

Weoley Hill & Weoley Castle Church News



April 2025

How Easter is still working out in this world—

Living riskily for Christ

Below is shared a testimonial that we recently received about a perhaps unsuspected aspect of the life of Bruce Harvey, who died at the beginning of December last year. Those who knew Bruce in his 50-odd years in Weoley Castle, will remember a man with beard, shorts and sandals, with strongly-held and sometimes unconventional views about Theology and Physics, and huge practical and IT skills. “Pam”, who long ago was a bolshy teenage Christian in a Sikh household, has only recently become aware of Bruce’s death, and she writes in tribute to him:

“Bruce was an extraordinary and exceptional human being. I cannot tell you how much he supported and helped me. I would like to tell you what he did for me and for that you need to know a little about me. I knew Bruce from West Park College, as I was a student there. My home life was very traumatic and abusive; let’s just say that the clinical psychologist said that I was one of the worst cases of trauma he had ever seen in his career.

“Bruce found me safe accommodation so I could escape the horror of what I was living in; he would visit me and see how I was, talk to me, take me out for meals or walks in the park. He was a good friend to me—not that I ever appreciated it (or even thanked him)—I was too angry at the world. But still he continued in his immense generosity and kindness and he asked for nothing in return. He gave his time, and the cost of meals etc., he paid for all himself. Later he fitted a lock in a house, so I could have some privacy. Bruce enacted his Christian beliefs in practice; he did not talk about being a Christian: he lived it. I have met many Christians who don’t do this, they are all talk, no action. One of his co-workers said he was extremely brave for helping me, because he risked his career.

“Now, as a professional Social Worker, I understand what he risked and what could have happened to him. He crossed a line to help and save me, in which he sacrificed himself to help another human

being, purely because he was a decent caring human being. He had nothing to gain (trust me: I gave him nothing but grief—he bore it all) and everything to lose. There were professionals and other adults who stood by and did nothing: one even blaming me for what was happening to me. Bruce never judged me: he tried desperately hard to understand and his care was unconditional.

“One of the things he would say to me is that you can't turn the clock back but you can turn it on: something that I have never forgotten. Other times he would tease me and say 'Pam: Jesus is not coming back. There will be no second coming, when you (ever the optimist!) get to heaven, they are going to do a little side show for you!' Of course I was grumpy when he said this (being the rancid angry teenager). He had a wicked dry sense of humour and a glint in his eye. Another time he was bitter and angry at the loss of his employment at West Park College. This was another lesson for me: as Bruce was dyslexic, (later I was diagnosed too) the employment situation was not as welcoming as it should have been.

“Bruce Harvey was a wonderful, exceptional, generous, selfless, good human being and he touched my life at a time when I was at my lowest and had hardly any support. He gave right from his soul. He helped to save my life at that time. It's a debt that can never be repaid. I thank God that he sent Bruce to me, (I guess God's love poured through Bruce's kindness to me) and that I got to spend time with this extraordinary person. Bruce's life should be celebrated; it was a life well lived.

'Pam'



Where were they?

The disciples—where were they? The people who heard him speak, who perhaps witnessed a miraculous healing—where were they? The followers, the crowds who shouted hosanna at the arrival of their king—where were they?

Fled into hiding when he was arrested? Sitting in judgement with the High Priest? Shouting for the release of Jesus bar Abbas and the crucifixion of Jesus bar Joseph?

All of the above?

The interpretation handed down to us, emphasising the angry sense of betrayal in the gospels, is that ‘all’ the people in Jerusalem were rioting at Roman headquarters, a fickle mob that welcomed a king and then demanded his death a few days later. Modern retellings usually focus on a few headliners, either people mentioned in scripture or a ‘typical’ follower or two.

But let’s put ourselves in the turmoil of Roman-occupied Jerusalem and call to mind news images we’ve seen from Gaza and other places, including the UK. *Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*

Aside from Peter and Judas, we are not told where the disciples went after the arrest, but they were in hiding together three days later.

Let’s imagine that you are just an ordinary resident of Jerusalem. Perhaps a small craftsman, perhaps a comfortable merchant, perhaps a servant, perhaps a rabbi yourself, perhaps homeless. Or you might have made your pilgrimage from another part of the country for the great religious celebration. You have probably heard of this Jesus some call the Messiah; you may have heard him teach or seen him in the temple overturning the moneychangers’ tables. Perhaps you were shocked at the impiety, or afraid of the brutal Roman reaction. Perhaps you hoped that this time a great king like David would drive

out the Romans and re-establish a godly rule. Let's say your heart was warmed by his teaching, you long to hear more, you call yourself (however silently) one of his followers.

It all looked so good, so right. Surely the day of God's promise was coming soon, now. Then that night, the night of sacred Passover, the rumours flew, all too soon confirmed as true news. Jesus bar Joseph was arrested. The Romans had him. No, Herod. No, the temple police. He was on trial.

Do you dare go out in the night streets to get the latest news? Maybe. But soon enough in this small, crowded, occupied city, everyone can hear the sounds of a mob and the heavy tread of soldiery. Where are the followers in this? Where would you be? Most surely have been barricading themselves and their families into their homes and workplaces, hiding anything of value, making sure the children will be well-hidden when the door is smashed down, ready to shield them with their own bodies at the end. Along with most of the residents of Jerusalem. The wealthy have armed servants at their doors. The Romans have a well-earned reputation for brutality.

Now let's imagine you are zealous enough, brave—or reckless—enough to go out. Or perhaps it's your duty to be at the temple or the high priest's house for the examination, or you're a witness. Perhaps you're part of an important household and required to go with your master or his patron.

Who else is out on the streets? Again, some of them don't involve a big stretch of the imagination: we just have to think of recent riots, the people who seek out violence for its own sake. Then there will be the 'hired muscle', not so different from the first group, come to that, there to make a noise and threaten violence on behalf of the temple authorities. And people who are truly angered by the heresy of this Nazarene so-called rabbi. But also—people who get carried away by whoever shouts the loudest, whether hosanna or crucify; people too

quick to believe rumours. People who thought they were followers and then felt the cause had been betrayed. Perhaps some who think that provoking a violent Roman response will surely bring the victorious Messiah and an army of angels to throw the Romans out. (Not so different from some current extremist politicians after all.)

So many different motives, so many different failings.

But then judgement is passed and Roman law takes its brutal course. Of course there are people lining the roads—the whole point of crucifixion is to terrify people into submission. They must see what happens to the condemned even before the final cruelties. Some are there for vengeance. Others—well public hangings used to be public entertainment. Some women, likely followers, weep and wail in traditional mourning, and the fullness of their hearts. And is there a last, desperate hope that this will be the moment? Will God act? Will the prophets or angels carry him off?

But no. No prophets, no angels, no miracle. He is cruelly dead, with only a handful staying to the bitter end. Dead and not even buried properly, because the Sabbath must be observed according to law and tradition, no matter what. For some, an occasion of relief or even rejoicing at a threat averted. For others a sombre, fearful affair. *Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?*

Keep your heads down. Stay out of sight, because they may come for you tomorrow.

But then, then.... More wild rumours. Peter says, John says.... The women who went to tend the body properly at first light; they say....

It can't be true. Can it?

Were you there? They were there. They saw.

CT

Prayer page

We give thanks for

- † The hope we have in the Resurrection
- † The people in our lives who have brought us to Christ, directly or indirectly
- † Our co-workers in the vineyard, our brothers and sisters who do the Lord's work in many different ways

We pray for

- † Forgiveness for the many ways in which we fall short of Jesus's example
- † Justice and mercy in law and in our community life
- † Peace with justice in places and situations where they are not found
- † People who bear heavy burdens alone
- † People who are sick, injured, recovering
- † Friends, families, colleagues of the people we have lost
- † That we have the strength, courage and will to strive for justice, mercy and peace; to support each other; to support anyone who is burdened, in the name of our risen Lord.

Pastorate News



Holy Week & Easter services:

Weoley Castle:

13 Palm Sunday (Communion) 11 AM, led by Phil Seadon

17 Maundy Thursday, 8 PM service

20 Easter (Communion) 11 AM, led by Weoley Castle members

Weoley Hill:

13 Palm Sunday 10.30 AM, led by Ann Evans.

17 Maundy Thursday 7.30 PM, at St Davids, Alan preaching.

18 Good Friday 7.30 PM

20 Early Easter 7 AM, worship led by Ann Evans.

Easter communion 10.30 AM, led by Revd David Tennant

Report of March Synod meeting

This meeting was on the morning of Saturday 15 March by Zoom. The proceedings opened with worship using the Message version of 1Corinthians 2:1-5 about keeping things 'Pure and Simple'. During worship Helen Laird was commissioned as the Children and Youth Development Officer (CYDO) and Angi Barker was inducted as the Pioneer Cluster Minister.

Vision Statement

- 4 /5 pioneer communities have been established. 5 being the target for the end of 2025.

- Maintain and increase the membership in every church for every year
- Increase the number of Eco awards but no church has been awarded the gold level yet.
- Every church to have realistic mission plan and keep their profile as an active document.

Synod Review process

Aim is to identify which areas of operations are most successful and where we might better serve.

There had been a questionnaire, and several items have been addressed such as personnel being employed and they are going on the road to meet local people and answer queries. Some people are still settling into their roles.

Grants and Loans review

The pulpit supply grant will now be 50% of total costs regardless of being in vacancy or not and is backdated to 1 January 2025. Claims to be submitted 6 monthly, June & December. The £40 fee has been in operation for several years and is reviewed annually by ministries committee but not all churches pay this.

The inclusion and Equality grants will now widen the scope for claims to physical and cognitive disabilities so new signage can be covered

Compliance Allowance will be about £1000 pa to cover costs of having items checked and maintained it can also cover the energy audit. This can be rolled over if not fully used.

Church of North India visit.

4 representatives went on this visit earlier this year. They visited the Colin Choyce extension to a hostel for young girls. This is used to take care of girls so they are not used in human trafficking and are given an education and taught life skills.

As part of the anti-trafficking programme they are asking for £2500 pa which will safeguard 20 girls. A request to churches or individuals has

been made asking for a commitment of £50 pa for 5 years. If 50 churches or individuals make donations this will be raised. If in the event of the money exceeding this, the excess will be sent to be used as the needs arise. Weoley Hill voted to make this commitment.

Website and Communications

The new communications officer, Emma Wright made a short presentation about the changes to the Synod website. These will become live before Easter and will include access to grant forms.

General Assembly – changes to the basis of Union

This included new paragraphs about ministers' stipends being non-contractual. Mainly legal wording and somewhat confusing to me. If you wish to know more contact me to see the wording. The changes were voted on and a majority of 65% carried the result to accept the changes.

Children & Youth update

Many slides were shown of forthcoming events or ideas. This went quickly but I noticed something about bags of welcome but do not know what they are. If they are gifts for new children coming to church, we should explore this for Theo and his brothers.

Committee reports

These are in the Synod papers which Ann, John & Rachel have copies. One item that required a vote was a donation of £150,000 to the Legacy of Slavery Fund. This money is 'spare' because it had been put aside for the pension fund but was no longer required.

Mission development

Ashley, the LYCIG person finishes his role at the end of April. Some churches have had some training on LYCIG and although sceptical to begin with were enthusiastic after doing the course or at least the introduction. We have looked at it but have not felt enthusiastic. It could help us to discern our mission plan. The Mission Development officers, Sally & Andrew Willett could help us.

Synod Executive report

This document is in the synod papers and includes movement of ministers, in memoriam, nominations, General assembly representatives, General Assembly moderator nomination for 2026-2027 and URC youth Executive. Also a safeguarding report and minutes of the last Synod meeting.

The meeting closed at 1.00 PM with prayer led by Steve Faber, the moderator.

Ann Evans as John, our rep had submitted his apologies.

Weoley Castle News

Services: 11 AM on Sundays

Apr 6th : led by Melanie Smith – ordination and induction of new Elders

Apr 13th : **Palm Sunday** - led by Phil Seadon – including Communion

Apr 20th : **Easter** - led by Weoley Castle members – including Communion

Apr 27th : led by Alison Geary

May 4th : Bible Study

Sam, Katie, Susie & Jonah are trying alternative styles of family-friendly worship and community engagement on Sunday afternoons at 4PM.

We are planning an Easter-themed **Family Fun Day** 10 AM to 2 PM on Tuesday 15th April, under the title “New Beginnings”.

Maundy Thursday service 8 PM 17th April

Warm Welcome will take place as normal on Good Friday 18th April, though we shall probably include a recognition of the significance of the day.

The **Day Centres** will **not** be operating on Good Friday and Easter Monday as Shencare transport is not available on these days.

Swap Shop continues on Mondays from 10 AM -12 NOON but not on Easter Monday.

News of the Fellowship

Gordon Wakeman, a regular attender at the Monday and Friday Day Centres, died on 25th January. His family recently sent a donation to the Day Centres after his funeral, in thanks for how he regained such a zest for life by attending.

Long-term church member **Margaret Wozencroft** hasn't been able for many years to get to Church from her retirement village on the Hagley Rd., but Lorraine da Costa visits her and reports that she was in the Midland Met. Hospital for a while but is now back home. Gail Dean reports that **Madge Finch** had a fall at her Care Home and is in hospital, but is recovering well.



Weoley Hill News

April's retiring collection is for *Debt Justice*.

Weoley Hill Calendar for April 2025		
Sunday	6	10.30 AM: Worship & communion led by Revd Ian Ring.
Tuesday	8	2 PM: Lent Group
Wednesday	9	7.30 PM: Elders
Thursday	10	10.30 AM: Lent group at St Marys 7.30 PM: Lent group at St Marys
Sunday	13	10.30 AM: Palm Sunday worship led by Ann Evans.
Wednesday	16	10 AM Funeral of Iris Bird 11.30 Committal at Lodge Hill; refreshments at Chaddesley Corbett
Thursday	17	7.30 PM: Maundy Thursday at St Davids, Alan preaching.
Friday	18	7.30 PM: Good Friday worship
Sunday	20	7 AM: Early Easter worship led by Ann Evans. 10.30 AM: Easter communion led by Revd David Tennant
Sunday	27	10.30 AM: Worship led by Alan Cotgreave.
Monday	28	3 PM: F&B meeting

Community Choir: Fridays at 6.45 PM in term time. See Alan or Gordon.

Art club: Wednesdays at 10 AM in term time. See Lorraine.

Fish & chip supper and quiz

Our first quiz of the year, in aid of Fairtrade, is on Saturday 3 May from 6.30 to 9.30 PM, and this will be our event to keep us a designated Fairtrade church. It is a little later than usual so as to make it easier for some people to attend during the lighter evenings. As usual there will be a meal of fish and chips with pickles and sauce with a hot drink and cake to follow. The cost will be £9 per person for teams of six, but don't worry if you haven't a team already as there are always spaces of friends you can join with. You are welcome to bring your own wine etc and donations of prizes for the raffle are always very much appreciated. Prizes—{surprises)—are out of this world!

Lorraine



The next issue will be available around 1 May. Contributions are requested! Send them to Ted Forgan at Weoley Castle or Cheryl Thornett at Weoley Hill.

Spring rolls about with laughter

When is the best time to wash your Slinky?

During spring cleaning.

What's the best flower for a boy to give on Mother's Day?

A son-flower.

Should I plant flowers in April?

May as well!

When is it impossible to plant flowers?

When you haven't botany.

Did you hear about the pregnant bedbug?

She's having her babies in the spring.

Why couldn't the flower bud ride a bike?

It didn't have any petals.

What happens when you tell an Easter egg a joke?

It cracks up.

Why are waterbeds so bouncy?

They're filled with spring water.

What did the dust say to the April showers?

You'd better stop, or my name will be mud!



Weoley Castle & Weoley Hill Churches

Weoley Castle Community Church, Quarry Rd:

Worship Sundays at 11 AM.

Alternative style family-friendly worship Sunday afternoons at 4 PM.

Weoley Hill URC, Greenmeadow Rd:

Worship at 10.30 AM.

Sunday worship can be still found on the Weoley Hill website in outline or in complete form.

We are forming a new Pastorate with Cotteridge & Carrs Lane churches and hope to call a minister to the Pastorate soon

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