

Weoley Hill Church News



I know that my Redeemer liveth!

April 2019

From the Minister's study—

Good Friday and Easter Does life have to be 'successful'?

'Life does not have to be successful; it may be a failure too' This was the heading of an article that I read in a Dutch newspaper which noted that there is a marked loss of a sense of eternity among Christians today. The belief in life after death is in decline. This means that for many believers life, between birth and death, is all there is. And if it is all, then it has to be successful! There is no room for failure. For there would be no blessed afterlife, no heavenly bliss, to compensate for the 'valley of tears' that we may pass through in life.

I must admit that I have no idea what happens after death. But what I do believe is that God is love and God loves us, in life and in death....for God's steadfast love endures forever (Psalm 138: 8). And I also believe in 'life before death' (very appropriately used as a slogan by Christian Aid). God wants us to have life, life in abundance, as expressed in the words of Jesus, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10) So is there room for failure in our life before death, in the abundant life God wills for us? Of course, we have to admit that failure is a fact of life, and we know that it was part of Jesus' life too. Before there was resurrection, there was crucifixion. Before the empty tomb there was the cross. Before there was strength, there was weakness.

Failure, struggles, mistakes....aren't they inevitable parts of our lives? However hard we work to make a success of our lives, of our studies, of our careers, of our relationships – often evaluating success according to the 'worldly' standards of money, power, prestige, etc – there is no doubt that at some stage in our lives we may well be confronted with disappointment, (dis)stress and even failure.

If it is the disappointment or failure someone else suffers we may sympathize or perhaps try to ignore it and look away. It is embarrassing; it doesn't fit the picture of how life should be! If we ourselves are confronted with disappointment and misfortune in our

lives then, of course, we have to somehow deal with it. So what to do? Often we try to put on a brave face and we say that we can learn from our mistakes, our failures, our physical or mental suffering. They can make us stronger; they can be a useful experience to prepare us for future success.....

Again, success! Somehow life always has to be a success story. However, I believe that Jesus' death and resurrection takes away the need for (the pursuit of) success as determined by the logic of the world. Why? Not because we have an assurance that there is heavenly bliss in the afterlife. We don't know. But because the resurrection – whether you consider it a physical resurrection or see it more as a spiritual event – means that disappointment and failure do not have the last word. Not Christ upon the cross but Jesus lives and he is Lord! God's love prevails; the resurrection is God's affirmation of life, here on earth. It is God's **YES** to life with all its weaknesses and failings and God's **NO** to the death-dealing powers of endless striving for success, prestige and domination.

And so you may breathe a sigh of relief. Phew! There is ultimate freedom in failure. In Christ we can exit the rat-race, step off the treadmill, and embrace God's love. For it is a love that has absolutely nothing to do with how successful we are. In Christ we can embrace failure...and because of Easter we believe, we know, that beyond failure there is new life, new beginnings, new hope.....Thanks be to God!

CHRIST IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN INDEED. ALLELUIA!

All best wishes for Easter and the Easter season,

Leonora



Personalia

Please remember all who have been ill or are undergoing treatment, including Ursula Aitkin, David Hitchin, Grace Carter, Betty Johnson, Grace Chung, Edna Bayliss, Michael Walpole and Ian Ring,

We give thanks for those who are recovering.

Reminder: Anna McManus is running the London Marathon for the charity Phabkids. Sponsorship:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/AnnaMcManus2>

The Church Secretary will be away visiting family the first three weeks of May.



Notices

Reading/Discussion at the Manse:

We continue to meet on the 4th Wednesday of the month to read and discuss news items of interest. It is a good occasion to share ideas and experiences and to get to know each other better. Do come and join us on the 24th of April at 10.30 AM at the Manse.

Bournville Meditation:

Every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 3-4 PM a small group from Bournville URC meets for an hour of meditation based on the *lectio divina* practice of reading a Bible text and meditating on it. You are very welcome to join in and parking on Beaumont Road is no problem at that time of the day.

Neighbourhood News

News and events from other local churches:

St Mary's: **Palm Sunday Choral Evensong**, 6.30 PM.

Barbara Calvert, a Methodist who has preached at Weoley Castle, would like **sponsors for cycling 100 miles** as part of the 'Birmingham Velo' on Sunday 12 May, which she is doing on behalf of Christian Aid. <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Barbara-Calvert1>

Weoley Castle: **Good Friday Happening** at 10 AM-12 NOON.

Notices

Lent Soup: here on Saturday 13 April from about 12.30 PM.

Pastorate Day on 18 May

On Saturday 18 May Stuart Scott (Synod Training Officer) and Leonora will lead a day on "Exploring experiences of change, loss and bereavement" for the pastorate churches. It will be a day in which we can share our experiences as well as learn from each other how we live through these experiences ourselves or help others to cope. As we all live through experiences of change and loss, I am sure that it will be a very interesting and useful day. The day will start at 10 AM and run until 2.15 PM and will be held at Bournville URC (no problem parking on Beaumont Rd on Saturday!) Refreshments will be provided but please bring your packed lunch (or you can buy a sandwich from the Tesco around the corner). Do sign up for the day and lifts can be organized!

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Only 9 attended the card games session. Next month is a speaker from Restore, when we hope to have a better response and also do a collection. Our retiring collection this month is also for Restore.

RESTORE

We have had links with the Birmingham charity, **Restore**, for several years—you may have read their newsletters on display in the John Kydd Hall. **Restore** is a project of Birmingham Churches Together which welcomes and supports refugees and those seeking sanctuary by offering friendship, social activities and training. Their aims are to 'welcome, include, integrate'. Activities are for men, women and families and may be anything from swimming to a walk over the Lickeys or a community meal. **Restore** helps with the process of applying for asylum or citizenship, translating documents, applying for benefits or equipping refugees for work. Through a scheme of 'befriending' volunteers are introduced to those newly arrived in Birmingham and can help them with learning English and to settle into our way of life. Do try to come along to Friendship group on 10 Wednesday April, from 2.30 PM, when Jeremy Thompson, the co-ordinator, will talk about their work.

May Planning

The Friendship group will be organising a **Bring and Buy on Wednesday 8 May** for Christian Aid. Books, plants, jewellery, toiletries and items of bric-a-brac are all needed and very welcome. Please have a 'sort out' and if you would like things to be collected please let me know.

Lorraine DaCosta

Other news

The Fish & Chip Supper and Quiz on Saturday 2 March raised £157 for Fairtrade. A little lower than last time but costs have risen from £4.25 to £4.50 per head. A good attendance of 55! Lent Soup is here on Saturday 13 April. Help needed to set tables from about 12. (The Korean School doesn't finish until then, even though they are kindly finishing early for us.)

Lunch Club: Following a meeting of the Eco Group it has been decided to purchase only biodegradable disposable plates etc when the present equipment is finished.

There is a **Big Breakfast** for Christian Aid at **Weoley Castle** on Thursday 2 May from 10.00 AM. Bacon, egg and all the trimmings, so no need for lunch (or even dinner!) See noticeboards for details.

Birmingham Passion Play

On 16, 17 and 18 April, from 12.30- 2 PM each day, Saltmine Theatre Company's actors and community cast will process through the central Birmingham streets, telling the extraordinary story of Easter using a contemporary script, movement and song.

Saltmine's hope is that these performances—free for anyone to attend—will encourage people to investigate the Christian faith at local churches this Easter.

Report of the Synod meeting of Saturday 16 March 2019

This was held at Sutton Coldfield URC which is a convenient venue as it is close to the station. Leonora, Cheryl and myself attended as John, our new representative was not available.

We were welcomed by the minister, David Walton who also explained about the Foodcycle charity that they have started to use. It is a charity that uses the discarded food from supermarkets to make meals for those in need and others.

Worship was led by Barbara McDowell, a Lay Preacher from Sutton Church. It was good to have a Lay person leading worship with so many clergy within the gathering.

There was news of people who had left or will be leaving the synod as well as those who have come since the last meeting in October. Leonora was greeted also Mark tubby who will be going to the Eastern Synod in the summer.

John Davey then spoke about Eco church. Kevin Snyman started the initiative within our synod aiming for us to be an Eco Synod having many Eco churches. Kevin had now a role based at Church House in London and John had succeeded him. John spoke with enthusiasm about this. Our synod has the most churches registered 37 out of 114 and 9 have obtained their bronze award, including us, and 3 have attained silver. Read my article to find out more. It is all showing we are concerned for God's creation.

Walking the way good news stories. West Orchard URC in Coventry has started a prayer card scheme where all users of the premises are given cards to complete if they wish asking for prayer concerns and these are mainly anonymous. Maybe we need to revisit our idea we had a few years ago. Lillington Free church in Leamington Spa has been rebuilt to include an integral hall. John Procter the General Secretary of the URC preached at the opening ceremony on 9 March 2019.

Stepwise. Stuart Scott is the advocate for this within our synod. Stepwise is a facility to enrich the faith of us all and is intergenerational. It is not just for people wanting to become lay preachers or pastoral visitors. There is a video available in the URC website.

Reflections of the moderator's sabbatical—Discipleship. Steve Faber asked us to discuss in 2/3s in a couple of minutes: 'What kind of leadership do you think the URC needs to move us into the next decade?' One response was we need active growing disciples who in turn can make new disciples. This is the most important aspect of the great commission from Matthew 28. We are inclined to focus on teaching and baptising. Relationships are very important not just room bookings. Another question was; 'What is a disciple?' This led to a range of replies: someone or something that needs a leader, goes beyond welcoming, a light of Christ in society, an apprentice learner from the Master, someone to go out, a listener of people, awe inspired and filled with joy, committed to a community of faith, a doer of the Word not just a hearer and several other thoughts and finally a Disciple maker! A growing disciple is inwardly developing and binding with All disciples to make new ones. The plural of disciples is church. The final question we were asked was: 'How is your church helping you to be disciples making disciples?' Christ calls the people to be growing disciples. We are equipping the saints. Every member is to grow as a disciple and every member can make disciples. Steve is still working on his thoughts and isn't yet sure how it will be shared.

Finance and property report. I didn't make many notes about this as is consisted of quite a lot of figures. One thing I did pick up on was that grants for church work is being increased from 20% to 25% and the maximum for £20,000 to £30,000.

Synod-wide Pilgrimage. It is a time for reflection and prayer with others. It is walking the way. Some churches have walking groups.

We were ahead of schedule so an item from the afterNOON was brought forward. This was: **Elders promises**. A new promise has been suggested that has a deeper meaning than the others already used. If accepted by the 2020 assembly it will be constitutional. 'Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always as far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?' Answer: 'By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit'. Churches and Synods have the right at the moment to accept this by doing nothing or objecting so it does not proceed to the 2020 Assembly. This caused some confusion and discussion took place about it. The result by consensus was that our synod will allow it to go forward. It will only proceed if 2/3 of churches and synods agree.

Notices General Assembly in 2020 will take place at Aston University on 10-13 July and stewards are required.

After lunch the Moderator led us in worship with the theme of 'Buckle up and hold tight'. This was with reference to a rollercoaster ride where one cannot see the whole track at one time so the unexpected make it interesting and exciting.

The meeting closed after the acceptance of the Synod Mission council report and the minutes of the previous synod meeting as published in the synod papers. The Moderator finished with prayer and invited us all to the residential synod meeting on 11-12 October 2019 at the Holiday Inn near the airport.

Ann Evans
*with additions by Leonora Jagessar and
Cheryl Thornett*



Circle the City 2019 - Birmingham

Saturday, 18 May 2019 – 9.30 AM to 4.00 PM

Join Christian Aid for this unique fundraising challenge on a sponsored bus ride around Birmingham

Circle the City is a family-friendly fundraising event launching in Birmingham this Christian Aid Week. 13 churches along the famous number 11 bus route will have their doors open and activities for you to take part in. This is a great chance to visit diverse churches across the city, find out what they get up to and take part in activities while raising money for our sisters and brothers across the world.

You can either start at Bournville Quaker Meeting House (B30 1JT) or Erdington Six Ways Baptist Church (B24 8AD). Registration begins at both venues at 9.30 AM and there will be short ecumenical service starting at 10 AM.

Make a difference

The money you raise through Circle the City sponsorship will help our sisters and brothers around the world step up the fight to end poverty, especially our work in Sierra Leone with maternal health care. Find out more about what Christian Aid partners are doing to make Sierra Leone a safer place to give birth.

Sign up today

Everyone wishing to take part in Circle the City will need to register their place. You can sign up as an individual or as a group.

<http://www.cofebirmingham.com/events/view/circle-city-2019-birmingham/> <http://www.ctcbrum.eventbrite.com/> After signing up to the event, you will receive a sponsorship pack with all the information you need to get started.





What is this?

Hopefully when you have read the article you will have a better idea.

At a recent Synod meeting I was asked by Kevin Snyman the former Synod Mission enabler if I wanted to explore the chance of Weoley Hill URC becoming an Eco church. He was trying to get as many names as possible to have our synod with the most registered churches. I said yes without consulting anyone. Anyway I took this to Elders and then registered our interest on line with their permission.

I did wonder what I had let us all into! However I looked at the survey to see what we were doing already. It is not just the fact that we have recycle bins and now have LED lighting in the sanctuary but it covers other areas as well. These are Worship and Teaching, Management of Church Buildings, Management of church land, Community and Global issues and Lifestyle. A group of us looked at this survey together and I submitted our answers and discovered the fantastic news that we are already eligible for an award! We have started on the ladder of success! We have a bronze award! As yet we have not received our certificate as it has to be applied for. My next task is to make the application.

One of the things we suggested is to have a bench in our community garden for anyone to use. It will be concreted into the ground or secured in some way. It will be for people to sit and maybe think of the environment around them and God's creation in the plants and trees that they can see. Or they can just sit and rest. We are also going to suggest to the uniformed organisations that they make bug hotels or more bird boxes for the community garden or their own gardens as part of one of their badges. One thing we did do straight away was to move the cartridge recycling box into the corridor to the hall so it will be accessible to more people.

Any ideas any of you have to make us a more eco-friendly church will be welcomed.

I shall submit articles to the newsletter frequently do you can see that they are looking for in giving awards. The web site is www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/how-eco-church-works for more details.

Thank you to David Marlow for putting our award onto our website.

Ann Evans



WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus Christ to life, will also raise us up with Jesus and take us, together with you, into his presence.

2 Cor4:14

	Church members	
WK 1: 7-13 April	Christine Grubb Rosemary Hay	For those involved in relief work following recent disasters. For the long-term re-establishment of communities, livelihoods as well as measures to prevent such problems happening again. Pray for and thank God for those who are bringing change for good to individuals and communities. – You could use information from charities to focus on specific projects and people.
WK 2: 14-20 April	Gill Hitchin Norma Johnson	
WK 3: 21-27 April	Betty Johnston Daniel & Dora Kyereh	
WK 4: 28 April -4 May	Sharon Letissier & Hannah Doreen Longman	

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