

Cadbury Pastorate News

Bournville, Weoley Castle &
Weoley Hill Churches



Christ be our light....

December 2020

From the Minister's study—

Christmas Greeting from Leonora

“Every time a child is born it brings with it the hope that God is not yet disappointed with man.” (Rabindranath Tagore). Or “to hold each newborn is like holding hope itself.”

In the birth of Jesus, and in each newborn baby, God is bringing hope; there is the wonder of God’s love and the hope that God’s love will prevail in the world.

The message of hope is really central in the Christmas story. When all seemed doom and gloom, something wonderful happened. God intervened in history, and ever since we have real hope that God-is- with-us, Emmanuel.

We live in difficult times and sometimes we may feel hopeless or overwhelmed with worry and fear. But Christmas is, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “God unlocking the door of our prison...the prison of our fear”

So let us receive “hope” when we allow God to enter our lives and release us. Emmanuel, God-with-us, “he feeleth for our sadness, and he shareth in our gladness.” In Jesus God has come among us “the broken hearts to heal, the prisoner to free....and those who mourn with heavy hearts, who weep and sigh, with laughter, joy...he’ll beautify.”

May hope - and peace and joy - fill your hearts at Christmas!

Leonora



A message from the Moderator

A Christmas to remember?

My first grandchild was born in September. Although she only lives 10 minutes away from me, I've yet to be able to hold her. I know a great many of us will have similar stories to tell. Grandchildren, nephews and nieces, aging parents, lonely and isolated friends: a raft of people with whom we would long to share safe physical contact, whether that's a huge hug or the reassuring touch on their hand or arm to let them know that they are not alone. I, at least, am able to know that this will be quite some story to tell my granddaughter when she is older, but for some people at the other end of life we may never get to reminisce with them after this is all over.

It really has been—and I use the term advisedly—one hell of a year for so many.

I hope that by now you are waiting for the, "And yet..." Well, here it comes! Throughout this, God has not abandoned us. Yes, I know many have experienced isolation, desolation even. But God has been with us, constant and faithful.

How can I be so confident that this is the case, even if God has not been obvious in our life, and in the world as so many millions have been ill and countless families have been plunged into grief because of Covid-19? It is because at the beginning and the end of it all, we have God's promises.

Jesus came into the world as, "Immanuel" —God with us. He ascended to heaven with the promise, "Surely I am with you always, to the end of the age." These are words that merit full acceptance, to borrow from 1 Timothy and the assurance of pardon in our service book.

In a world that has been violently unpredictable during 2020, with everything from wildfire to flood, drought, and an as-yet-unresolved Presidential election (will he finally concede defeat when the College of

Electors meet in December?) besides the global pandemic and all that has brought us: surely we will be glad to see the back of it and pray that 2021 brings better news.

But hold fast. We already have the best news of all: a baby born in Bethlehem, our true Hope, the True Light, the Saviour of the World. I cannot see that we will have church worship the way we know it and want it for Christmas but there is still so much for which we can thank and praise God.

My prayer for you is that you know the closeness of God in your lives this Christmas and always, and for the help of the Holy Spirit to share Christ's light in the world.

Steve Faber

Synod Moderator



Pandemic stories

In preparation for the All Saints Day service at Weoley Hill church I had invited the congregation to write a “story” (a few lines) about their experience during the pandemic, about the losses experienced, but also what they had found. The “stories” that were written up showed that while there are differences, there are also quite a few similarities how we live/d through these very challenging times. And while some of us suffered great losses (or more “trivial” ones) most of us could also write about the good things we have discovered. While all of the stories (signed or anonymous) were really lovely to read (my privilege!) I just share a few lines from them.

“..the pandemic....has strengthened my faith and without this I couldn't have got through the months of lockdown and isolation. I also found through it that I appreciated so much a wonderful

family, special friends and nature.....I do miss travelling out into the countryside.....but I have the memories which still give me pleasure”

“The loss of a close cousin and a dear friend...also Marilyn Raw, gave opportunity to ‘tidy’ photographs and albums to enjoy the nostalgia these evoked.....People in general, offering a ‘ready’ smile, a friendly wave and the extra treat of flowers, a meal and a chat!! Saints of today!!”

“What I missed: live singing and concerts. Live church!....What I found:.....Walking and discovering great beauty in the surrounding area”

“Thank God for all the help I received from very good friends who have helped me...”

“Not being able to see my children and grandchildren”

“What I didn’t miss or gained: finding local lovely parks to walk in; not being stressed with too much church stuff to do; enjoying God’s creation”

“The restrictions have not been a hardship for me but I have missed:.....Having fun in France!! Sorry if this is trivial, but...it’s true!”

“My journey through the last few months has been interesting with many ups and downs. My first reaction to lockdown was relief. I had no responsibilities but after a few weeks I began to question my role in life. I need people around me.....As the rules relaxed I started to take country walks with [my brother]....I am probably closer to my brother than ever [and] I have also watched closely the change of the seasons...The hedgerows have been heaving with blackberries, sloes, rosehips and acorns and the autumn colours have been spectacular. It has been hard not to be able to hug my family but there have been compensations.”

“Lost.....Personal—our daughter’s wedding and the family get-together that should have been part of it. A gain—neighbours making an effort to look after one another and get to know each other better. And the response of this congregation at a difficult time”

“It is perhaps stating the obvious to say this has been a difficult year.... In less than 12 months I have lost two sisters and a brother-in-law. On the plus side the funerals have been a time to meet up with family, especially those in Canada who we seldom see. In amongst the sad things that have happened we can rejoice in the good.... All the family are fit and well so we have much to be thankful for”

“Losses during this awful time: Marilyn Raw was a very sad loss. Travelling, browsing, mixing with people....”

“Until yesterday I would have said that the pandemic had not affected me too badly, except for major dislocation of my normal lifestyle! However, yesterday it really struck home, with the news that a close neighbour of mine had died from the virus.... On a more positive strain, I have been very much touched by the kindness and generosity of neighbours and church friends with their offers of help and regular enquiries as to how this sad old nonagenarian was coping.”

I would like to think that we can glimpse God’s faithful presence in our “stories”—in the love and support of family, friends and neighbours as well as in the beautiful things we notice and appreciate—even as personally and collectively we have felt the losses in these challenging times but look forward to better days. Thank you for sharing your stories!

Leonora

Pastorate News

Pastorate worship for December

Sundays: See your church news for details. Printed or online worship will be available every week as usual.

Wednesday 23 4 PM: **WH Outdoor Carol Service**, weather & regulations permitting. Gather, distanced, on flat area or pavement on Greenmeadow side. Dress warmly & bring a torch. All welcome.

Thursday 24 4 PM: **WH Crib/ family service** outdoors, weather permitting. Gather near the main steps. All welcome.

Friday 25 10 AM: **WC Christmas Day worship**

11 AM: **WH Christmas Day worship**

Bournville will not gather to worship on Christmas day

New Year, New Prayer Diary

Now that we have a pastorate newsletter, we need to make the prayer diary inclusive of the 3 congregations. Short of other suggestions or preferences, the plan is to produce a diary that encourages us to pray for named members of our congregations on each day of each month. It would mean that we are all prayed for once a month rather than the twice a year with the present system. Other prayer requests can still be printed in the newsletter.

Sue

Bournville

Midland Rd collected 213 kg of food for the food bank. We have an Elders meeting next Monday. At the moment we are not opening Christmas Day. Sunday services: Leonora preaching 6 December at 3 pm; Shirley and David on the 13th; Alan Cotgreave on the 20th. We have

started the prayer requests again as the congregation said how much they like them.

Weoley Hill

WH December & Christmas retiring collection: St Basil's Centre

St Basils works with young people to enable them to find and keep a home, grow their confidence, develop their skills, increase opportunities and prevent homelessness. St Basils houses almost 500 young people every single night. Coronavirus or not, their work continues, regardless.

Marilyn's birthday would have been on 1 December. Please remember her family, and through their first Christmas without her.

Hampers!

I just wanted to add the news that...18 Christmas hampers are going to members of the **Lunch Club** who live alone. All items have been donated by the ladies who usually cook and serve the lunches. The boxes include a small, iced, Christmas cake (Nancy), jam (Gini), shortbread (Doreen Bradley), pot of bulbs (Norma), knitted 'pudding' with chocolate in (me) plus other things donated by ladies I can't remember... sorry... and a card. A small group are getting a bouquet because they have different dietary needs. All organised and packed by Nancy so grateful thanks to her. Lorraine

Hampers for local families: Thanks to all who contributed funds towards these hampers and especially to Gini Tambyraja for doing most of the hard work. 32 hampers are being prepared, 22 for families of children at Princethorpe School; 5 for Northfield Manor, and 3 will go to families from Weoley Castle Community Church.

The Weoley Hill calendar has details of December's worship.



Weoley Castle

The Senior Citizens' Day Centres are continuing to meet and will have a Christmas dinner at Church Monday the 14th (for both Monday & Friday groups) —ask Chris Hopkins for further details. The last DC of December will be on Friday the 18th , then re-start on 4 January.

Even though we are in tier 3, Elite Dance & Karate are allowed to restart from Wednesday 2nd, and they will do so with enthusiasm.

We have heard from Cathy Grigg, who has been made welcome by Maypole Methodists near where she is now living.

Bruce Harvey is expecting Fay home again any day now.

Chris Basterfield's carer Octavian will be with him over Christmas— partly because they get on very well together and partly because flights to Romania are getting cancelled.

The church Service on 13th December will be in person and will be an occasion to *bring toys and gifts for disadvantaged families* and will include *communion*.



The Day Centre at WCCC and the Christmas tree the ladies helped to decorate

THREE LITTLE WORDS

Can you guess the *Christmas carol* from just three words found in the verses?

1. angels, come, worship. _____
2. gladness, guiding, mercy-seat. _____
3. crib, lowing, nigh _____
4. merrily, verily, swungen.. _____
5. merry, dismay, tidings _____
6. Stephen, page, mountain _____
7. here, love, joy. _____
8. crown, rising, prickle _____
9. bleak, iron, snow _____
10. ships, Chrisimuss, lady _____
11. midnight, bending, harps _____
12. joy, heaven, nature _____
13. faithful, come, adore _____
14. city, lowly, mild _____
15. rise, follow, star _____
16. ever-blessed, Jerusalem, Bethlehem _____
17. night, Virgin, peace _____
18. virgin, boy, glory _____
19. orient, gifts, moor _____
20. flocks, fear, mankind _____

Answers on p. 11

Eco Issues

Back in September I attended a Zoom meeting run by the Synod of Wales on Eco issues. It was called 'And God said "Take care of ..."' with the subheading of Yourself. I assume from this that there will be others with other subheadings. Watch this space!

The keynote speaker was Caroline Pomeroy, a director of the charity Climate Stewards set up in 2016. I took this statement from their website. "Climate Stewards believes that we are all called to be good stewards of God's earth, and that voluntary carbon offsetting is a great way to do this." Climate Stewards encourages you to calculate your carbon footprint, reduce it if you can, and offset the rest. Offsetting means compensating for every tonne of CO₂ you emit. We do this by supporting community forestry, water filter, solar and cookstove projects in the developing world. On their website is information about some of the projects that Carbon Stewards has supported by carbon offsetting.

Also, on their website is the chance to find out the carbon footprint of our church. Do you want to find that out as a small group will have to get together sometime to gather the information required? At this particular moment in Lockdown 2 our carbon footprint must be low as the building is not in use.

Apparently, there has been a 68% decline in worldwide wildlife since 1970. This has happened for several reasons and is tragic. There is a book called 'Lost words' and from that it appears we are losing our connection with nature as several words with that connection are now lost. However, there is a 'Green Bible' which highlights about 2000 references to things like air, etc of the natural world. We as humans were given dominion over all the earth and made stewards of it. See Genesis 1: 28.

What can we as individuals do to save our planet? Cut our carbon footprints. A lot has been said in the past but eating less red meat or at least being more aware of the ratio of red meat you eat compared to

plant-based meals. Reduce your energy consumption by turning down your thermostat by a degree – not easy with winter approaching and us being inside so much more but try. Engage with politicians. It is useful to take small steps to help us consider the future generations. Could we engage locally, and ecumenically as bigger voices sometimes carry more weight? Could we offset our church carbon footprint by planting trees in our local parks and neighbourhoods?

Refuse, reduce, reuse, repair & recycle. Recycling gets a lot of attention, but it's the least effective of the 5Rs. We need to be doing more refusing, whether it's excess packaging, cheap goods that won't last, or just simply something we don't need. Take what you have already and make it last or give it a new lease of life.

As stewards we can hope for a better environment that we all are involved in although at times hope seems in short supply. The ultimate hope is with God. Let us pray for our planet now and for the future generations.

Ann Evans

ANSWERS to the quiz

1. Angels from the realms of glory.
2. As with gladness men of old.
3. Away in a manger.
4. Ding, dong merrily on high.
5. God rest you merry gentlemen.
6. Good King Wenceslas.
7. Here we come a-wassailing
8. Holly and the ivy.
9. In the bleak mid-winter.
10. I saw three ships come sailing in.
11. It came upon the midnight clear
12. Joy to the world
13. Oh come all you faithful.
14. Once in Royal David's city
15. Rise up Shepherd and follow
16. See amid the winter's snow.
17. Silent night, Holy night
18. The virgin Mary had a baby boy
19. We three kings of Orient are.
20. While shepherds watched their flocks by night.

CHRISTMAS TIERS OF LAUGHTER

Q. How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?

A. *Nothing: it was on the house.*

Q. What did Mrs. Claus say when she looked up into the sky?

A. *"Looks like rain, dear."*

Q. Why do Santa's little helpers wear seatbelts in the sleigh?

A. *Elfin safety.*

Q. Why would you think Santa is unsociable?

A. *He never visits people more than once a year.*

Q. What do you call people who are afraid of Father Christmas?

A. *Santaclaustrophobics.*

Q. What goes "Oh, Oh, Oh"?

A. *Santa walking backwards.*

Q. Granny hasn't seen her grandson all this year, so she knitted him three socks for Christmas. Why was that?

A. *She'd heard that he'd grown another foot.*

Q. What did the fireman give his wife for Christmas?

A. *A ladder in her stocking.*

Q. What kind of pizza should you eat at Christmas?

A. *Deep-pan, crisp and even.*

Q. What do you call a group of chess players bragging about their games in a hotel lobby?

A. *Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer.*



WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

On you the light of the Lord will shine; the brightness of his presence will be with you. Is.60:2

Home	Church members & local streets	Topical prayers
WK 1: 6th- 12th Dec	Kumar & Gini Tambyraja <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shenley Fields Rd & Iris Close</i> 	That the new regime in Sri Lanka will not make religious conversion a crime. Many Christians there are converts.
WK 2: 13th- 19th Dec	Gordon & Cheryl Thornett David & Kathleen Upton <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Erica & Gorse Closes</i> 	Homeless people in our locality. Refugees & asylum seekers.
WK 3: 20th – 26th Dec	Barbara & Philip Viney Rachel Wakeman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bournville Gardens</i> • <i>Bryony House</i> 	That the hope and joy of the Christmas message will be meaningful to those who have found this year hard.
WK 4: 27th Dec-2nd Jan	Michael Walpole Kathleen Wood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Abdon Ave, Holdgate Rd</i> • <i>Tugford Rd, Wierbrook Close</i> 	Look back for the good things that have happened this year and give thanks for them. Pray for resilience & fortitude in our nation during the year ahead.

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

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

Weoley Hill Calendar for December 2020

All dates are of course provisional under present circumstances, but we believe we will be able to meet for worship during December.

Sunday	6	10.30 AM: Advent 2. Communion led by the minister.
Wednesday	9	7.30 PM: Elders meeting tbc
Sunday	13	10.30 AM: Advent 3. Toy service worship led by Alan Cotgreave. Donated toys to Birmingham Crisis Centre.
Sunday	20	10.30 AM: Advent 4. Worship led by the minister. After worship Church budget meeting
Wednesday	23	4 PM: Outdoor Carol Service , weather & regulations permitting. Gather, distanced, on flat area or pavement on Greenmeadow side. Dress warmly & bring a torch.
Thursday	24	4 PM: Crib/ family service outdoors, weather permitting. Gather near the main steps.
Friday	25	11 am: Christmas Day family worship
Sunday	27	10.30 AM: Pastorate worship led by Cheryl Thornett.

The next issue of the newsletter will be available around 1 January. Contributions are requested! Send them to the minister, Leonora Jagessar, or Cheryl Thornett at Weoley Hill.

Special thanks to Alan Cotgreave, who has been creating audio-visual presentations for Sunday worship, and to everyone who is helping to distribute worship sheets and newsletters.

The Cadbury Pastorate

Open for Worship

(Government restrictions permitting)

Bournville URC, Beaumont Rd: Worship at 3 PM on 1st Sundays and 10.30 AM on other Sundays.

Weoley Castle Community Church, Quarry Rd: Worship 2nd & 4th Sundays at 11 AM.

Weoley Hill URC, Greenmeadow Rd: Worship at 10.30 AM.

Sunday worship can be still found on the Weoley Hill website as an audio/visual presentation or in print form, and through email and postal distribution on request.

Check with the organisers for news of groups which normally meet in Weoley Hill and Weoley Castle.

Please check the churches' websites for further news and any changes, as well as details of precautions to be observed.

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