

# Weoley Hill Church News



*June 2019*

*From the Minister's study—*

Dear friends,

A recent headline in the New Statesman reads “When it comes to immigration, the UK is already in a post-Brexit era. Today’s ONS migration figures show that fewer migrants are coming from the EU—but more from outside it are taking their place.” (Jonathan Portes, 24 May)

It was three years ago that the UK was getting ready to vote in the EU referendum and immigration and free movement was by far the most important substantive policy issue in the referendum campaign. While we all remember the “vote leave” red bus promising £350 million a week for the NHS once the UK would leave the EU, I also remember well the misleading “taking back control of our borders” anti-migrant poster that Nigel Farage used in his leave campaign.

The issue of migration is one close to my heart because, like some of you perhaps, most of my life I have been a “migrant,” living, studying and working abroad. However, I have never really felt a migrant; I have never been made to feel a migrant either .....until now! Freedom of movement in Europe allowed me to feel at home in every European country and even living and working in the Caribbean seemed to me an entitlement rather than a privilege. I know that many “migrants” have a rather different experience, especially those who have come from outside the European Union, among which are the Windrush generation and their offspring.

Because of my own experience, but also as I am “schooled” in the Bible that contains so many stories involving migration and the movement of people—whether it be the Israelites moving to escape famine, flee persecution or to follow God’s calling to the promised land; or the disciples and apostles of the early Church spreading the good news—and because I am well aware that all through history people have been migrating for many different and compelling reasons, I am always disturbed about the anti-immigration, anti-immigrant rhetoric that was (and still is) prominent in the Brexit debate but also seems to be high on the agenda of many populist politicians (and politicians from mainstream parties who buy into the rhetoric to get votes) in Europe and beyond.

Of course, there may be good reasons that unlimited migration and open borders may not work, especially in a world where there is still such a huge gap between the rich and the poor. But we cannot, and should never, close our borders to those who are seeking refuge from war, violence, persecution, even natural disaster and resulting poverty (especially as we, in the West, often are complicit, given the huge arms industry that we benefit from and the climate change or crisis we contribute to). The refugee, the migrant, the stranger comes to us as “our neighbour” who we need to love and to reach out to.

*When I was hungry, did you feed me? When I was thirsty, did you give me a drink? When I was a stranger, did you receive me in your homes? (Matthew 25: 31-46)*

But more than that, we have to make our neighbour who has come to us as refugee, as migrant, as stranger feel at home...feel that they can belong, be appreciated for who they are and what they bring. Yes, we all have experiences of moving, of having to make our “home” somewhere else, be it a different country, a different town, a different time in our life, a different situation...especially in our fast changing “world”. We all journey; we all move and we recognize that leaving “home” is not easy. It always means leaving something familiar or someone precious behind and sometimes it is a perilous journey and often a journey into the unknown.

So let us not be swayed by anti-immigrant rhetoric but let us make “the stranger” our friend, just like many of us in Weoley Hill URC have been befriended as we came as “strangers” but have found a warm welcome in the church community. As “the cry of a migrant” reminds us:

Don't call me a stranger

The language I speak sounds different but the feelings it expresses is the same

Don't call me a stranger

I need to communicate, especially when language is not understood

Don't call me a stranger

I need to be together, especially when loneliness cools my heart

Don't call me a stranger

I need to feel at home, especially when mine is far away from yours

Don't call me a stranger

Borders we create them and the separation that results is the same

Don't call me a stranger

The colour of my passport is different but the colour of our blood is the same

Don't call me a stranger

I am your friend but you do not know it yet

Don't call me a stranger

We cry for justice and peace in different ways but our God is the same

Don't call me a stranger

Yes! I am a migrant (or refugee) but our God is the same!

(National Council of Churches, India – slightly adapted)

And a quote we would certainly agree with: *“Migrants and refugees are people with names, histories, needs and desires and this makes us neighbours with common interests. For, as long as the migrants are unnamed and faceless, they become less human to us, and therefore threatening”* (Juliet Kiplin, *“Mission, Migrants and Refugees”*)

May the Spirit of God move in and among us to break down any barriers that keep us separated from our neighbour: brothers and sisters who cry out to us in their need. May we encounter Jesus in the migrants and refugees that reach our shores and help them to feel at home in our midst. Especially on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, World Refugee Day, and the week around it, which is Refugee Week, let us be thankful that we have welcomed many migrants and refugees in the past, celebrate their contributions to British society and recommit ourselves to continue to reach out compassionately to those who seek sanctuary in our midst.

With all best wishes,

Leonora



## Personalia

Please remember everyone who is ill, in hospital, undergoing treatment, or recovering.

Please remember young people sitting exams and finishing one stage of their education to move on to another. And don't forget teachers at this stressful time of the year.

My thanks to Chris Marlow, in particular, and to everyone who covered for me while I was away. Both grandsons are thriving. Cheryl

### Barbara Brown Taylor and Paula Gooder

The Revd Barbara Brown Taylor, an American Episcopal priest, professor, author and theologian, who is one of the United States' best-known preachers, was 'in conversation' with Dr Paula Gooder at St Francis, Bournville, on Tuesday 28 May. They spoke about Revd Brown Taylor's new book, *Holy Envy, Finding God in the faith of others*, based on her years of teaching a class on world religions, as well as exchanging thoughts on how and what we can learn from people of other faiths and much more. (And, incidentally, whether atheism is virtually a faith.) Dr Gooder formerly lectured at Queen's College and is presently the Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral.

Leonora and Cheryl attended. Leonora has many of Revd Brown Taylor's books, which she is willing to lend.

*A further conversation took place at St Paul's on 30 May, and was recorded, so may be available online by this time.*

Cheryl Thornett

## Neighbourhood News

*News and events from other local churches:*

This year's **Carrs Lane Lectures** on 5 October are on the theme *Faith...the Art of Unease?* The Revd Canon Mark Oakley of St John's College, Cambridge is the speaker. See Cheryl to order tickets or book through Carrs Lane.

**Serbian Orthodox Church Summer Choral Concert**, 7.30 PM, Saturday 8 June. An evening of beautiful Orthodox and English spiritual choral music. £5 at the door. All proceeds will go towards representing the church at the 6th International Music Edict Festival in Niš, Serbia. 92 Griffins Brook Ln, Birmingham, B30 1QG

## Interfaith Service

We are invited to join in the Interfaith service on the topic of "Creating a City of Peace together" at the Al-Mahdi Institute and Peace Centre (60 Weoley Park Road) on Saturday 8 June at 6 PM. It will be an occasion to share from our different faith traditions and remember all those who died while offering devotion in Christchurch (New Zealand) and in Sri Lanka, as we search for peace in a divided world. Refreshments will follow the service. Do come if you can as it is a great opportunity to build a bridge between our church and the Muslim centre!

Leonora

# FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Our annual Bring and Buy sale for Christian Aid raised £122.60. This included £35 in donations and £39.10 from sale of refreshments.... (we *like* cake!). As usual some items were taken to St Mary's Hospice shop at Weoley Castle and other items were retained for further fund raising later this year. Thanks to Linda and Doreen Bradley who helped set out, and work, in the kitchen and also to Sue and Norma who joined in to clear up at the end.

Our next meeting is a proposed visit to the **Wedgewood Centre** in Stoke on **Wednesday 12 June**. We will leave the church at **10.30 AM** and if you wish to go and would like a lift, or can offer one, you must give your name to Nancy or Lorraine as soon as possible. This visit may not go ahead if there are fewer than 8 members who wish to go.


Lorraine DaCosta



## ECO-FACT

We have been collecting old spectacles for some years now for Vision Aid. They are cleaned, and sometimes repaired, first by inmates of local prisoners who earn a small amount for doing the job, and then sent overseas where they are re-ground and distributed to those afflicted with poor vision, some 10% of the world population. Although the cases are **not** needed they can also be recycled if they are plastic or metal. You can put any glasses you have in the small box by the print room or take them direct to any Scrivens opticians.

Lorraine DaCosta



FOLK  
MOZART  
DVORAK  
BAROQUE  
CLASSICAL  
CONTEMPORARY  
KLEZMER  
SPANISH  
REGGAE  
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# Bournville Clarinet Choir

## SUMMER CONCERT

An exciting and eclectic programme -  
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Musical Director Nigel Wood

Guest Soloists

Trevor Workman Piano/Organ

Gill Steventon Cello

Saturday 20th July 2019

7.00pm

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Tickets: £10

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# Eco church

## Climate change

Those of us who were worshipping on Sunday 19 May at the end of Christian Aid week will have heard Leonora reflect on the subject of climate change or climate emergency as it is being named now.

The research that is being done by climate scientists and others tell us that the levels of the oceans are rising faster than first thought.

What can we do to try to slow this down? We have heard about flying less, buying electric cars and the like but is that enough?

Can we change to green energy suppliers that get their electricity from renewable sources; we as the church itself and us as individual energy users? Doing this will help us en-route to obtaining a silver award not that that is the goal.

It has been great seeing children such as Greta Thunberg and other young people involved in this subject and speaking out about what we are doing to our planet.

Leonora talked about sheep and how they eat the grass roots as well as the blades of grass. (I didn't know that!) We are eating the roots of our non-renewable energy resources such as oil and coal. We are also the shepherds to lead others in the right way. Global capitalism is also eating the roots which are affecting the poor of the world. Let us lobby where we can to prevent deforestation and the like.

If we have faith and hope action and change can follow.

The last verse of *God in his love for us lent us this planet* by F Pratt-Green (R&S 85) says so much:

*Earth is the Lord': it is ours to enjoy it,  
Ours, as his stewards, to farm and defend.  
From its pollution, misuse and destruction,  
Good Lord, deliver us, world without end!*



Ann Evans

# WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

*Jesus said, "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever. He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God."*  
John 14:16, 17a

	<b>Church members</b>	<b>Other topics</b>
<b>WK 1: 2<sup>nd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Audrey Nganwa & family Marilyn Raw Margaret Shiner	For fresh awakening by God's Spirit in the churches of this country.  For strength and direction for the churches of our pastorate.
<b>WK 2: 9<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Vida Southall & Carys Kumar & Gini Tambyraja	
<b>WK 3: 16<sup>th</sup>- 22<sup>nd</sup> June</b>	Gordon & Cheryl Thornett David & Kathleen Upton	
<b>WK 4: 23<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Barbara & Philip Viney Rachel Wakeman	
<b>WK 5: 30<sup>th</sup> June- 6<sup>th</sup> July</b>	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. Names in the prayer lists are on our church register but please add other members of the families mentioned to your prayers.*

