

Weoley Hill Church News



Nikola Ancevski

January 2019

From the Manse

Dear Friends,

Grace & Peace and Happy New Year!

A new year always brings a sense of hope, doesn't it? The previous year with all its tragedies, problems, disappointments, sadness is now behind us, and a new year lies before us, no doubt with challenges too (eg the political turbulence surrounding Brexit is still ongoing), but we can make a fresh start and who knows: the future may be brighter; good things may happen, nay, they will surely happen in our lives, in our society and in the wider world!

Of course, when the clock struck midnight on the threshold to 2019—if we were still awake to share a toast to the new year—some of us may have felt that it is all going to be the same; it will be the same story again in the new year Nothing changes, nothing will change. And if anything, passing from the season of celebrating the good news of the birth of Jesus with lights, carols, family and friends' get-togethers to the season of the dark, cold, bleak midwinter does not exactly lift our spirits, does it? Also, for some of us the pain, anxiety and sense of loss we felt before and during the Christmas season may be felt just as keenly at the beginning of the new year.

Oh, these January blues.....!!!

When we feel this way, the temptation is to stick with the familiar and the comfortable, to close our doors and crawl back into bed and pull up the covers or to find comfort and security in tradition and familiar routines. The temptation is to let our sadness, our fears or feelings of foreboding overwhelm and paralyse us which may lead us to just give up or giving in to frustration and cynicism, boredom or lethargy.

But then, in church we find ourselves in the season of Epiphany with its emphasis on a light shining in the darkness which reminds us that life continues on, that revelation and growth and new beginnings loom on the horizon, that new roads appear up ahead, new roads that will take

us, if we choose to let them, into new adventures, new challenges, new opportunities to be the people God wants us to be and to live the life God wants us to live.

Epiphany reminds us that life goes on and we are encouraged to get up and go, to rise and shine, knowing that it is God's light that empowers the light to shine within us and also through us into the world. Each of us has a new road ahead of us in the new year. It is another road, a different road than any we have travelled on before. As we step unto that road, not knowing what we may find, not knowing exactly where we are going, we can be comforted in knowing that for sure, the light goes with us, leading us, guiding us, showing us the way. God will be with us on our journeys down that new road ahead.

Some of us may be thinking, "Well that's fine for the younger people, but I'm too old to be thinking about starting off on any new roads." Yet, *"there is grace here not just for the young, but for the old, or older, as well. It's not hard, is it, to see the possibility of new life and new beginnings, when we are young or in the lives of the young? It may be more difficult to imagine such grace and newness when we are well beyond that time of life, when the future is no longer so open or full of promise as it once seemed. All the more reason then to receive the gift of this part of the story, the promise of grace and new life, not only for the young, but for no-longer-young as well. Grace happens, surprise and new life can come, no matter what our age. Look today for the surprise of God's grace in your life, no matter what age you are."* (Tony Robinson in UCC Daily Devotional)

May the God of surprises surprise us and lead us forward "through the bad and good... travelling along with us" in the New Year!

With all best wishes, *Leonora*

Postscript: As a church we have a new road ahead of us too and that is why the Elders' Meeting on the 9th of January will be a discussion meeting when, at the beginning of a new year, we will reflect on the road we have travelled the past year(s), review our mission and vision and consider new ideas and opportunities for ministry as we "travel from the old to the new." We are very aware that our church community has changed, is changing and so is the world around us. To remain relevant as a faith/faithful community that seeks to witness to the all-inclusive love of God in word and deed we need to make some adjustments, mindful of the social changes and national/world events that impact on our lives today. This discussion will pave the way for a wider conversation in the congregation and within the Cadbury pastorate.

Morning at the Manse

This is a notice to gauge your interest in a monthly (Tuesday or Wednesday?) morning meeting at the Manse to talk and ask questions and reflect together on issues that are of particular relevance to us and in our society today. The conversation may be on the basis of one or more news item(s) or articles in a magazine/newspaper, an ethical issue that we grapple with, a question that we have or are being asked, etc. If we need an overall theme to focus on it could be "How do we live well and how do we shape our lives as people of faith in the complex world of today?" I hope this is appealing enough to some of you that you would like to give it a try. And in any case, it will also be a time of fellowship and tea/coffee will be served. Do let me know if you are interested and if there is a good response we will start meeting in February.

Leonora

Personalia

There are, thankfully, no recent notices of illness, accident or loss, but please remember everyone who is recovering from illness or treatment, and everyone who is mourning.

Please inform the Church Secretary if your name should be removed from the list of people eligible to serve as elders because you are now over 80. Our records are not complete, which also adds to the challenge for completing the Annual Return.



CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

Many thanks to Chris Grubb and partner Peter for spending much time, effort and money on providing two excellent raffle prizes to raise funds for our December appeal for Shelter. Tickets were drawn by Michael Walpole at the December Christmas lunch and the winner of the Christmas food hamper, which raised £127, was Lorraine DaCosta (honestly not a fix!) and the winner of the toiletries hamper, which raised £31, was Kath Upton, making a total of £158. Many thanks to all those who supported this and especially to Chris and Peter for all the hard work beforehand. Chris hopes to do something similar for next Christmas.

Lorraine DaCosta

Benevolent Fund—January collection

This fund, separate from both the regular Sunday collections and the other monthly retiring collections, enables the minister to distribute funds where she sees the need within the congregation or community.

There continues to be a need to help out from time to time in very special cases and it is therefore important that we keep sufficient money in the account to be able to respond to urgent needs. Please respond as generously as you are able to our retiring collection this month.

Neighbourhood News

News and events from other local churches:

Barnes Close: Reflection Days, 10 AM- 4 PM on the 2nd Thursday of the month. £15 including lunch. See Ann Evans for details.

Bournville: the Minister will be leading a service in the Week of Prayer on Wednesday 23 January at 10.30 AM. Do come and join an ecumenical congregation for prayers and reflection!

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Thanks to all those who took part in the services over the Christmas period: To the Worship and Arts group, who assisted the minister in initially arranging the hymns, readings and orders of them all; to the readers, musicians and singers who helped to lead the worship; to those who helped with decorating—and clearing up afterwards—of the church; to Nancy for providing the tree and David for putting it up; Barbara, Cheryl, Gill, Lorraine, Nancy, Norma and Sue for arranging baubles and lights etc and others who helped provide greenery; those who helped with the candles at the carol service; to Joyce and Norma who made the advent wreath, and all those who helped with the Christmas meals and mince pies. Once again a team effort which helped to make a truly wonderful Christmas for all attendees.

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Brexit Borders and Belonging conference at Queens Foundation in December 2018

I had a chance to attend this conference in December, thanks to the invitation from Michael Jagessar. The conference took place over three days and I was able to listen to a wide range of speakers from the URC and affiliated organisations. This included the viewpoints from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There were also some speakers from outside the UK. This is the latest in a series of conferences which Michael organises for the URC nationally, inviting also local participation of which I was a part.

I enjoyed the conference and have made some new friends. I have also some ideas for things I want to bring to Weoley Hill and the Cadbury Pastorate during 2019. I will keep this short now. I want to mention two sets of initials to make sure we are all aware of them.

J.P.I.T. Joint Public Issues Team – This is a joint team on public issues between the URC and other free churches working two ways – to share information with us and to be a critical friend to the government. I think there is useful information for us here.

CWM Europe is made up of five member churches and is currently focused on developing missional congregations, equipping missional leaders and a dynamic youth programme.

The members of the Europe Region are the UK and the Netherlands.

John Fletcher

January 2019

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019

As every year, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is from 18-25 January. The theme this year is “Only Justice” and resources have been prepared by Christians from Indonesia, the largest country in South East Asia, made up of more than 17,000 islands, 1,340 different ethnic groups and over 740 local languages, united by one national language Bahasa Indonesia. With some 86% of its 260 million people estimated to be Muslim, it has the largest Islamic population of any country. About 10% of Indonesians are Christian. Indonesians have lived by the principle of *gotong royong* which is to live in ‘solidarity and by collaboration’, regarding all Indonesians as brothers and sisters.

But *gotong royong* sits ill at ease with the neo-liberal approach to economics that has led to economic growth, and corruption infecting politics and business, often with devastating effects on the environment. Meanwhile those who are supposed to promote justice and protect the weak fail to do so. As a consequence, a country rich in resources bears the burden of many people living in poverty. Particular ethnic and religious groups are often associated with wealth in ways that have fed tensions.

The Christians of Indonesia found that the words of Deuteronomy, ‘Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue...’(see Deut. 16:18-20) spoke powerfully to their situation.

Leonora will be leading a service in the Week of Prayer on Wednesday 23 January at 10.30 AM at Bournville URC. Do come and join an ecumenical congregation for prayers and reflection!

FRIENDSHIP GROUP PROGRAMME 2019

January 9	Rosie Meyer, <i>Collecting Postcards</i>
February 13	Pancakes and puzzles
March 13	Card games (NO gambling!)
April 10	Speaker from Restore . Collection.
May 8	Christian Aid Bring and Buy. items needed.
June 12, 10 AM	Day trip to World of Wedgewood, Stoke on Trent. See Lorraine or Nancy for details.
July 10	Garden Party at 54, Middle Park Road.
August	No meeting
September 11	Beetle Drive small prizes
October 9	TBA
November 13	TBA
December 11	Christmas tea

All meetings are open to **all** church members and friends. We open at 2.15 PM for a drink and cake except outings; Lorraine DaCosta

Retiring Collections for 2018

January	Benevolent Fund	£ 115.00
February	Leprosy Mission	£ 66.00
March	The Project	£ 87.00
April	Chance for Childhood	£ 98.00
May	Corrymeela	£ 60.00
June	Jubilee Debt	£ 30.00
July	R.N.L.I.	£ 105.00
August	Hearts of England	£ 87.00
September	Amnesty International	£ 83.20
October	Youth & Family Work Fund	£ 100.00
November	Birmingham Crisis Centre	£ 70.00
December	Shelter	£ 717.74

Other collections

Commitment for Life £3,838.80 (Last year £4,058.00)

Induction Service (Special collection for "Restore") £150.15

David Marlow

WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

Watch for the new things I am going to do. It is happening already – you can see it now! Is 43:19

MONTH: JAN 2019	CHURCH FAMILY	TOPICAL PRAYERS
<i>WK 1: 6th - 12th Jan</i>	Ursula Aitken Edna Bayliss Sue Beeby	Pray for peace in 2019. – Bring to God places and situations which require resolution, eg. Yemen. Syria. The Central African Republic. The Democratic Republic of Congo. Drug cartels and gangs in S America. Gang attacks on our streets.
<i>WK 2: 13th - 19th Jan</i>	Mary Bevin Iris Bird Jim Brackley	
<i>WK 3: 20th - 26th Jan</i>	Linda Bradley Doreen Bradley	
<i>WK 4: 27th Jan- 2nd Feb</i>	Jane Byford Bill Campbell Kay Campbell	

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.