



Weoley Hill Church News

From the Minister's Desk

January 2012

2012 – THE YEAR OF UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

An 87 year old lady, Rose, was asked by a younger classmate (the age of her grandchild) why she decided to enrol at College at such an age.

People grow older every passing second, minute, day, and year, but it takes skill, experience and effort to grow up.

She responded with a tongue-in-cheek that she hopes to "meet a rich husband, get married, have a couple of children, and then retire and travel." Ha, ha, that's awesome. Anyway, she later tells the young man the truth – she enrolled because she always dreamt of having a college education. And here she was, finally living her dream, age notwithstanding.

I know this might sound new or even strange to some of you, if you are not used listening to or hearing God. But God still speaks to His people today – those who are willing to listen. So, it has now become a custom, if you like, for me to enquire from the Lord His plans for every New Year. And it always comes in an overarching theme. For 2012 I sensed in my spirit it is going to be 'THE YEAR OF UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES'. It immediately gave me a sense of peace and excitement to embrace the New Year that I believe holds so much opportunity and possibilities. I was led to Matthew 19:26 where this was derived. There Jesus was talking to His disciples about God's sovereignty to save all who come to

Him, that 'with God all things are possible'. This was repeated in Mark 10:27.

What does this mean? It means trusting God to break fresh grounds or to make progress generally. As a congregation it means not resting on our oars, but believing that there is so much we can achieve in 2012 with the help of God. Of course looking at the past year you will recognise times when we exercised great faith and were rewarded by amazing outcomes. The same applies at personal levels where I believe there is so much we can achieve in the New Year. It means not accepting that your life is over before it really is. However, we may need a change of perception, because a lot of the defeat we suffer start with how we see things.

If a woman of 87 can get herself a college degree why will you limit yourself? One thing you should know is that age is relative. Some are fifty and they already feel eighty, whereas others are eighty and they feel less than forty.

Continued over

Maturity comes with time and the correct application of knowledge and experience.

Of course, yours might not be the pursuit of further education. It might just be taking little steps, or venturing to do some things you have always wanted to do but have not had the courage or the confidence to try them. Or, may be, you have tried things in the past and failed, so you are scared to try again. Well, you should understand that failure is not final, but rather a lesson on how not to do a particular thing when next you have the opportunity.

Finally, in that story, Rose believes there is a difference between growing older and growing up. She says you don't need any skill to *grow old*, because time passes naturally by itself and

so you grow older by default. Whether we sedate ourselves or pretend to freeze time, we will only wake up one day to realise that time is gone. People grow older every passing second, minute, day, and year, but it takes skill, experience and effort to *grow up*. Maturity comes with time and the correct application of knowledge and experience. Have you stopped dreaming? DON'T! For with God ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

George
January 2012.



Scripture Cake Answers

(From December)

- Judges 5 v 25 last clause unsalted butter, softened
- Jeremiah 6 v 20 light brown muscovado sugar
- 1 Samuel 14 v 25 honey
- Jeremiah 17 v 11 medium free range eggs
- 1 Samuel 30 v 12 Raisins
- Nahum 3 v 12 soft dried figs
- Numbers 17 v 8 Blanched almonds, roughly chopped
- 1 Kings 4 v 22 Light brown plain flour
- 2 Chronicles 9 v 9 Ground mixed spice
- Amos 4 v 5 Baking powder
- Leviticus 2 v 13 salt
- Judges 4 v 19 milk

Method of preparation

Mix in Method as for sponge cake. Bake at 170 degrees for 2 hours.

Personalia

Phyllis Townsend is now living with her daughter & son-in-law, Geraldine and Dave Evans. She was in hospital over Christmas with stomach problems but had frequent visits and is now with Geraldine and Dave at

Juliet Chideya has been in hospital.

Phoebe, the Weaver's granddaughter, has had an operation for a hip dysplasia.



The Moderator's Christmas Message 2011

I lost count of how many times one of my daughters went to see the film 'Robin Hood Prince of Thieves'. But the local cinema did offer her shares in the company! Not entirely surprising in a way as not only was Kevin Costner playing the lead role but this story has gripped our society and international communities for nearly 1,000 years.

Two aspects of the story that ring bells in our souls are:

- a) Having an allegiance to an alternative King (King Richard rather than King John) and
- b) Taking from the rich to give to the poor

Those themes of an alternative King and bringing wealth to where poverty is are also marbled through the tapestry of our Christmas stories. The star (in Matthew's account) like an early day Satellite Navigation System, guides the wise men to the birthplace of the King of the Jews and Herod (who thought that was his job acts brutally to extinguish this alternative ruler.

The travelling parents (in Luke's account) unsure of finding a place to be a maternity ward mix it in poor circumstances with some four legged friends, and an unsanitised manger. And then (back to Matthew) the wealthy wise men arrive with gifts for the poor - dripping gold and all the rest of it.

In a way it touches us deep down. Robin the Hood and the birth of Jesus the Christ both took place at a time before the Enlightenment, the Renaissance, the Age of Reason. This powerfully creative period ushered in much that was liberating in both secular and religious terms. Our own church traditions date back to the Reformation of the same period in which in parallel to the themes of

the renaissance many churches moved away from hierarchy to engage all the people of the church. And they sought 'the light and truth God had yet to break forth from his word' and not just the truth the church was prepared to sanction.

But one of the other effects of that renaissance was a move away from the previous consensus founded on scripture which was that usury or the taking of interest on loans was to be forbidden. Martin Luther still stood against it and even John Calvin in his urban Geneva only allowed it to be practised in certain modest circumstances. The word usury has come to mean lending money at extortionate interest rates. But in the Old Testament it was not sanctioned at all!! However with the powering up of trade after the enlightenment, the discovery of gold in the new world and then the increasing development of capitalism disconnected from its original roots in morality we have got a market believed in as something which of its own volition will deliver what society needs for its own good. Whatever we think about Marxism it could be seen to be a great nineteenth century shout of protest against the unjust effects of such an unfettered market. A sort of macro and intellectual version of what we have seen outside St Paul's in recent months. So we live in a very different world where all of us myself included, are involved in the processes of borrowing money and paying interest. The fact the bible says more and expresses more unhappiness at this than it does on matters of sexuality or gender does not seem to trouble us. Though now we are seeing the effects of unfettered usury and a market with our

compliance, simply bent on endless growth and profit.

Because our scripture and our cultural history (stories like Robin Hood are grounded in a culture which was essentially Christendom) allows us to be plugged into another realm as well as the one we inhabit daily through our credit cards it allows us to know that things can be different. There can and should be means by which we can work our economic climate to shift the gross wealth in some places towards the gargantuan poverty of others. A way to ensure the functioning of society so our needs are met but that there is fairness and which works against greed.

So this Christmas as you ponder your plans and gifts, gathering with families and friends might you find ways to say that like Robin the Hood and the sat nav driven Wise Men you will seek to follow different music, an alternative rule and be well attuned to the plight of your neighbour. Let's think of it each time we use a credit card and the plastic gets near to melting with its continued usage!

Might we also put our weight in every way we can behind a move which has Robin Hood stamped all over it! The United Reformed Church for well over a year now has been backing the idea of a Robin Hood tax. As you know it taxes financial transactions and diverts the money raised towards relieving poverty and the effects of climate change. A way of incarnating this alternative King's rule. Roberta Rominger, the United Reformed Church General Secretary said in September:

'The financial sector bears a huge responsibility for the current economic crisis and must make

a fair contribution to help finance the massive deficits in EU member states. There is a moral imperative to use the Robin Hood Tax to fill the gap in urgently needed funding to tackle climate change and poverty at home and abroad. It's in everyone's interests to find new sources of finance to tackle these global challenges'

And Rowan Williams the Archbishop of Canterbury said last week in supporting what the St

Paul's protest has been expressing and this Tax said:

"There is still a powerful sense around - fair or not - of a whole society paying for the errors and irresponsibility of bankers; of impatience with a return to 'business as usual' - represented by still-soaring bonuses and little visible change in banking practices. "

Celebrate your socks off and have fun over the festive season. But let the beauty of Christmas and its worship, music and family gatherings bring us with new eyes to these Christmas accounts and literature and music. There God in Christ in a stall sets out his stall as the alternative king with real demands about the consequences of his rule for our beleaguered economic lives. And let Robin Hood's resurrection in this tax proposal be one means at least by which we can bring that alternative kingdom to bear on the mess we have made. With Jesus the King and the miracle of the incarnation there is always hope.

Revd Roy Lowes

MESSY CHURCH

This definitely lived up to its name as, at one point, we seemed to be knee deep in glitter, glue and gooey paint, and what wasn't stuck to card was stuck to every surface in the John Kydd Hall.

Forty-five children, ranging in age from 2 to 12, plus various parents, grandparents and other carers, came to our first attempt at this craft day -linked to a religious theme- which hopes to encourage youngsters to see that churches are not necessarily dull places to visit. The theme of course was Christmas and so we had groups drawing and making cards, cutting and decorating 'angels' and 'stained glass windows', making foam-card decorations to hang on the tree and sponge printing 'wrapping paper'. There was even a chance to make some 'donkey dung' (from fondant icing and cocoa thankfully!), or to dress up, or play with play-dough.

Following a short introduction from George in the Sanctuary the children chose which activity to try and then moved on as space, and the fancy, offered them. After an hour there was a short service before having hot-dogs, salad and cakes in the Lower Hall. Everything disappeared you will not be surprised to learn! A hectic and interesting afternoon was had by all and we have certainly learned much for future similar events -we hope to do another one at Easter so make a note now.

Many, many thanks must go to all those who worked non-stop from earlier on in the day to get equipment sorted and furniture arranged

and then stayed later to sweep and scrape to make it look as though we hadn't even been there - Barbara, Gini, Ina, Linda, Nancy and Zim, together with Iris, and Gini again, with others in the kitchen- plus other helpers who went round with the younger children. Also thanks to those who donated sweets and other items to help the day run smoothly and those who organised the initial advertising and booking.

We will have a review later this month to see what we can improve on, or what to try next, or what to never do again (several people did try for a degree in Glitterology but if the amount on the floor and chairs is an indication of success they need to do re-sits!) One thing was obvious in that we do need more helpers on the day so if you think you could help please watch for further notices later this year.

We managed to get donations totalling £45 and we now have a stock of equipment which can be added to later so future events should not be so costly. Altogether a successful link with the Toddler Group, outreach to the youth and families of the local community and a great example of teamwork within our church family. Once again thanks to all concerned.

Lorraine DaCosta



Celebratory Worship in Westminster Abbey

The following email has been received from the Synod. I think it sounds a very interesting occasion. If you are interested in attending please let me know so a few tickets can be booked together. Arrangements for travel can be made later.

Ann Evans



Dear All

The following press release has recently been issued concerning our relationship with the Church of England.

The Church of England and United Reformed Church are to hold an historic service in Westminster Abbey, marking a significant step forward in the development of a shared relationship. This will take place on Tuesday 7th February 2012 at 18.15, in the year of the 350th Anniversary of the Act of Uniformity and the Great Ejection, as well as the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church. The service, arising out of the joint report 'Healing of Memories' which has been to General Synod and the United Reformed Church

Mission Council, will be a service of Reconciliation, Healing of Memories and Mutual Commitment. There will be testimonies about martyrs of the past and stories of shared work in the present, leading to an act of commitment for the future.

Tickets are available from the United Reformed Church Ecumenical Office, email ecumenical@urc.org.uk.

There is also a dedicated webpage on the URC website at http://www.urchurch.org.uk/what_we_do/ecumenical/WestminsterAbbeyService with information that will be updated as time goes on.

The invitation is open to all those who would like to attend and we would obviously hope that as many people will come as possible so that there will be as many members of the URC present as of the Church of England!

FWO REPORT

We're now at the end of the year and I'm delighted to be able to report that the FWO figure for December is £2,464.50, which is only £12.42 short of the budgeted figure of £2,476.92 for December. Therefore we have ended the year £1,883.50 over the budgeted figure of £32,200.00 which is very good news.

Rosemary Hay
FWO Secretary
31 December 2011

December & Christmas collection

We collected a total of £665.30 for WaterAid's "Seeds of Hope".

Dave Marlow

Friendship Group Christmas Lunch

Once again a delicious meal was had by the lucky 37 members of the Friendship group who joined together on the 14th December for the usual pre-Christmas lunch. A festive red roast- tomato soup (made by Pat Weaver) was the starter, followed by generous slices of turkey and ham (previously roasted by Nancy Nicholls and Doreen Bradley), accompanied by a mixed green salad, puy lentil and bean salad, thinly sliced dressed green cabbage salad, red cabbage with apple, then hot parsley potatoes as the main course. A fruit compote of apricots, figs and mixed berries soaked in orange juice and served with cream or custard was the dessert and finally, if there was space left, a mince pie and tea or coffee.

This was a wonderful start to the Christmas (eating) season and thanks must go to the talented and dedicated cooks who produced it

as well as to Joyce Cope who made the beautiful floral decorations which later went into the Sanctuary, and Deb Moriarty who did all the organisation of bookings and all the purchasing of non-food items. The meal itself lasted from 12.30pm until 2.30pm but people were helping from 10.30 in the morning until nearly 5 o' clock to ensure the event was a success and everything was left tidy for the next day so a very big thank you to all concerned.

Deb handed out a calendar of interesting events for 2012 and our first meeting on Wednesday 11th January is a talk about 'Some Sights of the Faroes and Iceland' to be given by Pat Weaver. Do come along, and bring a friend at 2.15pm for a drink before a start at 2.30. If you have any suggestions for speakers or other events, please contact Deborah.

Lorraine DaCosta

Friendship Group Spring and Summer Programme 2012

Meetings are at 2.15 for 2.30 pm unless otherwise stated on the second Wednesday of each month. All welcome.

Wednesday	11 January	Some sights of the Faroes and Iceland: Pat Weaver
Wednesday	8 February	My life in music: Gordon Thornett
Friday	2 March	Women's World Day of Prayer Service (WH 10.30 am)
Wednesday	14 March	My experiences of work with WaterAid: Julie Regis
Wednesday	11 April	TBA
Wednesday	9 May	Christian Aid Coffee Morning and Bring & Buy sale, John Kydd Hall
Wednesday	13 June	Day outing TBA. Leave car park at 11 am
Wednesday	11 July	Garden Party 2.30 pm