

# Weoley Hill Church News



*May 2018*

## *From the Secretary*

Censuses are frowned upon by some Christians, who point to the Old Testament passages where the whole nation of Israel is punished because King David decreed a census—but ignore passages in Numbers (the hint is in the name), where all the tribes are counted, or Ezra, where the people returning from exile are counted. Let's skip arguing why some were 'good' and some were 'bad', shall we?

In any case, we aren't conducting a census, but we are legally required to 'number' what personal information Weoley Hill URC holds about individuals: what kind, who has it, where it is, how we keep it safe, and so on. This doesn't mean an elder is going to demand to examine your address book or mobile phone! It does mean that if you have a list of names, phone numbers, addresses or the like headed, say, Weoley Hill Church Rambling Club, we would like you to tell us—Cheryl, David or Ann—that you have this list, where it is, how you keep it safe—and why you need it. And then maybe you need to think where it is kept and how you can make sure someone outside the church doesn't see it. (Messy desk—no one will ever find it?)

Of course we are legally required to keep some information, such as marriage, Free Will Offering and Gift Aid records. The URC asks us for statistics including age ranges. Individuals sometimes ask about past baptisms or funerals; we have even been asked to tell another church when someone was ordained as an Elder here. This latter kind of information is part of our archive at the university and we are telling the university who can see what documents from now on, to put it simply. Existing records like the archive won't be changed.

The next step is that we need to ensure that from 25 May onwards we have your explicit consent to keep the information you give us. I think we've all been getting endless letters about this from organisations we deal with. You need to know that we are careful with your details and that we will not sell or give them to an outside group the way too many businesses and even charities have been doing.

So when you receive a letter to this effect, with a copy of our privacy policy and a consent form to fill in and sign, please sign and return the form promptly. We will have to treat 'no answer' as 'no consent' after a while. (Because we have a duty of pastoral care to members and others on our list who can't give meaningful consent for themselves, we can still keep their contact details; parents will give consent for minor children.)

This would be a very good time to look yourself up in the Annual Report and the latest Church Directory to check that your address, phone number/s and email address if you have one, are still correct, that we show what you want church members to see and don't show what you don't, or show out-of-date information. We no longer publish changes of address or phone number in this newsletter, so remember to tell the Membership Secretary when there is a change.

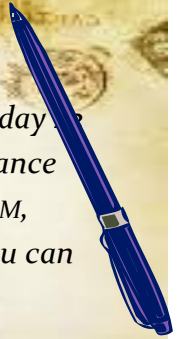
Not very spiritual, is this? Just boring administration— But 'pastoral care' is at the top of our list of why we keep your contact details; so we keep in touch with each other for support, fellowship and the work of the church.

Let's get this particular requirement out of the way as quickly and efficiently as we can—then we can concentrate on worship and our work as the people of God.

Cheryl

## *Personalia*

*We are sad to say that Tom Bradley died on Monday 13 April. The service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance for his life and work is on Saturday, 19 May at 2 PM, with light refreshments to follow. See Nancy if you can help with refreshments.*



## COMMUNION PREPARATION ROTA

Could you consider joining the rota for the preparation of the communion elements? This is not an onerous task, and providing we have enough people on the rota you would not have to do it more than perhaps once every six months. Two people do it together and you don't need to launder the linen or even buy the elements – I will do all that. It is just a matter of arriving early enough on communion Sundays (usually first Sunday of the month) filling the glasses, putting the bread in the baskets and laying the communion table. After the service the glasses need to be washed and put away. And that's it!

If you think you could do this occasionally please have a word with me. Thank you in advance!

Christine Marlow

## Neighbourhood News

*News and events from other local churches:*

### **Weoley Castle Thursday Cafés:**

10 May at 10 am, Advice Cafe;

17 May 10 am-12: Christian Aid Week Big Brekkie;

24 May at 10.00 am: Art & Craft Café

**Christian Aid at Selly Oak Methodist:** Celebration of our global congregation 9 June at 7 PM, entertainment and buffet refreshments for *Around the World in 80 Minutes*. Donations for Christian Aid and a warm welcome to all ages.

**Jubilee Debt Campaign Coffee Morning & Gardeners' Market at Selly Oak Methodist** 19 May 2018, 10 – 11.30 AM a “Bring and Buy” plant stall and Jubilee Debt Campaign coffee morning at SOMC. Proceeds will be shared between JDC and Church funds. Plants of all kinds—vegetable, salad, pot, bedding, perennials—are welcome.

## Birmingham City Mission Barn Dance

Friday June 8, 7 PM

Live band & caller, ploughman's supper,  
home baked cakes, charity auction.

Rowheath Pavilion, Heath Road, Bournville B30 1HH

Tickets: adults £10, children £5, family (up to 2 children) £25

For tickets call 0121 766 6603 or email  
office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk

## The Retiring Collections for May: The Corrymeela Community

**Corrymeela** is a volunteer-led, open Christian community based in Northern Ireland, motivated, informed and empowered by the teachings of Jesus. It gathers and engages with young people still divided by segregated housing and education and seeks to heal the many divisions in society, such as those caused by economic, social, educational, political and religious differences.

**Corrymeela** works with families who are carrying deep loss.

**Corrymeela** creates space for new types of learning in the classroom, offering residential facilities and working with community leaders.

**Corrymeela** offers training programmes that allow people to explore how to deal with difference and to celebrate diversity. It is a place that nurtures dialogue.

Sectarian violence is still experienced in Northern Ireland. **Corrymeela** strives to secure a peaceful society, based on social justice and positive relationships.

**Corrymeela** needs partners to volunteer, to pray, to offer wisdom and to give financially.

## Cream teas at Barnes Close

**3-5 PM**

June: Sunday 10; Sunday 24

July: Sunday 15; Sunday 22; Sunday 29

August: Sunday 12 Sunday

September: Sunday 2; Sunday 9

Phone 01562 710231 cfrpeace@gmail.com

### **Christian Aid week events at Selly Oak Methodist:**

**Big Brekkie** Sunday 13 May at 9.15 AM, promoting Fair Trade products. Everyone welcome; donations to Christian Aid. Please tell Emlyn if you plan to attend.

**Celebration of our global congregation** 9 June at 7 PM, entertainment and buffet refreshments for *Around the World in 80 Minutes*. Once again donations for Christian Aid and a warm welcome to all ages.

## **Weoley Castle Christian Aid Big Brekkie**

Join us for Christian Aid's Big Brekkie, here at Weoley Castle Community Church from 10 AM till noon on Thursday 17 May. There will be all sorts of breakfast items on offer, from sausage and bacon etc. to toast, so come along and enjoy some good food and support the great work that Christian Aid does at the same time. Pay is by donation only. See you there!

## FRIENDSHIP GROUP

On 11 April we were once again '*Strolling In Slovenia*' with **John and Jill Davies**, following their walking holiday in 2016, in the hottest July on record. Surrounded by Italy, Austria, and Croatia, with just one pass through the Apennines, the country has been the pathway for many armies. Throughout their trip they were very impressed with the amount of wildlife, Mediterranean species often not seen north of the Alps; the architecture, with influences from neighbours and invaders; and farming methods owing little to pesticides and intensive practice in limited flat space. The large open fields are delineated by pathways not hedgerows, railways are not fenced off, scything is more common than tractor work and the resultant grass is left to dry on racks, a symbol of Slovenia.

The main industry is tourism, following the collapse of their iron and steel works. A favourite place was **Stara Fajima**, literally 'Old Iron Mill', where the valley floor is so restricted a barn was built on stilts overhanging a river, but even so the birds, insects and flowers were abundant. **Lake Bled** is a tourist hot-spot with casinos, discos and swan-shaped gondola style boats to ferry folk to a monastery in the middle of the lake with a tall bell tower that, for a small fee, you can climb up and make a wish. The 1000-year old castle at **Bled**, now a museum, contains jewellery, tools, clothes and remains of the area's earliest settlers. The locality is marshy, and the resultant methane gas erupts in plumes which local legend ascribed to the ghosts of these settlers. The castle also holds a working replica of the printing press which was used to print their first book, a translation of the Bible by the local bishop into Slovenian and an ABC, again by the bishop, so that people could learn to read it! The church of St



Martin has interior frescoes painted in the 1930s representing the Lord's Prayer and the Last Supper with all the evil doers dressed as Italian Fascists and locals being everyone else.

The **Ventgar Gorge** is a narrow, deep, twisting mountain chasm with a turbulent river at the bottom. In some cases the 1,600 metre pathway is a narrow boardwalk *over* the river and sometimes the water, which is so clear trout can easily be seen, splashes up between the boards.

**Ljubljana**, named after the river, is the capital. Once a Roman settlement it later became part of the Hapsburg Empire, then in 1918 was forced into the newly formed Hungary. In 1895 a massive earthquake wrecked most of the town but in 1900 it had recovered enough to have one of the largest department stores in Europe. In 1945 Slovenians came under the leadership of Marshall Tito but when Yugoslavia disintegrated after his death, there was a brief civil war in 1990 and now the country is working hard to modernise and find work for its younger members.

The Technical Museum at **Bistra**, although a 5 km walk from the station, showed a watermill complex with three sets of stones producing differing grades of flour plus a water-driven iron works with bellows and 2-cylinder engine. There were also displays of forestry and woodworking, textiles and clothing plus President Tito's luxury motor fleet.

Their last two visits were to the **Predjana Castle** and the **Postonjina Caves**. The castle is built *inside* one huge cave with a system of smaller caves behind that run through to the other side of the mountain. This proved useful when the castle endured an 18-month siege, only ended when the owner paid a visit to his

private privy which was smashed with boulders! The huge caves were not explored properly until the 1880s and were used by the Germans as a munitions dump in WWII. A short underground railway, built by Russian POWs, takes tourists to see the rock formations. The caves are home to blind albino salamanders which can breathe in or out of water and can go without food for years.

John's talk was accompanied by many photographs of the places he had talked about and the hour passed very quickly. Many thanks to him and Jill for their contributions. Our next meeting is the **Bring & Buy for Christian Aid on Wednesday 9 May**. Once again we are asking for donations of bric-a-brac, books, plants and, of course, cakes which can be brought on the day, or the Sunday before, or collected earlier if you wish. Contact Lorraine



# POLITICAL NIGHT PRAYER

Time magazine of May 31<sup>st</sup> 1966, in a piece on Karl Barth, said he “recalls that 40 years ago he advised young theologians to take your Bible and newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible.” Barth must have been conscious of the need for Christians to make connections between what was going on in their society in the 1930s and their faith. From hindsight we can see that so many in Europe failed to do that.

It is no less a problem in our own time. How many people look for intelligent guidance from the pulpit or for their personal experience to be taken seriously? On environment, politics, economics and the media there is often a great disconnect. And yet making the connection is not easy. All too often preachers struggle to deal with a subject within 15 minutes, conscious that they have to communicate with all ages, abilities and experience; furthermore there may not be time to resolve the whirling of people’s thoughts and emotions before the mood of harmony often expected at a communion service. One remedy is to encourage private reading or group discussion, but then the connection may not be made with the wider church, a gulf may appear between those thus informed and the majority, and the subject become intellectualised, divorced both from worship and action.

Political Night Prayer is another approach which has recently been attempted by Christians in Birmingham. The inspiration stems from late Sunday evening sessions started in Germany in the late 1960s by the radical Protestant theologian Dorothy Soelle and her Roman Catholic husband. An issue of the day would be outlined, subjected to a biblical and theological critique and prayed about. The services fulfilled a need and elicited a wide response.

In Birmingham over the last couple of years a group has been holding services, first at Stirchley, then at Cotteridge Church, once a quarter at 7.30PM. We have taken subjects as varied as: Identity, Mental Ill Health, the Environment, Austerity and Our Hope in God, and, most recently

“Beyond Brexit”. After an introduction and a litany for Night Prayer, the theme is introduced – both in its content and in its effects on different social groups; in “Beyond Brexit” we made a point of hearing voices both from those who had voted leave because they had felt left out, and from young people and European migrants who felt excluded by the referendum result. Later on the theme was explored further; in this case we looked at some of the guiding values of the Treaty of Rome and the extent to which they had or had not been fulfilled. The ensuing theological reflection explored the need to stand back from the immediate argument, to cultivate the kind of contemplative attention and discernment recommended and practised by Bonhoeffer, out of which we can learn to resist evil and search for the future God may wish for us. We then broke into small groups to discuss what positive things had emerged for us; each group was asked to contribute one bidding to the ensuing intercessions, before a liturgical close.

The pattern of service has varied with the theme, as has the inclusion of music, bible readings, video, art work, prayers and hymns. None are there because of a formal requirement so much as the contribution they can make to the exploration of the theme, our reflection on it, and to our prayer and action together. Not everyone has been satisfied; some have felt that questions may have been dodged, singing or speaking has gone on too long, or views were put forward they considered unjustified. But then the purpose is not to please, it is to move forward in discipleship, and sometimes it is the discordant response that makes that happen.

So far this experience of Political Night Prayer has, I think, proved fruitful. Some 40 to 120 people have been present at any one time. Methodist participation has been strong; others involved have included Anglicans, Catholics and members of the Society of Friends. There is a continuing group maintaining email contact; some of whose members prepare forthcoming sessions and to which anyone wanting further information can apply. What has pleased me above all is that a way has been found to bring the varied experience of members of the Christian

community into a conversation with the issues of the day, where theological reflection has a convivial but not a dictatorial place. I hope that the news of this experience may encourage others to find their own way of following the advice of Karl Barth.

John Nightingale  
3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018

The next service is on June 10<sup>th</sup>. For further details please contact [caroline.homan@methodist.org.uk](mailto:caroline.homan@methodist.org.uk) or [johnbnightingale@hushmail.com](mailto:johnbnightingale@hushmail.com)

Hold a cake sale & help our city's most in need  
More Info & recipes • [birminghamcitymission.co.uk](http://birminghamcitymission.co.uk)  
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Reg Charity No. 1051023

**BIRMINGHAM CITY MISSION**