

# Cadbury Pastorate News

Weoley Castle &  
Weoley Hill Churches



*April 2024*

*From Alan Cotgreave—*

## Journeying

Dear Friends,

As I write I am sitting in a hotel room, just outside Edinburgh, overlooking the Forth Bridges. We have come to spend a few days in and around the Edinburgh area as a family, to blow away the cobwebs of a busy term and spend some time together. We have journeyed up the (relatively well behaved) M6 and onwards to our destination.

Frequently we hear the word journey being overused these days; many times celebrity contestants on reality TV shows will talk about the ‘journey they have been on’ and how much it has meant to them. They talk, of course, of emotional journeys rather than physical ones and they speak of how much they have gained from the experience.

Beginning with Palm Sunday we can see Jesus last few days through Holy Week as a journey. On Sunday, in church, we considered the events of that day and thought about the donkey owner and how important his seemingly small part was in the events that followed.

In this lectionary year we read the events of the week in Mark’s gospel. They continue with Jesus clearing the Temple, then Jesus’ authority is questioned. He goes on to tell several parables, including the one about paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is to Love God with all your heart and then to love your neighbour as you love yourself. He also shares the story of the widow’s mite, which again points to the fact that it doesn’t matter how small our part may be, it’s an important one. It’s what God needs. He goes on to tell us that things will happen in God’s time not ours—all of this before we get to the last supper and the unfolding of the drama of Good Friday. This is truly a journey and a half, an emotional roller coaster all squashed into a few short days!





The weather has not been amazing so far in Scotland, but today we did manage a walk along the beach just after the rain. The vision of a rainbow brought to mind the journey that Noah embarked upon, with absolutely no certainty as to where it would end. He had nothing other than his faith in God to lead him and his family to safety.

Jesus knew where his journey would end, Noah did not. It seems to me that our journey is much like that of Noah, we do not know where it will end. We may not like all of the bits of the journey but we must take heart and know that God will be

with us all of the way. It's OK to be unsure and apprehensive.

The original text of Mark's gospel ends in a rather abrupt way; in chapter 16 verse 8 we read that after the women had been to the tomb "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid" and at that point the story ends. Later manuscripts try to tidy things up a bit but I quite like that ending. It conveys how things were for them at the time. When we read the story now we do so from a position where we know how it will turn out. It is not realistic to always expect to know how things will turn out.

What we can be sure of is that God knows how it will end and God needs us to be part of that journey. As we continue to pray for the future of our churches and our pastorate and our search for a minister let us keep heart and continue to journey along with God.

I am just praying that the M6 will be as kind to us as we come home on Friday as it was on the way here!

A very happy Easter—and beyond—to you all.

Alan

# Prayer page

Creator God, we thank you for the beauty of spring, ever-changing and ever the same, and for the promise of renewal and new life we see around us.

We pray that you will teach to be better stewards of the world you call good.

We pray that we will find renewal and new life in our church lives and in our own; that we will foster renewal and new life in the institutions around us and in our families, friends and neighbours—all our neighbours.

We thank you that in our Lord and brother Jesus Christ we see the image of all that we may be and all that the world could be.

We pray that wherever His image has been distorted by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed there will be a renewal of justice, healing, peace and love. We pray that you will strengthen us for this work.

We pray especially for the people of Ukraine, Gaza and Palestine, Syria, Sudan, Yemen and the other places of conflict and war. We ask for just and lasting peace everywhere.

We thank you for standing with us in dark times as well as good, for the power of redemption, the joy of Easter and the promise that we will share in His resurrection.

We pray that like the faithful women at the tomb, we will bear faithful and loving witness to all the joy and promise of Easter.



# Pastorate News

## Proposed South & Central Pastorate

The West Midlands Synod is proposing a new group of churches, Carr's Lane, Cotteridge, Weoley Castle and Weoley Hill, to be called the *South and Central Pastorate*. Steve Faber, Synod Moderator, and representatives of the four churches met on Thursday 14 March at Weoley Hill to discuss the proposal.

Synod's intention is that a full-time minister will serve these four churches. A minister would be called to the pastorate as a whole with no individual scoping. (However, any of the churches can opt out of the proposal, so the final form of the grouping and indeed whether the plan is feasible will depend on these decisions.) The plans require a Vacancy Call Group to prepare a pastorate profile and negotiate critical issues such as a preaching pattern, a body to meet regularly with the minister, and how costs would be shared. This group would be limited to 8-9 people, 2 from each church if all agree to participate. An Interim Moderator would be appointed to assist with the latter part of the process, but not to serve as an interim minister as before.

**Pastorate profile.** Each church would write a short individual section: where they are now, physically and in mission and their current vision, less about history and setting. There would be a joint introduction and summary.

**The call process.** The Vacancy Call Group would need to be authorised by their respective Elders and Church Meetings to make decisions on behalf of the pastorate. They would first see the profile of a prospective minister and decide whether or not to meet them. After meeting a candidate, the group would then decide whether to invite them to preach with a view. As before, the candidate would meet the congregations informally on Saturday and lead worship on Sunday, followed by discussion and a secret ballot.

The ideal would be one meeting, one service, one discussion and one vote, but this is probably not possible with 200 or more people. Steve suggested a double set of joint meetings, worship, and voting meeting on the same days. Anyone could attend both sets and take part in both discussions, but could only vote once. The ballots from the first meeting would be collected and sealed for a single count later. The ballots would have to show which church they were from because of the recommended requirements for a call, namely 80/85% of the total count with a threshold of 50% + 1, a bare majority, for any one church.

**And after a call.** The minister would need to meet regularly with church representatives including Church Secretaries. For example, even though there would be an existing preaching plan and time allotment, circumstances could require more ministerial time at one church. A ministerial support group could also be set up.

**Manses.** The Carr's Lane/Digbeth manse will be used by the next training officer in any event. Synod prefers not to have manses next door to the church, and thus would like to sell the Weoley Castle manse, although that would raise issues such as the fire escape route.

In discussion after the meeting, the Weoley Castle Elders felt that selling the Weoley Castle Manse immediately is not a good idea. We note that all the mainstream Churches in Weoley Castle have their pastors living next door to their Church, because it is an important part of being recognised and accepted by the community. Our former ministers, Ernest, Ruth & Mark have worked on this principle. We expect that the Synod does not have a financial imperative to realise immediately the capital value of the Weoley Castle Manse. If we continue to let the Manse, it retains its value while creating a fund for future purposes. It is currently occupied by an American missionary couple, who are working for Betel and shortly expecting a baby. If it is sold immediately, it disrupts their life and it forecloses future possibilities (probably not as a minister's residence) that we are considering for use of the site, which is in the physical and commercial

centre of Weoley Castle. We are continuing this discussion with the Synod.

The Weoley Hill manse has some advantages, but as an older building needs quite a lot of maintenance complicated by BVT restrictions. Synod suggests selling the two Weoley manses, buying a newer property reasonably convenient to all, and paying any remainder to Weoley Castle and to Weoley Hill. This would have to be authorised by Elders and approved by Church Meeting.

**Finances.** (A handout is available.) Manse costs and ministerial expenses would need to be apportioned at the profile stage, manse costs being relatively fixed and ministerial expenses more variable, but some ministerial expenses might pertain to just one church.

The suggestion is that one church act as 'banker' for a pastorate, setting up an account for that purpose. This could be administered by that church's treasurer or another person. The churches would pay in agreed amounts to cover manse and ministerial expenses, probably but not necessarily based on their numbers of members. This fund would have to be set up before the calling process to cover those costs.

If these churches, or perhaps 3 of them initially, decide to form the new pastorate, the priorities are to set up the Vacancy Call Group, to work out issues such as time, preaching and funding allotments, which church would act as banker, whether there should be a new pastorate manse, and to create the profile document.

The question of uniting with another local church, perhaps Selly Oak Methodist, was raised. If this is a real possibility for the near future, the process should be started soon and included in the profile.

Ann Evans, Ted Forgan, Cheryl Thornett

*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.*

## News from Weoley Castle

### Services: 11 AM on Sundays

Apr 7<sup>th</sup>: led by Ted

Apr 14<sup>th</sup>: led by Richard Alford – followed by the AGM

Apr 21<sup>st</sup>: TBA.

Apr 28<sup>th</sup>: led by Phil Turley

May 5<sup>th</sup>: Joint Service with St. Gabriel's & Castle Elim at WCCC  
10.30

There will be an “**Easter Fun Day**” on Tuesday 2 April from 10 AM to 2 PM with a snack lunch provided. This will include Easter-themed crafts and games.

***Weoley Castle Elders' comments on the future of our Church in the proposed Central & South Birmingham Pastorate are elsewhere in this Newsletter.***

## News from Weoley Hill

### Family Fun

**Thursday 4 April, 2-4 PM**

Hope for fine weather on the Thursday after Easter when we invite adults and children to an afternoon of games, crafts and, of course, refreshments in our hall and on the lawn.

We are publicising the event in Northfield Manor School and in the locality, hoping to attract some who would not normally come to our premises. Maybe some would then like to come to our Coffee and Company mornings—or suggest other activities that might be of benefit to them and the community.

Help on the afternoon to organise a game, craft activity or with the refreshments would be very welcome, or just come! We will require cakes and indoor or outdoor games eg. Quoits, Jenga, balls, nets, bats, puzzles.... Also small prizes eg sweets, and cake decorations eg sprinkles. Speak to Norma, Cheryl or Sue if you can help in any way.

Sue

### ***The April retiring collections are for Debt Justice***

## **Visit from Northfield Manor School**

Nearly 60 5/6-year-olds came into the church on 13 March to hear the Easter story told to them by members of WHURC. They listened quietly and participated in parts of the story, such as waving palm branches and shouting 'Hosanna' when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Afterwards, they decorated our Easter cross with flowers before exploring the building, including the 'empty cave tomb', and asking questions.

We pray that they remember the meaning of Easter and that the experience was positive for them, as it may be the only time they enter a church. It was a lovely time and great to strengthen our links with the school.

Sue

## **Lower Hall Chairs**

Many of you will have seen the chairs in the lower hall which were in poor condition following years of wear. Several of us have now covered the seats so that the foam is protected and are pleased at the colour match and neater appearance. However we then found **ten** more chairs which had been in the sanctuary hidden behind other plastic chairs, in the corner by the banner hangings! Thankfully we had more donations and we managed to buy more of the same material which we will now

use to re-cover those chairs as and when we have time. Grateful thanks go to Sue, Linda, Norma, and Nancy, and to all those who donated so that we did not need to use church funds. We did get a little more than required and this money has been forwarded to the refreshment fund to replace mugs and tumblers, and to purchase disposable plates—all plastic tumblers, bowls and plates were used or recycled—and to provide refreshments when needed. Many thanks to all.

Lorraine

### **Could we...?**

Christian Aid's Lent study material include a short video of the excellent work of the South London Mission, founded by the Methodist Church. Ok, so we haven't got the numbers or resources or paid staff to do a fraction of all they do. And they do a lot! But one thing really caught my attention: they make up meal kits—the sort you may see advertised here and there—for families. (Do they give them away? Sell them at cost? The clip didn't say.)

But I began to think of the tradition of taking food to people who are ill or bereaved.... And I thought of how well the food bank box fills up.... And how someone we all know took food from her own pantry to a family who asked the church for help.... So I wonder whether we could make up a few 'food for a day' bags suitable for a family—cereal, long-life milk, tins of things like soup, tuna, beans, veg, potatoes, and so on—to keep in the vestry ready to give to someone on short notice, perhaps telling the school about it so they could notify us of someone with a family emergency. This would be **in addition** to the Food Bank collection. We'd want to check on the best items to include and change them from time to time.

This is still just a rough idea and I'm sure it would need more thought and planning, but is it worth trying?

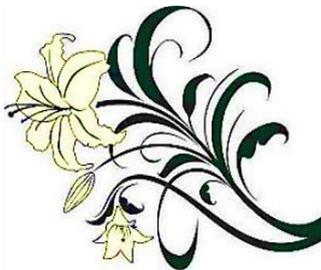
Cheryl Thornett

## Weoley Hill Calendar for April 2024

Tuesday	2	10.30 AM: Tuesday Fellowship
Thursday	4	2-4 PM: Family Fun activity
Sunday	7	10.30 AM: Worship & communion led by Revd Graham Sweeny. 12 NOON: AGM & Church meeting
Wednesday	10	7.30 PM: Elders' meeting
Thursday	18	10-11.30 AM: Coffee & Chat
Sunday	14	10.30 AM: Worship led by Ann.
Tuesday	16	10.30 AM: Tuesday Fellowship
Thursday	18	10-11.30 AM: Coffee & Chat
Friday	19	Preparation for Korean Wedding in the John Kydd Hall and Sanctuary.
Saturday	20	Korean Wedding, which will be using the whole building all afternoon.
Sunday	21	10.30 AM: Worship led by Revd Ian Thornley.
Thursday	18	10-11.30 AM: Coffee & Chat
Sunday	28	10.30 AM: Worship led by Alan.
Monday	29	2.30 PM: F&B Committee meeting

Art Club 10 AM-12 Wednesdays in term time

Community Choir 6.45-8 PM Fridays in term time



## Synod Meeting

### ***Saturday 16 March 2024 via Zoom***

The opening worship was led by Ashley Evans, our new LYCIG consultant. He based it on Luke 13: 1-9 and we all said the LYCIG prayer together.

Ashely went on the talk about LYCIG and said that the church should grow which is what Christ intended. Today we do not know how to get there. There are 7 steps:

1. Create a prayerful culture for growth. Matthew 13:31
2. Implement an effective strategy. Matthew 6:10
3. Practice fruitful evangelism. Mark 1:17
4. Develop engaging workshops. Exodus 3:5
5. Become an inviting and welcoming church. Luke 14:21
6. Make a pathway for seekers to become disciples Mathew 28:19
7. Begin a planned journey of growth Acts 5:14

Invite someone to a service or event by saying 'I'm going, it's going to be good, do you want to come with me?'

If people are stretched because they are too busy with church things do less of something to make time for new things. Get the balance right for your situation.

### **Environmental policy**

This is a 5-page document and is a major update having consulted to get the best advice. It is part of the Synod's continuing development as an Eco Synod. We were the first to reach this but not alone now but are heading towards the silver award.

Why is this important? It is in response for God's creation. To help this w the church can reduce the negative impact on the planet and strengthen the positive impact. We need to recognise the urgency of working **now**. We may be inconvenienced but it will help the future.

What can we do as a church? Agree the new policy and implement it, improve energy efficiency, reduce waste, engage with local MPs and

councillors, reduce the carbon footprint of the church, pray and teach others. **get the silver eco award.** As individuals we can insulate, use green energy, travel more responsibly, fly less and not too far or offset carbon use, manage gardens for wildlife, recycle more, etc.

Could we have bins for recycle items in the halls? Notices by light switches to remind people to switch them off, also heaters if used? Have we had an energy consultant visit to give us advice? Encourage a future minister to use public transport where possible, have an electric car or hybrid.

The synod calculates its carbon footprint annually should we as a church do so?

### **Manse energy efficiency scheme.**

Every manse and home for that matter should have an energy performance certificate (EPC) to improve the rating talk to Matthew, the property officer, at synod about how this can be done. This may be irrelevant for both churches as our manses may/will be sold.

### **Flourishing Church**

This was partly defined where people are valued and nurtured and are growing in faith. We are called out to worship and develop a relationship with God, to encourage one another. Share the Good News with others and faithfully serve the community. Also grow in numbers. This is the ethos of LYCIG.

Mentor people into new disciple roles and train them even into church offices. Speak openly about service and growth. Ministry is the work for all of us not just for ordained ministers.

We do not keep records of the age profile of congregations but there is a trend that they are ageing. Some churches cannot find people to take on roles, so they close. That is being addressed by sharing the responsibility with local churches and team ministry. Some statistics for the denomination, in 2001 there were 187 churches with a

membership of over 100 but in 2021 there are 26! A third have a membership of 12 or fewer now and the average membership has dropped from 53 in 2000 to 31 in 2020!

The obstacles to flourishing churches are people, lack of ministry, money and building and regulations. The priority is to address the people issue. We ought to talk more about people not buildings and finance, more about outreach and faith sharing and talk more about vocation rather than volunteers as we are called to serve rather than volunteer.

There were other points made but an important comment was made that if a church feels it ought to close it must speak to synod first to see if there are alternatives such as becoming an LEP but that ought to come from conviction not desperation, or unite with another URC church if the geography allows this.

### **Safeguarding**

Churches have all received a copy of Good Practice 6 (GP6) and it is also available online. Donna, the safeguarding officer went through the changes since GP5. It is a guidance and not a policy. She emphasised safer recruitment, DBS checks and safeguarding training at the appropriate level. It is the responsibility of us all and as an issue it needs to be kept on Elders' agendas and church meeting agendas even if there is nothing to report.

Rachel, the synod clerk shared the Synod executive report about changes in personnel which included the death of John Johansenberg and Leonora retiring, etc.

The Moderator closed the meeting with prayer.

Ann Evans

## Private Detective Wisecracks

*(Imagine that these are said in a world-weary voice through a veil of cigarette smoke – don't take them seriously...)*

There was a tap on the door—funny place to put a tap.

*There was this dame leaning against the bar—I reckon she was made of copper and tellurium: she was CuTe.*

There was someone fumbling outside the front door - I guess he was an amateur singer, because he couldn't find the key, and wasn't sure how to come in.

*The most important piece of evidence in the rock player's room was a broken drum—you can't beat it.*

My attempt to observe the suspect on a ride at the funfair was proving difficult—I was riding a horse at full speed, with a giraffe next to me, and a lion right behind.

*The victim was lying dead on the floor—odd that it was in the living room.*

The victim shouldn't have annoyed the old man—a life sentence isn't much of a deterrent when you're old.

*Friday morning and no new cases all week—but I clung to my dreams of being a great private eye – and carried on sleeping.*

The company website said that it used cookies to improve performance—I do the same.

*The sight of the crime scene took my breath away—or maybe it was my asthma coming on.*

You might call them swear words—I would call them sentence-enhancers.

*"How many people work in this joint" I asked—"About half of them" he replied.*

# The Cadbury Pastorate

Weoley Castle Community Church, Quarry Rd:

Worship 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 in outline or in complete form.*

Bournville URC has closed.

## THE PASTORATE IS CURRENTLY IN VACANCY

**WEOLEY HILL CHURCH Office: 244 6711**

Secretary: Ann Evans 628 4558

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