

South East Wales District News Sheet – SUMMER 2021



From the President

With Covid restrictions now easing, our congregations will have to decide how they will conduct their services post-pandemic.

Do they return to just holding services on a Sunday at a set time or do they continue holding them via Zoom or a blend of both? Those churches/chapels that have held Zoom services have reached an audience that cannot attend a physical church service for many reasons. These are issues which each congregation will have to consider in the next few months.

Likewise, the District Committee will have to decide how it will go forward. All our District meetings have been via Zoom, including that of our last Christmas service.

The District Committee was hoping to hold our AGM and enjoy a social gathering this September at Penrhiw Chapel, St. Fagan's. Unfortunately, that is not possible as until at least October this year. Therefore, the District will have to make a decision whether or not to hold the AGM via Zoom.

Hopefully, the Indian Covid variant will not veer the easing of restrictions off course. However, we all have to be careful and vigilant as there are reports of some cases involving even vaccinated patients. So, we have to be mindful of such issues as the physical safety, mental health and the needs of all congregations, while grappling with the dilemma above.

As with all problems, let us pray, contemplate wisely and consult widely for an outcome that delivers the message of Unitarianism to all who listen and live by that message.

Take care and stay safe.

Alun

Aberdare: Highland Place

The congregation at Highland Place is getting back to normal after lockdown and a period of almost six months when the front of the church was being renovated. On Sunday 20th June the congregation met at the church, having met in the schoolroom for a few services. At present, Highland Place will meet in person on the first and third Sunday of the month and on Zoom for the second and fourth Sundays. We are pleased with the support we have received for both kind of Service. We now meet regularly at 11am.

We are back on Facebook once again and we are grateful to Jacob for being the administrator and for hosting the Zoom Services. Our Facebook information can be seen on "Aberdare Unitarians".

Thanks to Anne and Alun Watts, Humphrey Evans, Hilda Dumbleton, Jacob Jones, Lis Dyson-Jones, Anne Jones, Angela Jones and Zac Baker for conducting our services during May and June.

Our congratulations to Grace, our organist on achieving wonderful results in her GCSE subjects under difficult circumstances imposed by Covid.

Sympathy is extended to Janis Roberts Cwmbach, on the death of her husband Myrfyn, to Margaret Slocombe on the death of her son-in-law Martin in London and to Marion Davies Bryngwyn, on the death of her sister Gwyneth. In May we were sad to hear of the death of former Sunday school member, Christopher Beasley, 39 Ty Fry. Good wishes are extended to Arthur Saunders who has not been well recently due to a fall. My sympathy to him after I had a fall earlier in the month and it is not pleasant. Arthur now lives with his daughter Rhian Angharad in Redhill, Surrey.

Cardiff Unitarians/Undodiaid Caerdydd

We are continuing to hold weekly zoom services with the second Sunday free to visit other congregations. During the summer we will make decisions about our future patterns of worship, but for now we are continuing as an online community, though we are planning a few picnics to be able to spend some time together in person while it's pleasant to do this outside.

Our monthly Connect groups have created an opportunity for us to spend some relaxed and supportive time together and we have been led with a variety of activities based on meditation, singing, Taize chanting, and learning about the Camino de Santiago de Compostela and Inishmore.

We successfully proposed a motion at this year's GA Annual Meetings (online) and have held a number of meetings about the issue of getting out of investments in oil, gas and coal industries.

We held our own Annual General Meeting online and have also been having a series of congregational conversations about our congregation and its future.

Best Wishes from Cardiff.

Stephen Lingwood

Cefn Coed –Hen Dy Cwrdd

During the course of the pandemic a number of funeral services have been held at Hen Dy Cwrdd but we have been reluctant to resume Sunday services, preferring to adopt a more cautious position. The persistent emergence of Covid in variant strains continues to worry us, but the success of the vaccination programme stirs thoughts of re-opening – albeit with some restrictions such as 'distancing' and masks.

Mrs Vera Thomsett continues to be hospitalised; currently at Ysbyty Cwm Cynon, Mountain Ash. The good news is that arrangements are being made for her to return home with Carer coverage.

We are sorry to hear of the death of Dewi Bowen at the age of 93 years. Our sympathy is sent to his sister-in-law Gwynfa and family members. The funeral will be at Hen Dy Cwrdd and Lwydcoed Crematorium on 1st July, conducted by Rev. Eric Jones.

Gellionnen

Over recent times we have become a closer community. Our gallery is in regular use due to social distancing and weather permitting we gather outside on the mountain after service, to catch up. The gorse and rhododendrons are in bloom and our well behaved dogs (often five of them) have the opportunity to socialise like the rest of us. We now have a monthly dog walk on Saturday mornings.

Mair Evans and family have placed a bench in the graveyard in memory of Mair's husband, the late Clive Evans who was for many years our Chairman and a lifetime member of Gellionnen. We are pleased with the new log burning stove and work is due to begin on our new kitchen.

The Rev. Melda Grantham preached her first sermon as a Minister with us: we were honoured and were pleased that a number of the Swansea congregation joined us for the occasion. Next came the Rev. Dr. Rory Castle-Jones' first service as our Minister Elect and on that day he also welcomed six new members – Jane Hallett, Kay Malson, John Sneade, Andy and Delyth Macinally (adult members) and Gwenna Evans as a junior member.

We continue with our zoom coffee mornings and twice monthly 'Pub Club'. #Blessed, our youth group, set up by Andy Farrell with members in the teens and twenties, meet regularly on Zoom and some are able to attend Chapel. They have been in contact with a number of groups elsewhere and hope to conduct their own Gellionnen service annually. We appreciate the services taken by Sian M Rowden Cooper and Sian Evans. Two year old Aiden's corner is in regular use, we watch him grow and hope for other smaller attenders in the future. As much as we miss singing, we have the pleasure of live performances from Lawrence Bowen as well as a wide range of music chosen by different service leaders.

We send our very best wishes to friends from other congregations and look forward to meeting up in the future. Hwyl Fawr.

Marian Littlepage

Nottage

We continue to hold 'in –person' worship on the second and fourth Sundays of the month and are considering starting congregation led Services on the other Sundays, very soon. We also hope to restart our Friday Club in the near future once we have ensured we can do that safely.

Rev. Lewis Rees

Swansea

We have had some interesting services over the past few months conducted by people from across the District, including some younger members who have addressed us with some different ideas to ponder. Stephen has acted as host to both Services and Fun Club evenings and does so in a most professional manner. We send our grateful thanks to him.

The fruit trees and herb beds in the back of the church are really blossoming and the wild flowers at their roots are really pretty and encourage the bees. Lynn has arranged for the planters at the front of the church to be planted with a multitude of bedding plants. We have arranged a watering rota including UID, Ihor and Rita. The interior of the church is causing us great concern but we are continuing with Phase 1 of the building work, at the end of July. Ihor attended the GA Zoom workshop covering the design programme and templates for the website. We are fortunate that he and Rita are sorting the website for us. Stephen and I attended the Approved Persons Workshop run by Melda and organised by Lis. Many thanks to both for this worthwhile training.

News of the congregation: Julianne continues to write services for us and she has now purchased a mobility scooter. She will soon be racing into town breaking all speed records! Zac and Aled have been busy moving house in Cardiff. Lynn and Margaret are enjoying the sunshine in their motorhome and welcoming Hilary and Dave on occasions.

Very best wishes, love and friendship from the Swansea congregation.

Hilda Dumpleton

Wick

There is little change from our last report. We have become quite the quiz experts and keep in touch the old fashioned way, using post and the telephone, which we are happy with.

We have been lucky as there are currently no leaks or evidence of damp in the chapel – just plenty of spiders. Our graveyard has been kept beautifully and the flowers are blooming.

The congregation from Wick is keeping going and still hopes to meet together in chapel for Harvest and Thanksgiving. The Flower Communion Service this year will be a postal one; different but still a special sharing one.

Our best wishes to all.

Julianne Morgan

From the Secretary

A second District Welsh Language Service, hosted by Diana Bianchi and conducted by the Rev. Eric Jones was held via Zoom, on Sunday 13th June. It was good to see all those who were able to join the Service and thanks from the District to both Diana and Eric. The next of the agreed four annual Welsh Language Services will take place later in the year and will be advertised in good time.

'One of the nicest things about life is not to forget to stop what we are doing and devote our attention to eating' (Luciano Pavarotti) and from Lucille Ball, 'Live honestly, eat slowly and lie about your age'

Thanks to everyone for the contributions to this News Sheet.

Lis