

Weoley Hill &
Weoley Castle
Church News



*Christmas Blessings
& a Happy New Year*

December 2024 – January 2025

From Christine Miles —

A view on approaching the Terminal (Care Package).

It is December: evenings have become dark. It is Advent: traditionally a time of fasting and preparation, but now more of feasting and preparation. But even without a traditional fast, I hope we can find some time for serious reflection, as believers in a largely unbelieving society. (Though there are indications that this is changing).

In November we celebrated the feast of All Saints, remembering that we are part of a worldwide church, stretching back through time. This can cause difficulties, with different parts of the World Church having different views about inclusivity, and the difficulties that arise when churches made up of impoverished groups are offered financial support from rich churches on condition that they take up a particular theological position. But we all turn to one God, as revealed in Jesus. All of us need to grow closer to him and actively (and humbly) want to do this, through the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. The search for a way to do this is what makes us saints.

But do we really feel that we are part of this community of saints? I don't think I am alone in feeling I don't really fit, I have 'impostor syndrome'. Am I just acting a part? Am I really committed to following Jesus and loving his Father (or however else you may express your commitment to the Eternal One). Am I just pretending when I come to church and say nice things?

Some people are troubled by times where they have no sense of the presence of God. My trouble is that I know God is present but I myself turn away from him. This has really been a lifelong issue. At work, of course one gives all one's attention to one's clients

and colleagues (pupils / patients / customers etc.) but when time comes for a break it's gossip over a cup of coffee or chat about other interests. Many of my friends do not share my faith, though I believe that the love of friends is in itself something Holy. After some hours (or days) of overlooking God in this way, the sense of needing him fades and I can find God feels like an unnecessary complication! Life goes on without a spiritual dimension, until something happens to bring God to my attention again. I meant it when I recently told a friend that I really appreciated living in a Muslim country. Five times a day being reminded of the greatness of God kept me in line.

Even now, living alone so there are no obvious distractions, and being unwell (with cancer) I am too tired to take up any interests, or engage in even light physical activity. I find myself reading light novels for much of the day, again pushing thoughts of God away. (Not that all light novels are bad—many, especially children's books, have a strong moral basis, especially about love between friends—as can be seen from Paddington Bear to Harry Potter. And this can be found in some adult books too, from the love between friends in the Thursday Murder Club to the kindness, thoughtfulness and moral crises of some literary detectives). Reading a newspaper can be even worse. I thank God for God's patience. I know the answer for many people is discipline, setting aside certain times of day for prayer and bible study, but I am not very disciplined person and it tends to only last a few days. Other people's experience warns me that I may in the next few weeks or months experience a sense of God's absence so I should be preparing myself, but in the meantime I find all is calm, and all is well.

So, knowing my difficulties in keeping to a disciplined routine, I continue to ask along with George Herbert:

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee.

A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or, if he pleases, through it pass,
And then the Heaven espy.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

George Herbert: The Elixir (extracts).

I have already outlived the prognosis given in April. In the meantime God has sometimes used a particular way of reminding me of God's continuing presence with me.

I have sometimes found God uses music to tap me on the shoulder –or even hit me on the head. These days my 'God prompt' on the radio is Gavin Bryars' 'Jesus Blood never failed me'. If you don't know the story, just google it. There are various U-tube versions. Listen when you have a chance. A few days ago I was lying in bed, not calm, going to go for an oncologist appointment and expecting bad news. How do I switch on rational thought without panicking? Radio 3 breakfast programme on and suddenly the voice of the old unnamed tramp came on with his song. I felt the descent of calm with an

awareness of God's presence. The doctor's news was grim, but I know God is with me and I am trying to follow God's will for the time that remains for me here.

Christmas is approaching. There are dreadful, frightening things happening in our world. But it is Christmas and we are allowed to celebrate. Family relations should be Holy. May God make us gentle with one another when needed so that we may grow in love. Friendship too, with all who are kind and caring as well as to those in need.

And for many of us the NewYear is traditionally a time for change, and let us all resolve to make an effort to find times to remember that God is with us and loves us, whoever we are.

May we all know that we are loved and blessed as we ourselves continue to learn to love.

Christine



Prayer page

† We remember our sister Christine

† **We remember the forgotten**

People having a blue Christmas:

People who are alone, who are mourning someone who won't be there this Christmas, people who are overladen with cares or separated from those they love, who are weary of life, who fear the future, who have little to celebrate

People in disaster areas, in war zones, in camps and shelters, on the streets

† **We remember the people who don't remember:**

People cut off from family, friends and memories by the cruelty of dementia and illness

People who have cut themselves off, and people who have turned their backs on God and the people who love them

† **We pray**

That the Holy Spirit will move and enable us to bring 'tidings of comfort and joy' to our friends and family, and to people near and far who have little comfort and rejoicing in their lives

† **We give thanks**

For our Saviour who blessed the poor and mournful, who shares the burdens of the overladen and gives rest to the weary

For His coming into this world of sorrow as one of us, bringing hope for this world and the next.

For the hope of redemption for all His lost sheep.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth.

Pastorate News

South & Central Birmingham Pastorate

(Carrs Lane, Cotteridge, Weoley Castle & Weoley Hill)

The Revd Melanie Smith, also Synod Training & Development Officer, has been appointed Interim Moderator for the new pastorate and joined the most recent planning meeting at Weoley Hill on 26 November. Melanie hopes to lead worship at all 4 churches early in 2025. We are all working on our profiles.

Weoley Castle News

Services: 11 AM on Sundays

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

Dec 8th: led by Alison Geary—including Communion

Dec 15th: led by Andy Vail & Youth Band

Dec 22nd: Carols & Readings for Christmas led by Chris Miles

Other Christmas services—including Christmas Day—at Weoley Hill

Dec 29th: Joint Service at Weoley Hill **at 10.30**

Jan 5th: Bible Study

Jan 12th: led by Brian Brown—including Communion

Jan 19th: including a talk by Evan Yoder, U.S. missionary with Betel

Jan 26th: led by Revd Melanie Smith

Sunday afternoons at 4 PM:

Informal, family-friendly services with food—led by Sam, Katie, Susie & Jonah, but not on the 22nd and 29th Dec.

Mary Burgess

We hear from John Burgess that his wife Mary died peacefully on 18 November, after her stem cell transplant did not work as hoped.

'Thank you all for your words of sympathy and comfort and also your wonderful words about Mary and how she has been a friend to so many people.

The arrangements for her funeral on Friday 13 December are as follows:

11.15 AM: Short funeral and committal service at East Chapel,
Streetly Crematorium, 296 Little Hardwick Road,
Walsall WS9 0SG

2.00 PM: Service of Thanksgiving at Banners Gate Community
Church, Westwood Road, Sutton Coldfield B73 6UH.

We are hoping to live-stream both services, so if you wish to join us on-line, please email john@spiritualseekers.co.uk so that you will be able to received the log-in details nearer the time

Blessings,
John'

Christmas Events and Gaps

Day Centres & Lunch Clubs

Not open Fri 6th Dec

Christmas Lunch Club Dinner: Monday Dec 16th.

Closed after this over Christmas Reopening Monday 6th Jan 2025

Parent and Toddler Group

Christmas Party: Wednesday Dec 11th

Closed after this over Christmas Reopening Wednesday 8th Jan 2025

Warm Welcome, Incredible Surplus, Clothes & Toys exchange

Christmas Buffet: Friday Dec 20th

Closed 27th Dec and 3rd Jan

Reopening Friday 10th Jan 2025

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.

The WCCC team at Lorraine's Fish & Chips and Quiz on 16th Nov carried away 1st prize!

The Day Centres have been making Christmas wreaths—see the picture below—as a craft activity led by Mary Sparkes.

The 'Family Fun Day' on Tuesday 29th October during half term attracted 75 children along with parents from 42 families. See the picture: including a young man sporting his scary Halloween getup, and the display of some craft items made at Fun Days. *(Pictures over.)*

WCCC are sharing with Castle Elim and St. Gabriel's in distributing 1000's of copies of a Christmas message, and information about the three Churches to just about every house in Weoley Castle.





Weoley Hill News

NOTE: If you are planning to attend the meeting with MP Laurence Turner, please let Ann know absolutely no later than 5 December, as she must send the names of attendees and the organisations they represent to his office the next day, for reasons of security.

Retiring collections

The retiring collection for December is **Shelter** and for January is the **Birmingham Refuge & Crisis Centre**

Quiz night

Congratulations to the Weoley Castle winners! Twenty-seven people came, raising £139 for the Trussel Trust. Special thanks to Norma and Sue, who helped set everything up, counted the points and did the washing up afterwards.

Note: We need to consider some changes: moving the quiz to lighter months so more can come; giving the whole thing a rest for a year; having someone else take it all over, questions, ordering food and all the rest; or possibly having a smaller quiz like a Christian Aid quiz after church. The current form is a lot of work for Lorraine, in particular, and she never gets to be 'just' a participant.

Christmas lunch

After church on Sunday 15 December.

Soup, cold cuts, cheese, rolls, green salad, mince pies
(& a few 'trimmings')

£5 or donation each to cover the cost of the food

Please sign up if you are coming as soon as possible.

(And please volunteer to help set up on Saturday afternoon, and to clear up afterwards.)



Carol Service

Saturday 21 December at 5 PM. Candles, carols and readings, finishing at a family-friendly time.

Christmas worship

We no longer have Christmas Eve midnight communion, and this year there will not be an afternoon crib service. **But** Alan promises that Sunday worship on **22 December**, the 4th Sunday of Advent, will be family oriented. What do you suppose it will be? Come and see! **Christmas Day worship** will begin at 11.

Weoley Hill Calendar for December 2024 & January 2025

Sunday	1	10.30 AM:	Advent 1 Worship & communion led by Rev Steve Faber.
Saturday	7	7.00PM?	Clarinet Choir Concert
Sunday	8	10.30 AM:	Advent 2 Toy Service. Worship led by Blair Kessler.
Tuesday	10	10.30 AM:	Tuesday Fellowship
Wednesday	11	7.30 PM:	Elders' meeting
Friday	13	2 PM:	<i>Meeting with Laurence Turner, Northfield MP, advance notice of attendance required by Thursday 5 December.</i>
Sunday	15	10.30 AM:	Advent 3 Worship led by Ann.
		12 NOON:	Christmas Lunch, £5 or donation to cover costs. Sign up in advance.
Friday	20	9.30 AM:	Northfield Manor Carol Service
Saturday	21	5 PM:	Carol service
		7 PM	Arabic Church Christmas Service
Sunday	22	10.30 AM:	Advent 4 Worship led by Alan.
Wednesday	25	11 AM:	Christmas Day Family worship
Sunday	29	10.30 AM:	Joint Worship led by Cheryl Thornett
			January 2025
Sunday	5	10.30 AM:	Worship & communion led by David Tennant. TBC
Wednesday	8	7.30 PM:	Elders meeting
Sunday	12	10.30 AM:	Worship led by Ann Evans.
Monday	13	2.30 PM:	F&B meeting
Sunday	19	10.30 AM:	Worship led by Revd Brian Brown.
Sunday	26	10.30 am:	Worship led by Alan Cotgreave.
		12 noon:	Church meeting

Art Group Wednesdays 10-12; check with Lorraine about holidays

Community Choir Fridays term time 6.45-8 PM, check with Alan or Gordon about holidays

Eco Tips

How many toothbrushes have you used in your life? Well they are all still around, somewhere, as the plastic does not readily biodegrade.

Bamboo brushes without nylon bristles are now commonly available and are more easily degradable. There is also a company that makes recyclable/degradable electric toothbrushes.

Do you have a compost heap? If you have a garden it is easy to start one – and you can get free compost as a result.

Food waste such as peelings, can rot naturally in a compost heap producing less methane, a greenhouse gas, than when buried in landfill. Tons of food waste is discarded and goes into landfill, producing methane. By composting we can reduce our messy, rotting waste in our bins, which may be helpful if rubbish collections become less frequent, and help the environment at the same time.

Not everyone can have a compost heap, so how about campaigning for food waste bins?

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



Christmas Ho-ho-ho's



(most donated by Connor Tanner)

1. Why would it be dangerous for a snowman to get angry?
2. Why can't Christmas trees sew?
3. How do Santa little helpers learn to read?
4. Where did Mr and Mrs Snowman meet?
5. What do you call an old snowman?
6. What makes snowmen popular?
7. What make of motor bike does Santa have?
8. Which reindeer has bad manners?
9. What did Mrs Claus say when Santa asked her for a weather forecast?
10. What did the bald man say when he got a comb for Christmas?
11. What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?
12. What did Luke Skywalker say after he planted a Christmas tree farm?



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1. Because he'd have a meltdown.
 2. They always drop their needles.
 3. They learn the elfabet.
 4. At a snowball.
 5. A puddle.
 6. They are so cool!
 7. A Holly Davidson
 8. Rudeolf.
 9. "Rain—dear."
 10. "I'll never part with this"
 11. Frostbite.
 12. May the forest be with you!

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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