

Weoley Hill & Weoley Castle Church News



September 2025

From Weoley Castle—

What do the flags mean?—a personal view— Ted Forgan

About the same time as the women's Euro football competition, England flags and Union Jacks started appearing on lamp posts in Weoley Castle. More recently the rash has extended to Middle Park Road and Bristol Road. A group calling themselves 'Weoley Warriors' describe themselves as "a group of proud English men with a common goal to show Birmingham and the rest of the country of how proud we are of our history, freedoms and achievements." Clearly this was not just supporting and celebrating sporting achievements. See the Birmingham Dispatch for more information:

<https://www.birminghamdispatch.co.uk/who-is-responsible-for-all-the-flags-in-northfield/>

A flag is the symbol of a country: they are waved when Royalty visits; they are held up at Remembrance Day events. An Olympic athlete will wrap themselves in their country's flag when they win a medal; the Ukrainian flag expresses support for that country suffering the brutal Russian invasion. What about a Palestinian flag? I would regard displaying that as an expression of horror at the utterly disproportionate killing and starving of innocent civilians and targeting of journalists by the Israeli Defence Force, in response to the appalling Hamas attack—also on civilians. Others might regard displaying the Palestinian flag as support for terrorism.

I entered this country without receiving permission from the Government—just by the accident of being born here—and I

wonder what my life would have been like if I had been born (say) an Eritrean. Therefore, I recoil when I see people wrapping themselves in the England flag complaining about support for fellow human beings seeking refuge from violence. I don't like the Union Jack being hijacked. I worry that many residents of Weoley Castle are feeling intimidated by these flags. What would you do if they went up in your road? Take them down by dead of night—in the same way as they were put up—and be accused of unpatriotic behaviour? Put up an England flag, with words written on it expressing your views—what would you write? Just ignore and wait for the flags to grow ragged and be taken down by the Council? But most of all, let's make sure that all people who have a right to be in our area know that they are welcome!

Ted



Prayer page

We give You thanks, Lord, for the cycles of the world and of life: the changing of the year, the fresh beginnings for our young people, the season of harvest and thanksgiving.

We pray for our schools, teachers and support staff, for children starting school or moving up; for university students, for trainees and interns, for parents and carers. We thank you for the devotion of parents, carers and educators.

We give thanks for everyone who tends the environment we live in: parkkeepers and groundsmen, neighbours who delight our eyes with beautiful front gardens, those who labour to keep things clean and healthy in city and countryside, those who campaign and demonstrate to protect all the world we live in.

We pray for the many people suffering the consequences of climate change and pollution; fire, flood, drought, children whose lives are impaired and shortened. Help us, Lord, to take our own steps towards a world more in line with Your will.

We give thanks for the people and institutions who care for others here and throughout the world: the health service, family carers, food banks, organisers of day centres and warm welcomes; groups that go wherever aid is needed to help provide clean water, healthy crops, safe housing, education, health care, the Good News of God's love....

We pray for the work they do and for the people who don't always share in the good things of this world. Show us, Lord what we can do to help bring Your goodness to them.

We pray for friends, family and neighbours who are not well; for family and friends of the people we have lost in recent months. Help us to comfort and support them.

We pray for the peacemakers in a world too often violent.

Pastorate News

The purchase of the new Manse has been completed. The Pastorate churches are responsible for weekly inspections until a minister is in residence. Could you volunteer for just one month? We hope to avoid this becoming a burden for one person—of course we hope this will only be for a few more months in any case, but.... Please see your Church Secretary if you could cover a few weeks.

Weoley Hill News

The retiring collection for September is **Sightsavers**. Sightsavers treats eye conditions such as cataracts and tackles debilitating diseases, many of which cause sight loss. To do this, they work with governments and local, national and international partners to carry out eye operations and distribute treatments where they're needed and help to improve health services so they are sustainable and make education more inclusive for children with disabilities. They also advocate for the rights of women, girls and people with disabilities.

Lost Records book

Following the break-in a few years ago when the safe, with all the church records inside was stolen, we attempted to collect as many records as possible of baptisms, marriages and funeral services that we could remember, or of which we had our own records. Unfortunately, this book has also now gone missing. It is a large 10x8 inch black book with lettering cut at the side and was left on the table at the back for people to add their records as necessary. Apart from the works included in the book these records will be very difficult to replace. If you, or someone you know, has borrowed the book to add or retrieve some information could you please return it as soon as possible as several entries now need inclusion plus it is a very valuable archive resource for the church. Thank you
Lorraine

Autumn quiz

Our early autumn quiz and fish and chip supper, in aid of the Trussell Trust food bank, will be on Saturday 20 September, from 6 PM for a 6.30 PM start, to finish about 9.30 PM, with the usual pickles, hot drink and a doughnut provided. Surprising prizes!!! And a raffle—donations gratefully received—at a cost of £9 per person and teams of no more than six. Don't be worried if you haven't a team, just come along and join with others for a friendly and fun evening. See Lorraine to book for catering numbers.

Prayer handbooks and diaries for 2026

I am taking orders for the above now.

The diaries cost £9 and there is a choice of red or blue ones. The prayer handbooks cost £6.99.

If you would like any of these please let Ann know as soon as possible.
Thank you

Ann

Knitting Group MacMillan coffee morning Friday 26 September

Do come along for a morning of delicious cake, plenty of chat and an opportunity to support the work of the MacMillan Cancer Support. The expected start time is around 11 AM.



Weoley Hill Calendar for September 2025

Tuesday	2	10.30 AM: Tuesday group tbc
Sunday	7	10.30 AM: Worship & communion led by Revd Brian Brown .
Sunday	14	10.30 AM: Worship led by Ann Evans
Tuesday	16	10.30 AM: Tuesday group tbc
Wednesday	17	7.30 PM: Elders
Saturday	20	6 for 6.30 Quiz night with fish & chips in aid of Trussell PM; Trust foodbank. £9 per person
Sunday	21	10.30 AM: Worship led by Ian Carnell.
Friday	26	11 AM tbc: Knitting Group MacMillan coffee morning
Sunday	28	10.30 AM: Worship led by Revd Ian Thornley.

Fridays from 6.45 PM: **Community Choir**, resuming 12 September. See Gordon or Alan.

See Ann or Sue about the **Tuesday Group**.



Weoley Castle News

Services: 11 AM on Sundays

Sept 7th : Bible Study—led by Jonah

Sept 13th : led by Barbara Calvert—including communion

Sept 21st : led by Carol

Sept 28th : led by Paul Tucker

Oct 5th : **Harvest Festival**—led by members of WCCC

Sunday afternoons at 4 PM. These will alternate between informal family services, with tea and eats, and community celebrations, with games and pizza. These are led by Sam & Katie, Susie & Jonah.

Sept 7th & 21st: **family service**; Sept 14th & 28th: **community celebration**

News of the Fellowship



Rev Dr Peter Cruchley

We are very sorry to record the death on August 15th of Rev Dr Peter Cruchley, from bowel cancer at the age of just 59. Peter had been working on World Mission and Evangelism at the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva. A private family funeral has already taken place. The WCC is organising a memorial service for Peter in Geneva on September 9th. His UK memorial service will be at Beulah Church, Rhiwbina, Cardiff at 3PM on Saturday 5th October. It will likely be streamed for people who cannot attend in person. Peter grew up in the Manse next door to Weoley Castle Community Church and later followed his father

Ernest in becoming a U.R.C. minister, and he served in Wales. He then joined the Council for World Mission (CWM) and led the Legacies of Slavery Project. For him, this was a personal and theological journey, driven by his conviction that the church must reckon with its history of slavery and colonisation, and must be committed to the difficult but redemptive work of reparatory justice. We were able to reconnect with Peter as he continued his work with CWM, after moving to the U.K. (because of Brexit) with his wife Lena to live again in his childhood home. They decorated the Manse in a distinctive style! After that they moved from WCCC to WCC. An appreciation of his life and work may be found at: <https://urc.org.uk/urc-mourns-the-passing-of-revd-dr-peter-cruchley>

Peter's great worldwide and oecumenical influence can be gauged by the responses to this Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1J2JRwPE8b/>

Please remember Peter's family in your prayers.



Keith Twamley continues receiving excellent care from visiting nurses at home.

Christine Hopkins is back in harness but is not back to 100% after her viral infection. We trust she will take enough time off her many activities (including the new foster child) to have a checkup!

In the previous Newsletter, I mixed up the surnames of our visiting preacher 'Phils': it was **Phil Seadon** who had some health issues; he is beginning to be on the mend.

Weoley Castle community outing



With some financial support from the Synod, Sam Poursain organised a Weoley Castle community outing to Barry Island (South Wales; home to Gavin and Stacey) on Tuesday August 19th. The original plan was for a 53-seater coach, but that filled up immediately and expanded to a 70-seater plus a minibus driven by Anji Barker of Lodge Road URC—and still a few people had to be turned away. However the minibus clutch failed 5 minutes into the journey out! The situation was saved by Emma (thanks Emma!) and Sam driving their cars to take the overflow. The weather was kind for this **(tidy!)** community experience. Almost everyone who went really enjoyed the day out, which gave good value for friendship and pocket with the subsidised coach. See some pictures of the trip.



A letter of gratitude and hope from the national treasurers of the URC

To: All members and adherents of United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you all.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the faithfulness and generosity you have shown to God's work through your local churches. Your contributions—whether through time, talents, or treasure—have been a beautiful expression of discipleship and community.

Celebrating Faithful Stewardship

In these challenging times, when many families have faced difficult decisions about household budgets, rising energy costs, and the ongoing cost of living pressures, your continued commitment to supporting God's work has been truly remarkable. We have witnessed the church at its best: caring for one another, maintaining mission and ministry, and trusting in God's provision.

Your financial contributions through the Ministry & Mission Fund have enabled us to continue our shared calling across England, Scotland, and Wales. Through this Fund, we support ministers' stipends, theological training, Assembly gatherings, and the vital central services that strengthen our witness and ministry in every community we serve.

God's Provision in Action

We rejoice that in 2024, despite significant economic challenges, your collective giving to the M&M Fund reached £16.2m—slightly behind our budget, but late contributions in early 2025 would have taken us over the budget, had the auditors allowed us to bring them in. This achievement reflects not just financial commitment, but spiritual resilience and trust in God's faithfulness.

We are particularly grateful for the additional support from our Synods, who contributed approx. £2m of the amount noted above, demonstrating

the interconnectedness of our church family. Total income for 2024, including investment income and grants etc. was £18.5m.

While our expenditure of £20m resulted in a deficit of £1.5m for 2024, we remain committed to balancing our budget over the next 4-6 years through difficult, but necessary reductions in central costs and continued partnership between local churches and Synods.

Looking Forward with Hope

As we move through 2025, we recognise that challenges remain. Economic pressures continue to affect both individuals and churches. Yet we face the future with confidence, knowing that God's call to faithful stewardship remains constant, and that together we can continue to serve Christ's mission in our communities.

We have a clear plan: Synods have committed to maintaining their enhanced support, and we are implementing careful budget reductions of an average of 3-5% annually in our central costs. This balanced approach ensures we remain good stewards while maintaining our essential ministries.

A Call to Continued Faithfulness

In the spirit of 2 Corinthians 9:7, your giving has been a source of joy and strength to the whole church. As we move forward, we invite you to continue this journey of faithful stewardship, giving "as the Spirit directs and as our means allow." We understand that every church's situation is unique, and we celebrate with those who have been able to meet their full commitments, while also deeply appreciating those who, facing their own challenges, have continued to prioritise the M&M Fund within their means.

Partnership in Ministry

As officers of our denomination, we treasure our roots in local URC congregations and LEs. We understand firsthand the joys and challenges of local church life, including the financial pressures you face. This shared experience strengthens our commitment to wise stewardship of the resources you entrust to us. Your local church

treasurer has received detailed financial information and can answer specific questions about our accounts. If further assistance is needed, our finance team at Church House stands ready to help.

Our Deepest Thanks

To every member who has contributed to their local church, to every congregation that has supported the M&M Fund, and to all who have made this work a priority even in difficult times—thank you. Your faithfulness enables ministry to continue, training to be provided, and the gospel to be proclaimed across our three nations.

May God bless you abundantly as you continue to be faithful stewards of all that He has entrusted to you. Together, we participate in God's wonderful work of transformation, both in our own lives and in the world around us.

In Christ's service,
Alan Yates, Treasurer
Vaughan Griffiths, Deputy Treasurer

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."—2 Corinthians 9:7

<p><i>The next issue will be available around 1 October. Contributions are requested! Send them to Ted Forgan at Weoley Castle or Cheryl Thornett at Weoley Hill.</i></p>

Editor's note: Recycling can be confusing, even if you have council guidelines. (When they collect recycling again.) These guidelines come from a website aimed at local councils and give an overall picture which may not always match what our council does, but I hope they will be helpful. I'll try to include one set each month. The web address is included below.

THE RECYCLING GUIDELINES:



<https://www.unisort.co.uk/what-can-and-cant-be-recycled-recycling-guide/>

YES PLEASE

- Newspapers and supplements
- Magazines, brochures and catalogues.
- White paper (*e.g. computer paper, letters*).
- Telephone directories.
- Leaflets and flyers.
- Envelopes (*You can include those that have a window*)
- Shredded paper—*if paper is collected mixed with other materials, shredded paper may not be suitable for collection.*

NO THANKS

- Hygiene/Sanitary products (*i.e. nappies, wipes, sanitary towels etc.*)
- Used paper towels.
- Tissues.
- Cotton wool/make up pads.
- Wet wipes.
- Sticky papers (*e.g. Post-it notes, sticky labels, paper tape*).
- Non-paper gift wrap (*e.g. foil-based gift wrapping*) or bags.
- Crisp or sweet packets/ wrappers.
- Wallpaper and decoration paper.
- Brown paper—*This should be recycled with card because it causes brown flecks in new paper, resulting in whole loads of paper being rejected*

The Tale of the Three Envelopes

The chief executive of a big organisation was standing down and his replacement asked him for some advice on how to fill this important role. The retiring chief executive responded with: “Oh you’ve got all the skills you need: you’ll wing it! You don’t need any advice from me”.

“But you’ve had all this experience, you must pass some on to me!” said the new chief.

“All right” he replied, “When you arrive in your office next Monday morning, I’ll have left on the desk three envelopes for you.” “What are those for?” he asked.

“Well, I’m sure that everything will go fine for you for quite a while, but at some stage there’ll probably be some crisis, and people may start to think that you are not up to the job. At that point, open the first envelope, and inside you’ll find my advice about how to survive the crisis.”

“Now it’s possible that another crisis will come up, in which case, open the second envelope – and the same applies for the third one.”

And so it turned out: the new boss started off well, and everything was OK, but then there was a problem. It threatened to upset his whole operation, so he opened the first envelope: ‘Blame the government!’ was the advice inside, so he followed that and survived the crisis.



Of course, a second crisis occurred some time later, and on opening the second envelope he found the advice: ‘Blame the unions!’ He followed that and remained at the helm.

Eventually, along came a third crisis, and he opened the third envelope. The note inside said: ‘Prepare three envelopes!’...



Weoley Castle & Weoley Hill Churches

Weoley Castle Community Church, Quarry Rd:

Worship Sundays at 11 AM.

Sunday afternoons at 4 PM: *Informal, family-friendly services with food*

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 are forming a new Pastorate with Cotteridge & Carrs Lane churches and hope to call a minister to the Pastorate soon

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