

Lewisham Unity

Annual Report 2021



We rely on you!

Our members and friends supported us with over £5500 in individual donations last year. The goal for 2022 is to increase that to £6400.

Together Apart

A second year of being mostly virtual shows how resilient we are!

We had many false starts in the course of 2021 — we were all worried about each other and our families, yet we were longing to be together again. We opened the doors of the meeting house on several occasions, only to have to close them again shortly thereafter. Our dedicated team of worship leaders and coordinators kept

us connected on Zoom when we couldn't meet in person. But there was so much more hope this year!

We welcomed several new visitors to our virtual and in-person gatherings, faces who have now (*cont'd*)



1000+ hours

That's how much time volunteers spent working at and for the meeting house last year, including the committee and special teams.

12

OFFICIAL MEMBERS

We have 12 official members who serve as our backbone

30

ACTIVE COMMUNITY

About 30 lovely people regularly interact with our community

15

AVERAGE SERVICE

On average, about 15 amazing people attend our service each week

Thank You!

For your support, whether financial or through sweat equity, we are extremely grateful. We could not exist without you!

(cont'd from p1) become regular sights. It was uplifting to know that the rhythm of the community was not stalled due to the circumstances of the pandemic.

We exchanged virtual visits with other congregations, including Edinburgh, New Unity, and Godalming and hosted some really moving events, such as Breaks & Joins and Active Hope (more in Claire's report below).

We were also very blessed to have Rev Julio Torres with us as a ministerial intern. His presence has added some much-appreciated stability to our community.

The management committee also grew this year, as we welcomed Elizabeth Bergeron, Ben Hoisin, and Paula Nottingham onto the team. With a lot of important organisational and operational issues to tackle this year — including ever-changing Covid protocols, bringing in a new tenant to the flat, and a certain amount of repair work on the building — we really benefitted from having more input.

On a personal level, I have been back and forth a bit this past year with family obligations in the US and it looks very much like we will be moving back there later in 2022. I will continue to stay committed to and involved with Lewisham Unity for as long as I can.

Many thanks to the Committee, the Worship and Communications teams, the Garden group, and especially Rev. Claire for all of the hard work that has been done to keep us connected in a meaningful way this past year. I am so proud of what we have accomplished during such a difficult time. This community continues to inspire me on a daily basis!

Ann Howell
Chair



Report from the Minister

Rev. Claire MacDonald reflects on 2021

This has been another extraordinary year of change, growth, joy and challenge for Lewisham Unity.

In March 2021 (see above) we were on Zoom. In March 2022 we are planning our return to meeting in our meeting house and developing our community garden 2021 was slow and very quiet — but looking back on it we seem to have done a lot.

In May we began our first *Breaks & Joins* arts workshops — a collaboration with Sue Mayo (far left) and her team from Goldsmiths University. *Breaks & Joins* is a continuing project about mending our stuff to mend ourselves and the world. Mo Sumah, far right, ran our first repair workshop. A poetry workshop in our garden placed poems on degradable clay rounds, left in our garden to return to earth.

Peace-maker Raj Bhari ran a series of non-violent communication workshops with member Ben Hoisin and Raj and I made a podcast about our own broken limbs and what we learned.

Our Sunday services continued on Zoom and we gathered a growing community of new attenders and new members from Exeter, Cardiff (cont'd)

(cont'd from p2) and Ely — and from St Neots as one of our local members moved away but could still join us. We continued to build and strengthen a network of worship leaders, both Unitarians and cross faith leaders as well as poets and artists. Shana Begum, Natalie Davis, Lindsay Stevens and Alex Brianson, Revs Winnie Gordon and John Harley all led services. We collaborated with York, Edinburgh and, on Xmas Eve, with New Unity. Most importantly we also engaged Rev Julio Torres as an associate minister — Julio has led gatherings, has supported us throughout the year and some of us attended his online UUA ordination on 4 December, for which I gave the address.

For our 4th Sunday **Café Connect** gatherings we drew on members, especially Joel Xhaard, as well as Tatiana Spencer and Linden MacMahon, who also co-led our Active Hope workshops and we invited artist Rebecca Swift of Entelechy Arts to lead as well in July. In the late winter member Simone Riddle also hosted a Café with Hannah Gretton of Citizens UK. This year we also co-led a communion gathering with a template put together and written by members of Common Street Spiritual Center from Natick Massachusetts who have also become a kin community over Zoom. By the end of the year our services had built to an average of around 15 people each week from a network of members and attenders now numbering around 30.

Philosophically, and with the support of the Worship & Programming group, we have kept and developed our commitment to queer, green spirituality and social justice.

Rev Claire MacDonald
Minister



Wedding Bells

In autumn 2021, Lewisham Unity was able to host a 'memories of a lifetime' wedding for the collective Nottingham, McIver, and Smith families. On the 29th October, Pauline and Tom were able to formally sign the register for their wedding at the Lewisham Unity Meeting House with Lori (Registrar) and Reverend Claire presiding.

It was a small family gathering of parents and twin sister, Patience, that was followed by dedicating a garden bench with the community on the Sunday and a larger celebration on the Monday at Queen's House Greenwich with Claire as officiant.

31 DAYS OF LIGHT

A highlight of 2021 was the month-long community-curated feast for the eyes and ears that was "31 Days of Light". We called upon our community and friends far and wide to share content to bring a little light in each day of December. We were overwhelmed with the beautiful photographs, poems, music, artwork, and readings that came to us from across the country and across the world. We have preserved most of the content in an archive on our website and invite you to have a look: www.lewishamunity.org.uk/31-days-content



Lewisham Unity Treasurer's Report 2021

2021 was the second successive financially challenging year, which has negatively affected our financial position. In 2021 our current account balance reduced from £8,862 to £7,274.

The most significant expenses, in order with the largest first, were minister costs, utility bills and building maintenance (including a new front door for the flat).

In recent years, our most significant income streams, in order with the largest first, were rent, room hire, service collections. All three of these were reduced in both 2020 and 2021. In 2021 we made additional funding efforts to reduce our deficit, the most significant of which was a crowdfunding appeal.

In 2022 our minister will reduce her role from ½ time to ¼ time. This will reduce costs, although some of the saving will be offset by having to pay for more visiting service leaders.

Our building maintenance spending has reduced in the last two years to a level that is not sustainable. The building is converted from a residential 1930's house. It is nearly 100 years old and, over many years, has not been maintained to the same standard as most residential, fully occupied buildings. We will need to spend significantly more on updating the building in 2022. We expect the building improvements to create a more attractive space for room rental, which in the long term could allow us to increase our income from room hires.

Taking into consideration the points above, the current financial position allows us to continue to:

- Support having our own minister, ¼ time in the near future and possibly return to being able to support a ½ time minister after 2022
- Maintain the building by carrying out repairs, improvements and decorations as needed
- Hold occasional community events, such as the Jam and Jam and Active Hope events that we have held in the past 2 to 3 years

Our reserves have been reduced and we are now in a more vulnerable position if there are unexpected, unplanned costs. The major risks to our financial position are:

- Urgent repair work needed for the meeting house.
- If there are significant, urgent repairs needed, then it could significantly deplete our reserves.
- A return of lockdown restrictions, which would reduce our income from room hire and service collections

Mark Cooper
Treasurer

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Ann Howell, Chair

Mark Cooper, Treasurer

Elizabeth Bergeron, Secretary

Tatiana Spencer

Ben Hoison

Paula Nottingham

Lewisham Unity Financial Accounts 2021

	2021	2020	2022
Expenses	Amount	Amount	(Projected)
Pulpit and Music for Services	350	917	1000
Minister Payroll, Pension, Conferences	20808	19489	10500
Admin Costs & Office Equipment	246	312	900
Building Maintenance	2217	6380	15400
Garden	0	0	1300
Utilities	3536	4650	7500
Insurance	1422	1360	1500
Unitarian Quota, publications, meetings	210	235	400
Donations	0	1169	0
Events	615	550	1500
Total	29404	35062	40000
Income			
Rent – flats	14820	15720	19000
Collections	711	355	1100
Donations	2033	195	2000
Gift Aid	0	0	1000
Memberships	2840	2873	3300
Room Hire and Parking Hire	1885	1361	2500
Grants	3350	7075	11000
Events	2177	431	500
Total	27816	28010	40400
Surplus / Deficit	(1588)	(7052)	400
Starting Balance	8862	16164	
Closing Balance	7274	8862	

Unspent grants for a specific purpose are:

1. £2475 from National Garden Scheme for the development of a community garden scheme
2. £1000 from Heritage Lottery for a Jam and Jam event

Unrestricted funds at 31 December 2021 are £3799

Unrestricted funds may be used for any purpose described in the governing documents