

**A**dvent greetings. In many ways, 2021 has seen Cytûn return to and deliver on aspirations set out in the Swanwick Declaration of 1987 and the subsequent proposals set out for Wales. Much has been achieved during extraordinary times. Some key aspects of the work are set out here.

## Ecumenical Achievement

### Engagement with CTBI

Cytûn has deepened its relationship with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) offering considerable support regarding racial justice matters. Research was offered to CTBI on race relations in Wales and Cytûn played a significant part in preparing for the George Floyd Anniversary Service held in Brixton in May. Parts of the service were conducted in Welsh. Strong contacts have been built upon around the Churches' Refugee Network and the work of Richard Reddie as CTBI's Director of Justice. Cytûn supported the David Goodbourn Annual Lecture in May focused on *Untangling the Legacies of Slavery* given by Anthony Reddie.

We wish Bob Fyffe well on his retirement thanking him for his service and look forward enormously to working with his successor as General Secretary, Nicola Brady, especially on the

shared Church, Nationhood and Identity work. Thanks also to Peter Colwell for his service as the Acting General Secretary.

### Wishing Peredur Owen Griffiths Well

Until May, much of Cytûn's engagement with CTBI was brought to fruition through the work of Peredur Owen Griffiths. He served us well as Cytûn's Faith, Order and Witness Enabler until his election to the Welsh Parliament. At the Senedd he currently serves as the Chair of the Finance Committee. We were all thrilled for Peredur on his election but miss him very much as a staff team member. He brought exceptional skills and enthusiasm to his core work of witnessing and offered additional expertise in financial scrutiny. We await to hear whether the national events will be held during 2022 but have put contingencies in place to enable Cytûn to respond appropriately.





## Growing Membership

It has been a joy to welcome new churches and fellowships into Cytûn membership. The involvement of the Assemblies of God has been a blessing and the engagement of the Iraqi Christian Fellowship has brought home issues from the Middle East that have informed the conversations of the Cytûn Racial Justice Network. Recent updates on the consequences of events in Afghanistan on Iraqi radicals have been informative.



Sasha Perriam has been successful in encouraging churches to reengage with the Racial Justice Network and has facilitated new members joining. She has put her 18 years of service with Cytûn to good use by refreshing contacts. External partners have enabled Cytûn to consider in depth issues such as dementia in black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Suzanne Duval of Diverse Cymru gave a powerful presentation before the Network and provided a valuable update. Sasha has also assisted in Cytûn's response to public transport issues.

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## Growing Engagement

It was particularly encouraging in April to receive a warm letter from Gavin Calver, CEO of the Evangelical Alliance, noting the unity enjoyed between EA Wales in working alongside each other. Cytûn has engaged in particular with the Redeemed Christian Church of God concerning Covid-19 vaccination concerns. It has been a joy

to work with Pastors Edwin Egede and Ademola Agunbiade in Cardiff alongside Siân Rees of Evangelical Alliance in facilitating vaccination pop-ups in churches such as the Garden of the Lord in Tremorfa. This work has been achieved working effectively with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales. We pray that the Spirit may guide and strengthen us in mission and service to God's world.



*(Photo taken before March 2020)*

Cytûn rejoiced with the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Nicholas, Cardiff following the election of Archimandrite Iakovos Savva as Bishop of Claudiopolis. He has served as parish priest in Cardiff since 2000 and was elected unanimously to the office of the Bishop by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate following the recommendation of his Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain in February 2021. He was ordained Assistant Bishop to His Eminence on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March.

Relationships with the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales and the Free Church Council for Wales have continued and a deepening engagement with the Evangelical Alliance is a source of celebration. The Commission of the Covenanted Churches is conducting significant faith and order reflections on shared ministry and oversight or episcopate. This work is ongoing.

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## International Ecumenism

Throughout 2021, Cytûn has remained in contact with the Focolare Movement enjoying its fellowship, prayers and emphasis on developing ecumenical relationships.



A Cytûn presence was ensured at the virtual July Assembly of the Conference of European Churches and initial conversations have been held around how Welsh churches will engage with the European Regional Pre-Assembly to be held from 25 to 27 February 2022 in Warsaw, Poland, ahead of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) also taking place in 2022. We look forward to Gethin Rhys representing Cytûn at the World Council of Churches.

## Local Churches

Local churches have continued to provide feedback on their activities. Cytûn has also continued to provide support concerning local ecumenical structures and constitutions. This flow of information has for example enabled Cytûn to assist Gwent Police in its community engagement with churches and other faith groups. A great deal was also learnt from the activity of Muslim Doctors Cymru delivering vaccination pop-up centres in mosques in the Newport area.

Concerning enabling local ecumenism, Cytûn has missed the invaluable work of Sally Thomas and has had to turn to the churches and denominations for support and representation on some ecumenical structures.



(Photo taken before March 2020)

## Bodies in Association

Cytûn has sought to support its agencies and bodies in association seeking to engage with their work whenever possible. Staff attend Christian Aid's Wales Committee and remain involved in its work. Reports have been received from others.

Ideas for the future have been discussed with the Bible Society and Embrace the Middle East. Cytûn profiled the work of Through the Roof in its efforts to enable churches to be inclusive of disabled people. The excellent work of Housing Justice Cymru has also been profiled.

## Chaplaincy

Much was achieved through the Penally Interfaith Chaplaincy in serving asylum seekers and Cytûn has continued to support the Royal Welsh Society Chaplaincy and profiled its work in the National Conversation Report. Efforts have continued to establish a recognised Senedd Chaplaincy but there has been no further progress.

## Welcome to Wales Course

Once again Cytûn's Welcome to Wales Course has been held virtually. Almost 20 participants joined this year's training. Sasha Perriam takes a lead from within the staff team in organising this unique training initiative. The course not only enables ministers and church workers new to Wales to have a better understanding of the context in which they find themselves ministering but also enables Cytûn to hear of new vocations being enabled and celebrated.

## Interfaith Work

Cytûn's involvement in setting up what became the Interfaith Council for Wales following the events of 9:11 twenty years ago and in securing its success was highlighted in a BBC Radio Wales *All Things Considered* programme introduced by Abdul Azim Ahmed in the company of Saleem Kidwai. The Welsh language broadcaster S4C explored how faith communities have worked together in Wales during the same period for *Dechrau Canu: Dechrau Canmol*. Cytûn assisted members of the Interfaith Council to prepare a response to the consideration of S4C's future



funding and liaised with Welsh Government and other faith communities regarding tensions in the Middle East publishing a joint statement in May calling for peace and respect valuing a shared humanity. In this area of work and others, Cytûn has engaged fully with the press and media in Wales and beyond. Premier Christian Radio has asked for contributions.

The Interfaith Council for Wales reached a significant landmark recently in agreeing a constitution to be submitted to the Charity Commission with a view to the Council becoming a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO).



Sasha Perriam has been proactive in helping the Chair of the Interfaith Council, Kate McColgan, and her colleagues to put together an events programme. During September, Interfaith Council members participated in an event to commemorate those lost to Covid-19 with the Welsh Mormon community in Rhiwbina and supported a reflection on the festival of Sukkot. Gethin Rhys has also continued to serve as an effective conduit between the Interfaith Council and the Welsh Government's Third Sector Partnership Council.

Throughout 2021, Cytûn has continued to assist others in arranging national services and ceremonies: Holocaust Memorial, Srebrenica Memorial Day, Remembrance Sunday and services at locations such as Llandaff Cathedral. Links with the World Council of Churches' Interfaith Officers Network have been retained as has Cytûn's engagement with the Anglican Network of Inter Faith European and North American Concerns (NIFENAC) building on the network's visit to Wales in 2019.

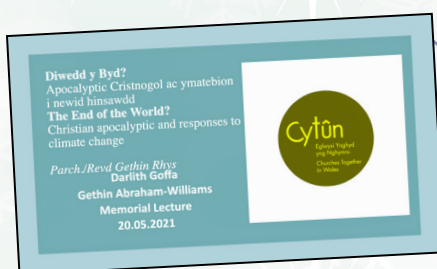
## In the Service of God's World

### Climate Sunday

Cytûn is a full partner in the Climate Sunday campaign, which encouraged churches of all shapes and purposes to hold a Climate Sunday service, commit to local action and raise a voice with the UK Government as it prepared for the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November. Cytûn was present at that conference, with churches across Britain and Ireland and organisations such as Christian Aid, CAFOD and A Rocha UK, ensuring that a Christian voice is heard calling for the protection of God's creation and the future of humanity. To that end Climate Sunday asked to hear stories from local churches that have addressed these issues. A briefing paper of COP-26 is being prepared by Gethin Rhys.

### Gethin Abraham-Williams Memorial Lecture

The third Gethin Abraham-Williams Memorial Lecture given by Gethin Rhys on the fascinating theme of 'The End of the World? Christian apocalyptic and responses to climate change' is available online. Cytûn is indebted to Gethin for his challenging and perceptive thoughts. His timely lecture was well received and greatly appreciated.



## Covid-19 Response

Cytûn has been in weekly if not daily contact with Welsh Government ministers and officials throughout the Covid-19 pandemic concerning the implications for churches. We are indebted to Gethin Rhys for his invaluable briefings and service to the churches. We have contributed expert advice and communicated the views of individual churches about their situation. Several virtual question and answer sessions were arranged with a significant number attending each session.

Cytûn continues to provide a special section on our website summarising the latest regulations and advice on Covid-19 and its impact on church activity in Wales. The numbers visiting the website have risen significantly because of this page, and we have also done our best to respond to specific questions from local denominations and churches. It is the responsibility of the managers or trustees of each building or audience to ensure compliance with the law, but Cytûn is pleased to support them in bearing their responsibilities in this area.

Cytûn represented the churches on working groups within the Health Service as they faced the complex moral questions raised by the pandemic. We are a foundation member of the Compassionate Cymru working group, which aims to promote a kind and compassionate attitude to people in general and especially those facing bereavement, and we contributed to the draft bereavement strategy. We are also a permanent member of SHaW (Spiritual Health and Wellbeing Working Group at NHS Wales).

## Education Matters

In conjunction with the Evangelical Alliance and other faith communities, Cytûn is in constant contact with the Welsh Government's Education Department as preparations for a new curriculum for schools in Wales progress. We were pleased to be able to meet Jeremy Miles MS shortly after his appointment as the new Education Minister.

Cytûn is part of a group convened by our body in association, the Bible Society, which produces material and guidance to enable local churches to take advantage of the opportunities to deepen their links with their local schools, as the new curriculum requires schools to start learning at their feet taking advantage of what is available in their *cynefin* (locality).

## Wales and Europe Working Group

Now that the process of leaving the European Union has been completed, the Working Group is turning its attention to the many links that Cytûn and its member churches have, not only with the European Union, but across the European continent. Some of these links are ecumenical. The Working Party is keen to draw up a list of all those links in order that churches and Christian organisations can, within their limited resources, support one another and avoid unnecessary duplication. They are therefore inviting all our members to let us know of the links they have and provide them with public contact details or web addresses, so that the wide range of pan-European links can be of as much benefit as possible. Please respond to Gethin.

## Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Cytûn gained a great deal of knowledge and experience through its hands on engagement with the Penally Multi Agency Meetings facilitated by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership following the placing of asylum seekers by the Home Office in the camp in September 2020. The story of how Cytûn facilitated the setting up of an Interfaith Chaplaincy Team and worked alongside other agencies to serve the asylum seekers located there, many of whom were Christians, has been set out in the extensive *National Conversation Report* tabled at the Cytûn AGM meeting held in June. There was a discernment at the time that churches and other



faith communities made conditions at the Camp better but couldn't make the decision to place the men there right.

## Urdd Gobaith Cymru

Prior to the fall of Kabul into the hands of the Taliban in August 2021 Cytûn had already contacted churches concerning the need to find homes for Afghan refugees. Churches did offer some properties.

Within hours of the fall of Kabul, Cytûn was called upon to assist Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh League of Youth) in pressing the case that Afghan refugee children and their families should be housed in their centres. Cytûn has worked closely with the Urdd around its traditional peace and goodwill message for a number of years. Initially, the Home Office was reluctant to allow the placement but the Welsh Government, local authorities, faith communities and former servicemen and women familiar with the families underlined that the Urdd could bring an additional level of care to the children and their families. Some three weeks later, the Urdd announced that it was preparing to receive families having worked with the Welsh Government, the Home Office, local authorities and Cytûn. Initially, Cytûn served as a conduit for conversation between the rapidly set up Multi Agency Response Group and Afghan community leaders in Cardiff. The model of care offered to refugee children by the Urdd and those who have worked with it may now be viewed as best practice in the UK and beyond.

## Nation of Sanctuary

Following a request by Cytûn at the Faith Communities Forum, the Welsh Government

declared its support in March 2012 for Wales becoming a Nation of Sanctuary. Achieving this goal has been a strategic aim for Cytûn. In a press release issued on 26<sup>th</sup> August Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Justice, underlined that Wales would provide a distinctive Welsh response to the Afghan crisis. It is now the practice of Welsh Government to define Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary. In September, it was announced that some 230 people from Afghanistan would be given accommodation in Wales.

## Cross Party Group on Faith

We were pleased to see so many members attending the first meeting of the Cross Party Group on Faith at the Welsh Parliament in November. These included Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, a former Cytûn member of staff. Cytûn will continue to attend this group, and other cross-party groups on topics such as hospices, funerals, gambling and poverty. Most meetings are public and are advertised on the Senedd Wales website.

## Future Conversations

Cytûn's *National Conversation Report* is offered to the churches as a resource and as a platform for further discussion. Its contributors have offered thoughts on local mission, serving others in the public arena, engaging with other faiths and with those of no faith and contending with the challenging issues of our day. The Church in Wales' Global Issues Forum has welcomed Cytûn staff members into its conversations around what sort of church will evolve out of the pandemic. These conversations are ongoing.