change in the legislation.

Having had such a successful workshop, and taking account of the work that has been done by Robert Ince and the many Unitarians who were involved in producing and circulating the information pack on Assisted Dying, I have to cite the old adage that, "you can only take a horse to water...", assisting death remains a very sensitive, and for many people, a very frightening issue, which it is more comfortable to ignore. It is very important that those people who vote on this issue on behalf of their congregations and districts at the General Assembly Meetings in Nottingham do so from an informed position.

Ella Lewis-Jones

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

The Interview in this issue of South East Wales Unitarian News is with Gareth Evans who is the treasurer and vice-Chairman of Gellionnen and Graig Chapels. I only met Gareth recently when I visited Gellionnen and he has been kind enough to agree to be interviewed.

Ella Lewis-Jones

I was born in 1947 in Sydenham, SE London (I think it was in Kent in those days though) – My parents were renting a flat in a grand house that had been divided up into smaller flats and I was told that the room I was actually born in, their bedroom, formed part of the original ballroom! My father's family came from the Pontarddulais area and later moved to Swansea where my Grandfather was a teacher and headmaster in various local schools. My mother came from Whitby in North Yorkshire and her family were water engineers as they called them in the 1700s, so I come from a long line of plumbers – In fact I have many cousins in the Whitby area all still carrying on the family tradition and I have been known to turn my hand to the odd job in the house that involves pipes and connectors as well!

I was brought up in Battersea and was educated at Emanuel School in what is now Wandsworth. My first job after escaping from school was as a YIT in the GPO – That is a "Youth in Training" with the telegraphy and telephony side of the General Post Office (These were the pre-BT days).

I married my beautiful bride Sheila in 1969 and we have two wonderful children and two wonderful grandchildren. My technical career expanded into a commercial sales engineering role and in 1980 we eventually moved to America where I was running the US subsidiary of a British micrographics equipment manufacturing company. This post was supposed to last for two years ...Fourteen years later we returned to the UK when the parent company in England went out of business. Our return brought us to the Swansea Valley area where I had secured a post as Sales Manager with a local computer manufacturing company. I went on to become the Public Sector Sales Manager for a large national computer manufacturer based in Evesham. When they were sold off after going into administration, I moved to a small company in Cardiff where I stayed until my retirement in July 2012.

Sheila and I live in Pontardawe, which we think is the gateway to the best of what Wales has to offer and we spend time walking, and in my case, some fishing in one of the most beautiful parts of the country. In our spare time we visit our children and grandchildren whenever we can. They all live in America so it is only once or twice a year if we are lucky; however, the upside of this is that we can spend longer times with them now we are both retired.

Have you always been a Unitarian?

No – I was Christened and Confirmed in the Church of England as a young boy then lapsed for many years as life developed and my views changed. I began attending Gellionnen Chapel more or less by accident when my wife and I first moved to Pontardawe. We were told by a woman my wife met on a course she was attending that the only place to go on Christmas Eve was to the candle-lit carol service at the little chapel on the mountain. We duly attended at what we thought was the appropriate time and walked in to the service which was almost half over – The chapel was full and we probably had 200 people turn and look at us as we walked in...a slightly daunting experience I might add! We were nevertheless made very welcome by the gentleman conducting the service and took our seats in our first Unitarian chapel service. The gentleman in question was an intriguing character who piqued our interest with his views so we decided to attend a regular Sunday service – From then on we were hooked and Dr Beverley Littlepage and his family became great friends.

What is your earliest memory?

I think it must be when I was with my mother, I was about 3 years old and we were in a little playground in Battersea Park near where we lived – I was riding on a rocking horse and she was holding me so I wouldn't fall off.

What do you owe your parents?

Well I probably owe my mother everything especially as she taught me how to love. My father and I had a difficult relationship as he was an alcoholic, but despite this illness I think he taught me to be well mannered, polite and respectful to others.

What qualities do you most admire in others?

I think I would have to say honesty and compassion would be very high on my list.

Have you had any really big disappointments in your life?

Yes, I never played rugby for Wales!

What, in your current life, gives you the greatest satisfaction?

Buying the airline tickets to go and visit our children and grandchildren in America when we can afford it!

Do you have a favourite place?

This is a hard one because there are so many – I think I would have to say that it is sitting around the dining room table with the whole family present and sharing the fellowship of eating together.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

How long a list would you like...? Currently it is not having to get up in the morning and go to work...I have recently retired you see.

Did you make the best or most of your schooling?

Not in a million years...My secondary education was chosen for me by my father because he wanted me to play rugby. The school I was lucky enough to attend was a very traditional (minor) Public School in south London that taught a very classical curriculum...but they did have a good sports reputation and did not play soccer, only rugby. So while I tried my hardest to be a good rucker player I had little regard for the likes of Latin, French and the scholastic side of life and did the barest minimum to keep my place in the school. The subjects I always came top in were the handicrafts – I loved making things, and still do. It wasn't until I finally left school that I applied my practical interests to engineering and electronics and was moderately successful.

What would make the world a better place?

Probably if everybody thought like a good Unitarian.

Have you achieved your dreams or ambitions?

I have achieved many of my dreams and ambitions already, but new dreams and ambitions arrive everyday so there is still a long way to go yet...I hope!

What is the most valuable lesson life has taught you?

Everybody deserves a second chance.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK – O DDESG YR YSGRIFENNYDD

2013: A busy year ahead.

First of all, I would like to wish each and every member of SEWUS a very happy New Year.
Ga'i ddymuno Blwyddyn Newydd dda i bob un ohonoch.

I would also like to apologise for not having posted in the last SEWUS newsletter. Quite simply, I ran out of working hours in the days prior to the deadline, due to taking some leave at half-term and also organising the visit of Lis Dyson-Jones, President of the General Assembly, to Carmarthen.

As we move into 2013, I am keen to move forward positively as Welsh Department Secretary, in partnership with you as congregations and as a District. However, I do respect the fact that the role of Welsh Department Secretary may seem a bit abstract to some individuals or congregations. Occasionally, I hear (in both districts) the question of whether the role of Welsh Department Secretary is not worth funding from the congregational budget.

I would therefore like to spell out some examples of what I think my role delivers for you as congregations, and to state why I feel that the post of Department Secretary gives extremely good value for your "Unitarian Pound" as Congregations.

In my view, there are two projects that best explain my role. As it happens, both of these projects have arisen from SEWUS Away-Days. Both projects seem crucial to me, if we look at the obvious challenges facing our denomination in 5, 10, 25 and 50 years down the line. In my view, the projects are best addressed on an all-Wales level (in partnership with South Wales District, and Bangor), and therefore justify a Welsh Department Committee/Secretary in a co-ordinating role at the Wales national level.

Governance

The first key issue is that of governance and constitutions in our congregations, which was raised at the 2011 SEWUS Away-Day. As a direct result, I have been invited to facilitate three District-wide workshops in South Wales District, with a fourth to follow shortly.

It is clear from the feedback I am receiving that the congregations in Ceredigion are taking this issue very seriously. This may be due to the fact that the workshops have touched on some very difficult (and sometimes upsetting) issues, such as the possible closure of chapels, and the need to have an up-to-date set of policies (Valid land registration; Winding-up clause, etc.), if the worst comes to the worst and a chapel is closed. (As an aside: in the light of these workshops, some chapels in Ceredigion have reviewed their insurance policies and secured better deals for themselves by switching insurers).

As I mentioned in Glynneath in 2011, I would ideally like to know that **every** congregation in Wales has reviewed and updated its governance documents. With the exception of Gellionnen/Graig, I have not been approached by any SEWUS congregation to discuss matters of this nature, so I can only assume that SEWUS congregations are already happy with their governance arrangements, or are actively working on these matters of their own accord. Please remember that I am available to visit an individual congregation, or group of congregations, if you wish to share this important task with me – or if you would like to know more about how the chapels in Ceredigion are co-operating on these matters, in order to make the task less onerous for yourselves.

Lay Leadership

I left the recent 2012 SEWUS Away-Day charged with the task of co-ordinating a one-day event on lay leadership / worship studies. I'm pleased to report back to you that representatives from Ceredigion and Bangor are enthusiastic about the idea. I have also spoken to Derek McAuley, who has suggested that a lay leadership project in Wales could be open to one or more sources of funding further down the line.

This subject is due to be discussed at the January meeting of the Welsh Department, and hopefully we will be able to suggest a date and venue for a one-day event, as a starting point in this project. I see lay leadership as key to strengthening EVERY congregation in Wales for the future, by increasing the pool of potential lay leaders, and in terms of sharing good practice.

As I look across Wales, I see strengths and weaknesses in both Districts, and Bangor. Each area has something to offer the others in terms of a differing experience of lay leadership, and each area would, I'm sure, be strengthened by coming together to share ideas. Hopefully, some attendees at a one-day event will be inspired to take up further training.

Of course, it is possible that none of this work will result in a single extra member attending chapel in the short term. However, I do think that a stronger pool of lay leaders will lead to more vibrant worship, and a more confident and proficient denomination.

Other work

I will briefly mention the other work that I have undertaken over the last few months. In terms of external work, The Unitarians in Wales are now affiliated to the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), and have already benefitted from their resources relating to good governance. We have also become members of the Interfaith Council for Wales, and the Equalities and Human Rights Coalition (administered by the WCVA). Although it is very early days, each of these forums gives us an opportunity to align ourselves with a range of progressive and current social and faith causes in Wales, and to gain publicity in the wider world. Did you know that there is an interfaith week in Wales every Autumn?

In 2013, it is my intention to see that the Unitarians take part in this event for the first time. If anyone is interested in helping me out on a voluntary basis with ANY of these new initiatives, I would be delighted to hear from you.

My focus on producing and editing the Wales Unitarian Directory earlier in the year, and subsequently organising the Eisteddfod stall, means that some tasks (particularly communications) did slip a little on my agenda. However, I'm pleased to report that the @UnitariansWales Twitter account has 300 followers: easily the largest Twitter presence of any non-conformist denomination in Wales. Only the Church in Wales has a larger following (around 460 followers) but I'm confident we can overtake them within a year – now *there's* a New Year's Resolution!

I have become increasingly persuaded that Twitter is more than a gimmick – it has a several specific functions for us as Unitarians. Twitter is often the quickest source of breaking news: we gained a good number of followers by contributing to live debates on women bishops in the Church of England (under the Twitter theme #Synod). It is also good for informal “banter” and conversation, which, from time to time, does gain us the occasional follower in Wales who is genuinely interested in Unitarianism, and can be added to the small band of individuals who receive **Y Fflam / The Flame** – an e-mail bulletin which I have created. This is a Welsh equivalent of the NUF magazine to keep individual, non-affiliated Unitarians in Wales in touch with our affairs. I have also worked closely with the NUF to contact other individual Unitarians in Wales.

Elsewhere, I have also sharpened up the appearance of my own blog (and done some more writing) and aim to write for publications in Wales in the New Year. I have been invited to represent the Unitarians on a BBC Radio Cymru current affairs programme in January (“O'r Bae” / “From the Bay”) and I shall have taken every effort to put a Unitarian “spin” on whatever issues happen to crop up on that programme. My long-term aim is that the Unitarians become an automatic port of call for reporters who are looking for a faith-based response on any particular issue.

Of course, I am limited by the fact that my role is part-time. Occasionally – as I cover a wide array of issues - some things do fall through the net, such as my missing contribution to the last SEWUS newsletter. However, I trust that I have provided some strong examples of where I feel I, and we as a Welsh Department Committee, are making some progress. I hope that I can count on your support as congregations, and as a District, in order for me to keep on pushing these initiatives through, and to try and keep the momentum going in my work.

Gyda ddiolch am eich cefnogaeth – with thanks for your support

Carwyn Tywyn

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 16/17 NOVEMBER 2012

1. Vice President 2013/14

The Executive Committee agreed to nominate Mrs Marion Baker at the Annual Meetings in April 2013 for the position of General Assembly Vice President in 2013/14 leading to the Presidency in 2014/15. Congratulations to Marion.

2. General Assembly Roll of Ministers

The Executive Committee were pleased to approve the entry onto the Roll of Ministers with Probationary status of Rev Sheena Gabriel following completion of her academic requirements.

3. Millennium Fund

The Executive Committee awarded the following grants to two congregations:

–Old Chapel, Great Hucklow – £1,000 as a contribution towards the installation and upgrade of audio equipment.

–Bradford Unitarians – £500 as a contribution towards installation of a sound reinforcement system.

4. Visibility Strategy Group

Dorothy Haughton, chair of the Visibility Strategy Group, joined the meeting to explore how the strategic priority around Visibility could be taken forward. A high priority was being given to a media training event and joint work with the Unitarian Communication Coordinators Network (UCCN) on social media skills. They were keen to see a “call to action” in all social justice motions presented to the Annual Meetings and the group were asked to develop its thinking on how important Resolutions might be promoted after the Annual Meetings. They will also be taking forward discussions on a Unitarian strap line.

5. Annual Meetings 2013 – Keynote Speaker Announced

We are pleased to announce that the Keynote Speaker at the forthcoming Annual Meetings will be

Rev Dr Terasa G Cooley, Director, Congregational Life of the Unitarian Universalist Association. She served as a minister for fifteen years in Detroit, Chicago, Stratford and Hartford and then for five years as District Executive for the Massachusetts Bay District before joining the UUA in 2010. She is heavily involved in the "Congregations and Beyond" project of the UUA.

6. Proxy Voting

A report was received from the Constitutional Review Group on proxy voting following the Resolution passed at the last Annual Meetings. A full copy of the [report on proxy voting](#) is available. The report recommended that proxy voting should not go ahead and made several suggestions to encourage greater understanding and involvement of congregations in the motions at the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee received the report and thanked the members (Dawn Buckle, Michael Allured, Ann Sinclair and Derek McAuley) for their hard work in preparing an excellent report. A motion will be submitted to the next Annual Meetings by the Executive Committee asking that the report be accepted.

7. Financial Position

The unaudited end of year accounts (up to 30 September, 2012) have been presented to the Executive Committee. These accounts show that:

- Expenditure is very much under control, even with the exceptional award of £10,000 to Unitarian College, Manchester.
- Essex Hall expenditure was £30,000 below budget.
- Income exceeded expenditure by £84,000 greatly helped by a large legacy which was matched by Bowland Trust funding.
- Value of investments grew by 9.2%
- Income from live giving was substantially down.

The budget for 2012/3 will be a considerable challenge to us all to generate the income necessary to continue with our planned programmes.

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION 2012

The following candidates were elected:

James Barry, Joan Cook, Robert Ince, Louise Rogers, Jacqueline Woodman.

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.

Edith Sitwell.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The roles of district president and printer of the District News invariably clash as events attended by me as president are reported by the correspondents leaving me with little to write about. I am always impressed at the high standard of reporting, making the District News a publication of which we can all be justifiably proud. When I do write an article we are invariably short of column inches and the president's slot is first to be edited.

The event which can be commented on is the **District Consultation Day at Cross Street Manchester** which I attended with Julie Nedin and Keith Lewis-Jones. Delegates travelled from the furthest corners of Britain, representing most of the Unitarian districts. The gathering was very well enabled by Mr Simon Wilson, the facilitator, who encouraged everyone to listen, but, with the loop system out of action in a gathering of elderly Unitarians, 'Some Fell on Deaf Ears' – which could have been the summary title for the conference.

The event was in response to a motion at the Keele GA from the North East Lancashire Unitarian Mission that complained of the lack of communication received by NELUM as a district from the EC representative. I did not fully support the motion at the GA and remain of the opinion that communication from the EC is generally good: my concerns lie with district communication, influence and representation to and at the EC.

There is always room for improvement and following the consultation, and in large part thanks to the efforts of Keith Lewis-Jones, communication from the EC has been improved with EC minutes and agendas now being published and circulated to districts. The SEWUS and the Welsh Department have also resolved to pre-

publish agendas and publish minutes within a reasonable period of time following meetings. Minutes will be used as a communication tool to be displayed in chapels to inform and not used purely as an historical record.

At Manchester the parameters of consultation had been pre-set and discussion was further limited as delegates were divided into four groups, with each group assisted by two EC members who in certain instances tended to confine debate within predetermined parameters and away from constructive criticism. Most delegates attended with a shared concern on the future of Unitarianism, although even the most accomplished speakers had difficulty in expressing the exact nature of their concerns (not complaints). Possibly a less structured forum would have produced a more open debate and dialogue with the districts.

One delegate who did ask a series of searching questions was Mr Philip Colfox from Bridport Unitarians, a candidate in the EC elections. Somewhat predictably Mr Colfox was not elected – possibly out-voted by the numerical supremacy of the large Unitarian conurbations. Wales and the West Country remain unrepresented on the EC and will do for the foreseeable future unless we can put up a candidate with national identity.

I came away from the meeting, as I do from most national Unitarian gatherings, firm in the knowledge that in South East Wales and South Wales we have two strong and well organized Districts within an increasingly effective Welsh Department structure which is able to contribute and be far more effective than the EC realize. Our future must lie at grass roots level in our own chapels. But to sustain Unitarianism in Wales requires our continued commitment and financial support to the districts and to the Welsh Department.

The Rev Stephen Lingwood in his letter to the Inquirer identifies one compass bearing of our faith which is possibly incorrectly set when he notes that, 'not one of the election candidates spoke of their spiritual aims but only of their management skills.' This raises the question are we in South East Wales also guilty of neglecting worship and growth within member congregations in favour of management procedure?

Is not grass roots spirituality and continued liberal worship the way forward?

Phil Griffiths

ABERDARE

Seventeen people attended the Assisted Dying workshop held at Highland Place on 24th November. Representatives from the Aberdare congregation were joined by Cardiff and Cefn Coed members and also by Rev Cen Llwyd from Ceredigion. A talk was given by Prof Paul Badham of Trinity St David University, Lampeter and this was followed by a good number of questions and comments from the floor.

The pulpit surrounds and chairs have been renewed by Cwmaman Upholstery and look extremely good. The Chalice Symbol has still to be embroidered onto the pulpit fall. Having seen the item about the pulpit surrounds in the church calendar, the family of the late Nesta Morgan has generously met the cost. New blinds have been also been installed on the windows of the schoolroom.

Joan Harlow and Eirwen Davies have been busy on Friday mornings selling items at a table top sale held in the local Church Hall. Thanks should also go to Tony Foster for transporting the items.

We were pleased to receive a gift from Martin Lloyd in memory of his parents, Elwyn & Nina Lloyd who died recently.

The Christmas Service on 23rd December was attended by over seventy people who enjoyed pieces by the Children's Group and the Nemeth Family from Pontardawe. The Christmas Eve service attracted another twenty people. The windows in the Church have this year been decorated by some of the groups that use the church facilities, including Caradog School, Vibes Band, the Brownies, U3A groups, Massage & Yoga groups and not forgetting our own Children's Club.

Keith Lewis-Jones

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNODIAID CAERDYDD

Cardiff Unitarians very much enjoyed the District Christmas service at Cefn Coed Y Cymer on 2nd December.

The style of the service at Cefn was replicated at Cardiff on the 23rd of December when Gwynn Pritchard led the service and members of the congregation had an opportunity to read and participate. Prior to the service a search of our database of names and addresses yielded information on lapsed members who were then contacted by letter and a follow up telephone call. This proved to be effective, with some lapsed members attending saying they were pleased to be invited.

The children began their contribution with a reading by Alwyn, and Lili sang a moving solo that brought a tear to the eye. This was followed by a reading by Hannah who had composed a poem for the occasion. The Children sang Silent Night together in Welsh, after which the congregation joined in to sing the English version and in German.

It was delightful to have Sarah and Peter Boyce's daughter, Caroline read a moving text on Peace to the Earth. At the end the children were given Christmas presents by GA National President Lis Dyson-Jones. The service closed with thanks and a benediction from Gwynn, and refreshments were served.

It was rewarding that the effort made to communicate with lapsed members resulted in a number of them attending. The exercise showed that it is possible to attract an audience through personal invitation, though the take up might have been for a variety of reasons—they may have thought about it for a long time and needed just that extra shove in the right direction; they may have been flattered by the invitation and pleased that they are not forgotten; they may have simply fallen out of the habit of attending. Finally, they may have been aggrieved by something, or someone, in the past and needed a personal invitation to create a bridge of reconciliation. Whatever the reason, the teamwork involved resulted in a rich, diverse, uplifting service for all who were present.

Another area of development to build on is the Circle service during which, since October, we have been holding a discussion group on "Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life", by Karen Armstrong – exploring a chapter from the book each month. This has attracted some people to attend outside of the circle of Unitarianism. Those who attend find it therapeutic and interesting. Posters and information will be distributed more widely for the next session in January led by Gwynn.

The Development Officer (DO) was able to travel to West Wales with the Rev Eric Jones to a Christmas dinner that included the company of the Rev Cen Llwyd and the Rev Wyn Thomas. The DO has also been in contact with them in order to locate any Unitarians from West Wales who now live in the capital and might be interested in attending the Cardiff Services.

Negotiations have been on-going with the Karai Jews and Universal Muslims who are attracted and interested in Unitarianism due to its inclusive doctrine of other beliefs. A Multi faith service is being considered for April. This is seen as putting Unitarian beliefs into a practical application by inviting those who follow differing doctrines but have a basic belief in compassion and social justice in common with all religions.

We were very pleased that Margret Evans was able to attend the service on the 23rd December, she was on fine form as usual. We were also pleased to have Betty Evans back with us after spending a number of months in Aberaeron working on a television production.

Cardiff Unitarians are looking forward to 2013 with excitement – keen to develop ideas on how we can attract people to our cause and so grow as a congregation and movement in the year to come.

After a break for Christmas the Sunday Club will restart on January 13th with Diana leading the Welsh Service on the same day.

Dewi Owen, Cardiff Development Officer

CEFNCOED

Women's League

As December was fast approaching, a few of us from League decorated the chapel at the end of November in readiness for the District Christmas Service on the 2nd of December. After the service we enjoyed a shared lunch in our schoolroom.

During December we only had one league meeting – on Wednesday the 5th. On the Wednesday before Christmas we all went out for our Christmas Lunch at the Castle Hotel, Merthyr, and then we were all busy getting ready for Christmas. Now it is as far away as ever.

As usual we are having January off and start back on the first Wednesday in February. Just one more thing – A Happy New Year Everyone.

Vera Tomsett

Remembrance Sunday

On 11th November, as has happened on Remembrance Sunday each year since 1974, the ceremony at the village war memorial and the public Service of Remembrance that followed were conducted by Ken Morgan. The parade through the village was marshalled by Major Tudor Price, MBE who led the marchers to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd where they were dismissed. The number congregating at the memorial has increased slightly over recent years but, sadly, those who then attend the service at the chapel remain a minority. Readings during the service were given by Major Stephen Price, MBE and by Councillor Lisa Mytton, Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil.



Ken Morgan at Cefncoed War Memorial



Major Stephen Price, MBE



Mayor of Merthyr, Coun Lisa Mytton

Photos: Keith Lewis-Jones

District Service of Readings & Carols

We were pleased to welcome members from other South East Wales congregations to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on 2nd December for the annual District Service of Readings and Carols.

Deaths

Several members represented the chapel at two funerals recently.

Mrs Trixie Snead, mother of the late Martin, was a resident at Avenue Road Nursing Home, Abergavenny where she passed away on 7th November, aged 96 years. Her funeral service on 20th November at Ivor Chapel, Dowlais was followed by cremation at Llwydcoed Crematorium.

Phyllis Hallet Knight, also aged 96 years, died on 22nd December at Greenhill Manor Care Home, Merthyr Tydfil where she had resided for a number of years. Phyllis hailed originally from Bridport, Dorset where her family had strong links with Bridport Unitarian Chapel. Her funeral service took place on 4th January at Llwydcoed Crematorium and was conducted by the Rev Eric Jones.

Services over Christmas and New Year

Members were very much involved in our worship over the festive period with three Sunday services being led by the congregation – the final one, on 6th January, scoring 100% participation with every member present contributing to the service.

In addition the service on Christmas morning was in the hands of *Two Wise Men* – Morgan and Ken. The *third sage*, Phil, hadn't been waylaid by Herod's men – he was laid low by a virus and confined to quarters. With our organists, Marian and Margaret, involved with family duties the music for our carols was provided by the CD produced by David Dawson.

Ken Morgan

SWANSEA

Members of the congregation enjoyed a pre-Christmas lunch at Olchfa House. This really started the season of looking forward to Christmas when we enjoyed Advent services enriched with the glow of candles, a crib and a Christmas tree. The singing of well loved carols is always a joy and it is the repetition of well known customs from childhood to old age that makes Christmas special and fills one with a warm glow.

The beginning of a new year can sometimes seem a bit bleak but the bulbs are already shooting up reminding us that spring is on the way, and who knows what adventures await us.

We send warm greetings to Mrs Mollie Jones who is always with us in spirit although unable to attend church.

We wish a happy, healthy 2013 to all our fellow Unitarian churches.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GRAIG

On the 9th of December 2012, a community carol service was held at Graig Chapel. The congregation sang many well known carols and were joined by past members of the Trebanos Mixed Choir. Three items were sung by the choir members, namely Mary's Boy Child, Suai'r Gwynt and John Rutter's carol Love Came Down at Christmas.

The service was in the capable hands of Julie Nedin and readings were given by Marian Littlepage, Colin Morgan and Julie. During the service a generous cheque was presented by Gordon Grattidge, former chairman of the Trebanos Mixed Choir, towards the repair of the Graig Chapel organ. An enjoyable time was had by all, culminating in Tea and mince pies at the end of the service. Many thanks to the people who helped make it such an enjoyable experience, hopefully to be repeated next Christmas.

Lawrence Bowen

GELLIONNEN

Despite the fact that in many ways we are a vulnerable congregation, we've had some great high spots during the past year and look forward to more in 2013.

Our fingerpost, pointing out the direction of the chapel and missing for several years has at last been replaced. Thanks go to local councillor Linet Purcell for her tenacity and determination.

Several dozen copies of Dr Elwyn Davies's book, *Be Gentle*, have been sold. A few still remain.

Our Trebanos postmaster has put out a 2013 calendar with a local photograph for each month of the year. Two of these months show his own lovely photos of Gellionnen and Graig chapels. The Gellionnen photograph was used by Julie Nedin for the front of a Christmas card / Invitation to carol services at both chapels.

One of our December services always takes the form of a devotional first half and then the second half becomes the time when we decorate to the sound of carols on CD or even musicians practising for Christmas Eve. Decorations have become very green with locally collected laurel, holly and ivy. The effect is stunning, cost negligible.

Thanks go to nine-year-old Gwennan Evans for unpacking and setting out our big old nativity characters. They were all there this year, though I do remember an occasion when Mary went missing!

Our musicians did us proud on Christmas Eve. Huw Jones had lit the log-burner that morning and tended it through the day and we were all met by smoke rising from the chimney and a wonderful red glow indoors.

Sadly, little Toto, Sandra Beynon's four legged companion and a regular attender at Gellionnen is no longer with us. We shall miss her.

May we wish everyone a heart warming year. God bless.

Marian Littlepage

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Items for publication should be sent by to:-

Ken Morgan, 25c Holford Street, Cefn Coed y Cymer, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 2RW. Tel: 01685 379016.

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

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