

WELWYN GARDEN CITY
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Happy Father's Day



*The greatest gift I ever
had Came from God,*

I call him Dad...

JUNE & JULY 2017 MAGAZINE

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER – REV. JANE WEEDON

This last week I was with 42 ministers and local leaders in Merville in France for Thames North and Eastern Synods Ministers Spring School. It is almost impossible to encapsulate the events of a week in a few words but I hope you get a little of the flavour of our time together.

It was my first trip on the Shuttle which was fascinating and so fast. We went through passport control at the terminal - which is rather like an airport terminal. We got back on the coach half an hour before train was due to leave. The coach drove onto the train and doors were closed in front and behind and we set off. It only took 25 minutes for us to arrive in Calais.

The week was interesting too. We had speakers from the United Protestant Church of France telling us about aspects of their ministry. Leonora Jagasars' brother Casper told us about the new pastorate he became minister of on 2012. When he arrived, he found that 3 men who had an interest in economics had plans to articulate their interest from the perspective of their faith. First, they organised open seminars by experts from the Sorbonne, the unions, and business to educate people about the economy. After that 8 people with a keen interest began to bring theology to bear on what they had learned. An Economics professor kept them grounded and they went on to create 7 mini theses on the subject. When the denomination asked it's 8 regions to come up with an initiative that would be published their thesis were chosen for their region and they were very proud of this. We had the opportunity to discuss their quite challenging statements which created lots of conversation which would be well worth looking at ourselves.

The next speaker, Jan, told us about the concrete experience of the church in Lille working with refugees. (As we do not have many, if any migrants in our immediate area as he spoke I thought about those we do know who are homeless or on the fringes of society whatever the reason.)

First, he gave us some statistics - of 243 million migrants worldwide 50 million are minors. Of those 243 million migrants only 10% of these refugees are in Europe. The main reasons people leave home to make the perilous journey are economic climate change and war. The 150 minors in Lille are just a small part of humanity knocking on the door if the church.

He reflected theologically on an appropriate Christian response. Migrants are seen as history's losers, unable to write history themselves. He questioned whether we can write history from a migrant point of view.? The book of Numbers tells the incredible story of migrants fleeing the terror of Egypt. Chapters 1-25 outline the death of the old generation of rebellion; chapters 1-10 speak of hopeful preparation for their flight- from Pharaohs refusal to the plagues and the Passover; 11-25 tells how they slide into rebellion and internal conflict, thinking God had abandoned them without food and water; whatever God

provided they wanted something different and when Moses met God on the mountain where he was given the 10 commandments they fashioned a golden calf to worship instead! From chapter 26 onwards we read of the hopeful perspective for new generation - renewed hope - a census - where everyone is counted because everybody counts.

Jan reflected that the experience of church today has parallels to Numbers. The church struggles to discern its way in a culture where migrants are often feared and rejected. If we agree we must learn from scripture and experiences of migrants today. He concluded that that if we don't want to make history with migrants there will be no history at all. If we are trying to understand ourselves through scripture we must ask ourselves which story do we want to write – the story with or without migrants? In Lille decision was 'with'.

A visit to Dunkirk took us to meet Isabel, the minister of a church who had been involved with one of the migrant camps, she grounded Jan's reflection in the reality of the camps. It was very humbling to hear her compassion for the people in the camps. Many of them were young and young professionals who had been encouraged to leave the horrors of life behind them in hope of finding a place where they and their families could be safe and secure. Tensions would often break out between different groups and one of the most important pieces of charity work was in helping people to get along. The work the church did in the camp was very humble. Cleaning out showers after someone had used them. Keeping the place clean and tidy to inhibit the spread of disease.

It was difficult for us to understand their way of life or what life had been like for the migrants on their journey and to help people with their understanding the church had produced a Bible study in a number of different languages. The work they did was unconditional and their care and concern for the people, genuine. These are not people to be lumped together but individuals, each with a story to tell and a dream of somewhere new to put down roots because their roots in their homeland have been destroyed.

A trip to Lille Cathedral bought us face to face with an exhibition of a refugee artists' emotive pictures of the reality of life on the road. Throughout the week in our worship Lance Stone minister of the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam unpacked familiar stories from the gospels that emphasised Gods open handed and open hearted generosity and the superabundance of the kingdom. Jan, talked about the huge tree that grows from the mustard seed that unknowingly hosts migrant birds. He said we worry too much about finding mustard for ourselves to go on our hot dogs. The reality of serving those on the fringes is that we meet face to face with the birds nesting in the tree and this is the work of the kingdom.

Challenging stuff!

Every blessing

Jane

Secretary's Notes

An Elder has the task of writing a piece on Prayer for the magazine and this month it is my turn so I thought I would make the piece my Secretary's Notes. I will freely admit that I have struggled with what I should write but after a great deal of reading and research I have finally put my thoughts on paper.

There is so much written on prayer, some helpful and some not so helpful so I have tried to bring together what I personally have found meaningful to me and hope you might find it or part of it resonates with you the reader.

What is Prayer

Prayer is the time when we let go of our pride, have our hopes lifted and find peace. Prayer is the time when we can confess our needs, be humble, and admit our dependence upon God. Prayer is an important part of our Christian life, a form of worship which enables us to express our faith, love and trust in God. We should engage in prayer first thing in the morning to thank God for the new day and ask him to be with us in all we do. We should also engage in prayer throughout the day, which may be a silent prayer or a simple sentence and before we retire for the night thanking God for being with us throughout the day.

The Bible speaks a great deal about prayer but too often, we ignore prayer and seek to accomplish things by the strength of our own wills. When we do come to our Lord in prayer we very often come with legitimate requests and needs for ourselves, our world and others and yet the answers we hope for often do not come. We must always pray in faith, even when we sometimes wonder and doubt. We should continue to pray trusting that God hears us, knows our needs and will answer them. Perhaps the answer is not the solution we were seeking or wishing for but he alone knows what is best. He is always on the other end of the telephone day and night and will never hang up on us.

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed "not my will but your will be done".

Too often we want our own will to be done in our lives when we should be seeking God's will. We need to listen to God and find out what he thinks and what he knows to be the answer, let go and pray for God's will to happen. His will is in our best interests even if at times we think we know best. We must get our will in line with God's will through prayerful listening.

In Acts whenever the church came together in prayer God moved miraculously. We all need God to move miraculously not only in our own lives but in our vision for his church here in WGC URC. In our prayers we must not pray informing God of what we want him to do, we must not try to change him to our way of thinking, and we must not try to get him to do our will. We must pray because we need him, love him and worship him as individuals and as a church. We must put our trust in him and listen to him as he guides us along the right path.

The bible says in James 4.8 "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." If our prayer life is strong we will have peace in our hearts and God will show us the way. So continue to seek the Lord in prayer and peace will surely be yours.

Prayer brings us closer to God.

Amen

Moving On.

Our Church Magazine is the platform alongside email where I try to keep you all informed. I also try to encourage you to support various events and challenges in any way you feel you are able. Allison calls it Joyce's Soapbox and she is probably not far off the mark. So "Are you sitting comfortably?" then I'll begin:-

Church Windows

The window cost £2,827.20 to make and the installation cost was £1,728 making a total of £4555.20.

The amount I quoted held in the fund in the last magazine was incorrect as the installation had not been paid. The fund currently stands at £1728 thanks to two generous donations totalling £1000 from donors who wish to remain anonymous. Both have connections with the Church but neither are members of our congregation. We are really grateful to them both for their generous and thoughtful gesture. We now have had £2000 in total donated by kind benefactors.

Our aim is to focus all our fundraising on growing the Window Fund enabling us to replace the windows one at a time.

Hopefully with the funds raised at the Quiz Night and other events throughout the year we should be in a position to go ahead with window number two.

If you have any ideas on how we could boost the fund, would like to make a donation, or any fund raising suggestions please let me know.

Car Park

Many of you must be wondering if our barrier is just an expensive adornment but I am pleased to tell you we are making progress and it will come into operation on the 1st July.

Anyone who has paid an annual subscription of £20 will be receiving their electronic pass over the coming weeks. You will also receive a Member Card which you must display in your car to assist us when we carry out spot checks. Your subscription will be valid until the end of June 2018.

There are forms in church for those wishing to subscribe so please speak to Allison or one of the elders.

The car park barrier will be open on Sundays from 8am-1pm for you to use without a pass.

Important points to note

You do not need a pass to exit the car park.

Pedestrians please use the foot path on your right as you enter the car park. **NEVER WALK UNDER THE BARRIER.**

Please park considerately and respect any coned off areas which are always there for a reason.

I hope this answers all your queries but please contact me if anything is unclear.

Family BBQ

This will be held on the 9th July after Morning Worship so please save the date.

I am looking for someone to take the lead in organising the catering. Is there anyone out there willing?

I am hoping Ade and Wale will don their chefs hats again as they are now experts at BBQs.

We will be looking for donations of salad items and desserts for the occasion and of course help with the preparation, setting out and clearing away. Please let me know what help you can offer to ensure the day a success.

Please Save the Date for:-

Our Harvest Barn Dance on the 23rd of September

Our Harvest Lunch at the close of Worship on Sunday 24th of September.

And finally

As you may be aware Jane is going on Sabbatical from the 1st July until the end of September. Then she will be on holiday until the 10th of October. All Sunday Worship has been covered but it will mean we will be holding Communion on the 10th of September instead of the 3rd.

Your Elders and Pastoral Friends will always be available and willing to help if needed during her absence. Do not hesitate to ask.

Well you deserve a medal if you have managed to read this to the end. God Bless you all

Joyce.

FLOWER ROTA

<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>
4 th Mr&Mrs Philip Read	2 nd TBA
11 th Mrs Joyce Deans	9 th Mrs Lesley Lambert
18 th Jane&Roger Weedon	16 th Mrs Barbara Palacio
25 th Mr Graham Daniels	23 rd Mrs Joyce Nicolson
	30 th TBA

You will see we have two blank Sundays in July. If you would like to contribute for the flowers on either of these dates please get in touch with Joyce on 07886392602, email joycen2@hotmail.com or simply add your name to the Flower Rota in the Rotas Folder at the back of the Church. Cheques for the Flower Fund should be made payable to Joyce Nicolson and please let me know if you would like your contribution to be Gift Aided.

Joyce on behalf of the Flower and Décor Team

FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE

This phrase is often used in churches to introduce the never ending need for giving by the faithful congregation. This brief article is no different and is intended as a preamble to Sunday 22nd October which will be designated Stewardship or Thanksgiving Sunday.

The Welwyn Garden City United Reformed Church is the same as every church in that it exists for, and relies upon, its members. Those of us who diligently read the reports of our faithful long serving Treasurer, John Meers, will know that for some time he has been warning that the level of giving within the WGCURC has been too low to sustain the expenses which we incur on an ongoing basis.

We are living in exciting times as we develop our plans to move towards a community hub church with plans to extend the building, and to encompass many sorts of socially aware activities which will in turn lead to increased numbers of church members. We believe and pray that these plans are in answer to, and following, the wishes of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our church has been fortunate to be led by Jane, our inspired leader, for several years, and has recently been strengthened by the welcome addition of our friends from the Woodhall Lane Church and further supported by grants from Synod towards the employment of our

Children's Youth and Families Worker and our Mission Co-ordinator, and from their efforts we can already see lively developments in many areas.

Now we must reassess our efforts that support this endeavour. We all lead different lives and all have different resources. It is a truism that we all spend our time doing what we want, and spend our money on what we want and value. It follows that our decisions and talents are variable and we will spend our time and money on that aspect of church activities we are best able and willing to support. The active participation in church activities is something in which we can all share, and the financial support is of necessity governed by the financial resources available to each of us.

So how can we give financially? As the collection bags go round at each service some put in cash, some put in envelopes, and some appear to give nothing. Starting in reverse many people give directly to the Church by standing orders – and so they may not put anything in the bag, but it may encourage others if they put in a few coins – a pound or a few pennies!

Envelopes

These have two virtues

1. They may be used in association with the recovery of tax paid Gift Aid from the Government.
2. They may be used to ensure anyones' giving is regular rather than spasmodic at occasional church services. For instance £2 given on monthly visits amounts to £24 annually whereas £2 given in weekly envelopes amounts to £104.

Most people know that recovery of tax paid by taxpayers under the Gift aid scheme gives the church another 25% on top of the giving. Much less well known is that through the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme for money collected in a Community Building we are able to reclaim a similar amount on all cash gifts of less than £20, and this indeed is applied to our giving in cash in the collection bags at services.

There is another avenue which may appeal to many of you. It is possible to give either regularly or occasionally to earmarked Restricted Funds which are then retained within WGCURC for their specific purposes, and not reduced by the payment of a proportion to the URC generally. These funds are for instance the Youth Fund, the Window Fund, and the Fabric Fund. It is perfectly possible to give to the general church funds and to a specific Fund, or for instance, a new earmarked Fund for Mission Co-ordination.

All this is getting too long but there are also other avenues. In the past Ministers have held special 'giving days' when members have come with special gifts, and this might be a method to be reconsidered. Also although most of us do not want to contemplate it, there is always the welcome possibility of leaving a legacy in favour of the Church when ones life on earth is over.

Despite this article being written as a preamble for the October Stewardship Sunday you may wish to increase your giving without waiting until October. So increase your giving straight away – and if you would like regular giving envelopes or wish us to apply Gift Aid tax recovery please ask any elder.

There is much food for thought here and each of us is asked to pray for guidance on what we should do with our time, talents and money.

Graham Daniels, on behalf of the Finance and Project Sub Committee

WORSHIP TEAM

As most of you are aware, I am a very 'appealing' person.

My latest appeal is for new team members to join the Worship Team.

If, having experienced our services over the past 9 months, you feel that you could offer some part of you to assist us in praising the Lord, then please consider talking with one or other of the team.

You have seen what we do and all it needs is the desire to share your love of God with the congregation.

Can you offer the prayers? Are you able to lead the service? Would you consider the 'Introduction to the Theme'? Or, do you have a burning sermon, lying dormant inside you, just itching to be released?

Every role is important if we are to give a satisfactory, or better still, an encouraging service of worship to all who come for sustenance and fellowship.

We only do one service a month, and the more of us involved the less often we would be required to serve.

Please think seriously about this and find out what you are capable of. Most of us at the beginning, were well and truly out of our depths but over the few months that we have been together we have surprised ourselves considerably. If I can do it, then you can for sure. Come on, dip your toe in the water and see how good it feels.

Jean Hughes