

Cadbury Pastorate News

Bournville, Weoley Castle &
Weoley Hill Churches



July/August 2020

From the Minister's study—

Dear Friends,

I hope you are all keeping well and are looking forward to the day that we can meet again in church. Even though we have kept in touch with each other, and we have tried to support each other, we have missed our weekly, or more frequent, get together in the church building. You certainly have taken note that from the 4th of July churches are allowed to open again for worship, although with strict distancing and hygiene measures in place. We are taking guidance from the URC and we are cautioned not to open the church before we are certain it is safe to do so, nor should we rush back to the old habits and customs, some of which we may want to reconsider. It will, therefore, be a little while yet before we will resume worship in our churches. In the meantime we will continue to prepare weekly online worship and distribute a worship sheet to those who are not online and, in the case of Bournville URC, also continue to collect prayers from the congregation which we pray, each in our homes.

And now I am going to let you in on a secret, but not a secret anymore! Over the past months, while I got used to praying and worshipping at home, in spirit together with the three congregations, I have felt God's presence more keenly than before, perhaps because in church I am so distracted by the "right" delivery of worship. But sitting in a quiet space at home or in the garden, reading, saying or listening to prayers and reflections, and singing along with the hymns, I felt that a little altar was set up, then and there, where God was meeting me. And in these unsettling times, this little altar, this divine presence, has been truly comforting and sustaining.

I hope that we all have found a little altar in our homes and/or gardens, and perhaps not only on Sundays but also during the week. For having a church building we may have forgotten that God's presence is not only found in church, four sturdy walls and a roof on top, but God's home is everywhere in the world. "Do we build God a house so that we do not have to let God staying at ours?" Perhaps the closure of the

church buildings has made us more aware that God is very much present with us wherever we are.

A much-loved book of mine is Barbara Brown Taylor's *An Altar in the World*. In it she talks about how in the Bible we read many stories about people encountering God in the world. Think of Jacob meeting God at Bethel; Moses and the burning bush; Jesus being baptised in the wilderness and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove. There are numerous stories of God revealing Godself, being present in the most unexpected, most ordinary places. However, over time, people of faith began to construct places of worship: temples, churches, houses for God. And religion became more and more localised, and God's presence was more and more restricted, so that church became the place to go if you wanted to spend time with God. Unfortunately this gradually led to a division between the *sacred* and the *secular*, places where you could go to find God, and places where you lived and worked the rest of the time, places where God was not expected to ever turn up. Of course, this is a false division, and we know it.

I am sure that, like me, you can tell of encounters with "the holy" outside of the walls of the church. Perhaps, like me, when you sit quietly in a comfortable chair at home, or on a bench in the garden. Or when walking around the neighbourhood or in the countryside. Or when gazing over sea or land, marvelling at the clouds sailing overhead or stars filling the night sky. But also in a hospital room, a concert hall or a playground, etc. you can have a real sense that God is there. We do not need to go to church to encounter God.

We need to let go of the idea that the church is the *only* place where we can really get close to God. It isn't true and it *never was* true. Not only that, but it places quite a heavy responsibility on the one-hour church service a week and puts pressure to make the worship satisfying and perfect. No, God shows up in all kinds of places, and in all kinds of people, and in all kinds of circumstances in life. In *An Altar in the World* Barbara Brown Taylor points out that the world is so full of sacred places that you practically trip over the many "altars" that are there.

There is nowhere you can go that is not holy ground. I am grateful that, over the past few months, I have really discovered the “altar” in my home and garden.

So, what about church? Why do we look forward to coming to church again if we can meet God and spend time with God in other places? Well, I think what we miss not being in church for the friendship and fellowship we share. That is so important! But also because in church we share stories, Scripture stories and our own stories in which we have encountered God (even though we may not recognize it) and let these stories make meaning of our lives. And church is also a place where we give thanks together, in our prayers and joyful singing as well as share our concerns for each other and the world. While the church is not the only place where we meet God, it may be helpful to be together to hear God’s voice just a bit more clearly, in prayer, in reflection, in singing, in silence, in the communion meal and in conversations with each other. Church can be a place where we discover God’s call for us, discerned with the help of the community; it can be a sanctuary for weary hearts and minds and a place of refreshment and healing; it can be a place where the command to “love one another” is practiced again and again.

There are still many reasons to come to church (meeting together in a building or room) but as long as we are not able to, let us be aware how God is present in our lives, seven days a week, all hours of the day and night! And as we become aware of the sacredness of many moments in our regular lives, as we recognize the divine in people and places, it may just be that we will approach life differently, more faithfully, more thankfully, more joyfully!

Stay safe, keep well and hoping to see you soon again!

Leonora

Personalia

We are praying for the friends and families of members and friends who have died recently.

Please remember everyone who is ill, recovering, undergoing treatment or waiting for treatment, especially when it has been delayed.

Please remember young people moving on at school in difficult circumstances, and those waiting for exam results. Also graduates beginning their working life.

Jacob Cotgreave has been awarded a scholarship for the Ex Cathedra Academy of Vocal Music. Congratulations!



Pastorate News

Notice from Weoley Castle Community Church

As the church building is closed, Chris Hopkins is not there to hand out free NHS hearing aid batteries. (This was something we took over from Age UK) If you know of anyone who needs them, they should contact Bill or Chris Hopkins on 0121 426 1227.

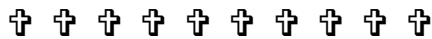
Please remember James & Chris Elson in your prayers, as they adapt to life without their Mum. And please remember Matt Fisher, who has worked hard to help them with sorting things out.

Weoley Castle Community Church and the “New Normal”

When will the church building open, when will we return to worship and when can activities be picked up again and external lettings resume? These were the questions we discussed at an Elders meeting (renamed a “consultation meeting” as we were joined by the acting

church secretary and plan secretary) on the 29th of June. Like all churches, we will first have to do a Risk Assessment and put all necessary measures in place which we hope to have completed before the end of July. In August we would like, as a congregation, to gather outside on a nice, warm and sunny day, in the car park, for a “meeting” which will be a kind of worship. And this may well be the start of adopting a different informal style of worship which, unfortunately, cannot include singing for the time being. But, we have ideas how we will continue to meet together for prayer, for discussion, for sharing words of faith and wisdom, for quiet meditation. It will not be the same as we are used to—we will miss the singing! —but it can be good. And we will make sure that those who are not (yet) able or willing to come out to church will not feel excluded as we will continue to share online worship and/or printed material. At the beginning of August we will discuss the possibility of resuming activities from the autumn but very much aware that we have to be very cautious and have a duty of care for all, and especially the most vulnerable among us. Watch this space for more information in the next few weeks! In the meantime, stay safe, keep well and best wishes!

Leonora



Tribute to Esme Nicholls

Bournville URC sadly reports the passing of Esme Nicholls on Sunday 21st June. We have lost a very longstanding member as Esme had attended Beaumont Road as a child and continued to do so until the recent lockdown. She was 91 years and her 90th birthday had been a wonderful celebration with her family last year. And her family was with her when Esme died peacefully at home, in her flat.

Over the past few months Esme has spent time living with her daughter Sarah in Devon and later with her son Andrew and his wife Alison in Cornwall, returning to Birmingham when she became very poorly to be looked after by her daughter Lynda and Macmillan nurses.

Esme was a much-loved member of our church family. She was especially good at welcoming new people and we all remember her lengthy conversations and genuine interest in our lives. She was always positive and spoke very kindly. She had a wonderful spirit.

We also will remember Esme for her joy in singing, especially Welsh hymns. And “How Great Thou Art” was one of her favourite hymns.

Esme and I did a City and Guilds course in Embroidery together at Bournville College. Esme’s work was exquisite. The quilters were a nice group of people and as some of them kept in touch when the Quilting Group formally closed, they met at Esme’s home. We were supposed to be stitching but it was more tea, cake and chat. Esme’s cakes were very good.

Esme was a member of the Quilters Guild. Some years ago an exhibition of Goff 's woodwork and Esme's needlework was held at the church. Everyone admired Esme's work; it was so neat.

Esme wrote a diary all her life which was a wonderful achievement.

We give God thanks for Esme's long and faithful life and we will miss her very much in our church family.

Maureen Peart (Church Secretary Bournville URC)



From the Weoley Hill Secretary

Where we are now

The Weoley Hill elders didn't quite close up shop during the lockdown. Instead of online meetings, which some couldn't manage for one reason or another, we exchanged emails and phone calls, looking at the URC document *Ready for the new 'normal'* as well as sharing pastoral concerns. F&B managed a Zoom meeting to discuss the document and begin the process of preparing to reopen. Both are looking forward to holding 'real' meetings again. We also have a Facebook page now (look for Weoley Hill Church.)

Ending lockdown

Before we can resume worship and meetings in the church, a full risk assessment must be carried out—thanks to Emlyn Evans for doing the first stage—and appropriate safety measures put in place, including the provision of hand sanitiser, wipes and cleaning supplies, setting up a one-way system, working out safe seating arrangements, and working out cleaning responsibilities and rotas. The Elders are considering safe ways of sharing communion—ideas are welcome.

The Korean and Arabic-speaking congregations will contribute to our discussions and arrangements. Bournville and Weoley Castle are engaging in similar considerations.

We hope to have a dry run of worship and communion before the summer is over and to be ready to resume worship in early September, which is in line with URC recommendations. We will need to know who is ready to return then, and just as importantly, if anyone is unable or unwilling to return on the proposed date when it is announced.

Inclusiveness

If you aren't sure you will be able to return to worship when the church reopens, how can we include you? If we can use a laptop or tablet to relay a service in a very basic way, like online exercise classes for example, would that suit you? Can we expand the recording we have been doing so you could watch via DVD or USB drive or are the audio recordings we make now better for you? Please let your Elder or the Church Secretary know. And this will help even after the pandemic ends, God willing, when people are kept at home by illness, injury or other factors.

Church activities

Chris Marlow is liaising with hall users and we all need to think about and discuss our church groups such as Lunch Club and the Friendship Group, as well as possible future Bible studies and prayer groups. We may not be able to get 'back to normal' with these as soon as we like, so I hope we can use the interval to think about as many ideas as possible.

Being Church

This has been a terrible time, and many people have suffered greatly, whether from the pandemic itself or from its consequences. We don't know what the long-term impact will be, for us as a congregation, for our community, or on a national or international scale. We were already facing the difficulties of declining numbers and growing older; it doesn't seem likely that we can ever return to a church as it was 40 or even 30 years ago. I am praying that we will see a light and a path out of this, even if it is all unfamiliar to us and that despite everything, we will continue to support one another in Christ and witness to our community.

Cheryl Thornett



PS: Aren't the recent weather photos of lightning, storm clouds and rainbows a good picture of where we are now?

WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PRAYER DIARY

Praise the Lord, who carries our burdens day after day.

Ps 68:19

	Church members & local streets		Church members & local streets
WK 1: July 5th - 11th	Ursula Aitken Edna Bayliss <i>Weoley Park Rd</i> <i>Tillyard Croft</i>	WK 5: Aug 2nd - 8th	Bill Campbell Kay Campbell <i>Bryony Rd</i> <i>Mimosa & Tamarisk</i> <i>Closes</i>
WK 2: July 12th - 18th	Sue Beeby Mary Bevin <i>Weoley Hill Rd</i> <i>Fox Hill</i>	WK 6: Aug 9th - 15th	Grace & Joy Carter Mohamad Chamanbaz <i>Shenley Fields Rd</i> <i>Iris Close</i>
WK 3: July 19th - 25th	Iris Bird Linda Bradley <i>Middle Park Rd</i> <i>Middle Park Close</i>	WK 7: Aug 16th - 22nd	Juliet & Yvonne Chideya Edward & Grace Chung <i>Erica & Gorse Closes</i>
WK 4: July 26th - 1st Aug	Doreen Bradley Jane Byford <i>Bristol Rd</i> <i>Head Injury Centre</i>	WK 8: Aug 23rd - 29th	Ina Clason Joyce & Susan Cope <i>Bournville Gardens</i> <i>Bryony House</i>

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 S Beeby

Names in the prayer lists are on our church register but please add other members of the families mentioned to your prayers.

Calendar for July/August 2020

Our normal calendars have been suspended because of Covid-19. Please use online worship, or the worship presentation and sheets prepared by the Minister and others. The presentation and sheets are available on the Weoley Hill website and via email. The sheets can be posted if requested. We will worship together in this way.

The next regular issue is planned for around 1 September, but there will be an update later in the summer with news of re-openings or otherwise. Contributions are requested! Send them to the minister, Leonora Jagessar, or Cheryl Thornett at Weoley Hill.



Special thanks to Alan Cotgreave, who has been creating audio-visual presentations for Sunday worship, and to everyone who is helping to distribute worship sheets and newsletters.

The Cadbury Pastorate

Covid-19 cancellations:

All worship has been suspended in our churches for the time being, but Sunday worship can be found on the Weoley Hill website as an audio/visual presentation or in print form, and through email and postal distribution. Recorded worship is also available via the URC Daily Devotions or YouTube.

All groups which normally meet in the churches have ceased meeting.

Please check the churches' websites for further news and any changes.

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