

Weoley Hill & Weoley Castle Church News



November 2024

From Leonora—

Dear friends,

I have just finished making a photobook covering the past 12 months and the first three photos are of the “happy retirement” cake and flowers I received at the last joint service a year ago at Weoley Castle and of the Harvest service and lunch at Weoley Hill. Yes, it is just a year ago that I retired and that Michael and I moved from Birmingham to our URC retired ministers’ house in Sutton. After we moved in the builder who had renovated the house still had to come back a few times as his work had not been quite up to standard. However, by Christmas we were comfortably settled in our “bijou” home which still does seem remarkably spacious and can accommodate the many books we still have, even after donating dozens of boxes of books to Oxfam. As the RMHS (Retired Ministers Housing Society) seeks to make all its properties energy efficient, and deliver carbon free homes in the future, we have, since the summer, solar panels on our roof.

Quite soon after our move we met up with the minister of Cheam and Wallington URC, Rev Craig Bowman (a former colleague of Michael in Church House). While there is a local Methodist/URC LEP in Sutton, in a large Victorian church building, we decided that we would take our church membership at Wallington, a small, friendly and relaxed congregation of about 40 members (and 20 on average in church), just 10 minutes by car and on a well-served bus route. When we were received into membership, we did mention that we may not be able to attend every Sunday to which the church secretary responded that she would be worried if we did! Yes, being retired means, of course, that we can travel for longer periods of time to our holiday home in France but in the URC it also means that you are soon approached by

pulpit secretaries to “fill the pulpit,” a request we answer cautiously so as not to fill our diary with too many preaching dates. That said, I am pleased that I could lead a service again at Harpenden URC (the congregation I served from 2010-2015) and look forward to coming to Weoley Hill on the 3rd of November, a date that Ann asked me to put in my diary a year ago!

I also regularly attend the Dutch Church in London, at Austin Friars right in the City, where I am (and have been) an occasional guest preacher. Earlier this year, just when I was starting to think what voluntary role I could take on now that I am retired, I was asked to consider becoming an Elder/Trustee at the Dutch church. “First come, first served,” so I agreed and I will be inducted on the 1st Sunday of Advent! I always had the intention to become more involved with the Dutch Church, which celebrates its 475th anniversary next year and is the oldest Dutch Protestant Church in the world. In 1550 Dutch and French speaking “strangers” (refugees fleeing religious persecution) were granted a royal charter by King Edward VI to establish the church. Since then, it has been a church home for Dutch Protestants, who are permanently settled in the UK, who live here for a few years or who just visit London. While the congregation meeting in the church may be quite small (as it is quite a trek for some to travel into the City on a Sunday), many watch the services online, not only to hear the sermon but also to listen to the beautiful organ played by David Titterington!

Michael is still involved in some URC committees and goes regularly to the LMS (London Missionary Society) archives at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) to do research on the missionary activities in Guyana and among the Indian indentured labourers. He makes some very interesting

discoveries as he reads reports and letters which missionaries sent home.

Very concerned and saddened about the situation in Gaza, and now Lebanon, I have travelled a few times into London to join a rally or demonstration to call for a ceasefire and peace talks, a call which unfortunately seems to fall on deaf ears of the Israeli government. And beside our daily walks with Valdo on a large field nearby, we have gone a few times into the countryside, especially to the North Downs and Box Hill. In the winter months ahead, we will certainly widen our exploration of the area and countryside, at times joined by our sons who visit us quite regularly and are doing well.

And so it is that a year has passed and “how time flies” is an idiom that certainly comes to mind! I look forward to seeing many of you again at the Communion Service on the 3rd of November and Michael joins me in sending you all best wishes,

Leonora



Prayer page

A prayer for the season of remembrance

We remember and pray for those we have loved and who have gone before us. Our prayers are not only for those we know but also for all those who have died at the hands of others in war. So we pray, God who is love, in your mercy receive all those we remember into the welcome of your eternal love and life.

(adapted from a prayer of the English Association of Cathedrals)

Holy Lord, we pray for your light to shine into the darkness of

- † our war-torn, violent and hurting world; we pray for peace in the Middle East, Ukraine and Russia, Sudan and all places of conflict.
- † this battered, exploited and struggling created world and all those whose lives have been turned upside down by fire, flooding and extreme weather events.
- † our prejudiced, angry, opinionated society where the anonymous hide and lives are damaged; we pray for harmony in our communities, an acceptance of difference and a celebration of diversity.
- † those who suffer pain, illness or mental ill-health; we pray for healing, comfort, reassurance and compassion for all those for whom life is a struggle.
- † Holy Lord, we pray for your light to shine into our lives with all our differences, challenges, problems and demands upon us; we pray that we may be constant in faith, hope and love as we make our journey with you. Be with us as we form a new pastorate and call a minister.
- † *We give thanks for each of our loved ones we remember, for all the ways in which their lives touched ours, for the difficult as well as the good times, for the ways in which their lives and their love continue to be with us. In our sadness and with thanksgiving, we will remember them.*

Pastorate News

Weoley Hill News

Harvest Sunday

Wasn't it lovely to have Scouts and Cubs in church for the service (and thanks to the Revd Ian Thornley for involving the children so well), and to have some of the families join us for lunch?

Thanks to everyone who brought in staples and toiletries for the B30 & South Birmingham Food Bank and fresh food for the Salvation Army. Special thanks to the Guides for their generous donations. Thanks also go to the **small** crew who decorated the church, arranged the display of food and made a start on setting up the John Kydd Hall for the Harvest Lunch, especially Lorraine Dacosta, who did so much of the heavy lifting by herself, as well as starting the washing up while the rest of us were still eating.

Update: The donations to the Food Bank totalled **over 1000 kg**. Thanks to John Fletcher for delivering it all.

Help needed

By the way.... *Did* the Harvest decorations look nice? Did you notice people rushing to prepare the tables and set out chairs on Sunday morning? The 3 people who decorated the church and set up the display on Saturday finally had to give in to aching backs and knees and go home after putting the tables in place, but a few more stepped up and pitched in before the service.

We really do need more people to help out with setting up and clearing away for church events if we are going to continue to have them. Lorraine, in particular, does **far** more than her share of heavy lifting on top of everything else. Of course none of us are getting any younger, but it really is a case of more hands making lighter work.

Christmas Lunch

There is a tentative plan to have a modest Christmas lunch after church on Sunday 15 December, probably cold cuts, salad, rolls and mince pies, with a small charge to cover the cost. We will need people to help set up, preferably on the Saturday afternoon, and to clear up afterwards. Please let Lorraine or Cheryl know any suggestions and how you can help.



Weoley Hill Calendar for November 2024

Saturday	2	9.30 am: Work party
Sunday	3	10.30 am: Worship & communion led by Leonora.
Tuesday	5	10.30 am: Tuesday Fellowship
Sunday	10	10.30 am: Remembrance Sunday Worship led by Rev Barbara Calvert.
Wednesday	13	7.30 pm: Elders' budget meeting
Saturday	16	6 for 6.30 Quiz night with fish & chips, £8 per head. pm:
Sunday	17	10.30 am: Worship led by Ian Thomson. noon: Church Budget Meeting
Tuesday	19	10.30 am: Tuesday Fellowship
Sunday	24	10.30 am: Worship led by Alan.
Saturday	30	1 pm on: Decorate church December
Sunday	1	10.30 am: Advent 1 worship & communion led by the Moderator, Revd Steve Faber.

Art Club Wednesdays 10 AM-12

Community Choir Fridays 6.45-8 PM

Weoley Hill Park

An action group has been set up to represent the community to the Environment Agency with regard to plans to construct retaining dams in 3 local parks, Weoley Hill Park, Manor Farm Park and the Valley Parkway aka the boating pond (each park has its own group). Former Weoley Hill member Donald Knight, a flood control expert, is part of the Weoley Hill Park committee. Information about the group and the history of the issue will be available soon or see Cheryl Thornett for her notes from a recent meeting. Email weoleyhillpark@gmail.com for information or to take part.

Advance Notice: the new MP for Northfield, Laurence Turner, will be at the church on Friday 13 December at 2 pm. This will not be restricted to church members. Can you help with refreshments? Give any suggestions of questions to put to Ann.

Anniversary and Induction

Birmingham Korean Church celebrated their 41st anniversary and inducted their new minister, the Revd Sun-Jong Park (Samson), on Sunday 27 October.



Weoley Castle News

Services: 11 am on Sundays

Nov 3rd: Bible study, led by Sam

Nov 10th: led by Richard Alford – including Communion

Nov 17th: led by Ted

Nov 24th: led by Paul Tucker

Dec 1st: Bible study, led by Ted; Toy & Gift Service

News

Also: Sam & Katie Poursain, together with Jonah & Susie Bateson, are starting an informal, family-friendly service with food on Sunday afternoon: 4 p.m. from Sun. 17th November. A more public launch to follow in the New Year. To learn more about this development, please contact sam.poursain@seedbeds.org

On Dec 1st, members of the congregation are asked to bring Christmas toys and gifts, which we will pass on to the Salvation Army to go to needy families.



We have had installed a new fibre connection to Wi-Fi, for general use by those in the WCCC building. The password is Welcome1662. The word 'Welcome' is particularly aimed at Warm Welcome on Fridays. People will doubtless be using it, while sitting and chatting, waiting for the food pantry or looking at the clothes...



Why the number in the password? Google 'Congregational Church 1662' to find out...

Synod meeting report 19 October 2024

NB: Most of this report applies to Weoley Hill and Weoley Castle, but some remarks apply specifically to Weoley Hill.

The meeting took place at Sutton Coldfield URC and we were welcomed by the minister, David Walton. The opening worship included the hymn that was written especially for the 50th anniversary of the URC, *'Through the Father's love we are one family.'*

The synod now has all staff vacancies filled, so the new people were introduced. Emma Wright is the communications officer, Andrew & Sally Willetts are Mission Development officers, Melanie Smith is Training and Development Officer/ Pastoral Consultant and Helen Laird is Children and Youth development officer (starting on 1 December).

There is a 'Shine your Light' campaign 13-15 December about singing carols and spreading the gospel. It has a website and a downloadable

booklet to use. **Hopefully we can do this at Oakview Care home, at least sing carols.**

For those who are interested the General Assembly record is now on the URC website. As part of worship at next year's general assembly we have been asked to consider **'What does resurrection mean to me/ to our churches?' Answers to be sent to Synod and they will be forwarded to the chaplain.**

One major item was the revised Manse policy. It now mentions pastorates rather than churches. There are several grants available for such as major repairs, energy efficiency alongside and annual allowance for minor repairs. **You may wonder how this affects us now our [WH] manse is on the market, but the pastorate will have a manse to manage when one is bought, and Weoley Hill will be responsible for 30% of it financially.** New manses will have EV charging points to encourage the use of electric cars. The synod pays for the insurance of manses, and it was agreed unanimously that they will also pay for the council tax and water rates when the manse is occupied by a minister.

Steve Faber, the Moderator then presented his paper on casting a vision. He looked at our current situation of a declining church and then having a vision for the future when God will grow the church. For the full report please see Ann or John who have copies online of the synod papers but in the meantime, a couple of bullet points for the future are:

- All our churches will have a clear mission focus with clearly stated mission aims appropriate to their local community and context, and true to our ecumenical and Reformed traditions and distinctives. Mission will be carried out through proclamation and living out the Good News of Jesus Christ—mission is through word and deed, not good deeds alone.
- Local administrators and outreach workers for pastorates will be granted or fully funded by the Synod or wider URC where an appropriate

case is made by the pastorate, in order to improve efficiency of local work and maximise the mission impact of our churches.

Our role as Christians is to make new disciples and our resources are the people we are as well as financial resources and buildings. **Local workers can make a difference and there is synod money to help with this.**

Should we pursue our family worker? We should have a clear mission focus to be carried out in WORD and DEED. **Do we know the carbon footprint for Weoley Hill? Could that be added to our profile?**

The financial presentation was given and as usual the M&M contribution was highlighted. Below are a few points the report made.

- Whilst M&M contributions may be voluntary, they are not optional. They are to be regarded as the “first call on a local church’s finances” (cf Plan for Partnership).
- All of the churches pay for the whole ministry of the URC. Individual church contributions are not related to ministerial deployment (with the possible exception of some LEP situations, where there is alternating ministry)
- If a church underpays, then everyone else (or the Synod on their behalf) has to pay more. The cost of the whole ministry of the URC remains the same and still has to be paid for.
- In order to meet the overall pledge, the Synod is expecting to contribute to the region of £300,000 from its own funds in 2025. Without this, church contributions would have been much higher.

Our (WH) M&M contribution has been reduced this year.

The URC training material ‘Stepwise’ was advertised. This is a replacement for TLS but it can be used to encourage spiritual growth. **Could we explore this?**

There was a presentation of the Synod executive report and included a review of operations. The report said: There is a strong perception that some synod processes can be too bureaucratic, and, in places, that has contributed to strained relationships. Communication issues have also been highlighted. Work has

already started in response to the review, vacancies have been filled and new staff have been appointed to better support churches and improve communications. Work is also underway to review grant forms and streams and simplify how financial support is provided to churches. The plan is to bring a full response to the findings to the March Synod in 2025, with related proposals for further changes. Watch this space.

The day finished with worship and the induction of Andrew & Sally Willetts as Mission development officers and Melanie Smith as Training and development officer/pastoral consultant.

Ann Evans

Eco Tips

Don't over-tidy your garden—leave seed heads for the birds and use fallen leaves as a light mulch in beds.

If you cut stems back, leave some near the ground, where they will help shelter next spring's new growth. Just completely remove the ones that particularly harbour pests or diseases.

If you have room, leave a heap of leaves and brush in an undisturbed corner for hedgehogs and other small animals.

PS: Doesn't anyone else have tips?

Shaggy Dogs and other tales...

A woman arrives early for a film in a cinema, and soon a stranger comes in and sits nearby with his dog. All through the film, the dog is incredibly attentive, and seems to understand everything: the dog smiles at the jokes, whines at the sad bits, etc...

As the film ends, the woman turns to the dog owner and says "Excuse me, but your dog seems incredibly intelligent. If I didn't know any better, I'd say he enjoyed the film."

The dog owner turns to him and says, "I was surprised too: he hated the book!"

A guy walks into a bar and sees three men and a dog at a table playing poker. He watches for a minute, thinking it has to be a trick. But it's not: the dog shuffles, deals, places his own bets, everything. Finally, the man says, "This is amazing! He's really playing poker! That's got to be the smartest dog in the world!" One of the men playing poker grins slyly and whispers, "Nah, he ain't that smart. He wags his tail every time he gets a good hand."

This guy is about to walk into a bar, but a dog is blocking the door. The guy says: "move." The dog says: "Hey, not so fast: we can split a pile of money if you take me in with you and bet on me being able to talk." So in they go together. But when told to speak, the dog just cocks his head. The bartender and the regulars take the guy's money, and he walks out, very annoyed. "What did you do that for?" he complains to the dog, who replies: "Don't worry: think of the odds we'll get tomorrow night!"

Mummy Lion and Daddy Lion had gone off hunting, and had told their two young lions not to wander away. However, a couple of

small gnus came by, and the young lions could not resist the temptation to try out their own hunting skills. They ran out, chased after the gnus, killed them, and started eating them.

Just then, the parents re-appeared in the distance, so the cubs ended their meal and returned home. One of the young lions turned to the other, and said: "That is the end of the gnus. Here are the head lions again."

Two crows were in a field when they noticed a figure in the distance that looked like a man. "See that over there: what's that?" says the first crow.

The second crow takes a long look, "That's a scarecrow. Looks quite like a person though."

"How can you tell it's a scarecrow and not a person?" replies the first crow.

"Look at its hand: no mobile phone," says the second crow.



The next issue will be available around 1 December and will cover December *and* January. Contributions are requested! Send them to Ted Forgan at Weoley Castle or Cheryl Thornett at Weoley Hill.

Weoley Castle & Weoley Hill Churches

Weoley Castle Community Church, Quarry Rd:

Worship Sundays at 11 AM.

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.

THE PASTORATE IS CURRENTLY IN VACANCY

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