

Weoley Hill Church News



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February 2020

From the Minister's study—

Dear friends,

As you may have noticed, I was away for a fortnight in January as I went to India for an educational visit and to accompany Michael who had been invited to give some lectures at the Kerala United Theological Seminary in Trivandrum (Thiruvananthapuram). For a week we were kindly hosted at KUTS and it was wonderful to meet with the very friendly staff and students in this seminary which is run by the Church of South India (CSI). Moreover, it was really good to be in Kerala, a “progressive” Indian state, ruled by a Communist party (=Social Democrat) which is fittingly called “God’s own country” as it is so beautiful and peaceful. In Kerala all faiths seem to live together in peace and harmony, unlike in some other parts of India, and it has the largest population of Christians which is very evident as there are so many churches around (RC, CSI, Mar Thoma, Orthodox, etc), visible signs are worn and pictures of Jesus, of Mary, of saints and church leaders are openly displayed on houses and in the streets.

At the Seminary we stayed in a very basic guestroom but it had aircon! This was a great privilege as the staff and students have to make do with ceiling fans, also in hot lecture rooms! And we ate in the student mess with the students who take turns serving, and sometimes helping to prepare, the simple but nice meals (always rice based) and who quickly realized that I needed cutlery, not being accustomed to eating with my hands.

In the seminary there are about 120 (mainly male) students training for the ministry as well as a few studying for higher degrees in theology. Even though the CSI is considered a liberal church and have ordained women since 1984 (and has a female bishop) much effort is needed to encourage women to come forward for ministry. The URC has recently financed a program to support access and participation of women.

The campus is very pleasant, with lots of coconut and fruit trees and also many vegetable plants, which are grown by the students for the student kitchen or to sell. Many of the students need financial support;

they are self-supporting and most need help from the college and they do some work in the garden and kitchen on a rota basis in return. Also, they are sent out to local parishes on a regular basis to collect money for the college and students.

One day the principal of KUTS (Revd Dr David Joy, who studied for his PhD in Birmingham) had arranged for us to meet the CSI bishop of Kanyakumari, Rev Dr Chelliah, in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. On the way to Nagercoil (on the southern tip of India) we made a detour so we could visit a church retreat/guesthouse in a most beautiful location overlooking the Arabian sea. Yet we were also reminded that the 2004 Tsunami had badly affected the area, which was prone to flooding too (which happens more frequently because of climate change!).

We met the bishop and his entourage in his “grand” office. The bishop was only recently installed and he gave us a warm welcome. When presented with a URC cross he took off his cross and wore the URC one for a photo session! We left with the impression that the bishop was a kind and humble man, pastoral but also strict as he does not allow ministers to wear t-shirts at any time, nor wear a cross! CSI ministers are recognizable as they always wear white robes and a black cord when they lead worship or go out for visits.

On the Sunday Michael preached at an early morning service in a CSI church in Trivandrum which has four services every Sunday, in Tamil, English, Malayalam (the language spoken in Kerala) and Hindi. The church was full to overflowing, with many sitting outside under a big marquee. I did not realize, until later, that I had sat down on the side of the church where mostly men were sitting, while the women sat on the other side. But no offence was taken (or shown). What was interesting was that the many children only went out to their Sunday School *after* the sermon and that the notices included so many names that it took nearly as long as the sermon. And quite a few people came forward for a blessing before the communion was celebrated. The women went forward first for communion and both women and men take off their

shoes...and so did I. Towards the end of the service Michael and I were invited to the front of the church for a presentation.

After the service members came to speak to us and many know that in the UK/Europe the church is struggling. They express their gratitude for the missionaries that came to India and they wonder and ask our opinion why our church membership is now in such rapid decline. Trying to explain the secular forces at play I tell them to pray for us—and send some missionaries! And they in turn ask for our prayers for specific occasions and needs.

I could tell so much more—about a visit to a tea estate in the beautiful hills high above Trivandrum, our stay in a fishing village where we met a local teacher who helps bright children from fishermen families to continue with higher education, our wanderings in Trivandrum and our discovery of a great bookshop, the wonderful Keralan food and friendliness, the effects of climate change in Kerala, the programs that KUTS would like to develop to help churches respond to climate disasters and to provide assistance to those most affected, etc, etc. So, expect to hear more.....!

With all best wishes,

Leonora



Lent and Easter

Lent study

(Details about groups at St Marys and Selly Oak Methodist to come)

Tuesdays at 2 PM, Lower Hall, beginning 3 March

The groups will all use Churches Together material, *Setting your heart on Fire*—What biblical text sets your heart on fire?

This phrase is drawn from one of the most evocative and treasured New Testament episodes – the account of a mysterious stranger who meets two people journeying on the road to Emmaus, whose identity is eventually revealed as the three of them break bread together (Luke 24: 13-38). After the realisation dawns that their fellow traveller was none other than Jesus himself, the two disciples say to each other: ‘Were not our hearts burning within us...’

Taking this biblical story as its starting point, the course invites us to ‘open the scriptures’ and read them with hearts and heads.

Lent lunches: details to come.

Mothering Sunday, 22 March: Joint worship here, with Graham Sweeney preaching.

Palm Sunday 5 April: *No communion*. Led by the minister.

Maundy Thursday 9 April at 7.30 PM: Worship & communion here, led by the Revd Mark Bennet, vicar of St David's.

Good Friday 10 April at 7.30 PM: worship led by the minister.

Easter Sunday 12 April

Early Easter worship at 7 AM, led by the minister.

Easter breakfast, 8 AM. Please let Alan know if you are coming.

Easter communion at 10.30 AM, led by the Revd Brian Brown.

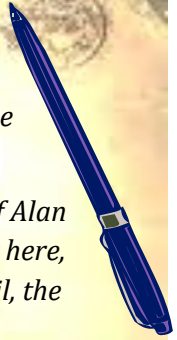
Personalia

Pat and David Weaver send their best wishes.

Please remember everyone who is mourning a loss, or the anniversary of a loss.

Our prayers and condolences to the family and friends of Alan Moody, who died on 26 January. Alan was not a member here, but was known to many of us through the Village Council, the Community Choir and other local activities.

Please remember everyone who is ill, recovering, or undergoing treatment.



Pray for Burkina Faso

Jihadist attacks in November killed many people including the only remaining key government leader who spoke on behalf of Christians and other communities. Frantic messages from a Christian leader asked for prayers for the many Christians who had fled that they would keep trusting in God. '... dying or living is of very little importance now. The most important thing now is keeping faith in the Lord.'
(Information from Barnabas Fund January prayer diary.)

Sue Beeby

Neighbourhood News

News and events from other local churches:

Weoley Hill Village News blog

The WHVN only comes out twice a year now, but you can also find out about local events (including ours) and news through Weoleyhillvillagenews.wordpress.com , where you will find instructions for becoming a follower and receiving email updates.



FISH AND CHIP SUPPER AND QUIZ

This quiz, in aid of Fairtrade, will be held on **Saturday 29 February** (this once in four years day) with the usual unbelievable prizes (!), and fish, chips, pickles, sauces, bread and butter with hot drinks. Total cost is **£6 per person** for teams of six, so gather a team of six if you can or join another friendly group anyway. The quiz will start at 6.30pm with a break for food around 7.30pm, then restart around 8.00pm to be finished, hopefully, by 9.00pm. We have a raffle so if you have something you could donate to this that would be great. Come along any time from 6.00pm. I will be collecting bookings, and/or money, any time before we actually send in the order at 6.30pm and if you would prefer a pie or saveloy please let me know beforehand. All profits go to Fairtrade to help satisfy our commitment to be a Fairtrade church.

Lorraine DaCosta

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Although we have reduced the number of events this year we are continuing to keep the **Pancake Party** on **Wednesday 12 February** to introduce Lent later in the month. Pancakes will be ready from 2.30pm and you can add your own sugar, syrup and lemon juice whilst you chat to friends over tea or coffee. Anyone can come along not just church members so do bring a friend... or two... and we ask for a small donation to cover costs *if possible*.



SUMMER CRAFT FAIR

At a recent meeting we decided to hold a craft-based Summer Fair on Saturday 27 June. We already have a series of embroideries from Westhill for display to accompany our own banners, plus a dance group, and possibly the community choir, will perform during the afternoon. We are in contact with various groups and are sending out enquiries for *anyone* working in a craft of any kind—pottery, pokerwork, patchwork, woodwork, jewellery, card-craft, crochet, ceramics, painting and drawing, modelling, knitting, and anything else you can think of—and we are hoping to have at least 10 different craft stalls for folk to browse around and buy *unique* items. Stalls will be £10 per table if the individual is selling for themselves or **free** if it is for a charity. Of course we will do our usual cake stall and refreshments but **no** bric-a-brac, and we are hoping some input from the street associations may involve local children's games. If you know anyone who would be interested in having a table please see Lorraine or Cheryl as soon as possible as advertising needs to be done soon.

Lorraine DaCosta

Statement from British Church leaders and representatives as the UK prepares to leave the European Union

We, the leaders and representatives of ten British Church denominations and networks, speak together as the UK prepares to leave the European Union on Friday 31 January 2020.

Three and a half years after the UK voted to leave the European Union, the point of departure has now been reached. The process of arriving at this point has been bruising and divisive. For some this date will mark the realisation of a long-held ambition and a moment of celebration. For others, however, it will be an occasion of great loss, marking the moment when deeply held desires for the nations of the UK are placed beyond reach.

Church members in good conscience continue to hold a wide range of views about Brexit. As Church leaders and representatives, we are united in wishing to seek God's guidance and a sense of common purpose as we move from this chapter of the Brexit process into the next.

As the UK leaves the EU there are important choices to be made about the values that we as a country live out. As Christians, we affirm our belief that all people are equally created in God's image. Our country should be one that offers sanctuary to refugees and is intolerant of those who hate because of a person's race or nationality. Both Leave and Remain campaigns agreed on this – we must now make it a reality.

The continuing challenges of the climate crisis, global inequality and conflict will require both resolve and close international cooperation to be addressed effectively.

We greatly value the love and friendship of our sisters and brothers in other European churches, and a group of us are writing to them publicly today to assure them that these relationships will continue. We also recognise that 31 January will bring uncertainty and anxiety to many EU citizens living in the UK and British citizens living in the EU. Leaving the EU cannot mean abandoning our responsibilities towards these families.

Brexit exposed and exacerbated divisions in British society. The deeply held convictions that fuelled the Brexit debate will not simply go away, but our Christian faith urges us to be people of peace and reconciliation. If the bitterness of the last four years is not to persist in polluting our national life, we will all need to resist the temptation to hold on onto the hurts of the past, or to act in ways which will be perceived as triumphalist.

We will only be able to move towards having a sense of common purpose, despite our differences, when we choose to act with kindness, humility and respect towards those with whom we disagree. We call on our political leaders to set an example over the next weeks and months as we move towards negotiations which will require further decisions about priorities for the nations of the UK.

For our part, our Churches will be working and praying for:

- a society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre
- a society that welcomes the stranger
- a just economy that enables the flourishing of all life
- a planet where the environment is renewed
- a world which actively works for peace
- a politics characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness.

We pray for the people of the UK, for our leaders, and for the whole of Europe, as we mark this significant moment together.

Revd Dr Barbara Glasson and Professor Clive Marsh, President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

Revd David Mayne, Moderator of Council, Baptist Union of Great Britain

The Right Revd Colin Sinclair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Revd Nigel Uden and Mr Derek Estill, Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church

Most Revd Father Olu Abiola OBE and Archbishop Fidelia Onyuku-Opukiri, Council of African and Caribbean Churches UK

Yvonne Campbell, General Secretary, on behalf of the Council of the Congregational Federation

Revd Dr Noel A Davies, Chair, Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales' Working Party on Wales and Europe

Bishop Simon Iheanacho, Overseer, UK World Evangelism Churches

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain

Most Revd Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

24 January 2020



Retiring Collections for 2019

January	Benevolent Fund	£138.00 + £22.50 (GA)
February	The Leprosy Mission	£90.00
March	Corrymeela	£42.70
April	Restore	£145.00
May	Barnabas Fund	£70.00
June	Jubilee Debt	£105.00
July	Children in Distress	£199.00
August	Mamie Martin Fund	£265.00
September	Bible Society	£77.10
October	Médecins Sans Frontières	£170.00
November	Help for Heroes	£110.00
December	Send a Cow	£826.31

Additional Fund Raising

World Day of Prayer	£138.00
Shelter	£180.50 (Christmas Hamper Raffle)
Traidcraft	£157.00 (Quiz and Fish & Chip Supper – March)
Youth & Family Work Fund	£157.00 (Quiz and Fish & Chip Supper – November)

Carbon conversations

This is an event which will take place on the first Saturday of each month, led by Wiebina Heesterman who lives in Bryony Road and is a keen supporter of green issues. You may have read her letter in the December issue of the Church News.

The first meeting was on 4 January and attended by about 16 people from the community—there were only 2 of us (Leonora & me) from Weoley Hill so we made the tea at the appropriate time as we are familiar with the kitchen. More volunteers in future please! We all shared our concerns about climate change and were mainly there to learn more about what as individuals or a group can do to minimise our carbon footprints.

Wiebina is basing these conversations on different aspects based on the Climate Conversations handbook, *In time for Tomorrow*. They will take place at 4.00 – 6.00 PM and there will be sessions on the following Mondays at 23 Bryony Road (Wiebina's home) from 2.00 – 3.30 PM if you cannot attend on the Saturdays.

The dates and topics still to come are:

Saturday 7 March Travel and transport

Saturday 4 April Food and water

Saturday 2 May Stuff -Consumption and waste.

Saturday 6 June IT and finance with a shared picnic of low-carbon(veggie) snacks

Saturday 4 July Talking to friends and family

Wiebina has prepared some interesting handouts; if anyone wishes to read then please see me. Come along to these meetings and find out more on how we can make Birmingham carbon-neutral as soon as possible.

Also in the Birmingham Mail on 22 January was a list of 50 small steps to save the world. Some of these suggestions were: walk more and drive less; replace single use items; buy local products and those in

season and buy vintage clothes. These are just a few of the long list and I expect you are doing some of them already that I haven't mentioned.

Just think before you buy items about where they have come from, whether they are wrapped in plastic and whether you really want them. Just think before you buy and you could be reducing your own carbon footprint. If we all do this we are on the way to getting Birmingham carbon neutral.

Thank you

Ann Evans



“WHAT SHALL WE TELL THE CHILDREN?”

That's the question **John Bell** is putting to the **2020 Holiday Forum**. What were we told as children about God, the Bible, and heaven? Are these the right things to be passing on to our own children? We'll focus, too, on some of the big issues they face, growing up in the 21st century. What should we tell them about money, technology, and dealing with people who are different?

John Bell is the theme and worship leader at the forthcoming Holiday Forum—a week of faith, fun and fellowship for individuals and families of all ages and walks of life. Many Forumites come back, year after year. Then they grow up and bring their own children!

This next Forum, we meet at **The Hayes Christian Conference, Swanwick, Saturday 22 to Friday 28 August 2020.**

Come yourself. Bring your friends and family. And if there's someone in your church who desperately needs what Forum offers, how about getting your church to sponsor them? But book soon—places are going quickly!

Go to <http://www.urcholidayforum.org.uk/wpsite/urc-holiday-forum-2020>



HOLIDAY FORUM
fun, faith & fellowship

WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

The Lord is faithful to his promises, and everything he does is good. He helps those who are in trouble; he lifts those who have fallen. Ps 145: 13,14

FEB 2020	CHURCH FAMILY & LOCAL STREETS	OTHER PRAYER POINTS
WK 1: <i>2nd-8th</i> Feb	Grace & Joy Carter Mohamad Chamanbaz ▪ <i>Witherford Way & Close</i>	For guidance as to how we might reach out to the local community in relevant ways.
<i>WK 2:</i> <i>9th-15th</i> <i>Feb</i>	Juliet & Yvonne Chideya Edward & Grace Chung ▪ <i>Greenmeadow Rd</i> ▪ <i>Hemyock Rd</i>	Leaving Islam is deemed a betrayal in Eritrea. Some Christians have been imprisoned, beaten & tortured for many years under very harsh conditions such as in shipping containers in scorching heat.
WK 3: <i>16th - 22nd</i> Feb	Ina Clason Joyce & Susan Cope ▪ <i>Swarthmore Rd</i> ▪ <i>Presthope Rd</i>	
WK 4: <i>23rd - 29th</i> Feb	Alan, Lydia, Jacob, Esther, Levi & Joel Cotgreave Roger Cotgreave ▪ <i>St Denis Rd,</i> ▪ <i>Hollybrow, Long Leasow</i>	For the reduction of tensions in the Middle East & wise diplomacy by Western countries.

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 Beeby

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