

Worship 18th July 2021

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Welcome/Call to Worship

Welcome to worship as Weoley Hill and Bournville URC are meeting in church today while Weoley Castle Community Church will meet again next Sunday. In this service we will be thinking about places of worship – from tents to temples, with brief readings from Exodus, 2 Samuel & the 1st letter of Peter. So let us begin this worship – wherever we are – with a song of thanksgiving, praise and joy:

Hymn R & S 386 *I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart..*
(one verse: sung 3 times)

Opening Prayer

Creator God, we praise you for the beautiful, vast and complex Universe that you brought into being: the sun, blue sky or clouds by day; the moon and stars by night; the oceans, plains, mountains and glaciers. Because you made it possible for life, including the human race, to flourish on our Earth we can marvel at the amazing diversity of plants, fishes, insects, animals and birds that occupy our home planet.

However, we admit that we have often done, or failed to do things that harm all the inhabitants of Earth. They include our fellow human beings, who may be in need of loving concern, food, healthcare or education. We have done this in ways large and small, nearby neighbours or far away, as countries and as individuals. We bring these sins, corporate and individual, before you O God, and rely on your loving Grace to redeem us all.
.....**Amen.**

Old Testament Readings:

Meeting God in the desert of Sinai: Exodus: 33: 7-8

King David wants to build a Temple: 2 Samuel: 7: 1-8, 12-13

New Testament Reading:

Living stones: 1 Peter: 2: 4-10

Hymn R & S 388 *Jesus stand among us..*

Reflection

King David said to the prophet Nathan: “Here I am living in a palace built of cedar, but God’s Covenant Box is kept in a tent!” David was told in response that he was not going to be the one to build a temple for “God to live in” to replace that tent. Did you wonder why I picked this item from the list of readings for the week? It is of course because the pandemic has reminded us that the Church is not just a place of worship.

The tent or “tabernacle” is referred to in the book of Exodus, and it was how the Jews carried their “temple” with them when they wandered in the desert after escaping from slavery in Egypt: on their way to the Promised Land. Mind you, it wasn’t a small Glastonbury 2-person tent: it was more like a beautifully-decorated marquee, divided in two with a holy place, and a “holy of holies” separated by a curtain. Over the last year, our “tent” has been video recordings and printed services, and many people are feeling, like David, that the tent is not good enough!

Just over 52 years ago, the 1936 building of Weoley Castle Congregational Church was closed, and half the land was sold to a supermarket to finance the construction of a new and more suitable building. The attenders and members at that time (Meg & I were among their number) became a “Church in a suitcase” (two suitcases actually) containing the hymnbooks etc. for Sunday worship in Princethorpe School hall. This carried on for about a year until the new building was put up. As you can guess, we imagined ourselves re-enacting the story of the Jews in the wilderness, with our temporary worship arrangement - until we reached the Promised Land. I remember not being totally convinced by this vision, as the idea that the Church is the People – not the building didn’t necessarily promise a renewed church with a renewed building. In the event, a building designed for Community use, especially combined with the ministry of Ernest Cruchley, was indeed a catalyst for great renewal.

Nowadays, the Weoley Castle building continues to be a Community resource, but like many other churches in the URC, our decreasing membership means that we struggle with its upkeep and to satisfy all the regulatory demands for a public building.

When it comes to maintaining buildings, people’s approach can vary widely: some may feel that building can look after itself, so very little contribution is required. At the other extreme is someone for whom the maintenance of the building for worship is the most important part of their

