

## FOREST GROUP NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2016

### From the Manse:

Dear Friends,

Last week it was announced that Bob Dylan had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, because he had minted new forms of expression for the Great American Songbook.

I am old enough to remember Dylan hailed as a prophet of the alternative society, and reports of some bitter rows in Portsmouth folk clubs when he went electric. But then I got to reflecting that the same sort of journey, from suspicion and “what does he know?” put-downs to laurels in maturity or in retrospect, happened to writers of books in the Bible.

In the division between major prophets and minor prophets the major prophetic books are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel (and Lamentations ). The beginning of the book of Jeremiah details his call and commission, which took place before he was born, and provokes a response of fear because of his youth. God replies, “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you”, and “I have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land – kings, princes, priests and people”. In other words, even though you are young, only a boy and even though everyone will be against you, I will be with you because what you have to say *matters*.

Jeremiah lived through a time when everything got worse, when he was regarded as a pessimistic moaning miseryguts. But history

showed him to be right. He bought a piece of land as a hope for the future, prophesied a new covenant and a new relationship, and defined the principle by which all exiles should live in chapter 29, verse 7 “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, that in its welfare you will find your welfare”.

When I think of Dylan as a Nobel Laureate I find myself thinking of Jeremiah, and when I think of Jeremiah I take comfort in current political uncertainties.

Every blessing,  
Richard

## SERVICES FOR NOVEMBER

All services start at 10.30 unless stated otherwise

### Chingford

- 6<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship with Holy Communion and Prayers for Healing** led by Revd Richard Mortimer (*Monthly collection for Jimmy's*) followed by Church Meeting
- 13<sup>th</sup> **Remembrance & Youth Service** led by Marjorie Austin (followed by *Faith Pictures* course at 12 noon)
- 20<sup>th</sup> 9.45 **Service of Holy Communion Morning Worship** led by Revd Claire Wilson (followed by *Faith Pictures* course at St James')
- 27<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Revd June Colley
- 4<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship with Holy Communion and Prayers For Healing** led by Revd Ulrike Bell

### Highams Park

- 6<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Keith Brame  
13<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship with Holy Communion**  
led by Revd Richard Mortimer  
20<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Steven Neville (followed by  
*Faith Pictures* final session with lunch at St. James')  
27<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Revd Ulrike Bell  
4<sup>th</sup> *Morning Worship led by Trevor Cottrell*

### Ray Lodge

- 6<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Revd Ann Woodhurst  
13<sup>th</sup> **Remembrance Service with Holy Communion**  
led by Joy Sadler  
20<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Revd Richard Mortimer  
(followed by *Faith Pictures* final session with lunch at  
St. James')  
28<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by the Elders  
4<sup>th</sup> *Toy Service led by Revd Jane Mortimer*

### St. James

- 6<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship with Holy Communion** led by  
Revd Kevin Swaine (*Sacramental Offertory for  
Combat Stress*)  
13<sup>th</sup> **Remembrance Sunday Parade Service** led by Revd  
Ulrike Bell (followed by *Faith Pictures* course in church  
room)  
20<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Marjorie Austin (followed  
by 'Faith Pictures' course in Church Room, church

lunch and joint discussion with members from other  
Forest Group churches)

- 27<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Revd Richard Mortimer  
(Church Meeting follows this service)  
4<sup>th</sup> *Morning Worship led by Keith Brame (Sacramental  
Offertory for Ubuntu Unleashed)*

### Woodford Green

- 6<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship with Holy Communion** led by  
Revd June Colley  
13<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship** led by Revd Jane Mortimer  
(followed by *Faith Pictures* course)  
20<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship at St. James'. Buckhurst Hill**  
(followed by *Faith Pictures* discussion and lunch)  
27<sup>th</sup> **Morning Worship for Advent Sunday** led by Revd  
Richard Wyber (followed by church meeting)  
4<sup>th</sup> *Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by  
Revd Richard Mortimer*

## FOREST GROUP CALENDAR

### November

- Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> **Forest Group Coffee Morning** 10.30 am in  
Woodford Green Manse  
**Woodford Gn** 8.00pm Elders Meeting at manse  
Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> **St. James'** 7.30pm Elders Meeting in Church  
Room  
Friday 4<sup>th</sup> **Chingford** 11.00am Worship Group  
**Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Knit & Natter Group

Sunday 6 **Forest Group Council Meeting** 2.00pm at Woodford Green

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> **St. James'** 2.00-3.30pm Craft/Prayer Group in Church Room

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> **Forest Group Coffee Morning** 10.30 am in Woodford Green Manse  
**Woodford Green** 8.00pm Elders Meeting at the manse

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Neighbours Club

Thurs 17<sup>th</sup> **Chingford** 8.00 pm Elders Meeting

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Knit & Natter Group

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Neighbours Club

Monday 28<sup>th</sup> **St. James'** 10.30am **Forest Group Advent Study Group** in church room

**December**

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> **St. James'** 7.30pm Elders' Meeting in Church Room

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Knit and Natter Group

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> **Forest Group Coffee Morning** 10.30 am in Woodford Green Manse  
**Woodford Green** 8.00pm Elders Meeting at the manse

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> **St. James'** Carol Singing in Queen's Road

## THE "REFUGEE CRISIS" - CAN OUR FOREST GROUP MAKE A USEFUL CONTRIBUTION?

I retired on 10<sup>th</sup> August and kept hoping it would go away- that image of Aylan Kurdi, the three year old Syrian boy the same size as our Oliver, carried out of the sea by a relief worker onto the Greek island of Kos, lifeless. That happened back in September 2015 and the news of that helpless toddler went viral. It was, say the media, the "tipping point" for many of us. Since then we have had almost daily accounts of migrants attempting crossings from one harrowing situation into another. They say 62 million humans are on the move worldwide. So the problem is immense, too big, too complex for anyone to understand let alone respond to.

Then Jesus says simply "Whoever welcomes in my name one of these children, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not only me but also the one who sent me" (Mark 9, v37) and I have to think again. I know the gospels are clear that we have to respond to the outcast, the sick, the hungry, so we have no choice as Christians. The only question is how?

It is such a big problem that no *one* person can work on this alone. We have to work together and we have to work with organisations and other individuals who are already responding to the crisis. I was encouraged by the Forest Group Council to find out what is happening in our area and to see what our Group of Churches could potentially become involved with.

I have made contact with our local TELCO which actually links with Citizens UK specifically in relation to refugee issues. Citizens UK is a national charity which aims to help local groups work with issues of social justice. They have established a "Refugees

Welcome” project which has helped locally to highlight the need to house and foster Syrian refugees, adults and children. I have been encouraged by Daniel Mackintosh who is the Citizens UK Refugee Welcome, Waltham Forest and Redbridge Organiser to think about ways in which our Forest Group of churches could get involved.

I was invited to go to the REFUGEE WELCOME SUMMIT in Birmingham on 10<sup>th</sup> September. I joined a coach at dawn in Whitechapel, not knowing who would be my travelling companions or quite what we would be doing in Birmingham together. My lack of knowing where I was going or with whom gave me, for just a brief moment, a sense of what a refugee must feel like when moving on into the unknown. But I had a bottle of water and an apple, a language I could communicate in and a roof over my head to return to - easy life!

After a very interesting journey through drizzle all the way into Birmingham, sharing views and perspectives with a young Muslim woman from the Isle of Dogs, we spent the day in a crowded conference room listening to speakers and project leaders describing their progress, challenges and hopes in schemes across the UK attempting to help refugees. We then split into interest groups and I spent another hour listening to people who have set up Community Sponsorships.

So, what can we offer? Citizens UK have highlighted the following:

- they need rooms to teach English to refugee adults. ( Many churches already offer venues.)
- they need people to offer spare rooms to asylum seekers/refugees facing deportation while they wait for their appeals to be heard. This can be short stays of a day or two, sometimes longer

- we could consider becoming a Community Sponsor as a Forest Group and take a more systematic approach to sponsoring refugees ourselves.

There are people out there able to help, advise and support us. We just have to decide what we can do.....

Margaret Minoletti 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept 2016

### **ROGER LINEKER**

We at Ray Lodge were very sad to hear that Roger had died because for many years he was a great friend to us all.

I first got to know Roger well when Jessie Cunnington, one of our members who also played our organ, had bought herself a small organ for her home in about the 1990's. When she died in 1998 her family donated her organ to our church. I didn't know enough about organs to solve this problem but I happened to meet Dorothy Parlett and told her about it and she offered to ask Roger if he could help. The next morning Roger phoned me up and said he would meet me at Ray Lodge the following morning and then go to Jessie's home and look at her organ which he decided would be a good one. We had to arrange to get it to church and her family offered to pay for the transport and Roger came and made sure that everything was done properly.

After that Roger played our organ many times, for Harvest and Easter and especially Christmas Carol and Lessons services when he

would accompany our Barbara who for many years sung for us, and we had some very lovely times together.

He would sometimes phone me up ask 'did we like this hymn or which tune we prefer'. He also came when we had new floor covering in the church to make sure the organ was moved carefully. We were sad when he became ill and could no longer play but kept in touch with him through his sister Margaret.

He found out that I was taking my grandson on a steam train holiday in Scotland and brought me books containing interesting items about trains in Scotland which was very helpful.

We really felt for his sister Margaret for her loss and we really are so grateful that she is still able to play the piano for our Sunday morning services as she has done for so many years. His memorial service that Margaret arranged was really lovely and the music was a joy.

He will be sadly missed

Margaret Woolmer

## CHINGFORD MEETINGS

### Youth Council 6<sup>th</sup> October

- 27<sup>th</sup> Chingford Scout Group New Group Scout Leader has found two new Beaver leaders. Cubs are running well under a new leadership team. Dirk Grobler took over as Group Scout Leader on 27<sup>th</sup> September. Malcolm is concentrating on Scouts and trying to build up a leadership team. 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations are continuing and various ideas are being developed for the main celebration 18/19 February. (As Guides not present unable to discuss provision of new Leaders Honours board and addition of name of Rosamund Stock 2014, former Guide Leader)
- 5<sup>th</sup> Chingford Brownies and Guides – 34 Brownies and 26 Guides; there is another helper with the Guides.
- Youth Services A few more uniformed members attended in September because of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary display and it is hoped that this display will continue to attract at the next few youth services leading up to the special service on 19<sup>th</sup> February.
- Church Youth Junior Group has stable numbers, but needs new members for continuity. Questers continuing to retain teenagers despite some members also being members of parish church choir. Charity activity to be arranged
- Forest Group Youth Pilots now have 12 members and will continue at Highams Park. Messy Church being moved to Woodford with a view to restarting in 2017 after discussions with Martyn Payne on format.
- Youth Outreach Worker Red Balloon organisation being employed to provide further youth activities for the Forest Group. The first initiative is a FG Youth group on Mondays

at Café Belgique for 13 years +. We agreed that we are not looking to Red Balloon to take over existing provision such as Questers but to provide additional activities for FG youth.

### **Church Meeting 9<sup>th</sup> October** 20 Members present

- Notes of Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July agreed and signed
- News of the Church family was shared
- As a church member could not stay for Communion because a particular service overran preachers are being advised to keep their services within the hour.
- Election of Elders, Church Secretary and Forest Group representatives Sam Roney, Rob Stolar, Daphne Pollock and Margaret Brown stand down as elders at the end of 2016 so there are 4 vacancies for the elders' election this time. Also Malcolm Smith has come to the end of a 4 year term as Church Secretary so nominations will be sought for this position, although Malcolm is prepared to stand again. Malcolm and Gill Harrison have also stood down as Forest Group representatives so there are two vacancies for nomination.
- 2017 – In 2017 Revd Richard Mortimer will take the Maundy Thursday and Easter services and Revd Ulrike Bell will take the Good Friday service and most of the Youth Services including the 27<sup>th</sup> Scout Group Anniversary service on 19<sup>th</sup> February.
- Finance A revised statement is available showing the actual financial position for the first six months and a revised budget for the year.
- Fund Raising - The recent book sale raised £115. Eric Doig's concert raised about £220. The Christmas Bazaar will proceed as a team effort with no one in overall charge. The remaining members of the fund raising committee are now standing down; thanks to Jane and Margaret for their

work. The Art Exhibition/ book sale will take place sometime in the New Year; date to be identified.

- Forest Group Services Dates of future services are 13<sup>th</sup> October, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 27<sup>th</sup> April, 29<sup>th</sup> June
- Faith Pictures The remaining sessions are after morning services on 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November (bring own lunch). Last session to be a joint session at St James URC
- Forest Group Day at Woodford UFC on 8<sup>th</sup> October led by Anne Sardeson – to discuss future plans for the Forest Group. Anne asked those present to be open to possibilities and identifying God's plan. Groups made up of a members of each of the five churches tried to identify strengths, opportunities, aspirations, resource requirements and results for each church and the challenging suggestion that the Forest Group should move towards being one church. Difficulties relating to finance and use of church buildings were revealed. We shall be considering what came out of the day at the next Elders and Church Meetings with a view to reporting back on 28<sup>th</sup> November and firming up proposals at another Forest Group Day early in the New Year. In this context Malcolm S has asked the young people to appoint a representative so that their views can be taken into account.
- Forest Group Youth Group Red Balloon (Luke Lowrie) is organising the Youth Group for 13+ children at the Café Belgique from Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October and the young people will be involved in planning what they are going to do.
- Forest Group Constitution – further revisions are being made
- Forest Group website – Liz Hawkins has given training to Jackie Stolar (Chingford), Revd Ulrike Bell (Woodford), Steven Neville (Buckhurst Hill) with Heather Nicholaou

helping the other churches so that the website can now be updated, particularly with news

- Authorisation for Communion Malcolm Smith and Helen Haigh are authorised to take communion in an emergency having been trained by the Revd Barrie Cheetham
- Refugee issues awaiting further information from St James’.
- CTINC For the 2017 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we shall invite other churches to our Friday prayer meeting
- The Child Protection Policies have been finalised and signed off. The draft Health and Safety policy will be circulated to the Board of Management for comment.
- The opening of the church doors during the hot weather has led to complaints from neighbours about the noise of music played in the church. The situation is being monitored on Wednesday nights. Church Meeting agreed to advise a let that loud music would not be appropriate in the front hall on Monday evenings.
- Details of special anniversaries and events in 2017 were circulated for discussion at a future date. We have also been invited to draw up an environmental policy
- Junior Family Church leaders were asked to determine the timing of the Christmas Eve service in consultation with Revd Ulrike Bell and Malcolm Smith
- Highlights of Youth Council Meeting – Pilots and Junior Family church
- Revd Ulrike Bell asked about links between the Church and youth groups; David Morris is our link elder and church members are involved in the Toddler Group. David explained the reasons why it is difficult to get a good attendance at youth services

## HIGHAMS PARK NEWS

### Prayer Partners

<i>Pam</i>	<i>Ken</i>	<i>Joyce</i>	<i>Margaret</i>
<i>Francis</i>	<i>Bernice</i>	<i>Helen</i>	<i>Helen</i>
<i>Valerie</i>	<i>Richard</i>	<i>Lorraine</i>	<i>Kay</i>

Please speak to your prayer partner and see if there are any specific things they would like to pray for. Or if possible, why not arrange a time to pray together during the month.

Please also pray for past members and friends.

If you would like a Prayer Partner please let Helen know so that you can be added to the list.

Happy Birthday greetings go to Lilian on the 5th of November.

## REFLECTION

I was walking into town when Louisa passed me with a wave.

“I’m just off to visit my great-uncle Peter,” she told me. “It’s his ninetieth birthday today, so to celebrate we’re going to visit a preserved railway for a trip down the line.” She grinned. “Although as far as he is concerned, it’s always full steam ahead!”

I knew what she meant, for I have met Louisa’s great-uncle, and never fail to be impressed by his liveliness and vitality. But as Samuel Ullman once pointed out, “Nobody grows old merely by living a

number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.”

May Great-uncle Peter – and indeed all of us – stay for ever un wrinkled!

*Thanks to The Friendship Book of Francis Gay*

## **STORIES FOR CHANGE**

### **Bangladesh**

Heavy and persistent rainfall since mid-July has forced hundreds of thousands of people in neighbouring countries to abandon their homes. The downpours have caused extensive damage to tens of thousands of houses, and to water sources, food stores, farmland and roads.

As the monsoon season continues, Christian Aid’s local partners are providing emergency aid to flood victims in some of the worst-hit areas, in a bid to shelter displaced families, curb malnutrition and limit the spread of water-borne diseases.

In northern Bangladesh, where over 3.5 million people are affected, Christian Aid is leading a £250,000 multi-agency response financed by the Start Fund.

Local partners are handing out relief packages to more than 17,000 people. These parcels include food, soap, disinfectant, tarpaulin and groundsheet, female sanitary items, rehydration tablets, cooking utensils and cash, to enable people to purchase other essentials.

Ram Kishan, Christian Aid’s Regional Emergency Manager for South Asia, said: “Loss of life has, thankfully, been limited, but the scale of need in India and Bangladesh is nevertheless vast. Although flood waters are receding, the rains are not over. Many families, whose homes were deluged, are still living in makeshift shelters and urgently need help.

“It’s vital we help the most vulnerable people to access nutritious food and clean drinking water. The floods submerged numerous wells and water pumps, contaminating water supplies. In many areas, these are now being used for drinking, washing utensils and clothes, and bathing people and animals. The risk of water-borne diseases is a major concern.

“With latrines also submerged, the lack of toilet facilities has increased incidences of open defecation – a major health hazard. At the same time, swampy areas and stagnant water create the ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes and other insects.

“Cases of diarrhoea and dysentery have already been reported. By repairing hand pumps, chlorinating wells and providing flood victims with chlorination tablets, anti-bacterial soap and mosquito nets, we hope we can help to reduce the chances of people falling sick.”

Mr Kishan continued: “Worryingly, farmland, paddy fields, granary stores and vegetable gardens were destroyed by flood waters. Not only does this create the long-term threat of malnutrition, but it also leaves small-scale farmers in an even more desperate situation, since agriculture is the main source of income for many people in the flooded areas.”

Alongside the Start Fund projects, Christian Aid is also responding using its own emergency funds. In two regions in Bangladesh, aid distributions are specifically targeting elderly women, pregnant women and mothers with small children. This is part of a 'women-led response'.

Rozana Majumdar, Christian Aid's Gender and Governance Programme Officer for Bangladesh, explained: "Women and girls are considered the worst victims of disasters and the vulnerabilities they face are unlike those faced by men. Not only have many women lost their homes in the floods, but many of them are pregnant or have recently given birth.

"I recently visited flood-hit communities in Gaibandha, northern Bangladesh. I met a woman who was nine months pregnant and didn't know where she would go to give birth, as she is in a temporary shelter and can't afford to travel to the closest district-level health facilities. I met another woman who gave birth in a temporary school shelter."

Bangladesh is a male-dominated society, where the needs of women and girls are often not taken into consideration during disasters. That is why Christian Aid and our local partners are taking measures to ensure the safety of women and girls before, during and after disasters, in a way that is culturally and religiously sensitive and appropriate."

## **HARVEST FESTIVAL AT RAY LODGE URC**

On Sunday 2nd October we had our usual Harvest Festival Service at Ray Lodge. This annual event is always a family service to which the Rainbows and Brownies are invited.

This year the service was led by Revd Jane Mortimer and a great time was had by all, young and old alike, everyone had a chance to join in one way or another, some showing some great acting ability.

We have a new Rainbow leader who is completing her training and this was her first service with us. She had encouraged a number of the Rainbows to come along with their mums and afterwards said that everyone, including the mums had thoroughly enjoyed the service.

As usual the harvest goods donated on the day completely filled a large table and I had a large car boot full of harvest goods to deliver to Mill Grove (White's Homes as was), where they were gratefully received.

I always seem to forget to take photographs of this type of thing! A big thank you to all involved, especially Jane.

Janet Jackson

## **WELL DONE!**

Congratulations to Ray Lodge Church in raising £60.72 at their recent **Macmillan** Coffee and Cake afternoon.

## **ST. JAMES' CHURCH MEETING NOTES SEPTEMBER 2016**

After an exciting Harvest Festival Parade Service led by Revd. Ulrike Bell, she went on to chair our Church Meeting, which was attended by fifteen people.

We began by exchanging news of the church family before moving on to other matters. The Property and Finance Committee had met recently and the idea of having a Forest Group Treasurer for all the churches was brought up. This will be discussed further at our Forest Group Day on 8th October, and subsequently will be brought to the Elders' and Church Meetings.

Our new notice boards are now in place at the end of the church driveway, with lighting still to be added. The newly planted area beneath the boards has been recently run over by a vehicle, so a bollard may have to be put nearby to stop this happening again.

Margaret Minoletti is looking into what we can do as a Forest Group regarding the Refugee Crisis. She had been to a conference in Birmingham run by Telco, who are locally active in Redbridge, giving help with housing and employment and she had gone on a march in central London on 17th September in support of refugees. She believes we have to think how we as Christians can respond to the crisis, maybe offering a spare room to someone, or making our church premises available for English Language classes. She suggested that someone from *Housing Justice* could come to talk to us.

Members were reminded of the dates of the *Faith Pictures* course which will be held after some church services in the autumn. The first session had gone well and the last one will be after the morning service on 20th November which will be followed by a shared lunch and then we will welcome people from the other Forest Group Churches for a joint discussion about the course.

It was agreed that we should renew our church membership to the URC Peace Fellowship and it was noted that their Annual

Conference will be held on 29th October at Bloomsbury Baptist Church.

A leaflet produced by Church Build entitled, *Is Your Church a Millstone or a Springboard?* had been distributed and now we have to consider whether St. James' is a welcoming place and maybe what we can do to improve things, if it is not. This will be discussed at the next Church Meeting in October.

We will be filling shoe boxes for *Operation Christian Child* again this year, so filled boxes need to be brought to church by Sunday 27th November.

*Sing Immanuel* is holding a Singing Workshop at St. James' on Saturday 29th October from 11am -5pm and this will be followed by a concert at 7pm.

We decided not to have a Sunday morning service on 1st January 2017, so instead members could attend the Roman Catholic Mass at 9.00am that day or the 10.30am service at Chingford URC or Woodford United Free.

*Isabel Bala*

### **East London Three Faiths Forum**

This meeting was held at South West Essex Reform Synagogue, near Newbury Park Station, on Thursday 15th September, and the topic was Hospitality in Our Sacred Texts. We explored this using the technique of Scriptural Reasoning. We were split into several groups with some Christians, some Muslims and some Jewish

people in each group. We were then given copies of texts from each of our sacred books with the theme of Hospitality.

In my group we first looked at the story of Abraham's hospitality in the Jewish scriptures, Genesis 18:1-8. This is when Abraham welcomed three strangers to his tent in the desert and gave them food to eat. They turned out to be angels bringing him the message from God that Isaac was to be born to his aged wife, Sarah.

Next, we heard how in the Muslim text from the Qur'an, the same story is told; Abraham offers hospitality and food to the strangers but it is not eaten. The three visitors are the angels Gabriel, Michael and Israfil, and angels do not eat, according to Islamic belief.

The Christian text was from Hebrews 13:1-2, where the writer draws from the Hebrew scriptures, recalling the story of Abraham's hospitality and encouraging his readers to follow his example.

Looking at these texts in turn, made us reflect that despite the different interpretations of Abraham's story, each of the three faiths accept that, as believers, we must show hospitality in our homes and places of worship and be welcoming to strangers and in particular at this time to those seeking sanctuary as refugees from war-torn countries. We thought how it was maybe easier for Abraham to show hospitality in his culture, compared with how we live today, isolated from our neighbours and the local community unless we make the effort to go out and meet people and make them welcome. We thought about how each particular faith welcomes people, Muslims at Eid (the feast after Ramadan, when food is shared even with non-Muslims), and Jews and Christians at their festivals. Christians in particular share the bread and wine at Communion with everyone who wishes to follow Jesus.

After our discussions had finished, we had some refreshments, and then we were invited to go into the worship area of the synagogue where the recently appointed Rabbi Lisa, showed us around. It was a wonderful experience seeing this very modern synagogue where men and women sit together in beautiful surroundings. Rabbi Lisa opened The Ark for us where the Torah scrolls are kept. She took one out and using a yad, a pointer with a small hand on its end (the Jewish scrolls must not be touched by human hands) she sang in Hebrew some verses from the passage which were to be read the next Sabbath. Copies of the passage, translated into English are distributed to the congregation, as not everyone understands Hebrew these days. I felt very privileged to have been there and I came away thinking how much we as Christians owe to the Jewish faith and as always from these meetings, how much we have in common, despite our differences.

The next meeting of the Forum will be at 8pm on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at South Woodford Mosque when the topic will be Care of the Elderly. The final meeting of the year will be held at Valentine's Mansion, near Gants Hill Station on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 8pm and will take the form of a Christmas/ Chanukah party.

Isabel Bala

## **ST. JAMES' PRAYER PARTNERS**

Val - Louise, Margaret M. - Steven, Isabel - Marisa,  
Diane - Graham, Kathleen T. - Eileen

*God, you are amazing  
Out of nothing you created all that we know,  
And all we will ever discover.  
You turn a single drop into a flowing river,  
A tiny grain into a towering mountain.  
You are bounteous and extravagant.  
From the smallest beginning, your works know no end.*

*So here I am! I am just me!  
As weak as I am, as little as I have –  
With my faith just the size of a mustard seed.  
Amazing God, work through me.*

***Karen Campbell***

## **THAMES NORTH SYNOD Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

The Synod was held at Ealing Green URC/ Methodist Church, and after being welcomed by the Moderator, Revd Dr Andrew Prasad, the Opening Worship was led by Revds Dr Jennifer Smith and Sue McCoan. We then heard something about the work of the Ealing Green Church in the locality before moving on to the business part of the meeting.

The Minutes of the previous Synod were scrutinised and after a few amendments were accepted. We then had an update on the closure of Queen's Park URC and heard that the appeal against its closure had been rejected. The Revd James Fields next informed us about the death of Revd Norman Barry Jones, offering thanks for his work

as a minister in the URC. We later heard of ministerial moves in and out of the Synod and of the Revds Shahbaz Javed and Edward Sanniez being appointed as Synod Pastoral Consultants in a voluntary capacity.

Revd Derek Lindfield has been appointed as Safeguarding Officer for the Synod so he reminded us that each church should have an up-to-date Safeguarding Policy, and a Safeguarding audit will need to be done by each church by March 2017. Help with this is available from the Synod. Other churches and groups using our premises also need to be aware of safeguarding requirements.

Next we had a series of reports from General Assembly which had taken place at Southport in July this year. Rachel Southwood spoke on behalf of URC Youth, telling of her experience at General Assembly. Revd Jane Weedon spoke on 'Walking the Way' which encourages us to embrace the discipleship habit and that TLS is to be developed into a discipleship course.

The deployment of ministers had been discussed at Assembly too. We heard that there are currently 383 ministers in the URC and this number needs to increase.

The Same-Sex Marriage debate had a prominent place in the national news after Assembly, with a resolution being passed that local churches can decide on whether to conduct such marriages or not.

A task group is to be set up to consider the purpose of General Assembly with the aim of reducing costs. The 2018 Assembly will be held in Nottingham and will be more austere. New technologies

are to be introduced for General Assembly where people can participate at a distance.

We then split up into groups to discuss the authorisation of Elders to take Communion Services in the absence of an ordained minister. In my group we agreed that it would be acceptable for an elder to lead a Communion Service, providing appropriate training had been given.

After this we heard that a Task Group is to set up to encourage churches to be more environmentally friendly, caring for God's creation and praying for those in developing countries affected by climate change.

Other topics discussed at Assembly were the renewal of Trident, the new electronic URC logo, a possible replacement for 'Rejoice & Sing', 'Reform' magazine now being available in a downloadable version, and the URC website which is not easy to use, apparently. This was followed by a series of Notices.

- Youth assembly is to be held at Whitemoor Lakes, in Staffordshire from 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> January 2017, with hopefully over 200 young people attending from Thames North Synod.
- A Church and Society event will take place at Hertford URC on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October from 10.00am - 1.30pm.
- Pilots are celebrating their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at Vine URC on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October from 11.00am - 4:30pm with an 'All Aboard!' event for 5-18 year olds.
- Francis Ackroyd reminded us that new modules for TLS Lite would be starting in January 2017.
- The importance of lay ministry is to be recognised with a gathering of Lay Leaders soon to be held.

We then had a time of worship led by Revds Jane Weedon and Henriette Wentink, incorporating the Christian Aid presentation at General Assembly which focussed on 'Change the Story' around refugees. General Assembly supported the proposition that we should write to our local newspapers about the way refugees are wrongly presented in the media and ask them to tell positive stories about refugees being made welcome.

The afternoon session began with a Gathering Song and then we heard some more reports from General Assembly, including the decision to allow young people of good standing within their church or youth forum to attend Synod or General Assembly, even though they are not URC members.

Recognition was then given by Synod to the Chiltern, East London, and the Enfield and East Hertfordshire Groups of churches. Next, it was announced that Chigwell Row URC is to close on 30<sup>th</sup> September after 232 years of Christian witness and service in the Chigwell Row area. St. John's, Northwood and St. Martin's Oxhey are to amalgamate and the new church will be known as St. John's URC, Northwood. Claremont URC and Harecourt URC are to combine also, and the new church will be known as Islington URC.

The business of Synod was then completed and the closing worship began with a song composed by Anne Sardeson, entitled 'We are who we are.' This was followed by the 'Vagabond Song' and then we finished around 3.20pm with a short Communion Service. It had been an interesting day and as always, good to meet up with old friends and people from other churches within the Synod.

Isabel Bala

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**London Inter Faith Centre programme**  
**125 Salusbury Rd, London NW6 6RG**  
(website: <http://londoninterfaith.org.uk>)

### **FESTIVAL OF NON-VIOLENCE** **8-20<sup>th</sup> November - Exhibitions, Talks, workshops**

#### **Exhibition – ‘Weapons to Works of Art’**

‘Music Man’ – a sculpture by Mozambique artist Kester on display with iconic photographs of works originally created for the initiative ‘Weapons into Art’ transforming decommissioned weapons into striking pieces of sculpture. The exhibit provokes reflection on the global trade in arms fuelling conflict, the impact of war and initiatives for peace. *Entrance free.*

#### **Silent Vigil for the Middle East**

Tuesday 8 November, 5pm-6pm - *Exhibition open 4pm-5pm*  
A place to come together and hold all those affected by the conflicts in the Middle East in our hearts in silence. A space for people of all faiths and none. *Free event – all welcome.*

#### **Remembering Armistice Day**

Friday 11 November, 10.15am-11.30am (provisional) -*Exhibition open 11.30am-1.30pm*  
An intergenerational event bringing adults and students together to mark Armistice Day, remember those fallen in conflicts around the world and as an intention to work together for peace. *Free event – please book.*

#### **Visions of Peace: achievable or not? – Keynote Event**

Saturday 12 November, 4pm – 6pm (doors open for refreshments at 3pm) - *Exhibition open 3pm*

How do we make choices that value, rather than harm life? What role does our relationship to the Earth have on conflicts between people? Can individuals ever make a difference? Join us for an afternoon of thought-provoking and lively conversation led by a panel of inspiring guest speakers, including Marina Cantacuzino - Founder, The Forgiveness Project; Justine Huxley – Director, St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace; Usama Hasan – Senior Researcher at Quilliam Foundation and formerly a ‘Jihadist’ fighter against Russian forces in Afghanistan, and Bruce Kent, long-time peace campaigner and Vice President of CND.

*Please book. £10 on the door; no-one turned away due to cost.*

#### **‘Stories to Live By: faith based stories and their meaning for today’**

Sunday 13 November, 2.45pm-5pm *Exhibition open until 6pm*  
Join us for a vivid sharing of what faith traditions teach us about violence and non-violence. Is violence ever justified? An afternoon of storytelling, reflection and discussion that remind us of different paths to non-violence. Facilitated by Rev’d Maggie Hindley, Co-director of The London Inter Faith Centre and Minister of St Andrew’s. *Free event*

#### **‘Squabbling Children of Abraham? A look at the way we use polemic’** a talk by Peter Colwell

Sunday 13 November, 6pm-7.30pm *Exhibition open from 5pm*  
In interfaith dialogue we often seek after common ground, but as Jews, Christians and Muslims we also carry within our traditions polemical writings about each other which often have a persistence about them. What does polemic tell us about the relationships between these three faiths, what do they tell us about how religion

interacts with wider culture, and how might we, as people of faith, make a contribution to ongoing reconciliation? Peter Colwell is Deputy General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

*Please book. £10 on the door; no-one turned away due to cost.*

**‘A teaching for all times: Non-violence and Gandhi’** a talk by William Rhind

Monday 14 November, 7.30pm – 9:30pm *Exhibition open from 5:30pm*

A talk about the life and work of M. Gandhi and its relevance and meaning for activists today.

William Rhind is Outreach Worker of The Gandhi Foundation.

*Please book. £10 on the door; no-one turned away due to cost.*

**‘Words can be walls or windows’** a workshop with Maria Arpa

Tuesday 15 November, 6.30pm – 8:30pm

How do we break down barriers and continue having a conversation when we meet resistance, hostility, anger or resentment? Join us for an evening of learning and participation as we dip into the ‘Dialogue Road Map’ – effective communications tool created by Maria Arpa designed to break down barriers and bring engagement.

Maria Arpa is Founder and CEO of Centre for Peaceful Solutions.

*Please book. £10 on the door; no-one turned away due to cost.*

**‘Devouring the Earth or eating ourselves: who is doing violence to whom?’** a workshop with Sarah Deco

Thursday 17 November, 10am-1pm *Exhibition open from 9.15am*

Join us for a writing workshop with local storyteller Sarah Deco who will be using an ancient tale as a stimulus for our writing. No experience of storytelling or creative writing needed, just a willingness to explore thoughts, experiences and reflections through

words. All welcome. Spaces limited to 12 people. Sarah Deco is convener of the North London Traditional storytelling Circle and a psychotherapist.

*Please book. £10 on the door; no-one turned away due to cost.*

**Silence and stories - a Walk** with Jules Allen

Sunday 20 November, 2pm-4.30pm *Exhibition open at 4.30pm*

An opportunity to learn about and participate in walking meditation, together with a chance to hear the stories of some of those now resting in Paddington Cemetery. Event ends with tea, cake and a space for sharing. Begins and ends at the London Inter Faith Centre. Jules Allen is an inveterate walker and meditator. *Free event – all welcome*

**Cockfosters Centre for Spirituality, 29 Bramley Road, London N14 4HE**

***Poetry Evening with Revd David Nash***

4<sup>th</sup> Nov. 7.30pm - 9.30pm

***Contemplative Imagination and Ignatian Spirituality - an evening hosted by the Chemin Neuf Community***

23<sup>rd</sup> November 7.30pm – 9.30pm

To book a place for either event:

Telephone 020 84496648

