

Ty Croeso

Compared to many community projects, Ty Croeso is very modest. On the other hand it runs in a way that is manageable for a small group of volunteers, many of whom have considerable other commitments. The majority of our volunteers are from local CYTUN churches, but we have tremendous support from a few who have no church affiliation, and are strongly supported by the local Elim church (not a member of CYTUN).

Our aim was to provide a venue through which the church could link into the community, offering services relating to health, wholeness and well-being. A major aim was to launch as a branch of the Swansea Food Bank, which has now been running for nearly a year. While our proportion of the food distributed by Swansea Food Bank is small, we provide a service at the north end of Swansea, and this is appreciated particularly by agencies operating in Morriston and the lower end of Swansea Valley. People also come from further away if Tuesday is the best day for them. Statistics are centralised so it's not possible to give information about the amount of food we distribute and receive at Ty Croeso, but across Swansea last December over 30,000 kg of food were handed out, about double the amount the previous year.

The venue is open each Tuesday morning for the Food Bank, for deliveries and collection. This is also a 'Drop In' morning, and when we're not too busy with the food, volunteers have sometimes been a 'listening ear' for local residents. Thanks to a Swansea based counselling agency we are now able to provide one to one counselling at Ty Croeso if requested, and one person has taken this up.

On Thursdays we provide a weekly Welsh conversation group, and on alternate Thursday afternoons have run a series of sessions on mental health issues; and a further series as a bereavement support group. We're looking into the possibility of being a local branch of LASA Credit Union, and in the future hope to run a Money Management course, and a Parenting Course. We work in co-operation with a number of agencies e.g. Communities First, Social Services, Library service, Cruse, etc.

As with many organisations we find it difficult to reach some of those who might benefit from our services. We find that general advertising is not successful, most of our activities needing a personal invitation, as well as reminders! On the other hand we put information posters on the door, and regularly find people reading them. Some have come to events as a result.

Ty Croeso opened in September 2012, with three months free of rent. Since then we have paid £300 per month rent, and our other running costs over the past year have been around £1000. Thanks to some generous grants from organisations, many smaller contributions from individuals, and regular small fund-raisers, we have covered our costs and kept a small reserve in the bank. We are grateful to the Synod and Circuit for their support last year and promised support for 2014-2015.

Pam Cram 13.3.14

Social Issues Report

MRDF (Methodist Relief and Development Fund)

This is the last time I'll write a report with that heading because MRDF is to be 'rebranded'. At present the new name and future plans have not been revealed, but a series of launch events will take place around England (!) during the next month.

The latest newsletter has an update on the **Mali project** we supported as our Circuit Project a few years ago. The partnership between MRDF and Jeunesse et Developpement (J & D) started ten years ago. Since then J & D has flourished and many of the projects now operate independently. Working with rural communities in Southern Mali, families have been helped to feed their children better by learning from one another, and finding that often very simple changes can lead to them being healthier. In this project, on average, after 3 months 85% of the children are no longer malnourished.

Women are seizing the opportunity to work together, and receive training to enable them to set up village savings and loans groups, enabling them to improve their agricultural output, set up sewing businesses, and get medical treatment in a crisis.

Although the projects have not been affected by the conflict in 2012-13, it has restricted the opportunities for MRDF staff to visit the project. The state remains fragile, and this means basic services to remote regions is reduced.

Through MRDF, supporters donated £350,000 for relief work following the fierce **typhoon in the Philippines** in November. AS well as providing materials for rebuilding, MRDF is also working with Jubilee Debt Campaign to support debt campaigners in the Philippines, a nation with a US\$60 billion debt burden. They aim to expose those debts that are illegitimate and should be cancelled. See www.mrdf.org.uk/debt

MRDF has **Mothering Sunday** resources focussing on women in the Bible and communities in India today – women who have demonstrated tremendous courage. See www.mrdf.org.uk/mum or phone 020 7467 5132

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REMEMBER

STREET CHILD WORLD CUP - RIO 2014

March 28th to April 6th.

Up to date news, and video clips on the website each day of the event.

Illustrated talk by Nigel Cram, volunteer at SCWC in 2010 and 2014

At Capel y Nant, Clydach
Tuesday May 6th at 7.00 p.m.

Pam Cram 13.3.14

Report from Brunswick Methodist Church to the Circuit Meeting on 20th March 2014

A Forward Planning Group was formed at Brunswick last year led by the Superintendent Minister. This was to discuss and decide the best way forward for the Church to reach out to the community and make better use of the premises. The Mission And Outreach Group has met on a number of occasions. The distribution of a Christmas leaflet took place with the help of members of the Circuit. Around 1900 leaflets were distributed in roughly 90 minutes. An Easter distribution is planned with leaflets already printed. Again, members of the Circuit have agreed to help. It is planned to purchase banners/posters to display outside the Church and estimates have been obtained. Heather Coleman, who is Circuit member for the group, has given invaluable help concerning fund raising projects and the acquisition of grants. Church Council has approved a limited amount of money to fund its activities but it is hoped that targeted fundraising will reimburse the Church for monies spent initially. It is hoped that the 'Smarties' appeal will pay for the Easter banner and leaflets.

The Property & Finance Group has been active in clearing the office and Oxford (Primary) Room. The office is being renovated with funds sanctioned by the Church Council and Derek's help and advice are very much appreciated. The kitchen and toilet area, off the Main Hall have had a much needed clean. Bernard and Derek have been attending Church Council meetings and supporting the Treasurer and the Group.

We are grateful for the help given by Circuit in finding new tenants and look forward to the premises being more widely used.

The Stewards are available to speak to members of the congregation to explain and reassure them when there are any concerns.

Circuit Outreach Working Party Report to Circuit March 2014

The group met last on January 20th with twelve present.

Christmas

- A) We were encouraged by the successful leafleting at Penlan, Morriston, and Brunswick and by the number of volunteers from our other churches who had helped. All felt that it had been easier and quicker than expected and very worthwhile.
- B) It was reported that the carol singing on the steps at Mumbles had gone well.
- C) We discussed the possibility of some sort of witness/activity/hot drinks for the Santa's Parade next year.

Easter

- D) We were reminded of the "Real Easter Egg" scheme for Easter.
- E) Easter leafleting. Six of our churches were thinking of distributing leaflets this Easter (Brunswick, Morriston, Mumbles, Murton, Penlan, and Wesley). It was suggested that simply advertising our services only meant anything to those with past or present church/Christian connections. Those to whom Easter meant only a bank holiday weekend, Easter bunnies, and Easter Eggs would not be attracted by the idea of a church service or Holy Week Services. We discussed the idea of also distributing tracts about what Easter is all about, why it is so important to Christians, and what it has to offer to those outside the churches. And we looked at the CPO tract "Unconditional Love".
- F) Marches of Witness. Three of our churches would be involved with neighbouring local churches in such marches. (Morriston, Mumbles, Penlan)

Worship Here

- G) The Worship Here group will hold a service in Brunswick on April 11th.

Discussion

- H) We discussed some of the obstacles to evangelism from Michael Harvey's book "Unlocking the Growth" (* see below)
- I) The idea of a regular circuit prayer meeting for outreach was floated.

Next meeting

Monday April 28th 7pm at Brunswick.

*Michael Harvey's book Unlocking the Growth

Chapter 2 The reasons why we don't invite our friends

- 1) "I suffer and I don't want my friend to suffer"
- 2) "My friend won't want to come"
- 3) "I don't want to be rejected"
- 4) "WE have no non-church-going friends"
- 5) "It's the church ;leader's job"
- 6) "My friend said no to me last year"
- 7) "I was never invited – I was born into the church"
- 8) "What is it damages my friendship?"
- 9) "Our services and people are unpredictable"
- 10) "I fear the congregation will think my friend is not 'our' type of person"
- 11) "No empty seats near me"
- 12) "It will be boring"
- 13) "I'm shy"
- 14) "Faith is a private thing"
- 15) "I don't want to be seen as strange"
- 16) "I wouldn't know what to say"
- 17) "They need to be the right people"
- 18) "Inviting is a brilliant idea"
- 19) "They might ask me about my faith and why I go to church"

Re-the Church Uniting in Wales.

The Swansea and Gower Circuit affirms the work of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales and has valued the consultation process for the proposal of a Church Uniting in Wales.

This process has enabled the circuit to revisit the aims of the Trefeca Declaration and to assess the involvement and commitment to ecumenical work in the local churches. Even though some very good work is being undertaken in the Swansea and Gower area including work with non-covenanted churches we recognise along with the Synod that 'more needs to be done in terms of what visible unity means and how we understand it to accord with what Christ wills for our time and place'

The Swansea and Gower Circuit therefore rejects the proposal of a Church Uniting in Wales in its current form and requests that the commission present revised proposals that are not based solely on the historic episcopate of the Church in Wales and takes into account

- a) The validity of each covenanting denomination's ministry, not only the ordained but also recognised lay roles.
- b) A recognition of the inclusive nature of ordained ministry and not one that is based on gender inequality

These revised proposals would need to demonstrate evidence that the formation of a Church Uniting in Wales with added hierarchical structures and cost will improve the mission of the local church.

Capel y Nant Partnership Building Scheme

Our partners at Capel y Nant have been exploring for some time what improvements they might make to the hall in which we meet. After long deliberations and consultation all round, they now have a proposal, which has been priced at £98,500. This does not involve any structural work, other than demolition of a store at the back. It does involve removing the stage and the suspended ceiling; insulating throughout and fitting double glazed windows; renewing the kitchen; putting in an additional toilet; installing energy efficient and variable lighting (instead of the present all or nothing!); new floor covering; new glazed doors to entrance porch; a row of large storage cupboards; and redecoration throughout.

At our recent Church Council, we agreed in principle that £10,000 be contributed to this work from the Methodist side, this being approximately the proportion expected from a membership of 13, as against the Welsh congregation membership of 125 (2012-2013 figures - we have rounded up because we actually now have 15 members). In consultation with the Superintendent, we understood that, of this sum, the Circuit might contribute the usual 10% (i.e. £1,000); and similarly the Synod, on the same principle as would be the case with Methodist schemes. This would leave the Clydach congregation contributing £8,000 (approximately half their current assets). We are not intending to do any specific fund-raising for this work, but will do so for the additional items that will be needed at a later date (e.g. new chairs, blinds to the windows, and some moveable low level staging).

With the Sharing Agreement that we have, such contributions into the ecumenical building scheme are possible. We feel it is not only possible but an appropriate sign of our commitment to the partnership and to our mission together. The hall is already used for a number of community activities as well as being the 'venue of choice' for a majority of our village ecumenical activities. It will enhance our worship space considerably, as well as making it more attractive for a variety of community uses.

Some grant assistance has been secured; there is a sum in hand through the sale of one of the chapels that closed to form the new Capel y Nant congregation; and a recent Gift Day in the Welsh congregation has raised a further £3,000. Once most of the money has been secured work can commence, and our contribution will move things well on the way.

Pam Cram 13.3.14

Report of Local preachers' Meeting held at Pentrepoeth Methodist Church 03.03.14

1. 21 Ministers and Preachers were present, plus 3 guests: Kojo Essiau (visiting preacher), Father Andrew Pearce (vicar of St Teilo, Bishopston) and Sue Raad (asking for a "note to preach")
2. Positive reports were given of recent services conducted by the three preachers on trial: Selina Taylor, Caroline Buckler, and Cynthia Mumford
3. Sue Raad spoke about her faith journey and call to preach. She was supported by Father Andrew Pearce. The meeting voted by 18 votes to 1 (with one abstention) to give Sue a "Note to Preach".
4. Various concerns and matters around the circuit were raised, including the poor health of various members, the Aldersgate Sunday Service on May 18th, the continuing work at Morrison, the proposed setting-up of a "drop-in" at Brunswick, the positive impact of the coming together of Bethel URC and Sketty Methodists and the Swansea Night Shelter.
5. Opportunities for "CPD" for preachers were highlighted
6. Rev Andy Walker gave a lively presentation on ecumenical projects taking place on the Gower, including Messy Church and the Stable Trail

Money Management Courses

About 12 months ago, the Circuit agreed to fund Martin Gregson and myself to attend Money Management training run by Christians Against Poverty. As a result of that training, we have run two courses in conjunction with Nigel Evans of Communities First: one in Clase, with 8, mainly single parent, women; and one in Morriston, attended by three men in their 50's. The series of three meetings in Clase proved to be extremely lively, interactive, but well received, even though some of the material was not appropriate for people who are, by and large, not in employment. As a result of that initial course, we modified the content, and reduced the course to 2 sessions at Morriston. In some respects, the course does not provide clients with any new ideas, but it challenges them (and all of us?) to examine the way we spend our money, and what we regard as essentials, priorities and luxuries. Good Biblical principles!

Alan Cram