

Weoley Hill Church News



*All glory be to God on high,
and to the world be peace!*

December 2018

From the Minister

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! We are looking forward to our Christmas celebrations and joyful we can be when we hear the Christmas again, "I bring you good news of great joy: to you is born a Saviour!"

But what is the joy that we receive? How can we be joyful when there is so much sadness and pain in the world? How can we be joyful when we see large numbers of desperate people on the move, fleeing war and poverty and not certain where they will find safety and a new home? How can we be joyful when we are faced with the disastrous effects of climate change and a lack of political will to effectively deal with it. How can we be joyful when we are reminded of past Christmases when loved ones were still with us? Do we switch on "joy," just like we switch on the Christmas lights? "Come, let's get together and have joy!" It doesn't work like that, does it?

Joy always comes as a surprise. Joy, real joy, is a spontaneous reaction to something surprising, something good that happens to us. It may be a family reunion, or a test result that is clear, or a positive appraisal of something done inconspicuously, or a surprise gift from someone, or meeting a long-lost friend, or a new born baby.....

Joy is a gift!

In the Christmas story of the birth of Jesus there isn't much joy at first. We read of an oppressed people living under occupation, at the mercy of an Emperor who could issue a decree that set a whole nation in motion. As the story goes.....Joseph and a heavily pregnant Mary had to travel to Bethlehem to be registered. There is no room for them in the inn, so they have to spend the night in a stable. But

then, in the dark of night, a baby cries in a manger. Angels are singing, shepherds out in the field see a bright light and when they are afraid there is the angel's message, "Don't be afraid, I bring good news of...**JOY**"

And that is why we are joyful. Christmas is a gracious intrusion in our lives; a break with the ordinary. For here we are, going about our daily business, facing the ups and downs of life, and then we get this wonderful surprise. We are joyful because something has happened. God has intervened in the normal routine of life.....and no imperial decree can prevent God surprisingly and unexpectedly intervening in history and in our lives!

"God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform" We are joyful because we know that there is a force loose in the world that is greater than all other forces. When we journey again to Bethlehem this Christmas, we are reminded that we are not alone; God is active, God is at work in the world.

And when, after Christmas, we are faced again with the daily realities of a suffering world, and our own ups and downs, remember.....**We are not alone.** God "Emmanuel" is with us, "to bring light and life to all." May we share that light and life generously with others so that we may surprise them with JOY!

May you all have a joyful and blessed Christmas and all good wishes for the New Year too!

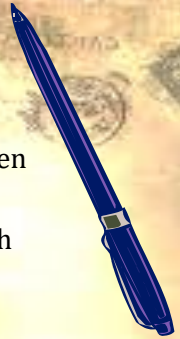
Leonora



Personalia

Please remember:

- former members Brian and Barbara Jennings, Karen and Lisa, following the death of Juliet.
- former member David Weaver, following the death of his mother.
- everyone who is mourning the loss of a friend or family member, which can be particularly difficult at this time of year.
- everyone who is ill, and those who care for them.



Gift to Youth & Family Work project

A friend who wishes to remain anonymous has donated £5000 to the project.



Lunch club

We must know who is coming, to avoid wasting food. (And be sure to let us know if you have any food allergies.) Please tell Nancy or another volunteer. The regular price rises to £5 as of February, to reflect rising costs. There is no Lunch Club in January, because the day would be too close to New Year's Day.

THANK YOU

While I mentioned it already in the November Church News (but my Minister's letter was written before my induction!) I would like again to express my gratitude for the warm welcome Michael and I have received at Weoley Hill. I know a lot of planning and work went into the preparation for my induction and it resulted in a very nice occasion. A lot of people have commented how much they enjoyed the service, including the contribution from the choir, and I certainly felt blessed to be inducted in the Cadbury pastorate. And the hospitality and fellowship after the service, with generous helpings of delicious soups and other delights, was very much appreciated. There was plenty of food for all and a very cheerful atmosphere in the church hall. I also would like to specially thank those who set up as well as cleared up the hall on the day. I hope that all who contributed to the day, one way or another, have heard loud and clear how much their contribution has been appreciated!

And I want to thank you very much too for all the work you have done to prepare the Manse for our arrival. Your efforts have certainly paid off and Michael and I were glad to move into the very attractive, clean and comfortable home where we, with Lucky and our many books, have happily settled in. The Manse is also ideal to welcome you for a visit or a meeting, etc. So feel free to come and meet me at the Manse, although I am happy to visit you at your home too. Do let me or one of the Elders know if you would appreciate a visit from me.

Leonora





Advent & Christmas

Sunday 9 December

10.30 AM: Toy gift service

Saturday 15 December

5 PM: Candlelight Carol service

Christmas Eve

4 PM: Christmas Crib service for families

11.15 PM: Christmas Eve Communion

Christmas Day

11.00 AM: Christmas Day family worship

Sunday 30 December



10.30 AM: 'Songs of Praise' family worship

Cheryl is leading our usual carol-based service on the Sunday after Christmas, when we try to include favourites not sung earlier. Please let her know if you would like a particular carol, hymn or reading included, or if you would do one of the readings or perhaps lead a prayer.

CHURCH BUDGET for 2019

As treasurer, I presented a budget for 2019 to last week's Church Meeting. The budget had been previously agreed by the Finance & Buildings committee and by the Elders (with minor modifications).

As individuals we are aware of the increasing calls on our income for running our homes and the same applies to our church. Each year we see the running costs of our buildings and church activities going up. Sadly, we can't say the same about the church's income. For a number of reasons our income is well down this year largely due to a predicted shortfall of about £3,000 on the F.W.O. budget of £36,500. We have also lost income because of reduced use of the church halls by the Taekwondo and Tai Chi groups.

Thankfully Synod has not increased our Ministry & Mission contributions for 2019. This will remain at £34,008 which, when combined with the minister's car allowance, means we pay just short of £3,000 *per month* to Church House in London. We are not so fortunate with some of our other expenses which continue to rise, such as heating & lighting, insurance, telephone, caretaking and supplies.

One of the Elders put it in a nutshell—"We *can* do something about the Income side of the budget but we can do little about the Expenditure side".

The budget for 2019 as presented to and accepted by Church Members at the meeting shows a *deficit* of £1,415. This has been achieved largely by cutting back on the amounts we normally would transfer to Church Repair Reserve and the 5 Year Projects Funds.

What can *we* do collectively, as a church family, and what can *you* do individually?

At the suggestion from the F & B committee, the Elders are considering putting an amount of the church's money (our Reserves) into an Investment Fund which has a better return (over time) than the present Deposit Fund.

Together we can make sure that we use our church buildings as efficiently and economically as possible to reduce our costs. In particular we can all watch for waste of heating and lighting – switch off when not in use. We can keep our buildings clean and tidy and reduce wear and tear and breakages.

Individually we can look at our financial contribution to the church. Is it the same as last year (or even the years before!)? Does it reflect my income? Whilst income from savings has stagnated in recent years most wages and pensions have been index linked and managed small increases.

Standing Orders are a convenient way to pay F.W.O. contributions but it is very easy to forget to regularly review them and adjust accordingly.

If you haven't seen a copy of our budget for 2019 please get hold of one and look at what it costs to maintain our church. Then, with that in mind, think how you can help us balance the budget.

David Marlow



INDUCTION SERVICE

Very many thanks to all those who helped to make the Induction service and following refreshments such a success.

To those who planned the actual service and took a major part, especially to Cheryl who did much of the organising of the many invitations, the printing of the service sheets, (*and managed the November newsletter at the same time!*) as well as delivering the history of the call to Leonora which involved much research of dates as well as writing the speech. To Graham Sweeney for conducting the service and to Fiona Elvins for giving us some background to Leonora's life and work. Over 130 people attended, including representatives from our local churches.

To Gordon, Alan and the Community Choir, who practised for hours to (nearly) achieve the standard Gordon required, with many perplexed frowns and worried expressions along the way!

To members of the Banner Group who managed to complete a 'Pastorate' banner illustrating the links of the three churches with significant dates of the individual churches and URC as a whole. Look out for it the next time we have a joint service. Pink circles for Bournville, orange for Weoley Castle and blue for us, with a few left blank for dates that might be suggested later!

To the Catering Group who produced the wonderful selection of soups: Chris Marlow (butternut squash), Min Elson from Weoley Castle (chunky vegetable) Cheryl (leek and potato), Fred DaCosta (pea and potato), Sue Beeby (lentil and tomato), Doreen Bradley (mushroom), and Nancy Nicholls (tomato and rosemary). We had many favourable comments about the choice and many came up for seconds, and even thirds, so they could try different ones. Thanks to Nancy again for ordering and collecting the fresh rolls, butter and cheeses which were also a success, and of course thanks to all those

who made or bought cakes. There were so many that, even though some were taken “for later”, we still had enough to take to the joint service at Weoley Castle on Sunday. Margaret Hurlestone from Weoley Castle made and decorated the wonderful central celebration cake. Gill Hitchin, Linda Bradley and Sue served tea and coffee non-stop and also managed the washing up, and Deb Moriarty did her usual service collecting used plates, etc. A special thanks must also go to choir members Rosie and Peter , Val and Andrea, who stayed behind until after 8 PM to help clear tables and chairs along with others who had been there since 12 noon!

Altogether a very tiring and frenetic weekend for all concerned but which welcomed Leonora with a lovely show of generosity, teamwork and co-operation on which she can build. Thanks again.

Lorraine DaCosta

News from China

You may have heard the news this year of actions taken against Christians and other minority groups by the Chinese authorities. These include the closure and demolition of church buildings, - mostly of unregistered or ‘underground’ churches. Despite this, the Church in China continues to grow by an estimated number of a million new Christians each year.

The Bible Society has been granted permission to print 3.4 million bibles this year. This figure is lower than last year due to reduced funds for paper. We could bear this in mind when next year we have a retiring collection for the Bible Society, that our donations and prayers make a difference.

(Information from the Bible Society, Dec 2018)

Sue Beeby

Christmas Aid Concert

Featuring: Young Strings
Project, Hanbury Quartet,
Fobrodka Quartet, Ex
Cathedra Junior and
Children's Academy of Vocal
Music

St Philips Cathedral, Birmingham
Friday 14th December
7pm



An evening of music from some of
Birmingham's most talented children and
young people.
Tickets available on the door
£10

Call 0121 200 2283
Email birmingham@christian-aid.org



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See Alan for further details.

Reverse Advent Calendars

Have you come across this idea yet? It's one that should appeal to anyone who gets discouraged by the heavy consumerism that takes up so much space this time of year. I've come across two ways of doing it, both with their good points. The first works with an old Advent calendar, especially the type meant to have sweets or coins put in slots: instead of removing a sweet, you add a pound coin every day, then donate the result to a charity (maybe Shelter, our Christmas charity?). Come to that, you could just tape them to a piece of paper or card! The other calls for a cardboard box: you put a packet, tin, toiletry, pair of warm socks, etc, into the box every day and then donate the result to a shelter or foodbank.

Besides the benefit to the recipient, this would be a good way to remind ourselves of our neighbours' needs.

And don't forget to check the Bible Society's *Advent Challenge 2018*.

CT



Those of you who bless the poor....

Friendship Group January & February

January 9

Rosie Meyer, *Collecting Postcards*

February 13

Pancakes and puzzles

TRAIDCRAFT—BETTER NEWS!

Following the announcement last month that Traidcraft was planning to cease trading at the end of the year, there is now light at the end of the tunnel. Following a consultation process this is the message we have received:

Traidcraft is not closing. instead, we are evolving

The new Traidcraft will be slimmed down, and the product range will be smaller. This does mean that we won't be able to work with as many producers as we have previously, but the good news is that we will still be able to work with some of the groups that we've developed relationships with over the years. We're working with our sister charity Traidcraft Exchange to help those groups who are worst affected.

It isn't going to be easy, but that's why you—our customers, friends and supporters—are crucial to Traidcraft's future. Next year is our 40th birthday, and we're planning to approach it like the fair trade revolutionaries we are.

So what are we going to do?

We're going to re-imagine how trade is understood and practised.

We have an aspiration to make transparent the costs, prices and profits involved in every Traidcraft product that we sell, which carries on the fair trade tradition of challenging and disrupting the market.

CEO Robin Roth said: "We want our members to be co-conspirators in changing how trade is understood and practised. We want to tell consumers who gets what from the Traidcraft products they buy. We want to annoy and irritate those who profit unduly through the non-transparency of their trading activities."

We've come full circle.

Over the years we've caused some pretty good trouble, and we're getting ready to do it all again from 2019—just as those six fair trade pioneers who started Traidcraft did back in 1979.

Want to know more?

Keep your eyes open for more Traidcraft updates that will be coming your way over the coming weeks.

Chris Marlow



Prayer request for Ukraine

Baptist friends have passed on a request, a plea, for prayers from Ukrainian churches, following renewed tensions with Russia and the threat of further violence.

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Once again we went travelling with Chris and David Marlow, this time on an Antipodean Journey. Flying to Sydney via Dohar, they spent four nights in Darling Harbour which is 11 hours ahead of Britain. In the Queen Victoria shopping centre, a very high-end shopping arcade, there was the interesting Captain Cook clock which showed day and month as well as time, with horizontal discs and rotating indicator. A tour of the waterfront around the Opera House and Harbour bridge was not missed, nor a visit to the rather deserted Bondi Beach. Chris sat in the 'Mrs Macquarie chair', a rock seat carved out by convicts in 1810 for the wife of the then governor of New South Wales. At a wildlife park they had the chance to see a kookaburra, pelicans, koalas, a wallaby with joey, a rainbow lorikeet, an ibis and a Tasmanian Devil. A later trip to the Blue Mountains, unfortunately so shrouded in mist that the usual spectacular views could not be seen, could not be repeated because they had to join their ship, the MS Noordam.

After a day at sea they arrived in Melbourne and toured on a hop-on/hop-off bus where Dave's hat was blown away by the wind, quite a problem considering the heat and position under the hole in the ozone layer. They saw Federation Square and the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Luckily, when they arrived in Burnie, an attractive seaside town in north Tasmania that turned out in force to greet the ship's arrival, they were able to buy another hat which met the high protection standard. They visited Port Arthur, a World Heritage Site: an original convict prison, based on Pentonville in London. Built in 1830, it lasted until 1877, with a small township. Many of the buildings are in ruins, some damaged by bush fires, but the church was later rebuilt and the governor's house still stands. This is large and creeps up a hill, built in several levels as the governor's family expanded!

Then on to the beautiful city of Hobart with Mt Wellington behind it, with spectacular views. The Tasman Bridge, which links the city, was the scene of a terrible accident in 1975 when a large ship carrying zinc ore missed the higher central arch and was blown by a storm wind into other

supports. Seven crewmen were killed plus five people crossing in cars. Now whenever a ship is expected all cross-bridge traffic is stopped. Two nights were spent in Hobart so Chris and David had a chance to visit the botanical gardens with the Japanese area a particular delight.

It took two days to cross the Tasman Sea before arriving in South Island New Zealand. Cruising through the area called Fjordland—Milford Sound, Doubtful Sound and Dusky Sound—they could see the steep-sided mountains, huge forests and pristine wilderness interspersed by waterfalls of all sizes. Some of the smaller islands are having introduced species such as opossums eradicated to preserve the indigenous animals and birds, and there is a rigorous immigration procedure for those who have been walking in other countries to remove even tiny traces of vegetation from footwear etc. The damp and misty start gave way to a beautiful clear day and a view of a gliding albatross added to its perfection.

On to Dunedin, a very Scottish city with a wonderful railway station known as 'the gingerbread house' because of its exterior icing-like decoration, and a subsequent trip on the Taleri Gorge Steam Railway. The scenery was stunning, if a little breath-taking in the heights and twists, but they had clear views in the sunshine. Finally a discussion about whether Baldwin Street in Dunedin is really "the steepest street in the world". Certainly a contender judging by the picture!

Later, rather than go on to Christchurch where the old port was destroyed in an earthquake in 2011, they decided to stay in Akaroa, the new port. It is the oldest town in New Zealand. Again sailing north through the Cook Strait they came to the northern tip of South Island at Picton. This is the gateway to the Marlborough wine-growing region, with beautiful scenery and lots of wine tasting! They visited 5 vineyards, learnt a lot about viticulture and tasted some wonderful wines, 3 or 4 at each one, but with water and meals in between! These are mostly family estates with competition medals proudly displayed on the racks of wine. Roses are planted at the ends of each row as they are more susceptible to diseases that attack the vines and so give early warning of problems. Heaters

nearby sound a warning if the temperature drops too much and can be turned on when needed.

Then on to Wellington, the capital, located at the southern end of North Island. A cable car up the hill to Kelburn district, where some homes have a private lift or cable car, leads to fabulous views over the city. The university is there, and an enormous croquet ground. And so on to Napier, famous as the art deco capital of the world. Virtually destroyed in a devastating earthquake in 1931, it was rebuilt in the then-popular art deco style and hosts a week-long festival to celebrate. Chris and David saw many people in period dress and there were many restored classic cars around. During the quake the sea bed rose 2 metres so a new port was built on reclaimed land and sunken gardens created at the old sea level.

Nearing the end of their journey they visited Tauranga which was near but not actually at Rotorua, so still had a hint of the muddy pools and bubbles and smell. Later they went to a kiwi fruit farm where the fruits hang from overhead pergolas, and still later saw some Maori people learning the Haka.

After disembarking in Auckland they had 2 nights in a hotel before flying home. They had arranged to meet Betty Johnston's daughter and her husband, who took them to see a gannet colony with fledgling birds, lunch in a winery and then up Mount Eden for some amazing views of Auckland and all its inactive volcanoes. Fortunately they managed to avoid a cyclone on their last flight home, 33 hours door-to-door! Many thanks to you both for taking us down-under!

Next month is the 'Ritzy High Tea' which is our alternative Christmas meal. We must have names for more accurate catering. (See Nancy or Lorraine.) As usual there will be a selection of sandwiches and cakes and as much tea or coffee as you would like, served in a slightly more genteel way. Cost is £5; profits go to support any speaker's expenses, craft supplies, etc for the rest of the year. This is open to any church member and their friends, so please do come along any time from 2.30 PM. The proposed programme for 2019 will also be given out. LD

WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago. Isaiah 25:1

	Church members	Topical prayers
WK 1: 2 nd -8 th Dec	Margaret Shiner Vida Southall & Carys	<p>For the homeless, particularly during the winter weather. For agencies that are dedicated to helping those without homes.</p> <p>For Christmas services that they may bring the message of 'God with us' in a fresh and meaningful way, particularly to those who do not usually go to church.</p>
WK 2: 9 th -15 th Dec	Kumar & Gini Tambyraja Helen Thompson	
WK 3: 16 th -22 nd Dec	Gordon & Cheryl Thornett David & Kathleen Upton	
WK 4: 23 rd -29 th Dec	Barbara & Philip Viney Rachel Wakeman	
Wk 5: 30 th Dec- 5 th Jan	Michael Walpole Kathleen Wood	

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.