

Cadbury Pastorate News

Bournville, Weoley Castle &
Weoley Hill Churches



June 2021

From the Minister's study—

Dear friends,

We breathe a sigh of relief, after languishing during the long winter months and the cold and wet early Spring, and as gradually the lockdown measures are relaxed and we have resumed our weekly worship. However, for the time being the worship time is still reduced, we still have to wear masks and keep a safe distance, we cannot yet sing as a congregation and refreshments after worship are still a no-no. But, at least, we start to gather again, and not only for Sunday worship but we are also beginning to resume church activities. At Bournville we hope to meet for the bi-monthly meditation again (see notice in newsletter), at Weoley Castle the Day Centre/Lunch club will resume this month and plans are made for children's activity days in the summer and at Weoley Hill the Elders have done some brainstorming what (new) group activities we could offer (art group, walking group, faith discussion group, etc). And I hope to start the monthly meeting at the Manse again in June (in the Manse garden, weather permitting). It seems that we are gradually emerging out of the upheaval and trauma of the pandemic (that is far from over!) to "rebuild" our church life again. But how will it be? What are our expectations?

I am reminded of the prophet Haggai who in a very brief period in post-exilic history had a very important message to deliver to a demoralized remnant of Jews who had returned from the Babylonian exile two decades before. In those two decades the people had rebuilt their homes, but the temple in Jerusalem was still in ruins. Yes, they had started to lay the foundations the year that they had come back from exile but soon "the work on the house of God in Jerusalem stopped and was discontinued." (Ezra 4: 24) Perhaps the people suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome as they surveyed the scene of loss and destruction? Perhaps there was a lack of skilled labour or building material, or not enough funds for the rebuilding? Perhaps some of the younger generation had no recollection of the temple so did not see the immediate urgency to rebuild? Or perhaps

the priority was to rebuild homes, lives and livelihoods? If so, who could blame them?

Enter Haggai who asked the question: How are things going for you? "Consider how you have fared?" (Haggai 1: 5) The people have rebuilt their lives but society is not prospering; the economy is not flourishing as envisioned. According to Haggai the people will only prosper if they get their priorities right and rebuild the temple. And so the "spirit" of the governor, the high priest as well as the people was "stirred by the Lord" and the work on the temple starts.

As the work progresses a real disappointment is felt among those who remember the first temple in its former glory. They compared the restored "second" temple with Solomon's original temple and the verdict was inevitable and predictable: "Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?" (2:3) Yes, the second temple paled in comparison to the glory of the former temple.

However, the word of God spoken through Haggai challenges the people not to be nostalgic about the past, nor to be disappointed about the present, but to look at the future. "Take courage, all you people of the land, and work. Rebuild, for I am with you according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear. Despite the outward circumstances, I will bless you, and the glory of the second temple will outshine the splendour of the first temple." (cf 2: 4-9) While the promise of God is for the future, God is present with the people in the present. And it is the presence of God which sustains us, which guides us and protects us, according to Haggai. In other words, the prophet helps the people to manage their expectations.

I think this is a timely message for us and we can take heart from the prophetic words encouraging us to look hopeful to the future, rather than with nostalgia to the past, pre-pandemic and long before. As we resume our church life and activities, we have to help each other

manage our expectations. It will not be the same as before, and certainly we will not return to our “former glory” when the church was full, church life was buzzing with activities, we had plenty of (people and financial) resources and the church had a prominent and much respected place in society. No, but we are reminded, as we build our church life up again after more than a year of lockdowns and restrictions, that we can trust that God will be present with us, sustaining and guiding us, whatever the future will be. God speaks to us today through God’s promise spoken by Haggai a long time ago: “*I am with you, do not fear, My Spirit remains among you. There can be greater glory in your lesser circumstances.*”

With all best wishes, *Leonora*



NOTICE re Morning at the Manse

On the 23rd of June I would like to start the monthly reading/discussion meeting at the Manse again, weather permitting, as we would sit in the garden. You are welcome at 10.30am and if you have a foldable garden chair which you can bring along, please do. I am sure there is a lot we can discuss and share and we will find a way that everyone can fully participate even when the “acoustics” outside can be a challenge for some. I hope many of you will be able to come (and that the weather will be accommodating!). *Leonora*



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

Prayer page

Tear Fund—Prayer in the Park

Prayer in the Park is a prayer event uniting people and churches across the UK as we celebrate the beauty of God’s world, repent for the damage we’ve done, and seek God’s heart for a sustainable future.

Just days after the event, world leaders will meet for the G7 summit in Cornwall to discuss how to build back better from the coronavirus pandemic and create a greener and fairer future for all. And in November, world leaders will gather for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) to discuss how to tackle the climate crisis.

Decisions made at these gatherings will affect us all, now and for generations to come – especially those living in the poorest communities across the world, who are already being disproportionately affected by climate change. We want to bring this to God in prayer. Will you join us?

You can take part in Prayer in the Park by going out into nature to pray in a local green space, beach, or park on Saturday, June 5. Do whatever works for you—whether that’s sitting in your garden or going on an adventurous hike, praying alone or with others (making sure to follow coronavirus restrictions).

We’ve created a prayer resource (including audio clips) to help guide you through prayer points as you walk or have a time of reflection in God’s wonderful creation.

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/reboot-campaign/prayer-for-the-climate/prayer-in-the-park>

If you plan to take part, you can also join our Facebook event to find out more and connect with others across the UK.

Yours in Christ,
Agnes McGrane
Email Editor, Tearfund

Pastorate News

All three churches are meeting for worship again, whether every Sunday or every other Sunday, and we all hope we won't have to close up shop again. In theory this means we don't need to supply recorded or printed worship anymore, but of course there are people in our fellowship who are not able to come to church on Sundays temporarily or permanently. And of course, no one knows whether there will be future restrictions.

So what is the best way of including people at home,? Please let your elder or church secretary know: could you receive a live-streamed service, play a video recording or...? Or perhaps you are happy to watch a televised service from elsewhere when you can't attend. Please let us know!



Weoley Castle

We are planning to restart our Day Centres for senior citizens on Monday 7 June 7.

At least during the Summer, we intend to have just two in-person services per month, on the 2nd & 4th Sundays:

June 13th , led by Leonora, including communion

June 27th led by Frank Challenor

Bournville

The preaching rota of Bournville for June is:

June 6 Leonora

June 13 Pastorate worship (using the pastorate worship sheet)

June 20 Stuart

June 27 Leonora

Meditation at Bournville URC

Pre covid 19 a few of us met at Bournville URC for an hour, twice a month to meditate on a passage from the Bible. Once all the covid restrictions are lifted, we plan to restart these sessions, (hopefully, on the 24th of June).

All are welcome to come and join us from 2-3 pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month.

So what exactly do we do during these times? We use a form of meditation known as *lectio divina*. Following a brief time of relaxation to help us slow down and recentre our distracted minds on God, we then begin to travel through the four steps of lectio divina.

Step 1 – Lectio, involves slowly reading the chosen passage several times.

Step 2 – Meditatio. In this step we ponder or mull over any word or phrase that stands out to us personally and relate it to our daily life.

Step 3 – Oratio. This is a time of prayer and responding to God

Step 4 – Contemplatio. In this final step we spend a few minutes just sitting with God and enjoying being with him.

In his inspiring book, *how to pray*, Pete Greig shares an example of using this approach with John 3:16. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. "Initially you might find yourself arrested by just those first six words, *For God so loved the world*. You could

repeat them a few times and feel the weight of that one little word, 'so' God 'loved the world' He didn't just love us a bit, he loved us a lot. It's extravagant. You picture the apostle John underlining the word 'so' in the original scroll. You can imagine the Lord speaking your name, saying I love you so much. Instinctively you reply, 'Thank you Lord' The conversation has begun. As you continue to circle these six words, you're struck by the fact that God loved the world so much. Your mind turns to your own little patch of it and your annoying neighbour. You ask God to help you to be a bit more loving today. You think of your friend Johnny. For God so loved Johnny that he gave Jesus. Johnny doesn't want anything to do with you right now, you say, sensing the deep sadness of it all. For God so loved Judith, lying there right now in that hospital bed. You hadn't planned on praying for Judith. She just popped into your mind. Maybe the Holy Spirit is asking you to pray for her? You send her a quick text "How are you? Praying for you"

Louise Tye



Weoley Hill

Deb Moriarty died in the QE on the evening of 11 May after a long illness. Her nephew was with her at the time. Our sympathy goes to her nephew, niece, stepchildren and other family, and to her many friends and former colleagues. We will all miss her very much. Restrictions mean the funeral on 4 June is invitation only, but you may wish to gather outside the church around 11.45, when the hearse will leave for Lodge Hill crematorium. Can you offer a cake for the refreshments?

The June retiring collection is for Jubilee Debt.

Weoley Hill preaching plan

06-Jun-21 Leonora
13-Jun-21 Ann Evans
20-Jun-21 Leonora
27-Jun-21 Cheryl Thornett

Re-opening news: I trust everyone has seen Leonora's invitation to resume discussions at the Manse. The Community Choir is waiting for clarification, but hopes to resume rehearsals at the church during June.

Elders have discussed what kinds of small/er groups people might like to attend—an art club? needlework group? walking group? general or themed chat?—as well as Bible studies, Lent groups and so on. If you have wondered why we don't have a particular group you would like to be part of, please tell your elder or Cheryl.

Christian Aid

We raised	Envelopes	392.40
	Sponsored walk	610.00
	Tap simple Church	520.00
	Total	1522.40

There may well have been more via people who gave direct to Christian Aid, as the envelope contained the main C A address. There is also Gift Aid, £302.75

Many thanks to everybody who supported Christian Aid.
Emlyn



I said we were talking about groups....

ART GROUP

(Painting and drawing for pleasure)

We are starting a group of anyone who would like to come along and spend some time drawing or painting for a couple of hours per week. Meetings will be on Wednesdays from 10.00 am till 12.00, starting on Wednesday 9 June. If you have materials—watercolours/ acrylics/ oils/ pastels/ pencils/ charcoal/ papers/ canvasses—then bring along whatever you feel comfortable with. If you don't have any of the above but would like to have a go then come along and borrow things for a while. There will be a small charge to cover electricity, (to be agreed) and you can ask for help if you want to but there is **NO** professional teaching and there is **NOT** a competition or display, unless you want it. This is just an opportunity to meet in a small group doing something you like or want to learn. Covid precautions will be observed so please wear a mask if we need to sit closer together and be prepared to give names and addresses at first and wipe tables etc at the end

Lorraine DaCosta



May 2021

To: All members and adherents of United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships

It would be fair to describe the year-and-a-bit since March 2020 as having been “different”, wouldn't it? Lots of us have experienced loss of loved ones, loss of income and perhaps jobs. All have experienced periods of lockdown; periods without ‘non-essential’ shops; and continuous and extensive disruption to our ‘normal’ social interactions and relationships. The world we thought we understood and could

take for granted has been utterly transformed. How many of us imagined at the start of 2020 that we could go months without a haircut or without people not in our ‘bubble’ entering our homes?

As members of United Reformed Church congregations ourselves, we understand much of what your church community has experienced since March 2020. The absence of what is now regularly labelled “in-person worship” for much (or all) of this time has compelled us to turn to other ways of being church. Buildings in which we used to praise God regularly have been shut, both to regular worshipers and others who might have sought solace within their walls during these desperate and troubling times. It has been hard to maintain close fellowship with people we only meet over Zoom (or the like)—if we are digitally enabled.

Financially, things have been extremely tough too. Plate offerings have collapsed; some regular givers have had to reduce or entirely stop giving to support God’s work; and those churches which hire out their premises have seen income from that source disappear.

At denominational level, we feared that these financial troubles would spell disaster for the URC’s Ministry and Mission (‘M&M’) fund through which the URC has always supported and developed our stipendiary ministers and Church Related Community Workers. It would have been all too easy for congregations to forget that for almost 49 years this fund (under various names) has provided stipends, pension contributions and training for all ministers throughout the three nations in which the URC operates: so that ministry reaches where synods judge it to be most needed and is paid for according to each congregation’s ability to contribute (though the ways of determining that vary from synod to synod). It was all very well to remind ourselves that the M&M fund is meant to be the first call on every congregation’s resources if the undertaking to financially support our ministers is to be honoured. We feared that drastically reduced income would make that impossible and that, because the need was less visible than the

other calls on your diminished resources, payments to the M&M fund would have stopped first.

We are sorry if we ever doubted you.

It quickly became apparent that, although some congregations had to reduce their pledged giving to the M&M fund, many more of you were continuing to meet the 2020 commitments you had made during better times, despite the struggles that required. At the start of that year we had been expecting churches and synods to contribute around £18.5 million to the fund. By the year end, all but half-a-million pounds of that had been received. Since Church House staff and committees managed to reduce their budgeted expenditure by almost £1 million, your money enabled us to meet the full costs of our Ministries, Education & Learning, Children's and Youth Work and Mission departments in 2020 as well as covering amounts spent on safeguarding, denominational governance and communications.

What is perhaps even more amazing is that, collectively, you have pledged to give £17.3 million during 2021 despite the financial problems caused by the pandemic being fully apparent well before your offers for this year were made.

We are always grateful for the financial support given each year to the M&M fund by all of you; but this past year has been phenomenal.

Thank you to those of you who have been able to maintain or increase financial support for your church congregation through this difficult time. That has enabled those responsible for your congregation's finances to keep more money flowing to the M&M fund than we expected.

Thank you for all your previous financial support to those of you who, after prayerful consideration, have had to reduce or stop giving in response to your changed financial circumstances.

Thank you for the pledges your congregation has made about contributing to the M&M fund during 2021 even though you were by

then aware of the impact the pandemic was having on your local congregation's finances.

Thank you in anticipation for what you agree to offer to the M&M fund during 2022 to enable the denomination to deliver ministry, education and learning, children's work and mission activity on God's (and your) behalf.

We are aware that synods have played a significant part in encouraging and supporting many congregations with their contributions to the M&M fund. We have separately written to Synod Treasurers to express our thanks to them and their colleagues too.

Of course, our giving for God's work is in response to the amazing generosity and love of God which we see in Jesus. Nonetheless, it is important for us to thank every one of you for what you do for God, your congregation and its and our denominational finances.

Thank you!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hardie (Treasurer) and John Piper (Deputy Treasurer)

-On behalf of the whole United Reformed Church Finance Committee



World News

It has been a tough year for Bible Society workers in many countries. Lockdowns have meant fewer sales and less income. So new ideas were needed. Bible Society in Egypt has looked for the opportunities and has speeded-up its digital outreach. After a huge increase in YouTube and Facebook views in 2020, they hope to double their social media outreach this year. One minister has nearly 2,000 people in WhatsApp groups who receive daily Bible readings.

The Burmese military has been in the news for the wrong reasons but their continuing murderous ethnic cleansing of the minority Christian ethnic groups do not make the headlines. In Karen State, Christians are being forcibly removed to gain more land for the military. Many villagers who escape, live in hiding in the forest or in overcrowded camps for displaced people.

Since September 2020, 169 Christians have been released from Eritrean prisons. Perhaps 400 more are still imprisoned, often enduring brutal and inhumane conditions, being starved, tortured and forced into hard labour. Most are held indefinitely without trial. Eritrea remains one of the worst countries for Christian persecution.

from Sue Beeby



In view of all May's rain, some weather jokes:

Q. What should you do if it's raining cats and dogs?

A. Take care not to step in a poodle

Q. What's worse than raining cats and dogs?

A. Hailing taxis

Q. What did the puddle say to the raindrop?

A. You should drop in sometime

Q. What did one raindrop say to another?

A. Two's company; three's a cloud.

Q. What do clouds put on under their clothes?

A. Thunderwear

Q. If an orchestra is playing outdoors in a thunderstorm, who is most at risk?

A. The conductor

Q. If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?

A. Pilgrims

Q. Red sky at night, shepherd's delight; blue sky at night?

A. It's Summer!



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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