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### URC in CHELTENHAM MORNING PRAYERS

11.30am – 12noon EVERY Tuesday at Warden Hill

Date	Readings	Prayer Issues
7 April	Psalm 119 17-24 John 20 1-18	All Saints Area, Churches, Society of Friends, Dowty House, Bangladeshi Community Peace and Reconciliation movements Prayers for the World
14 April	Psalm 119 25-32 John 20 19-31	Wymans Brook Area, St Nicolas Church and Leisure Prestbury Elders Prayers for the world
21 April	Psalm 119 33-40 Luke 24 36-48	Swindon Village Area, Industry, small businesses, Schools and Church In Touch editors and team Prayers for the world
28 April	Psalm 119 41-48 John 10 11-18	St Paul's Area, Community projects, Gas Green Homelessness Prayers for the World

Dear Friends,

Palm Sunday is one of the enigmas in the Christian calendar. It speaks of joy and celebration and of worshipping Jesus as the King of kings, and yet it leads us into the events of Holy Week and death on a cross. We cannot think of one without the other. The way to the throne involved the costly path of sacrifice. It is easy enough to sing Christ's praises and acknowledge him as Lord; it is a different matter to take up our cross and follow him.

In my version of the Bible (NRSV), it says 'take up your cross *daily*'. This helps us to put our sacrifice into context: not weighed down by life-or-death struggles so much as keeping ourselves constantly in check, so that 'right living' becomes a joy, not a burden.

Mother Julian of Norwich (c.1342-1414) acknowledged that, in the Bible, there was plenty about self-denial – even about 'dying to self'. But, she says, these are not ends in themselves; they are merely means to an end. God's intention for us is self-fulfilment, abundant life and exuberant joy. So, a question in the *Church Times* should make us smile: 'If Christianity is all about hope, love, joy, light and fulfilment, why do most of the clergy dress from head to toe in black?' What a good question!

As we enter Holy Week, waving palms and singing hymns, and then to be stopped in our tracks through sacrificial suffering, let us each ask ourselves 'what does Good Friday mean to me? In what way am I involved in the story?' Only after reflection will we be ready to appreciate the spectacular fireworks that is Easter Day. As love explodes from the tomb, taking our breath away, may we grab hope with both hands and hold on tight. The empty cross is our celebration of life conquering death. Let us continue to live and work to the glory of God in the light of that transforming hope.

Happy Easter to you all. *Maz*

## **THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN CHELTENHAM**

**Our prayers:** we hold in our prayers those who are ill as well as those who are or have been in hospital: George Apps, Ann Ashworth, Jeane Combes, Carol and Lorna Dewhurst, Dennis and Joyce Goldring, Hylda Greening, Mary Howes, Paulette Hyde, Dorothy Lamb, Joy Marsh, Mair McIndoe, Peter Meason, Edith Nicol, Betty Price, Alison Riddell, Nick Smith, Sadie Smyth, Jean Smith and Carole Wallace.

### **United Pastorate Service**

**on Sunday 26 April**

**at St Andrew's at 11am**

**The service will be followed by the  
Annual General Meeting of the  
United Reformed Church in Cheltenham**  
Further details nearer the date

**Please come along and share in this united service**

### **Literary Group**

The next Literary Group meeting will be on Wednesday 13 May at 7.30pm at Prestbury URC. We will be discussing 'Girl in the Blue Dress' by Gaynor Arnold. New members always welcome.

### **Pensioners' Forum – Wednesday 1 April**

The speaker this month will be Steve Morton from the **Gloucestershire Arthritis Association** who will be providing information on how to cope with arthritis and what support is available. The coffee Bar will open at 10am and the talk will begin at 10.30am to last about an hour. All are welcome, there is no charge.

### **Qi Gong**

Next session will be in the Garden Room at St Andrew's on **Wednesday 8 April** at 12.15pm. All are welcome; cost is £4 per session.

### **Tuesday Forum**

On **14 April** Revd Maz Allen will be joining us in the Garden Room at 2.30pm; all are welcome.

On Tuesday **28 April** we look forward to Wendy and Godfrey Outram giving us their Cook's Tour of travel photographs.

Both meetings will be at 2.30pm in the Garden Room at St Andrew's followed by tea and biscuits. All are welcome to join us.

### **BIRTHDAY TEAS AT HATHERLEY MANSE**

**April – June - Sat. 6<sup>th</sup> June**

July – Sept. – Sat. 29<sup>th</sup> August

Oct. – Dec - Sat. 12<sup>th</sup> December

3-5pm

All welcome don't forget to put the date in your diary

**C4 CHILDREN'S CHOIR**  
**Meets every Friday in term time**  
**6pm at Prestbury URC**  
**For all children who enjoy singing**

**DANIEL**

*A hard act to swallow*

**KIDS STUFF SALE**

25<sup>TH</sup> April 10am – 12 noon

At Prestbury URC

**Nearly New Baby & Toddler clothes, toys, books for sale.**  
**Admission 50p. Refreshments. Proceeds to Kenya Projects**  
**Sellers: please contact Maz**

**URCiC Walking Group**

Twelve people (and two dogs) took part in the walk on Cleeve Hill, in the winter sunshine and snow, in February, and six people walked in the much warmer and very sunny weather on Crickley Hill in March.

The next five mile walk will take place on Easter Monday, **13 April**, meeting at the car park of the Black Horse public house at Cranham, starting at 10am. Please sign up on the sheet on the notice board in your church, where further details can be found. As it is Easter holiday, youngsters will be especially welcome.

*Roger Little*

**Synod**

Synod met at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham on Saturday 14 March and the theme for the day was 'The Environment'. The worship during the day focused on God's planet and our stewardship. We saw a BBC film called 'South of Many Waters', a presentation on the work of the Arthur Rank Centre by Reverend Graham Jones, a National Rural Officer and displays from Churches on Church grounds, building management, recycling projects, campaigns and awareness raising through the Arts. We were challenged to consider how high up our priority list environmental issues are in our church life and mission.

During the business part of the meeting the Moderator Reverend Roy Lowes updated us on future initiatives to complete the Restructuring of the Synod. We have too many Churches and not enough ministers so Synod is proposing to create Team Pastorates who would look after a group of churches. The Team Pastorate will be made up of Minsters, Lay Preachers and Senior Elders; the pastorate would identify a leader for each church but this may not necessarily be a Minister. It is also proposed to

set in motion local Ministry and Mission reviews for every Church and Minister. These would take place every 4 years replacing the old quinquennial reviews.

A new programme of growth is planned in the URC called 'vision2020'. In early May every church will receive a discussion booklet giving more details and we are being encouraged to discuss mission planning and to provide feedback by the end of June. After discussion at Synod and General Assembly 2010, 'vision2020' will begin.

Julie Jefferies got a special mention for completing her TLS foundation course and also David Black who was appointed the new Synod Treasurer; congratulations to Julie and David.

*Ann Lewis*

## **Soup and Chat**

**Come along every Wednesday from to  
St. Andrew's United Reformed Church,  
Montpellier St, Cheltenham  
11.45 – 1.30**

**HOME MADE SOUP, BREAD,  
TEA OR COFFEE ALL FOR  
£1.50**

Come and have a chat with friends and perhaps make new friends; the minister even makes and serves the soup.

Just drop in. We look forward to seeing you.

For more information contact Rev Jon Morgan  
on 692974

**The Church of England has sold its shares in Caterpillar (for "economic" reasons)**

The announcement that Britain's state church divested £2.2 million in late December came after its Synod governing council clarified its position over the weekend on its investments in companies profiting from the illegally occupied Palestinian territories. The confirmation came just in time to prevent the planned publication of a letter in the Guardian newspaper Tuesday signed by 23 theologians accusing the Church of England of not acting on its policy to promote morally and ethically responsible investments.

"We believe that given the events in Gaza as well as the continued illegal occupation of whole swathes of Palestinian land and the illegal land grabs by settlers, supported by the Israeli Government, that the Church of England must make good on its policy of divestment and withdraw its investments from those who profit from the misery of millions of Palestinians immediately," the unpublished letter stated.

The move was welcomed by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) which said it was "a significant blow" to those who claimed ethical and morally responsible investments cannot be used as a peaceful weapon against Israel, even though the church insisted the withdrawal was for economic reasons.

"This is a clear message from the Church of England that they will not have their money tied up in companies that are directly or indirectly engaged in the

suppression of the rights of Palestinians,” PSC general secretary Betty Hunter said. But Reverend Gath Hewitt chair of Interfaith Group for Morally Responsible Investment (IMRI) expressed concern over the Church of England's claim that it had divested for investment reasons and not at its Synod's instigation. "I think it is a little bit sad that they quietly removed their holdings presumably to avoid any fuss," Hewitt said. "It appears to have been done secretly and leaked, then later announced as divestment but not at [our] instigation," he said.

The US-based manufacturer has been criticized for several years by such human rights organizations Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as well as the United Nations for supplying weaponised bulldozers to Israel's military which has used them to raze more than 7,000 Palestinian homes since 1967

**The Situation in Israel/Palestine is worsening, not just in the Occupied Tetrin but also within the State of Israel.**

***A letter from world wide multi faith students:***

The widespread passivity and hypocrisy of the governments of the East and West make it clear that they will rule out any solution to the conflict that continuously takes place between the Palestinians and the Israelis. We, as students, do not want to be impotent spectators, incapable of taking action against the humiliation that Palestinians face on a daily basis. Therefore, we have taken the initiative to support the establishment of a global platform which seeks to unite organizations around the world in resisting the violent extremist policy of the Israeli State, and we call upon you to do the same.

The Movement enables a wide array of people, institutes and societies, to work together and resolve the conflict in accordance with basic, agreed principles of international law. These seven broad principles include:

1. **The Israel-Palestine conflict is primarily a political one** (*even though it has a religious dimension that implies the obligation to respect religious freedom for all Jews, Christians and Muslims and freedom of conscience for all, irrespective of religious or non-religious persuasion.*)

2. **There is an oppressor (State of Israel) and oppressed population (the Palestinian people).**
3. **The Palestinian resistance is, de facto, legitimate.**
4. **The Palestinians have the right to their own state, and to full freedom within it.**
5. **The equal dignity of the Palestinians requires full equality of rights and treatment, no matter the proposed solution.**
6. **Palestinians expelled from their lands have a natural right of return.**
7. **Our commitment is based on an unconditional and equal rejection of racism of any kind, be it anti-Jewish, anti-Arab, anti-Christian or anti-Muslim.**

## **Prestbury News**

### **Easter at Prestbury URC**

This year we will again be joining with our friends from St Mary's to erect and decorate a 'Parish Cross' for Easter. Like last year, we will gather at St Mary's and walk in procession to the URC where the Cross will be dedicated and decorated with palms. As in previous years the Cross will be erected at the URC. On Good Friday, a Crown of Thorns will be placed on the Cross, although this time there will be no worship at the Cross because of the Passion Play. Finally on Easter Sunday we will all meet again for a short service where the Cross will receive its garland of flowers to celebrate the Resurrection and New Life.

The final details for this celebration will be placed in the weekly notices.

### **Prestbury Passion Play**

The Passion Play takes place at the Scout Hut on the Burgage (opposite the Royal Oak) on Good Friday at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. The Play is a great ecumenical event in the life of the village which only takes place every few years. It is a very moving and inspiring occasion which is well worth experiencing. In the event of bad weather the Play will be performed in St Mary's Church. Please do come along to experience the Easter story in this unique way.

### **Soul Café**

The Prestbury Soul Café is open on the fourth Sunday of the month at 6 p.m. at Prestbury URC for those who would like to try something a little different and informal when it comes to worship. The leadership alternates between Maz and Fr. Dan from St Mary's and I am told that in addition to the tea and coffee on offer, cakes are now available as well!

### **May Fair – advance notice !**

The Prestbury May Fair will take place on the 2nd May at 10.30 a.m. – please come along for our last event before the Church is closed for a few weeks for repairs. The May Fair will feature a tombola, cakes and home produce, plants, raffle, teas, coffees & more.

### **Coffee Morning Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

The next coffee morning will be held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009 from 10.30 a.m. until 12.00 noon. There will be cakes and homemade goodies for sale, so please come along and enjoy the chat, the coffee and the cake !

Whilst we are preparing for the work to be carried out in the school room we are having a clear out. Can we graciously request that no bric-a-brac is brought along to the Coffee mornings for the next few months as we need to empty all the cupboards for the works to be carried out. Thanks for your help and support in this.

### **Family Services**

Our Family Services will continue to take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month. Please do support these services; it is always great to see the younger people at church.

### **In Touch – Contributions always welcomed**

Please either see Ian Brooks at Church or forward all contributions to him directly via e-mail ([ianbrooks444@btinternet.com](mailto:ianbrooks444@btinternet.com)). Ian can also be contacted on 01242-603467.

## **St Andrew's News**

### **April Communion Offering - Cruse**

Cruse is the leading charity in the U.K. specialising in bereavement support. Founded in 1959, it currently has 134 branches and more than 5,500 volunteers throughout the U.K. The name is derived from a passage in the Old Testament about a widow's cruse, or jar of oil, which never ran out thus signifying that support would be given as long as it was needed. Despite the derivation of the name, Cruse is a non-religious organisation and welcomes people of all beliefs and none. Over 80,000 people contact Cruse each year for help and information. Cruse is only able to offer its services freely due to the generosity of individuals and grant-making bodies, and relies on these generous donations to continue the important work of helping anyone bereaved through death. Help is given to people who have been bereaved in any way, at any time, and completely free of charge, regardless of age, sex, colour, religion or sexual orientation. It is a unique charity in that everyone will be affected by bereavement at some point in his or her life.

### **From the Elders' Meeting:**

**Local Mission and Ministry Review** – prior to the start of the St Andrew's elders' meeting, the united elders and the ministers met to discuss a new Mission Statement for the URCiC. However, it was felt beneficial first to volunteer the three churches for a review under the new Synod Ministerial Self Appraisal scheme, which, if the Moderator agrees, could begin later this year, and, from which, a new Mission Statement would emerge.

**AGM** – the elders received and adopted the Accounts for 2008, and the 2009 Budget, and commended them to the AGM. The Agenda was also approved.

**Welcome Leaflet** – an information leaflet has been produced for people new to the church, to guide them on worship and fellowship. The duty elders and stewards will hand these out to visitors.

**Church entry and exit** – the elders were concerned about the two recent accidents reported, involving falls from the dais onto the hard wood floor of the church. It was agreed that when the church is open for worship, movement of the congregation between the Link Gallery and the Church should be via the Ramp only, and the door on the organ side should be kept closed.

**New Notice Board** – this has been put up in the Link Gallery, near the public entrance, and will be used to display items about the Mission and Ministry of the church in its work with children and young people.

### **Maundy Thursday**

There will be an evening service in the Garden Room at St Andrew's on **9 April**, starting at 7.30pm. A light meal will be served beforehand for those who put their names on the list on the notice board in the church.

### **Portuguese Church**

Please note that the joint service with the Portuguese church, due to take place on **Sunday 3 May**, will start at 5pm.

### **Volunteers for Stewarding**

At least ten extra volunteers for Stewarding on a Sunday are needed to make the Rota work better. This would mean there would be enough names to fill six months of the year and, therefore, Stewarding duty would only come around twice a year. Please give this some thought – you can get in touch with me on 01242 510478.

*Jean Wilson, Stewards' Secretary*

### **In Touch Contributions**

Contributions of articles, or points of view, for inclusion in the magazine are always welcome. Please contact Roger Little (01452) 730848.

### **Correspondence – placed in the Link Gallery**

- Word in Action – Spring 09
- MAF News – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

## **‘JUMP4JOY’**

**Sunday 19 April  
9.30am – 10am**

**Informal Short Service for all the family**

### **Music at St Andrew’s in March**

**Saturday 4 April  
Gothrington Singers  
at 7.30pm**

**Sunday 26 April  
Cheltenham Philharmonic Orchestra  
at 7.30pm**

**Tickets: available on the door**

### **Celtic Cross**

On 11 March, the new Celtic Cross was installed on the new apex stone above the main entrance to the church in Montpellier Street. This historic occasion was witnessed by Jon and a small group of members of the church. We hope the Cross will last as long as its predecessor did, which was well over 100yrs.

### **Recycling – Yellow Pages Again**

Sadly, we’re not meant to put Yellow Pages, BT Phonebooks to Thomson Directories into our recycling boxes. Cheltenham Borough Council will accept them at Swindon Road. If you have any directories you would like recycled, please leave them on top of the lockers and I will take them to Swindon Road. If you would like to save paper, through not having the directories delivered at all, you can opt out by phoning:

**Yellow Pages 0800 671444 - BT 0800 833400 - Thomson 01242 555555**

*Ann Lewis*

## Warden Hill News

Easter stands out as the principal event this month and the dates to be noted are as follows:

**Sunday 5 April Palm Sunday service** led by Carole Pennington. The main part of the service will be at URC ending with a procession from URC building to St Christopher's.

**Maundy Thursday 9 April** there is no service at Warden Hill, but there is an Agape service at St Andrew's at 7.30pm.

**Good Friday 10 April** 10am service at St Christopher's and 10.30am service at St Andrew's led by Maz.

**Easter Sunday 12 April** 10.30am service at St Christopher's led by Owen.

**Sunday 19 April** Holy Communion at URC with Maz leading.

**Sunday 26 April United Pastoral Service** at St Andrew's to which all from St Christopher's are invited followed by URCiC AGM. Offers of transport are available if required. Owen will also be leading Holy Communion at St Christopher's on this Sunday.

**Sunday 3 May** Family Worship at URC led by Jon.

We wish an enjoyable trip to the group travelling to London for 'Prom Praise' on Saturday 4 April.

### CHURCH WORKING PARTY

**Saturday 18 April**

**10am-12 noon**

Please come along to help tidy up after the winter  
and clear all the weeds

**REWARD – tea or coffee**

Finally some history. Warden Hill is approaching its half century, the fiftieth anniversary being next year. Members will have their own memories. The original plans in the late fifties (if long enough in the tooth), the Church's opening in 1960 with the Reverend Elsie Chamberlain of the then BBC Religious Services being the first name in the visitors' book, the Church extension in 1968 where we have today's services, various Ministries and so on. As mentioned members will have memories but there are three that the writer would like to recall. Two from the pulpit, the other involving Junior Church.

In the sixties the Reverend John Ticehurst, the Minister at Rodborough Tabernacle at the time, who went on to Weston-super-Mare and further afield sent us away to our Sunday dinners with some food for thought. He mentioned that people tend to think of the sacred and the secular but that surely the Christian approach should be distinguished between the SACRED AND THE PROFANE.

The other message was from the Reverend Lawrence Squires, formerly Minister at Highbury, who went on to have Churches in Cornwall and in Canada and was the Interim Moderator during the vacancy twenty years ago. His finishing words hit the congregation between the eyes being SO YOU WISH TO TAKE GOD INTO YOUR LIFE ..... ON WHOSE TERMS ..... YOURS OR GOD'S?

Finally the Junior Church item. Back in 1964, 45 years ago, the Junior Church outing consisting of two coach loads of pupils and parents embarked on a Thames steamer at Benson near Oxford for a two hour trip including tea on board. It was reported in the Church News Sheet that the steamer SANK .... YES "SANK" falling a few feet together with the water level in a LOCK !!!!! There were no casualties. We all go home safe and sound. A number of the party still worship at Warden Hill URC.

Experiences of Yesterday can be a guide to Today and Tomorrow.

*Pat and Jimmy Brett*