

Unity in Diversity (2015) CIO Trustees Report for 2020 AGM

It is fair to say that Unity in Diversity entered 2019 with a degree of trepidation. Carmarthen Road United Reformed Church – which had provided a warm, convenient and comfortable home for the group for a number of years – had a final service of thanksgiving on 20th January 2019; effectively, this marked the closure of the church, with the expectation that the buildings would be marketed at the earliest opportunity. Thankfully, the church authorities gave permission for UiD to continuing meeting on the premises until a new ‘home’ was found. This breathing space was much appreciated.

After looking at a number of possible venues, it was decided to relocate to the Unitarian Chapel on Swansea High Street in May 2019. There were a number of concerns – primarily the presence of damp in the buildings and the need to share the premises with a busy school of dance – but it clear that the move can be regarded as a success. Average attendance of under 40 at the Wednesday and Thursday Drop-In Sessions has increased to over 80 in February 2020. The outside space at the rear of the chapel offers enormous potential and the very central location has undoubtedly proved a ‘draw’ for some. The rental is very reasonable – and UiD has already left a positive physical mark on the buildings, having made modest improvements to the kitchen area and the previously overgrown area outside (see further information below). The Unitarians have a Trustee on the board Julianne Morgan and every effort is made to sustain a good relationship with the church authorities.

The Trustees have continued to run 2 Weekly Drop-In sessions on Wednesdays and Thursdays, 4pm till 8pm at the Unitarian Church plus a Saturday morning Drop-In purely for women and their children at Swansea YMCA. The Sessions at the church are constructed as such: time for socialising with the offer of personal advice surgeries, a shared meal followed by different levels of English classes. Donations of clothing, house items, toiletries (and sanitary products) are available most weeks.

The Trustees are very thankful for the brilliant group of volunteers who are involved in the running these Sessions:

- Rev Neil Riches (Trustee) has continued to very ably chair the CIO and attends the Thursday Drop-ins offering support where needed. The trustees are very grateful to him for his leadership and wish him a happy retirement from UiD in the near future.
- David Browell as well as a Trustee, is the Coordinator, ensuring the very smooth running of the Drop-in sessions both in their preparation and delivery of them. He liaises with the volunteers and teachers which gives those who attend the Drop-In, a meaningful and happy time in a safe and friendly environment. He is also the CIO Treasurer.
- The English Class teachers are Paddy Walsh, Charles McCarthy , Tess Allen and Neil Roberts. We are thankful to Sam Jones who has been organising the online English lessons since the beginning of Lockdown.

- Andrea Wallwork has developed the children's corner at the church to enable the good stock of toys and books to be readily available for the children who attend the Drop-In sessions with their parents
- Mark Farrell (Trustee) offers support to the attendees at the Drop-In sessions as well as at other times in the week and has spear headed the work on the church garden.
- Debra White has developed welfare rights work. Here is her report:

My paid job is as a benefits advisor and I can help refugees who attend UID with any benefit issue they have.

I can fill in claim forms, assist with phone calls to the DWP and help with appeals if a benefit is refused.

When the Unitarian Church was open I helped 2 to 3 people per week on average with a benefit issue.

I am still assisting some people by telephone at present. I am happy for my phone number to be given out to anyone who needs help.

When we return to having a premises to attend I would like my availability to help with benefits be more widely advertised.

I also help with other matters If I can such as phoning an asylum seeker or refugees GP if they feel their English is not good enough, I phone Migrant Help for asylum seekers or the Welsh Refugee Council if there are problems with their asylum support or problems with their accommodation, I report repairs, I will try to help with getting someone rehoused if they need Council or Housing Association accommodation.

- Terryll Lewis (Trustee) often leads the Thursday sessions and takes the lead in organising the fund raising weekend with LUSH.
- Saba Humayan (Trustee) manages and is continuing to develop the women's group – Sisters in Unity. Up until COVID 19 the group was meeting at the YMCA on Saturday mornings and some of the women also attend the weekly sessions at the Church. (Please see separate Women Group Report)
- Margaret Burdett and Lubna Humayan are the friendly faces at the welcome/reception desk.
- The kitchen/meal preparation team include: Gemma Son, Rowland Evans, Chef Muhammed, Ruth De Ibbara, Guli and Lubna.
- The CIO/ Sessions are also supported by Ros (Trustee) takes part in the Library cake competitions, is a cheque signatory and volunteers at the Clothing Bank; Jill Boggs (Trustee) Jonathon Bowen and Kristina Seit. Kristina (2) and Ben Trimmel volunteer at the Clothing Bank.
- UiD is fortunate to have contact with other people who volunteer their time due to their area of expertise: Mary Hayman from Vivian Art Gallery offering art & craft sessions; Viv Collis a photographic student, offering photography skills; Francesca Bombieri being able to share her knowledge on access to health services; Huw coordinating the use of the PCs and Ako Kaveem & Kamaran Ghafour offering a barber's service.
- Adella Pritchard who is a community worker with the URC joined UiD in December and has become a trustee. Her brief is to work with the trustees to develop the work and capacity of the CIO including developing links with other organisations who support asylum seekers and refugees in Swansea.

Financially UiD has benefited hugely from being one of Swansea's Lord Mayor's charities for 2019/20. Successful applications have been made for food poverty and period poverty grants and a lottery celebration grant which sadly UiD has not been able to spend due to COVID 19. Funding in the way of generous donations has also been received from Gellionnen Church, All Nations Church, the Korean Church in Llanelli, Yoga Ya Restaurant and Matt's Café. Rhosilly and Port Eynon Unitarian churches donated harvest festival food. Hay, Brecon & Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees (HB&TSR) has donated a snooker table, football table and UiD receives weekly donation of clothes from them thanks to Charles bringing them to the sessions. The Welcome Days organised by HB&TSR trips have continued and have been much appreciated by those asylum seekers who have attended them. Our Christmas party was such a great success thanks to the Christmas gifts presents donated from Gellionnen Church and HB&TSR. No Christmas party is complete without a magician and a visit from Father Christmas!

By March of this year the trustees were in the position of having a good programme of events in place for the coming year in terms of developing the church garden and turning it into a community garden; working on a photography project with Viv to be able to hold a celebration event in Refugee Week; holding arts sessions, singing sessions as well as a separate programme of events for Sister in Unity. The number of attendees was growing and friendships were continuing to grow. The onset of COVID 19 meant the Drop-In sessions closed the third week in March and all the listed activities have been halted.

Since March, some of the trustees along with some of the volunteers have worked tirelessly to visit the asylum seekers and refugees known to UiD by visiting them at their homes. At the time of writing this report visits have been made to approximately 80 households. The charity has been able to take out food parcels (thanks to donations from Tesco which are included in these food parcels) and to take out donations of clothing and toiletries, as UiD has set up a Clothing Bank in partnership with Uniting Church Sketty. By forming a What's App group, trustees are sharing information that the charity receives from other organisations who are members of Swansea City of Sanctuary and Swansea Council.

For 20/21 the Trustees like so many others in the voluntary sector are looking for build on their experiences of COVID 19 to be able to offer asylum seekers and refugees known to them a stronger service of friendship, hospitality, support, advocacy and training.

Neil Riches & Adella Pritchard

Unity in Diversity (Swansea 2015) Accounts 1st June 2019 to 31st May 2020

Opening Balance	10560.94
Income	3294.22
Expenditure	7219.22
Closing Balance.	6634.40
TSB Account	6667.64
Cash	-33.24
Closing Balance	6634.40

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

* to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act

and

* to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met or

2. to which in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signature

Date



3 / 8 / 20