Weoley Hill & Weoley Castle

Church News

July/August 2026

From Ted Forgan—

A sermon in personalised car number plates

I wonder what you think about personalised car number plates. I have never bothered with them myself: the only personalisation of my car that I try to stick to is to get one coloured red! I suppose I have a bit of a feeling that it might go with worshipping a false god or a graven image. Caring about the number plate might go with regarding the (make of) car as a very important part of your self-image and pride, rather than regarding a car as a means of transporting you or your family without fuss from A to B. If you engage in car idolatry, maybe your weekly worship is washing and polishing it on Sunday mornings!

Actually, I have stronger feelings about certain types of number plates. Take the one below, which belongs to someone I know (nowhere near Birmingham), whose initials I will modify to RDL, and who clearly thinks that he is a top guy. You know the kind of thing: you are travelling at the 70 mph speed limit in the fast lane on a motorway and up comes a car so close behind you that you can read the personalised number plate in your rear-view mirror. If you don't immediately get out of his (nearly always his) way, he undertakes you in a dangerous fashion. This allows him to continue along at his preferred speed of 90 mph. The number plate goes with the behaviour: "I think I am so important and skilled at driving, my time is so valuable and the rules don't apply to me, so that other people have to fit in with my convenience and wishes." I am sorry to say that RDL fits exactly with this pattern, both in his driving style and his personal relationships, particularly with women.

Another use of the number plate is to express your political opinions: how about the one here, which shows an unhealthy attitude to US politics.

But how about a number plate that is just a bit of fun: you can find lots of them on the internet, such as the two I found:

Judging by the make of the car they are on, I expect that the owners of these rather special number plates regarded their price as a minor extravagance!

One of my sisters has the first name Cecile, and she has kindly sent me a picture of the number plate from her car. You may wonder about the X at the end: that is because her married surname is "Cross", so in her number plate, she has managed to get her *entire* name, not just the initials! Here's an example where the number plate is celebrating the uniqueness of an individual person: sounds like a good idea.

Finally, one more number plate, which is on a car frequently parked in Quarry Road, just along from Weoley Castle Community Church. It was seeing this number plate that sparked this whole train of thought. I haven't asked the owner, but my interpretation is that this is a number plate that was *not* bought by the owner, but was *given* as a present to someone whose first name begins with M. Number plates may be a bit of an extravagance—but better extravagant love than extravagant selfishness! I conclude: which kind of number plate best represents *your* character?!

Ted Forgan

Prayer page

Please see Ted's report on the next page.

Lord, you are good to me
and I thank you for your goodness.
Help me to remember—

- ✝ Your goodness is not earned.
- ✝ Misfortune is not often earned.
- ✝ Making the world better may cost me something
- ✝ but your goodness to me cost more than I can ever repay.

Give me the grace and strength to help right the balance of this unbalanced world.*

Help me to understand the many hidden ways I benefit from an Imperial world to the cost of others, even though I do not feel 'privileged'.

We give thanks for the bounty and blessings of the world; we pray for Your grace to seem them better shared.

We give thanks for our young people, for their parents, teachers and supporters; we pray for wisdom in giving them a better future than we see at present. We pray for them as they move on to 'big school', to university or training, to jobs, to adult life.

We give thanks for health workers of all kinds, so many drawn from all around the world, and for carers, especially family carers; we pray for the love to support them and to speak up for them and their needs.

We give thanks for good neighbours, people who share, support, help out, offer friendship and kindness, whatever their origin, nationality, religion; we pray that Your love and divine will surrounds us all.

**Taken from a prayer I wrote elsewhere which 'coincidentally' seems to suit Ted's report.*

Pastorate News

"Imperial Christianity"—a report by Ted Forgan

On Saturday 27th June, along with about 40 others, I attended a workshop, based on the book 'Wrestling with Imperial Christianity' recently published by Mukti Barton: she is a local priest, teacher and theologian. The group ranged from Quakers to Muslims and met at the URC-Anglican St Paul's Church in Balsall Heath.

Mukti maintains, and I am sure there is a huge amount of truth in it, that Christianity got corrupted when the Roman emperor Constantine co-opted Jesus, instead of Jupiter, as the patron God of the Empire,. Ever since, Christianity has had a Western, individualistic, white, male-centred flavour, which in not-so-distant times enabled practicing Christians to be happy with enslaving others. This has left a legacy of racism in the West and deprivation in those countries colonised by us.

The worst examples of Imperial Christianity are probably the Christian supporters of Donald Trump and copiers in the UK, but message for everyone else is: "Don't think that you aren't infected with the same ideas!" If you say to someone "You're thinking about this in black and white" are you using two strongly contrasting colours like red and blue, or is there an implicit white = good and black = bad? We reveal our Western-centred view by referring to the Holy Land as the 'Middle East'; why not 'Western Asia' or 'Northern Africa'?

St Paul's Church is a Community building of similar age to Weoley Castle Community Church, and all around the Sanctuary area is a mural, painted to look like stained glass. The majority of the congregation at St Paul's are of Afro-Caribbean background, but just

look at the skin of Jesus and his disciples: not a trace of the brown or possibly even black skin that they would have had in actuality! This had the local Church members asking themselves, 'What do we do about that mural?' We should also ask ourselves; "Is my faith individualistic and blind to my Western view of the rest of the World, and am I following Jesus whose 'Nazareth manifesto' was good news to the poor and sight to the blind?"

Weoley Castle News

Sunday morning services: 11 am at Weoley Castle Community Church

July 5th: Informal Family service led by Sam, Susie & Jonah
July 12th: led by John Burgess—including Communion
July 19th: Informal Bible Study, with cuppa & biscuits—led by Ted
July 26th: led by Ash Barker

August 2nd: Informal Bible Study, with cuppa & biscuits—led by Susie & Jonah
August 9th: Informal Family service led by Sam, Susie & Jonah
August 16th: Informal Bible Study, with cuppa & biscuits—led by Ted
August 23rd: Informal Bible Study, with cuppa & biscuits—led by Sam
August 30th: Joint service with Weoley Hill **at Weoley Castle**, led by WC members.

Other Activities

On Sunday, July 19th at 4 pm, there will be a **Community Celebration** at the Church

On Tuesday 11th August is the **day trip to Barry Island** in S. Wales, leaving from WCCC at 8 am. There are still a few places remaining at £10 per adult, with children (who must be accompanied) going free. To book, talk to Sam Poursain, Paul Tucker or Mary Sparkes.

One Tuesday 18th August, we are planning a **Family Fun Day** from 10 am till 2 pm, with a seaside theme.

The beginner's "**English Conversation Class**" for people whose first language is not English on Tuesdays from 1.30 - 3 pm will continue till the end of school term on 14th July and restart in September.

For the first four weeks of the Summer holidays, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2 pm, Love Weoley Castle is organising **Family Activities in the park by the Duck Pond**.

Weoley Hill News

The July retiring collection for is for **Hope Now**, a charity providing counselling for Ukrainian refugees. The august collection is for **Guide Dogs for the Blind**.

Good news! The **black record book** which replaces the records lost in the robbery a few years ago has been found. Thanks to whoever finally located it and put it back in place.

Choir Concert
A great big thank you!

A great big thank you to all who came and supported the choir concert on Saturday 20 June, almost the longest day! Thank you to both choirs and their leaders.

The singing was excellent, just a shame we didn't have enough time to sing-along more.

The cakes were many and delicious.

The important fact about the afternoon was that we raised £393.50 for Christian Aid and added to that we more donations on Sunday making the grand total of **£422.50**.

During Christian Aid week in May we raised £190 so our contribution including £500 on our website link came to a final total was **£1112.50**

Thank you

Emlyn

Weoley Hill Calendar for Summer 2026			
		July	
Sunday	5	10.30 am:	Worship & communion led by Revd David Tennant.
Wednesday	8	2.30-5 pm	Garden Party at Nancy Nicholls
Sunday	12	10.30 am:	Worship led by Ann
Wednesday	15	7.00 pm	Elders' meeting
Sunday	19	10.30 am:	Worship led by Alan .
Sunday	26	10.30 am:	Worship led by Revd Ian Thornley .
		August	
Sunday	2	10.30 am:	Worship & communion led by Revd Brian Brown.
Sunday	9	10.30 am:	Worship led by John Fletcher.
Saturday	15	9.30 am:	Work party
Sunday	16	10.30 am:	Worship led by Ann.
Sunday	23	10.30 am:	Worship led by Ian Carnell .
Sunday	30	11 am:	Joint worship at Weoley Castle Community Church

The Community Choir will meet at 6.45 pm on 3, 10 & 17 July and then take a break until September. You are still welcome to come along!

Eco Corner

The emphasis for July is freeing up plastic you may not have realised you were using and for August is putting out water for animals and insects in the hot weather. We have recently had a hot spell so it is important to keep ourselves hydrated. Please don't forget other animals and put a saucer of water out or use something else. We have a family of fox clubs very close to our home, and they are coming to play in our garden in the early evening. I'll put water out for them every day.

JULY: It's Plastic Free July and this year we're thinking about laundry, a top source of microplastic pollution. Fibres from synthetic clothes (polyester, nylon, and acrylic for example) shed tiny fibres during washing and drying. These enter the sewage systems and are hard to filter out. Use a microfibre bag or ball to catch the fibres.

Key Steps to Reduce Plastic in Laundry

1. Choose Natural Fibers: Opt for clothing made from cotton, wool, hemp, or linen instead of synthetic fabrics like polyester, nylon, or acrylic, which shed microplastics during washing and contribute to ocean pollution.

2. Use Plastic-Free Detergents: Many conventional laundry detergents come in plastic bottles. Switch to powdered detergents in cardboard packaging, soap nuts, or refillable detergent options to minimize plastic waste.

3. Reduce Microfiber Pollution: Install a microfibre filter or use a laundry bag designed to catch microfibers. This prevents tiny plastic fibres from entering rivers and oceans with wastewater.

4. Wash Less Frequently and at Lower Temperatures: Washing clothes less often and using cold water reduces fibre shedding and energy consumption, supporting both environmental and personal sustainability goals.

5. Air Dry When Possible: Avoid using plastic-coated dryer sheets. Instead, air dry clothes or use reusable wool dryer balls to reduce static and soften fabrics naturally.

6. Repair and Reuse Clothing: Extend the life of garments by mending or repurposing them, reducing the need to buy new synthetic items packaged in plastic.

Learn more about reducing plastic pollution in the laundry process at plasticfreejuly.org/get-involved/what-you-can-do/plastic-free-laundry/ and more about this year's campaign at plasticfreejuly.org.

AUGUST: Looking after wildlife in the heat. Times of drought and dryness can be dangerous for wildlife. Provide water for birds and insects—put a dish of water out to help wildlife stay hydrated. Insects, small mammals, birds, and even badgers, foxes, and deer could benefit. A stone in a plant saucer helps bees to perch and drink without drowning. These small actions make a big difference and are just some of the ways we can live out our calling to care for God's creation. See our blog on looking after wildlife in the heat for more warm weather eco tips: arocha.org.uk/looking-after-wildlife-in-the-heat/.

For more practical ways to enjoy, nurture and defend nature, sign up to A Rocha UK's Wild Christian email: arocha.org.uk/wild-christian

Thank you

Ann

The next issue will be available around 1 September. Contributions are requested! Send them to Ted Forgan at Weoley Castle or Cheryl Thornett at Weoley Hill.

Jokes for the Summer Holidays

1. Where do singing birds go for a summer holiday?

2. Where do rich sheep go for a summer holiday?

3. Where do sharks go for a cool summer holiday?

4. Where do zombies go for a summer holiday?

5. When should you keep going on red and stop on green?

6. How do you know if a pool is safe for diving?

7. Why is James Bond allowed to operate a barbecue?

8. What's the worst kind of ice cream?

9. What are the two hottest days of the week?

10. What animal always takes part in a cricket game?

11. How do you prevent a summer cold?

1. The Canary Islands. 2. The Baahamas. 3. Finland. 4. The Dead Sea. 5. When you're eating a watermelon. 6. It deep ends. 7. He has a license to grill. 8. The kind you just dropped! 9. Sunday and Fry-day. 10. A bat. 11. Catch it in winter.

Weoley Castle & Weoley Hill Churches

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.

We have formed a new Pastorate with Cotteridge & Carrs Lane churches and have called a minister who will join us later this year.

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