

# Weoley Hill Church News



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*April 2018*

## *Thoughts From The Cottage*

Dear Friends

How do you make something fresh and real when you have done it many times? As I get older birthdays become less important as do Christmas festivities, where I go on holiday, and many other things. Sadly, the same issues confront the church in faith festivals. How do we celebrate Christmas, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost with a freshness and reality as if it was the first time we have done it? The situation is compounded by the need to help those who have never celebrated the reason behind the season to do so for the first time.

In Churches Together in B45 Lent Course we have tried to experience the events of what we call Holy Week as if we were Jesus and as if we were the disciples, the crowd, the religious leaders or the onlookers. We have then tried to relate it to our faith journey in 2018. Not easy, but very fruitful if we persevere.

Here at Weoley Hill Church we have had our regular Easter worship on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day which, God-willing, was moving, thoughtful and inspirational. There is plenty of opportunity to share the Easter story but first we have let it get under our skin so that we can live and breathe it. Come on a journey with me if you will.

The journey begins a few miles north of Jerusalem towards the end of March in AD30. Travellers are making their way towards Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Passover. Amongst them is Jesus who has travelled by foot from Nazareth with his disciples, some of his family and other followers, picking up more friends on the way. As they journey he chats to those around him, pauses to heal those in need and teaches the crowd by telling them

stories. As they near the city Jesus sends two of his followers to fetch an unriden colt and he sits on it to ride the last few miles. In adopting the traditional manner of a King coming in peace the crowd recognise Jesus as a King or Messiah and yell their praises whilst throwing their cloaks and palm branches on the ground to make a carpet for him to ride over. Expectation is running high, many think he is going to overthrow the occupying Roman forces, the religious leaders become afraid of an insurrection and the consequent loss of their status and position. The atmosphere is a heady mix of joy, tension, excitement and fear.

Jesus enters the city and goes straight to the Temple where in the Court of the Gentiles he throws the money changers and sacrifice sellers out. For three days he teaches in the Temple Courts and spends the night with friends in a village just outside Jerusalem. For three days the crowd hangs on his every word and grows numerically. For three days the religious leaders get ever more angry with Jesus and seek ways to arrest him without causing a commotion. Read the gospel stories to get all the detail. On the fourth day Jesus remained with friends in Bethany taking time to pray and prepare himself. Finally on the fifth day, Thursday, preparations for the Passover were made and Jesus and his disciples went to an Upper Room in Jerusalem to share a meal together. We call that meal the Last Supper.

At the Last Supper Jesus continued to teach his disciples, washed all his disciples' feet, told Peter he would deny ever knowing Jesus and told Judas that he would betray him. He spoke of his own death and subsequent resurrection. It was powerful, emotional and the disciples understood little of it. After the meal Jesus and his disciples went out to Gethsemane to pray as Jesus often did when he was in Jerusalem. It was here that Jesus was

arrested by the religious authorities who were guided to him by Judas. The rest of the disciples ran away but Peter followed at a distance and denied knowing Jesus when challenged.

The following morning, Friday, Jesus was questioned by the religious authorities and by Pilate, the Roman Governor, who declared him to be innocent of any crime. Despite this but fearful of the Jewish authorities and a possible insurrection Pilate ordered Jesus to be crucified. This happened on Calvary just outside Jerusalem. His disciples, his mother and other followers watched. As Jesus hung dying there was a total eclipse of the sun and at the moment of his death the Temple curtain protecting the Holy of Holies was torn in two. The atmosphere was electric and the Centurion in charge of the crucifixion was moved to declare that Jesus truly was the Son of God. His body was taken from the cross and laid in a borrowed tomb.

The Saturday was a day of rest and nothing happened. When the women went to the tomb on Sunday morning it was empty. Jesus spoke to Mary, then to Peter. He walked the road to Emmaus road with other followers, he met the disciples in the upper room. Word spread through Jerusalem that Jesus was alive. Despair changed to hope, sadness to joy. This is what we celebrate, this is the cornerstone of our faith, this is part of the greatest story ever told— and it is truth not fiction. This is what we must share, not just at Easter but throughout the year.

Ian



## *Personalia*

*Please remember all who are recovering from illness, injury and surgery.*

*Reminder: please check the Annual Report for changed addresses or phone numbers. We no longer include them in the Newsletter. Notify both Ann Evans, the Membership Secretary, and the Church Secretary of any changes.*



## Statement of faith

I became a Christian over forty years ago, when I was a college student. One of the favourite Christian Union training games then was to ask someone to give their testimony in 60 seconds, which meant you had to be both brief and certain.

More recently I was at another Christian gathering, at which a young man said to me "I'm still working on my statement of faith. What's yours?"

Well, it comes down to this. I'm a sinner. God loves me, Jesus saves me and the Holy Spirit keeps me.

Anything else is, shall we say, open to debate? But I don't think I can get more concise yet comprehensive than that.

John Davies

## Neighbourhood News

*News and events from other local churches:*

**Barnes Close**, Sunday 8 April at 3 PM: *The Bundle*, a play about refugees (originally scheduled before Christmas).

**Christian Aid Inherit the Earth exhibition:**

7-13 April, Northfield Baptist Church

*Launch talk at 10 AM on Saturday 7 April*

14-20 April, Northfield Methodist Church

21-27 April, St David's Church.

## Christian Aid exhibitions

Sunday 29 April at 6 PM, Christ Church URC Church Solihull

### **From Haiti to Solihull**

A special service in which the Christian Aid Country Manager for Haiti, Prosperity Raymond, will share his experiences of Christian Aid's disaster relief and development.

Sunday 14 May at 10.30 AM, Coventry Cathedral - **CEO visit**

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, the incoming CEO of Christian Aid, will deliver the sermon during the Sunday Eucharist Service.

### February-November ***Uprooted* Photo Exhibition**

This exhibition on displaced people is touring the West Midlands. Look out for it.

For more details, visit [christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/west-midlands](http://christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/west-midlands).

Emlyn Evans

## FRIENDSHIP GROUP

A change of programme meant that we brought April's plans forward to Wednesday March 14th and did some small Easter crafts. Thirteen members coloured in Easter themed wind chimes (well more of a tinkle than a chime really!) and made card fridge magnets of flowers and chicks. There was opportunity for talking, and of course eating cake thanks to Nancy, and a pleasant afternoon was passed by all.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 11 April when we will have the postponed talk by John Davies to complete his account of a wonderful holiday "Strolling in Slovenia". Come at 2.15 PM for a 2.30 PM start; all are welcome.

Early notice of our May "Bring and Buy" in aid of Christian Aid when once again we will be asking for donations of books, toiletries, jewellery, cakes and bric-a-brac. Do search to see if you can contribute something. Items can be collected or brought to church. Contact Lorraine or Nancy if necessary and thanks in advance.

Lorraine Dacosta



## WATER AID APPEAL

Our December and Christmas collection 2017 went to their special 'Untapped' appeal which we were unaware was being matched by the UK government. This meant that every £1 donated from November to January would be matched by them. Therefore our gift of £415.24 became a donation of £830.48! Many thanks to all those who gave.

Lorraine

# SYNOD MEETING held on Saturday 17 March 2018 at Sutton Coldfield URC

**'Walking the Way'/Stepwise:** Revd Stuart Scott, Synod Training and Development Officer, gave an update on *Walking the Way* and *Stepwise*. *Stepwise*, which will be launched in September 2018, is the new intergenerational URC discipleship development programme for people of all ages and backgrounds. It will in a sense be replacing TLS. It is an integral part of *Walking the Way: Living the Life of Jesus Today*, the United Reformed Church's focus on whole-life discipleship and mission. By helping people to develop as disciples, *Stepwise* aims to contribute to wider community and church transformation.

*Stepwise* is based around five broad subject streams with each stream containing stepping stones or modules. The five streams are: faith-filled life, faith-fuelled leadership, faith-filled confidence, faith-filled community and faith-filled worship. The streams are being designed ecumenically where possible, to include new and existing resources. News of *Stepwise* can be found at: [www.urch.org.uk/stepwise](http://www.urch.org.uk/stepwise).

*Holy Habits*, based on St Luke's model of church found in Acts 2: 42-47, is an initiative to nurture Christian discipleship under which missional discipleship resources have been developed to help churches explore the habits in worship and other group activities (all-age or age-specific) and to live out the habits in whole-life, missional discipleship. Further information can be obtained from Revd Stuart Scott at: [tdo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:tdo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk)

**Synod Manse Policy:** The Moderator led the discussion and voting on this. Synod resolved that the excess income arising on the Synod Manse Fund after settling expenses be transferred to the general funds in order to finance a reduction in and, when possible, elimination of the Synod Levy added to M&M Fund payments made by local churches.

A consequence of a reduction in the number of ministers is that it has been possible to sell a number of surplus manses and the proceeds

have been added to the Synod Manse Fund. Careful investment and stewardship of the fund has also resulted in substantial unrealised gains i.e. the value of investments has increased significantly and it is felt that it is time to put more of this income to good use. Consequently the Synod Manse Policy has been revised and, among other key results of this, major repair and refurbishment costs will be met wholly (100%) from the Synod Manse Fund rather than the costs falling to the pastorate with only 50% grant being available towards those costs as at present. Local pastorates will continue to be responsible for routine and cyclical maintenance (with the Minister being responsible to make good any damage beyond normal wear and tear for which they have been responsible).

**General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** The Moderator outlined key details in the processing of personal data under the GDPR. Churches already have information on the URC guidelines and templates on data protection which can be adapted to meet their specific needs. The new regulations will come into force on 25 May 2018. [Weoley Hill Church elders are preparing details on this for the information of church members].

**Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy:** Kathryn Cunliffe from Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy, Herefordshire and Shropshire, spoke about her work which involves the offer a confidential listening ear and pastoral support to farmers, farming families and agricultural communities. The work is funded, supported and managed by churches of different denominations providing assistance in various ways from a one-off phone call to on-going pastoral and practical care. The chaplaincy works in collaboration with national agencies which assist farmers with emergency finance and it operates as a “church without walls”, committed to serving rural populations. As an indication of the high levels of stress in farming, Kathryn quoted the national statistic of one suicide a week among farmers. She asked for prayers for farmers and those seeking to help them. Contact: [www.borderchaplain.org](http://www.borderchaplain.org)

**Nominee for General Assembly Moderator 2020 – 2022:** The West Midlands Synod nominated Dr Andrew Webb as Moderator of General Assembly 2020 -2022. Dr Webb's name was proposed by Emmanuel Church, Redditch.

**Durgapur Child Sponsorship:** Margaret Marshall, Synod Clerk and Global Partner Link, reiterated that Synod has a long standing partnership with the Diocese of Durgapur of the Church of North India and that in 2017 the Colin Choyce Hostel was opened in memory of one of our members who left a legacy for use in India. Synod is aiming to sponsor all the children for whom the hostel is now home through the God Parent Sponsorship Programme of the DWFC (the Women's Fellowship), Diocese of Durgapur. Sponsorship amounts to £180 per year per child of £15 per month. If you are able to sponsor a child please contact Cheryl for a form to be filled and returned to the Synod Office.

**Windrush Day in June:** A presentation was made on this by Revd Richard Becher and Virginia Lawson Becher, Racial Justice Advocate. Seventy years ago nearly 500 people arrived from the Caribbean on the British ship 'Empire Windrush' which landed at Tilbury Docks on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1948. The arrivals came to be known as the Windrush Generation. They were invited to come and help rebuild the country after the Second World War. Generally, however, the reception they received was not friendly and they have over the years had to persevere with their faith and a culture of hospitality in which they invite and welcome people into their homes.

The Windrush Generation have been 'longing to belong' and this is the title of a film written by Revd Becher and being produced by Revd Kevin Snyman, Synod Mission Enabler, to be launched in June with some accompanying guide notes for reflection and raising of awareness of the challenges that the Windrush Generation have to overcome. Churches are invited where possible to reserve Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June for celebration of the Windrush Generation and to demonstrate that we are a global family with a welcome for everyone.

**Eco Synod:** Revd Kevin Snyman made an urgent appeal to all churches to sign up with the Eco Church before the end of March to help the URC West Midlands become a vibrant Eco Synod. We need to gain a Bronze Award. Contact: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

The next Synod Meeting will be on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at Rugby URC, 40 Hillmorton Road, Rugby CV22 5AD

Sam Lukwago  
Synod Lay Representative

## April retiring collections

### Chance for Childhood (Africa)

Chance for Childhood is an international children's charity which strengthens and empowers local communities to protect children facing the gravest injustices.

Founded on Christian values, they uphold these through social, educational and business programmes which engage with local organisations. Their programmes protect vulnerable children and young people and equip them with the skills, knowledge and capacity to become active agents of change within their own communities.

- Children on the street
- Children with disabilities
- Children affected by conflict
- Children in conflict with the law



## Reflection Days at Barnes Close

You may not have heard that Barnes Close is being sold although the charity the Community for Reconciliation with overseas projects is still operational.

Until it is all finalised the reflection days will still continue. These days are a time to listen to God and study a few Bible passages. The dates for the next few months are all on Thursdays, 19 April, 10 May, 7 June and 12 July. The day starts at 10.00 AM and ends about 3.30 PM and costs £15 and includes a home cooked lunch. The theme for these dates is learning from women in different parts of the Bible (the Pentateuch, the Old Testament, the Gospels and the New Testament)

I have been attending these days for many years and appreciate the time of quiet and then sharing what the Bible passages says to us all. It is a lovely relaxing day.

Come and enjoy time with God

Ann Evans

## WEOLEY CASTLE THURSDAY CAFES

The Thursday morning cafes have been re-launched after reorganisation following the withdrawal by some groups. The second Thursday of each month will be an Advice cafe with all kinds of free professional advice from legal matters and debt management, to benefit help, employment services and Carers support. There is an area to sit and chill out with a drink and cake and all conversations and help are confidential. The fourth Thursday is the continuing art and craft session run by the Northfield Arts Forum, (hence NAFCAF) which has proved very successful. Meetings are 10.00 AM-1.00 PM and you can just turn up or contact Mark Tubby 07505521302 for more information.

Lorraine DaCosta

## Christian Aid

### Inherit the Earth exhibition

#### *Protecting the Amazon with gifts in Wills*

Gifts in Wills are protecting the Amazon for future generations—find out about our touring exhibition showing images of life-changing projects in Bolivia.

Our Inherit the Earth photo exhibition shows how Christian Aid projects are helping indigenous people protect the land they've inherited, so they can pass it on to their own children.

The exhibition shares stunning photos of the places and projects Trish and Maggie visited in Bolivia, showing the life-changing work taking place in the Amazon basin.

- **7-13 April, Northfield Baptist Church**  
*Launch talk at 10 AM on Saturday 7 April*
- **14-20 April, Northfield Methodist Church**
- **21-27 April, St David's Church.**



## David's books

There are still quite a few books which belonged to David Littlejohns at the manse. Many are hymn and music books, but there is also a variety of Bibles, including children's Bibles, and loads of commentaries and studies, etc. If you would like to look these over, please talk to David Marlow to arrange a time. We are looking for organisations which might like the commentaries and studies; suggestions are welcome.

Cheryl Thornett

# WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

*The Lord's unfailing love and mercy still continue, fresh as the morning,  
as sure as the sunrise.* *Lamentations 3v 22,23.*

	<b>Church members</b>	
<b>WK 1: 1 - 7 April</b>	John Glen Colin Graham	Rejoice in the hope of Easter.
<b>WK 2: 8-14 April</b>	Christine Grubb Rosemary Hay Gill Hitchin	For international relations, that tensions might be eased.
<b>WK 3: 15- 21 April</b>	Norma Johnson Betty Johnston Daniel & Dora Kyereh	For whoever will be the minister of the Cadbury pastorate. May both they & we be guided in our decision- making.
<b>WK 4: 22-28 April</b>	Sharon Letissier & Hannah Hilary Littlejohns Doreen Longman	Those who no longer attend services regularly. Pray for them and the situations that prevent them from coming.
<b>WK 5: 29- 5 May</b>	Sam & Alex Lukwago David & Christine Marlow José Marsland	That we might reflect some of God's love & care for others.

*NOTE: As always, please feel free to send any feedback on the 'Prayer Diary' and specific prayer requests that you would like to include in future lists to Sue Beeby*

You may wish to add other members of the families mentioned to your prayers.