



South East Wales Unitarian News

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January 2015

FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday, 7 February – Forum at Highland Place, Aberdare at 10 am. **See notice below.**

Saturday, 21 March – Copy deadline for the next issue of South East Wales Unitarian News.

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

FORUM Following initial discussions with congregation representatives SEWUS will convene a forum to take forward a proposal to employ a Minister on a District basis.

This will be held on 7th February at 10am at Highland Place, Aberdare. Congregations who wish to participate will be asked to send one representative.

Rev Eric Jones, SEWUS treasurer, will provide financial guidance, and the meeting will be chaired by Tony Foster, Vice President of SEWUS.

SEWUS AGM will be held in May 2015. Nominations are invited for following posts:

Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, IT & Publicity Officer.

Please inform the Secretary, Mrs Diana Bianchi, of nominations by 1st March.

MARIE ROSENBERG

A Celebration and Thank you to Marie

Marie's Celebratory Service was held on 21st November 2014 at her home chapel in Nottage. It was packed full to the brim with friends and family packed into the gallery, downstairs and even up the steps to the pulpit. The Rev John Harley hoped that there weren't any Health and Safety people there to see! There were Unitarians from the South East Wales chapels but also many Unitarians from all over the country attended who knew Marie and had developed special friendships with her and the family such as from the Unitarian Music Society, Youth Programme or from Meditation courses. Marie had friends there from all stages of her life, from school onwards in Lincolnshire as well as from her local community in the Newton and Porthcawl areas and family members. Members of the local community appreciated many things about knowing her, including her and Alastair's contribution to the girls' primary and secondary schools.

A very beautiful enlarged photograph of Marie was placed at the front of the church along with a flower arrangement which Alastair had organised to be made up as a replica of Marie's wedding bouquet.

The service was led by the Rev John Harley who knows the family well as Isabelle and Elizabeth have taken a full part in the Unitarian National Youth Programme, mostly centred at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow in Derbyshire. John provided a caring and eloquent celebration of Marie as a facilitator and 'midwife' of life. After her career as an army and then an NHS midwife Marie took on training as a Complementary Holistic Therapist with her own home-based practice. Isabelle, Marie's eldest daughter spoke movingly about her mother as did Alastair. We even heard the story of Marie meeting Alastair for the first time and advising him to get his teeth fixed as one day a woman would want to marry him!! Isabelle confided that her outfit had been approved for the occasion! Members of the congregation were also invited to share any thoughts and Julie Nedin spoke briefly on behalf of SEWUS to voice our appreciation of Marie's contribution to Unitarians in South East Wales.

The service was followed by a reception on the Porthcawl Sea front in the conservatory of the Atlantic Hotel overlooking the sea and guests toasted Marie with champagne. The family had asked for this to be a celebration of Marie's life and for those attending to wear bright clothes and this made a very fitting end to a fantastic celebration of Marie's life.

As a personal tribute to Marie I would like to give my gratitude to her for encouraging parents such as Helen, Rhiannon and myself to send our children to Juniors, Seniors and Inters events at Great Hucklow as part of the Youth Programme. I would probably never have got Carrie organised to go without encouragement from Marie and I know how much my daughter and other young people in the

district have enjoyed attending the National Youth Programme events. Marie brought Unitarian parents and children like myself and my daughter in South East Wales district together for a painting pottery session in October 2006 at the Art Cafe in Porthcawl. This then developed into Marie setting up a day at Nottage Chapel in December 2006 with John Harley, the G.A.Youth Coordinator on behalf of the South East Wales District for a 'Lighting our Chalice – Inviting Fresh Sparks' day. This cemented friendships between children and adults alike and was much appreciated as it was difficult because of numbers for each chapel to put on their own events to meet other Unitarian parents and children. In 2007 we then held a series of Intergenerational services with Julianne Morgan in Swansea followed by services at Wick chapel and at Penrhiw chapel, St Fagans. Marie played an active part with this and had many imaginative ideas for worship. Rev John Harley then returned in 2007 to lead a Children's Workshop and Intergenerational service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed. Joy Foster and myself went on in 2011 to undertake youth leader training on the Revolution course and there are currently Childrens' Sunday Clubs running in Aberdare and Cardiff. A number of Unitarian Services and events over recent years have been held in our district chapels and churches which have actively included our children and young people. We need to carry this on into the future and keep our children and young people involved nationally as well.

With love and thanks to Marie,

Sarah Boyce

DISTRICT CHRISTMAS SERVICE

The SE Wales Christmas Service was held at Capel Penrhiw in the grounds of St Fagans National History Museum at 11am on Sunday, 14th December. We had gathered in the old Unitarian meeting house just eight weeks previously but now it was 'bleak mid-winter' and Penrhiw has no heating system, so we appreciated having a temporary heater to at least take the edge off the cold.

The service of carols and readings presented by a representative from each congregation was conducted by District President Julie Nedin. Incidental music, and accompaniment for the carols, was provided on the violin by Martyn Edwards.



Capel Penrhiw

Coming together for this hour of worship provided a perfect start to the Christmas period, where words and music warmed our souls. We then moved on to St Fagans Village Hall where Cardiff ladies served up bowls of hot soup – this worked wonders in warming *other* parts! Unlike the treatment meted out to Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, there was more—and we very much appreciated it.

SECRETARY OF THE WELSH DEPARTMENT

The first signs that Spring is on its way are already with us. Admittedly, they are very tentative signs (in reality they are the tips of a few snowdrops pushing through the earth next to the washing-line in my garden) however, they are there, and they are a sign that the days will get longer, the weather will get better and we'll all feel better.

Sometimes, we humans can hibernate over winter, and can also be a bit slow to awaken in the Spring. There will be new opportunities and new ventures for us in the coming year, and we really must be awake and ready for these.

This Spring, as we welcome our fellow Unitarian, the Rev Carie Johnsen to our midst from the United States, we've been given the opportunity to "get into gear" a bit earlier. Thank you to all who've offered to welcome her in to their chapel, and I would urge everyone to go along and meet her and to show her a great Welsh Unitarian welcome. It would also be an opportunity to hear how the rest of the Unitarian world is faring and allow us to look outwards – to remember that there is a big world outside of our own congregation, and to realise that maybe our own domestic concerns and difficulties are really quite insignificant in the greater scheme of things.

2014 was a year of new challenges and opportunities for me personally and I'm quite excited (and nervous) to see what 2015 brings. One significant challenge will be to take services. The first will be on

Radio Cymru on the 1st February and the next at Cefncoed on the 1st March. Please help me meet this challenge in a supportive and loving atmosphere—let's all march into Spring together, determined to show the world that we can put our Unitarian values of nurturing faith, embracing life and celebrating differences into practice, not only in our worship, but also in our daily lives.

Melda Grantham

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 14 & 15 NOVEMBER 2014

1. General Assembly President 2015/2016

We are pleased to announce that Rev John Clifford will be nominated at the forthcoming Annual Meetings for the position of President of the General Assembly for 2015/2016. Born and trained in the United States John moved to the UK in 1970 and ministered with churches in England, Scotland and Wales as well as spending 13 years working at Essex Hall. He has also extensive experience of international engagement through the ICUU and the IARF.

2. General Assembly Vice President 2015/2016 leading to Presidency in 2016/17

Unfortunately the Executive Committee was not able to make a nomination as no proposals had been received. The deadline for receipt of proposals has therefore been extended until 16 January 2015.

3. Youth Strategy Group

Jen Hazel was invited to present the initial thinking of the group which has been established to consider how work with children, young people and young adults could be developed across the Unitarian Movement. The group has concluded that there is a large gap in our congregations and organisations to support people aged 16-25 years. They have suggested a three-year development project to enrich and develop the experience for young people within Unitarianism.

The Executive Committee has welcomed the approach being taken and asked for further work on a development plan for wider consultation with young people, congregations and others who have an interest for their next meeting in January 2015. The Youth Strategy Group members were thanked for their contributions to date.

4. Red Cross Emergency Appeal

Congregations and individuals are encouraged to support the Red Cross Emergency Appeal for Syria, Iraq and the victims of Ebola. Donations by cheque should be sent to:

Laura Deacon, British Red Cross, 44 Moorfields, London, EC2Y 9AL

Cheques should be made payable to **British Red Cross with 'Unitarian Churches Clara Barton Appeal'** clearly marked on the back

If you wish to make an online donation this can be done via [Virgin Money's Unitarian Churches Clara Barton Appeal](#) page.

5. Vision Day Follow-up

The Executive Committee thanked everyone who had attended the Vision Day, held on 6 September 2014 at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. Feedback has been very positive and there was considerable engagement by all those present from across the country.

Work is now underway to produce comment pieces for publication in *The Unitarian* and *The Inquirer* on the key issues raised and to gain further input. It is envisaged that these will be published in a booklet at the Annual Meetings. A video is also to be produced in co-operation with UKunitarianTV also to be launched at the Annual Meetings as part of the EC report. It is planned that these will form the basis of a new 5-year plan for the work of the General Assembly in support of congregations.

6. Good Society

Support has been given to a project of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland which will lead to a publication in January 2015 of a shared statement of our vision for the Good Society as a positive contribution to the public debate in the run up to the 2015 UK General Election.

7. Millennium Fund

Portsmouth Unitarians (John Pounds Memorial Unitarian Church) were awarded £3000 for equipment as part of a major capital upgrade of kitchen facilities to support a plan being implemented for more meaningful engagement with the local community through their "Open Church" and "Outreach" projects.

8. Study Motions

The Executive Committee discussed recent comments in *The Inquirer* about the use of study motions on social justice issues as a way of improving our processes of deliberation at the Annual Meetings. It was agreed that a workshop for those interested in this issue would be sponsored at the forthcoming General Assembly Meetings in Birmingham in 2015.

Executive Committee, 24 November 2014

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Our visit to Penrhiw Chapel, St Fagans for the District Christmas Service on December 14th and sharing lunch afterwards was delightful. It was such a pleasure to hear the contributions from our congregations and to witness the connections renewed as we celebrated togetherness through worship and fellowship.

We must move forward together in 2015, exploring our commitment to appointing a Minister on a District basis, and placing faith and trust in each other in what will be a tricky process.

We need to make some progress however, if we are to invest in the future of Unitarianism in this part of Wales. It is my belief that we are capable of making an appointment but if we are successful we must simultaneously look at a wider definition of leadership. We need to use the skills already in our midst to support that person and the congregations. In order to do so we should consider radical change to our worship/fellowship times together, meeting at a different time of the week for example in order to make the best of the time available of a paid post.

The journey ahead won't be easy but we can and must travel together in faith and mutual respect.

Julie Nedin

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

A rough path is sometimes worth the treading if, in so doing, we can tread down the brambles in the path of another.

Anon.

ABERDARE

Greetings, as always, from Highland Place and wishing you all a very Happy New Year. Like most people we have had our share of coughs and colds and many faces have been missing from the congregation of late. Our best wishes go to Diane Jones, Iris Davies, Edna Jones and Marion Davies. We hope to see them back among us soon.

Christmas services have been a delight with the church beautifully decorated and lit up. The Christmas show performed by the Sunday School, or 'Uni'Club' as it is known, was an absolute delight and proof of the dedication of Joy Foster and Joan Harlow. The church was packed with over seventy people present. The service ended with the Sunday School and the congregation singing "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas". What a lovely memory was created that night. Thank you Joy and Joan and the children for putting a song in our hearts and sending us home with hope for the future. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Women's League continues to flourish, although as everywhere there have been problems of ill health, Jan Morris, Diane Jones and Anna Williams to name but a few. Our love and best wishes go to all and please forgive me if I have left anyone out! We held a very pleasant Christmas party with food, a bran tub present and shared our memories of years gone by. As Charles Dickens always said "there is magic in the very word - Christmas"

The tea and toast on Monday mornings is still going strong thanks to Tony and Joan. Why not try us out one gloomy Monday morning – it's a great way to start the week! The best toast in Mid Glamorgan (I refuse to be RCT!!), convivial company and stimulating conversation.

The Men's Group ended the year with a three-course meal in The George, Mountain Ash. It was difficult to find for some, but well worth it, with good food and excellent company. Their next meeting will be held in February in Cefn Coed Rugby Club, with a talk given by Gwynn Pritchard.

My very best wishes to all and a healthy and happy 2015. Keep warm!

Marian Whippley

Uni'Club

I am delighted to report that children who left junior school in September 2014 wanted to continue to come to Uni'Club. So I now run a Seniors group on the second Sunday of each month. Seniors also attend all other sessions of Uni'Club. We had a very successful Christmas Service and thanks to Marian for including it in her report. A big thank you to Joan, to Rev Eric Jones for accompanying on

piano, to Nathan for playing the organ and to Joanna Foster who travelled down from London to help on the night and took part for us!

Thank you to the children and parents for making it such an enjoyable event.
Thanks also to the Congregation for their ongoing support.

The children's Christmas Party was held on Tuesday 23rd December. Thanks go to Angela Jones for all her help, much appreciated! It was nice to have Angela's daughter Grace Jones joining us for the Party she is the 9 year old sister of Jacob, our young talented regular Organist. We also had a young visitor from Holland with us for the Party who was over here visiting the family of one of our members. If anyone can assist on occasional Uni'Club sessions please contact me for a chat.

Happy belated New Year to all our readers.

Joy Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDDIAID CAERDYDD

Happy New Year to our friends in the District!

Christmas is well and truly over but we can still look back with some happy memories of the festive celebrations of 2014.

Several members attended the SEWUS Christmas service and lunch at Penrhiw Chapel and St Fagans Village Hall on Sunday 14th December and enjoyed the start of the celebrations in worship and fellowship. Cardiff members were pleased to produce lunch and a warm welcome on a cold, wet day.

On the 22nd December we held our Christmas service at the Friend's Meeting House when members, the children and their families enriched worship by their readings and presence sharing a joyful time together. The singing wasn't bad either!

Our services continue to be regularly well attended by the faithful few who make up our small congregation and we have again been glad to welcome service leaders from the district who have readily embraced the changes we have made to our style of service. We have held an Intergenerational and a discussion service and also enjoyed several stimulating Worship times, conducted by members of the congregation. Many thanks to all who give of their time so willingly. Sarah and Diana continue to work with the children who attend twice a month.

The Women's League group met at the home of Pat Simpson on the 19th December, when we enjoyed a delicious Christmas lunch together. We were delighted that Hetty was able to join us and hope to see more of her in the future. For our next meeting, we will probably have an outing in the spring. All the members of Cardiff League send warmest wishes to Joy Foster for her year as National President which will begin at the General Assembly Annual Meetings in March.

Not all of our church members have been in the best of health in recent weeks and we particularly send good wishes for a better 2015 to Marjorie Collins who has had a difficult time recently and has been missed at services. Having spent a few days undergoing tests in hospital at the start of January, Marjorie is hopeful that continued treatment will improve her health in the coming months. We send good wishes to those who have not been in the best of health recently and to those who have close family members for whom illness has become an upsetting factor in their lives.

The church committee continue to work diligently in respect of Ministry and increasing awareness of the presence of Unitarians in the city.

Thoughts to ponder

'I seek the self-knowledge that may illuminate new possibilities in life and I seek the courage to try them.'
(Robert R. Walsh)

'The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.' (Marie Curie)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

Women's League

We met only once in December as our second meeting was falling on Christmas Eve. We enjoyed our Christmas Lunch at Cefn Rugby Club.

Quite a few services in December and early January were taken by the congregation and all the chapel League members took part (we're getting quite good at it!) As usual, the chapel was decorated by the

Women's League—it looked lovely!

We don't hold meetings in January and we start back on the first Wednesday in February.

Gwen Everitt was in hospital, twice, for a total of over ten days over the Christmas period and is now back in once again – this time with fluid on the lung. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Lastly, I'd like to wish you all a Healthy and Peaceful New Year.

Vera Tomsett

Sadness

Marie Rosenberg's death saddened us all – she was such a lovely, warm-hearted lady – and we send our condolences to Alastair, Isabelle and Elizabeth. Several members represented the congregation at Marie's Celebratory Service which was held at Notage Chapel on 21st November.

Away from Home

Despite the cold weather several members attended the District Christmas Service held at Capel Penrhiw, St Fagans on Sunday, 14th December. It was good to celebrate Christmas in the company of friends from other SE Wales congregations.

A worrying time for Wise Men

As usual our service at 11am Christmas Day was scheduled to be conducted by Three Wise Men (aka Morgan, Phil and Ken.) Not long after 9am Phil reported that he might have to cry-off as Eleri, his granddaughter needed hospital treatment for a nasty facial injury sustained when opening one of her presents. Later, Phil was able to report that Eleri had been attended to and had needed 12 stitches for a wound quite close to one eye. He would now be able to make it to the service—but Morgan would not as he and his wife Marlene had been involved in a car accident. Morgan and Marlene were OK, though their car was a write-off.

The service went ahead without further incident – though the 3rd Wise man was quite nervous.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Happy New Year, and I hope it will be a good one for you all.

The highlight of 2014 at Nottage, I think, was the last service of the year (we kept the best until last!).

On Christmas Day, 16 of us arrived to conduct our own service, thus following the tradition of a service on this day for over 200 years.

Our "chapel family" was augmented by close family members who usually "support us from afar". The Steele family was the largest represented, with grandparents Helen & Alan, son & daughter Shaun & Emma and grandsons Ethan & Kian, who all participated.

Ethan Griffiths, who is 12, wrote the following poem especially for the service, we were overwhelmed by his reading of it, and I hope you will agree he thoroughly deserves to see it in print.

A Man's War

Guns fire as I write this poem,
bombs are blown as I write this poem,
but I carry on.

The wind blows as I write this poem,
grenades are thrown as I write this poem,
but I carry on.

My heart grows as I write this poem,
children grow back home as I write this poem,
but I carry on.

I fall as I write this poem, but my love carries on.....

It was very fitting that the final carol of our service, chosen by Rose Owen in memory of World War 1 was "Silent night". Thanks to all who attended, took part, and added another lovely memory to the history of Nottage chapel.

The preceding weeks at Nottage had been devastating with the loss of Marie Rosenberg and Jennifer Evans close together. Both ladies had been part of our chapel family for over 20 years, both coming as the popularity of our then Lay Pastor, Dr Beverley Littlepage, increased.

Marie arrived having sampled most of the local churches looking for a wedding venue. She liked what she heard, and was followed by Alastair, and then Isabelle and Elizabeth. She was active and involved in chapel life until her illness, which she fought very bravely. Her Celebration of Life service was testament to her popularity, the chapel was overflowing, there were dozens of young ladies, she would have been very pleased with it all. Her beloved daughters were a credit to both her and Alastair. God Bless.

Jennifer came to us following a friend who had become a member during Beverley's early ministry. She and her husband, Tudor, were regular evening attenders, and attended Porthcawl Methodist Chapel for morning services. Later, it was to Nottage every Sunday morning, and if she wasn't there we knew she was ill. Another faithful member who was active in all we did. God Bless.

Rose Owen for many years has decorated our chapel with floral arrangements, but, since a bad fall, has had to cut down on her standing unaided. She very kindly made a white floral tribute for Marie for the chapel, and then later a Christmas one in memory of Jennifer – thanks for your thoughtfulness Rose.

Helen Steele has been very busy on our behalf recently. Helen collected money from us all to send to Crisis at Christmas in Nottage Chapel's name, and then made our advent candle arrangement, as well as reading Christmas Day, many thanks Helen.

Robert Pattimore very kindly weeded our premises before Marie's Celebration of Life service, we are very grateful, thank you.

At Julianne's request our congregation contributed to our local food-bank before Christmas, they are always most grateful to us.

Avril Protheroe

TREBANOS

GRAIG

Trebanos Mixed Choir reformed for a carol service and reunion at the Graig Chapel: we did it in 2013, then again in 2014.

For some of us it was an opportunity to get together for the first time in twelve months, and what a pleasure it was. Lawrence Bowen, the choir's one and only conductor for the forty-something years of its life, accompanied on the organ, finishing up with a stunning rendition of "*When Santa Got Stuck in the Chimney*"!

We shared tea, cakes and lots of chatter and it was good to note that several of those attending had formerly attended many of the choir's concerts.

GELLIONNEN

There's good news and there's sad news. We have heard that Menna Phillips is now a great-grandmother. Congratulations Menna. Phil and Katherine Harris's latest grandchild Aria Jade has celebrated her first Christmas – Aria is such a lovely name and her second name, Jade, has been passed to her by her delighted Auntie Jade.

Gwennan Evans came especially to Gellionnen on 21st December to set up the big plaster crib scene. It was her eleventh birthday and she brought a cake. Thank you Gwen, it is always good to have you with us.

We were much saddened to hear of the death of Marie Rosenberg. Over the years she took many services for us, all prepared with obvious care and attention. She would arrive, driven by Alastair and with musical support from daughters Isabelle and Elizabeth; her services were always a family event. The one day Alastair took the service! Marie had intended, after Elizabeth's first year in university to join the pulpit supply list. We have lost a lot and our sympathy goes out to her family.

The funeral service of Adrian Stone was conducted by the Rev Lewis Rees. Lewis had married Mary and Adrian only nine years earlier. Musical accompaniment was provided by Julie Nedin and Martin Edwards. We were sorry to hear such very sad news Mary.

The SE Wales service in Penrhiw Chapel was much enjoyed as were the soup and bread served afterwards on a bitterly cold day.

Llais, our local Welsh language newspaper puts out a calendar every year and this time around it contains a photograph of Gellionnen taken from behind the gravestones and with daffodils blooming in the foreground.

Midnight service on Christmas Eve was well attended and our collection will be shared with the Pontardawe food bank. Huw Jones had lit the fire many hours earlier and we arrived to a lovely glow and the smell of wood-smoke. Our musicians as always were marvellous, including Caradog Jones with his harp and fresh home from university. Many will have watched *Nadolig Bryn Terfel* on S4C when Caradog's brother Aneurin played violin and guitar – did you notice that some of the music was played in Penrhiw Chapel?

At the end of January we are to be visited by the Mari Lwyd. They came last year and we know that we are in for some fun. They have performed in several schools and are even given to visiting local banks and hairdressing shops! This will be preceded by a short service and concludes with cups of tea and festive fare.

We are always glad to receive visits from the thoughtful and thought provoking people on pulpit supply and look forward to more visits this year. Diolch yn fawr iawn, and to all our good friends – blwyddyn newydd dda.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

Our congregation was saddened to hear the news that our most faithful member Eva Morgan had to move to a Rest Home in Derbyshire. This will be good for her because she will be near her son and family, but a great loss for us. I cannot get used to seeing her usual pew empty or to not hearing her forthright comments on all aspects of life. She will always be a part of our chapel worship. Eva would have loved to be part of our Christmas service (last year now) and see so many present. It was a bumper occasion for us. Wick village cricket team has been revived, and during the season they used our vestry for teas. Most of the members plus families attended our service. The singing was wonderful and the many children were a delightful addition to our worship. Luckily I had enough gifts to give out.

We also have the wonderful prospect of a wedding in the chapel this year so we hope 2015 will be a good year for us.

Helen Lewis our well-travelled organist is off to Patagonia this April with her choir. They are performing four concerts there and in Buenos Aires as part of the 150th anniversary of the first Welsh settlers who travelled in the ship 'Mimosa'. They are journeying right up into the foothills of the Andes. We hope to have a good story to hear and pass on in later issues.

A Happy New Year to all our friends in the District.

Julianne Morgan

BREAKING NEWS

As we go into print we've received word that Gwynn Pritchard (Cardiff Unitarians) has been elected onto the Executive Committee of the General Assembly. We congratulate Gwynn and are very pleased that Wales will have a (Welsh-speaking) voice in the denomination's decision making.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News is **Saturday 21 March**. Items for publication should be sent by to:- **kenneth.morgan25@tesco.net** or Ken Morgan, 25c Holford Street, Cefn Coed y Cymer, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 2RW. Tel: 01685 379016.