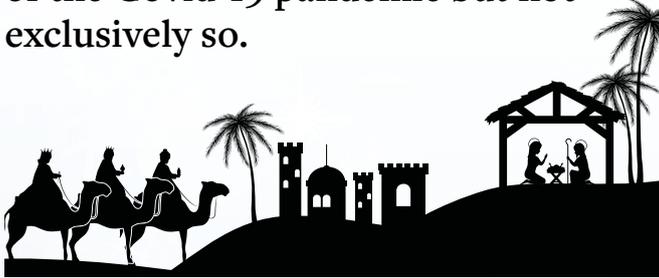


Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ during challenging days. This newsletter has been produced during the Advent season at the end of an extraordinary year primarily because of the Covid-19 pandemic but not exclusively so.



Throughout 2020, Cytûn has striven to enable its member churches and bodies in association to respond to unprecedented challenges around restrictions to the way in which we worship and serve together. Where possible, the staff have also tried to ensure that matters identified in our original Work Plan were delivered.

Some major projects such as witnessing at national festivals could not be achieved but other pieces of work have continued. A great deal of additional work undertaken by the staff team has involved responding to the challenges brought about by the pandemic. Welsh Government Voluntary Services Recovery Fund funding, administered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, has enabled Cytûn to plan and deliver some additional strategic work focused on shaping a post Covid-19 Wales.



Cytûn continues to serve as a growing body. It is a cause of great celebration that both the Assemblies of God and the Iraqi Christian Fellowship were received into membership. We look forward enormously to working together in the future.

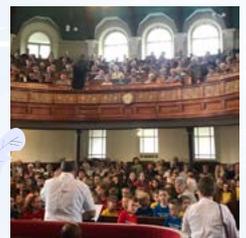


*Interfaith Conversation
Llanrwst Eisteddfod, 2019*

Remembrance, Thanksgiving and Commitment

On a pastoral level, churches have experienced a deep sense of grief in the face of profound loss. We remember those who have lost their lives due to the pandemic and offer prayers for the many who grieve. In conversations with government Cytûn has highlighted the need, when circumstances allow, for Wales to remember those who have died and to seek to comfort their grieving friends and families.

While many congregations have struggled in the face of the Covid-19 restrictions others have flourished through innovative virtual meetings and acts of worship. Creative new liturgies have emerged and church leaders have gathered together to discuss challenges for our shared futures in a way that could not have been imagined a year ago. Cytûn was still able to support the Welsh commemoration on Remembrance Sunday and is currently advising those charged with marking Holocaust Memorial Day in 2021. Much of this work has been steered by Aled Edwards in the staff team. Aled has also been active in ensuring that new structures have been put in place in the face of Covid-19. Carefully nurtured relationships have borne fruit.



In seeking to complete its work during the past few months Cytûn has relied heavily on two sets of relationships it has nurtured over many years: working closely with partners in Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and engaging almost on a daily basis with Welsh Government ministers and officials and other statutory bodies and third sector organisations in Wales. Our service has been marked and defined by coproduction during difficult days as creative partnerships have flourished around shared commitments.

Shared Witness

At the beginning of the restrictions, Cytûn ensured that the regular Sunday evening lighting of a candle initiative throughout Britain and Ireland was introduced bilingually. Gethin Rhys has contributed extensively to the regular ecumenical officers' Zoom conferences hosted by Churches Together in England enabling churches, on a four nations basis, to share thoughts and experiences on how the pandemic is impacting on the Christian community in Britain and Ireland.

Assisting British and Irish Church Leaders

Working closely with colleagues at CTBI, Cytûn played its part in ensuring that Welsh voices were heard at the church leaders' conversation that produced the shared Easter Sunday statement. Meetings between leading church administrators and finance officers have also been facilitated on a four nations basis. All these conversations are ongoing. Hopefully, such interactions will enable churches to respond appropriately in a well-informed way as communities move from lockdown during the coming months.

Witness and Mission in Wales

Peredur Owen Griffiths has helped Cytûn to make strategic alterations in budget lines with a view to responding as effectively as we can to current needs. Time that would have been allocated to witnessing at the two national *eisteddfodau* and the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show has been given to effective communications as several meetings have been held virtually.

Despite the difficulties this year, contact has been maintained with local congregations throughout Wales offering advice and support. It has always been encouraging to receive regular reports from local councils of churches working in places as diverse as Bangor, Waunfawr near Aberystwyth, Neath, Caerphilly, Newport and Caldicot. Offering encouragement and support to specific mission focused teams such as the pioneering Citizens Church in Cardiff has been a cause of celebration.



Community House, Newport

Meetings have also been arranged with an array of external partners who have turned to Cytûn for guidance. They have included the media, academia, third sector organisations and bodies such as Gwent Police, the Home Office and the Charity Commission. Contacts with the Urdd (Welsh League of Youth) have continued. It was good to support the Urdd's partnership with the University of Alabama and the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Peredur has also been active in furthering the work of the Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales. One area of consideration has been the development of community pastorates. This work will be taken up in the future. Throughout, good relations have been maintained with the Free Church Council of Wales especially regarding church and state matters.

Covid-19 and the Public Square

Cytûn, through the meticulous diligence of Gethin Rhys, has provided regular briefing notes and updates which are [available on our website](#) and social media platforms. This work has been immense. Cytûn has been able to offer advice to church officers concerning government guidance and regulation throughout the pandemic and has worked with several faith community leaders engaging constantly with Welsh Government officials. The briefing notes have been greatly appreciated offering up to date information in the context of unprecedented restrictions. Cytûn also co-chaired and assisted two well attended webinars with government officials concerning the restrictions.



Welsh Government Faith Communities Forum

In addition to responding to the demands of Covid-19 Gethin has continued to work across devolved and other policy areas and led on significant matters planned before the pandemic:

- focused particularly of the rights of EU citizens through the work of the Wales and Europe Group,
- completed research on climate change and worked with others in preparing for [Climate Sunday](#),

- Cytûn learnt from the work of Eco Church and Live Simply concerning reducing carbon footprint
- and attempted to ensure that the voices of the churches are heard in shaping the new curriculum for Wales.

Gethin also met regularly with the pertinent church policy officers through the Laser Group.

Building on the long-term work of the Welsh Government's Faith Communities Forum and Race Forum, both informed by Cytûn's involvement, new conversations have been brought about in response to COVID-19. The newly formed Faith Leaders Funerals and Burials Group has played a key role in advising officials on how faith communities have distinctive concerns around end of life practices and honouring those who have died during the lockdown. The Welsh Government has also set up the COVID-19 Moral and Ethical Advisory Group (Covid19 MEAG-Wales). Crucially, it has published a faith informed Coronavirus: Ethical Values and Principles for Healthcare Delivery Framework. Its work is ongoing.



Welcome to Wales

Under the staff leadership of Sasha Perriam, the Cytûn Welcome to Wales Course was held virtually. Once again, positive feedback was gained from the participants and we were able to share experiences with each other and pray for one another. The course seeks to introduce those new to ministering in Wales with a greater knowledge of the nation's history, faith narratives and how devolved government works.

Interfaith Activity

Sasha, in addition to ensuring that Cytûn has continued to work effectively through its own governance structures, has played a crucial role in supporting the administration of the Interfaith Council for Wales. Progress has been made on setting the Council up on a firmer administrative platform and much was achieved during Interfaith Week highlighting how faith communities have worked together over the past twenty years on S4C's *Dechrau Canu Dechrau Canmol*.



Asylum Seekers at Penally Camp Pembrokeshire

Unexpectedly, the Home Office placed a number of asylum seekers in the Penally Camp near Tenby. Cytûn works through the operational group set up to oversee the care of the service users placed there and has been active in establishing an interfaith chaplaincy to offer them pastoral and spiritual care. Many thanks to the Reverend Rob James for working closely with the local Muslim community and others in offering care. Plans are currently being put in place with a number of partners in preparing for Christmas at the Camp.

Racial Justice

Working with friends in Evangelical Alliance, Cytûn's Racial Justice Network has furthered plans to secure representation for black led churches on the Welsh Government's Faith Communities Forum. The network also received reports from Aled on the recommendations made by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna on the causes of the disproportionate numbers of black and ethnic minority Covid-19 deaths.