

Weoley Hill Church News



April 2020

From the Minister's study—

Easter Message

Good news and bad news, or bad news and good news

“I’ve got good news....and bad news. What do you want to hear first?” Many of us have on time or other heard and used these words in our day to day life. Some of us will say, “bad news first” hoping that the good news after will make up for the bad news we heard first. Others will say, “good news first” in order to postpone the bad news just a bit longer. Usually I prefer to hear the bad news first because it makes the good news seem so much better. I always hope that the good news will outshine the bad news although it is true that at times the bad news seems to overshadow the good news. But not at Easter! Easter is good news, the news that “Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!” and we can joyfully sing “Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son, endless is the victory thou o’er death has won”.

But what about the bad news? What about Good Friday and the pain of Jesus’ suffering? Without Good Friday, no Easter. Good Friday is bad news, very bad news, but it is undeniably part of the good news that followed on the first Easter when the women who had come to the tomb found it empty. While they could not imagine that any good news could follow the bad news they had witnessed, there they were told by an angel that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The good news had conquered the bad news! Instead of the story ending in great sadness and despair, there was new life, hope and joy.

Yes, there is good news! This we can affirm even as we are living in very unsettling and anxious times, in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. We may live in “Good Friday” times, with

bad news feeling very real and close to us, as it affects our day to day lives, but we are Easter people. We believe that even in the midst of all the bad news there is the good news of hope, of new life, of new beginnings and possibilities. Yes, even in the midst of this pandemic, which is really bad news, we already see signs of Easter, hints that “we shall overcome”and hope wells up in us.

Today, in the midst of the pandemic there are many, many people who are witnessing to the good news by the way they face the challenges of the crisis and who are making extraordinary sacrifices to help those who are most vulnerable and in need. Think of the health workers, doctors, nurses, paramedics, carers and those who work to keep all essential services running, who work on the frontline to save lives, to care for young and old. Think also of all the organizations, charities, churches that are reaching out to offer support as well as all the local neighbourly initiatives that have sprung up to make sure no one has to feel isolated and abandoned.

Yes, many people, whether they are Christian or people of other faiths or none, show that the Easter message is true. Life is about life, not death. Death and the death dealing powers in the world, whether they be human, systemic, or a microscopic virus, do not have the final word, life has! That is what the Easter story tells us.

The Easter story is about good news and bad news, of pain and of new life, and it is clear that the good is far more powerful than the bad. Everywhere in the Bible there is talk of the importance of good news. If you count it there are 44 verses in the Bible that speak of good news, in the books of Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Proverbs, Isaiah, Nahum, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Romans, Thessalonians, and Hebrews. Mark even introduces his gospel

with the words “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.” So even in this “Good Friday world”, and in “Good Friday times”, let us rejoice in the Good News that “Christ is risen, He is risen indeed, Alleluia!”

May you know God’s blessing at Easter!

Leonora

Easter Cross

Will there be no cross decorated with flowers this Easter at Weoley Hill URC? Yes, there will be as we are planning to have one, not in church but outside! Sue Beeby came up with the idea that we could place a cross outside (and David is looking at the best position for it) and we are invited to bring flowers to entwine on the cross any time on Easter Sunday. And we would also invite the community around the church to do the same, if they wish. This would be a wonderful way to share the Easter message of hope with the community! Of course, we cannot gather in numbers around the cross but only come in ones or twos to add some flowers and briefly meditate or say a prayer or sing (!) an Easter hymn. Do come and bring some flowers (eg daffodils) to decorate the cross which will be transformed from a Good Friday to an Easter cross! Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Best wishes, Leonora



Fundraising for Brain Tumour Support NZ

Just before we had to suspend our services and all our activities Marilyn brought to our attention the fundraising her daughter Sally was planning to do (running 2 half marathons with her friend Gail) to support the charity “Brain Tumour Support NZ.” Sally met up with Gavin, trustee of BTS NZ (who lost his wife to a brain tumour) and promised to do this fundraising for the charity and set up a crowdfunding page on “givealittle.co.nz”. On that page you can search “running for a distance to support those affected by a brain tumour” on which page Sally has written what motivates her: *Sally and her family are on their cancer journey, her mother was diagnosed with a brain tumour last year and is courageously battling every stage with bravery and grace. In awe of her mother’s strength, she too wants to raise as much as possible to help this organisation support anyone living through a similar journey.*

Some of you have already supported Sally by sending money through the website of givealittle.co.nz and some of you have put some money on the collection plate. However, as we were so few in church on that last Sunday (when we had our AGM) many of you may not have had a chance to contribute, if you wish to do so. If you would like to contribute, send your contribution to David Marlow, making cheques out to David.



Personalia

Given the current lockdown situation, Jim Brackley will simply be cremated. A memorial service will follow when circumstances permit.



Hymn for Streamed Worship

Sung to HYFRYDOL(Love divine) /NETTLETON (Come thou fount of every blessing.)

In our homes, we meet to worship,
far away from sacred space.
By the Spirit, Christ is with us,
making this a holy place.
In these days of social distance,
we are called to meet apart.
Still we pray for one another,
hold each other in our heart.

If this time indeed is holy,
we must keep it truly so.
Even in our isolation,
God's rich blessings overflow.
We avoid the world's distractions,
set our minds on things above:
Patience, kindness, goodness, mercy,
faith, joy, peace, abiding love.

R. G. Huff – 03/17/2020 [Permission Granted for Use]
Thanks to Gordon Thornett for passing this on.

Advice for Christian Aid Week

Many of you will have been planning house-to-house collections and events. Under the current circumstances, sadly, house-to-house collections should not go ahead. In particular, along with many churches, events such as Big Brekkies or Lent lunches, where food is shared, cannot go ahead. We are looking at alternative ways to virtually meet, share and pray with supporters over the coming months in the likely absence of physical church services.

We are working on alternative plans that will allow people to take part in Christian Aid Week in different, creative ways – by post, by text and online that strengthen our communities during this challenging time. In addition, we will be providing advice on managing risks with smaller sponsored activities, street collections and delivery-only envelopes. Christian Aid Week is our single-most important fundraiser, so we would welcome your ideas on how we can creatively show love for our neighbours at home and abroad, as a community.

Message from Emlyn Evans

Christian Aid week will not take place, but we will try to come up with other ways of raising money , given the current situation. All suggestions welcome!!



Quiz night

On the last day of February, the 29th (which only comes round every four years), 57 people put a note in *their* calendars for the quiz which had the (loose) theme of dates in the calendar! A varied set of questions over 12 rounds followed the months of the year, and were accompanied by some fiendish anagrams, and airports named after celebrities. Thankfully the fish and chips were easier to swallow and £156.50 was raised for Fairtrade. The winning team, (officially certified and they have a certificate to prove it), were Cheryl and Gordon Thornett, Alan and Levi Cotgreave, Charmaine Wain and Tricia Lowe, all connected with the Community Choir. Frames to display the certificates and winning medals were their prize.

Many thanks to all those who donated raffle prizes and especially to Alan and Levi who 'persuaded' folk to buy tickets, and then spent time folding them. Thanks, as always, to Nancy for helping set out the accompaniments and making drinks, to Linda for loading the dishwasher and clearing the kitchen at the end, and to all those who put away tables and chairs and even took the rubbish home because the bin was full! Look out for the next quiz in October.



The winning team, including key player Levi Cotgreave.

FWO Donations and the Covid-19 pandemic

Some members and friends may be concerned at this time about the church collections and FWO while the church is closed and we are confined to our houses.

Our monthly Ministry & Mission Fund payment to Church House in London still has to be paid (£2,750) as do some of our bills for the church and Manse. At the same time our income from hall hirings has ceased and so we are reliant on the congregation for our only income.

Thankfully the largest portion of the FWO is received by Standing Orders automatically into our bank account and a lesser, but important, amount is placed on the plate each Sunday.

We are suggesting that members and friends who prefer to give by cash in their FWO envelopes continue to fill their envelopes as normal but keep them until such time as we can restart our services on a Sunday.

If you normally give your donation in the form of a cheque you can do the same or wait until we restart and give a single cheque to cover the time we have missed. If you want to give me a cheque at any other time I can pay them into the church account using my mobile 'phone without having to leave my house!

It may be a good time to consider making your donations by Standing Order. This can be done either on-line or by telephoning your bank. I will be happy to supply you with the church's bank details and help you with the process.

It is obvious that, along with the rest of the country, we are going to find it difficult to meet our commitments this year but with your help and support we shall get through this trying time.

Thank you,

David

God's creation is continuing despite the COVID 19.

Emlyn and I found a walk from Weoley Castle ruins to Harborne Lane and back through Selly Oak Park. This was entirely new territory to us though maybe not for others but we do live in Northfield! It was a walk of about 5 Km which is quite a bit and generally it was flat apart from getting up the hill on Harborne Lane – I don't like hills!

Here are the photos I took of bluebells (I think), celandines and a primrose plant. Also the path between the trees.



A prayer for us all

Living Lord, we know you are with us always and we need your support in times of difficulty as the world is experiencing at the moment. The crisis is unprecedented within our lifetime.

Yet we give thanks for the springtime as a reminder that new life comes, flowers bloom and trees show buds to produce leaves. It is wonderful to see these things as we are burdened with the restrictions around us and it helps us to put things into perspective.

You are our Lord and Saviour and we are confident you are with us as we go through this difficult time. Thank you for your creation and for loving us and encouraging us to love others and do acts of kindness where and when we can.

Blessings to you all

Amen

Thank God for the beauty in simple things.

Ann

Please exercise normal caution with phone calls, emails and other messages offering goods, purporting to be from government agencies or threatening penalties relating to covid-19. Dishonest people hoping to gain access to your details or your bank account are trying to take advantage of the pandemic.

The Church Secretary

From the Synod Moderator

This message is part of a letter from the Moderator's office:

There is a greater need than ever for the church to be the church, though. Because we will not be meeting together, we must keep in touch for one another and show practical care as best we can. This is especially important for the more elderly and vulnerable members of our church community, many of whom were already burdened by loneliness.

The URC's daily devotions are commended for your use. As a new service, we will also be producing a weekly service that people can use in their own homes. It will be available in printed format and with an audio recording, with the aim that the first one will be available by Palm Sunday. Sign up at <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/> I recognise that many in our congregations will not be able to access online resources. Part of your care for them might well be to print copies and deliver them. You may also wish to produce devotional material locally.

Be aware of those who will need help with shopping bought for them, either because they are practising "social distancing" or because they are "self isolating."

Friends, whilst for a time we must give up meeting one another (compare Hebrews 10:25), we must still find ways to encourage one another.

I know there are many practical considerations that I have not touched on yet. I will write more on the Covid19 web page covering many of them.

For time being, the Synod Office will be CLOSED to visitors. Staff will mostly be working from home, in accordance with the government's advice. One member of staff will go each day to deal with post, and the messages left on the answering machine will be notified to Helen Cavaco who will relay your message so that we can respond to you as quickly as possible. All of the officers are contactable on email as usual.

In closing, let me urge you to do three things:

- 1) Love one another and encourage one another daily
- 2) Do not be bound by fear, but take sensible precautions to protect yourself and others. I heard a doctor on the radio saying that he prescribes “five portions of fun every day” along with fruit and vegetables!
- 3) Pray for each other and the world. Please join me in putting that third point into practice immediately, using a prayer written by our Moderators of General Assembly, the Revd Nigel Uden & Mr Derek Estill: *‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.’ Psalm 46:1, NRSV*

As so much is re-shaped by Coronavirus Covid-19, let us pray with

- people left unwell, beckoned by death or bereaved;
- people providing professional health care and advice, looking after loved ones at home or working to create treatments and cures;
- people shaping the response of nations and neighbourhoods, of commerce and industry, of service and voluntary organisations and of communities of faith;
- people who are anxious or afraid, alone or isolated.

Living, loving God,
we praise you,
and through times of peril we lean into you,
for in Jesus Christ
you have trodden paths as difficult as ours,
revealing there a love that nothing defeats,
a love that bears us through.
Even as we strive to behave responsibly,
and to care reliably,
so we feel after you
that in these uncertain times we might trust you are with us,

our refuge and strength,
and our faith, hope and love might be renewed,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Every blessing to you and yours,
Steve Faber (Revd)
Synod Moderator



Calendar for April 2020

Our normal calendar has been suspended because of Covid-19.

Please use the suggestions for online worship, or the worship and prayer sheets you receive, and we will worship together in this way.

The next issue of Weoley Hill Church News will be available on 3 May. Please remember to inform the Church Secretary, Cheryl Thornett, of any events, with details of dates and times. Please share any online resources you come across.

WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

PRAYER DIARY

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."
John 11:25

	Church members & local streets	Other topics
WK 1: 5 th -11 th April	Christine Grubb Rosemary Hay <i>Bryony Rd</i> <i>Tamarisk & Mimosa Closes</i>	Thank God for the gift of his risen son. As this beautiful Spring unfolds, remember God's gifts to us & the hope of new life in this world and the next.
WK 2: 12 th -18 th April	Gill Hitchin Norma Johnson <i>Shenley Fields Rd</i> <i>ris, Erica & Gorse Closes</i>	For those in our fellowship who are not well & those whose treatment, has been postponed because of the medical crisis.
WK 3: 19 th -25 th April	Betty Johnston <i>Abdon Avenue</i> <i>Holdgate & Tugford Rds</i>	That governments around the world would make wise decisions regarding the pandemic. For medical staff.
WK 4: 26 th April- 2 nd May	Sharon Letissier & Hannah Doreen Longman <i>Bournville Gardens</i> <i>Bryony House</i>	For protection of vulnerable groups such as displaced people in camps (particularly in Syria where hospitals have been destroyed), those in shanty towns & rough sleepers.

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.