

FOREST GROUP NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2017

From the minister:

Dear Friends,

May I begin by wishing you every blessing for 2017.

I have to say that since returning to work in the New Year I have sat in a number of fora where folk have expressed great concern for the future, given results in 2016 referendum and election and what they foresee this year. I wouldn't normally do this, but may I share something of my own current spiritual path to illustrate a possible way of looking at things in order to cope.

I feel a pull in two different directions. One part of me looks forward to being part of a community where my place is not determined by my role but by roots (my mother and grandmother were born on the Wirral and my mother lived the last twenty-five years of her life there). The other part senses a strong call to self-disciplined reflection on the truth that here we have no lasting city but look for one that is to come (Hebrews 13, verse 14). And so life is always about the duty of making the best of things amidst the mix of the good, the ordinary, the downright ghastly and everything in between those three, which is the reality of how things are. Somehow when I take up the challenge to resist the siren call of finding paradise now, it is easier to live in each day and find good and lovely things despite.....

Our Lord promised a hundred times more brothers, sisters, houses and fields, with persecutions as well, and in the age to come, eternal life. The Church should try to show what can be and will be in what is, and it is enough to do what we can.

I look forward to trying to work out with you what that means this year in the communities we serve.

Richard

SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY (All services commence at 10.30 am unless otherwise stated)

Chingford

5th **Morning Worship with Holy Communion and Prayers**

for Healing leader to be announced

12th **9.45 Service of Holy Communion**

Morning Worship led by Revd Richard Mortimer followed by Church Meeting

19th **Youth Service** led by Revd Ulrike Bell linked to 27th Chingford Scout Group 90th Anniversary

26th **Morning Worship** leader to be announced

5th *Morning Worship with Holy Communion and Prayers for Healing led by Revd Kevin Swaine*

Highams Park

- 5th **Morning Worship** led by Revd June Colley
12th **Morning Worship with Holy Communion** led by
Revd Jane Mortimer
19th **Morning Worship** led by Revd Richard Mortimer
26th **Morning Worship** led by Keith Brame
5th *Morning Worship led by Trevor Cottrell*

Ray Lodge

- 5th **Morning Worship with Holy Communion**
led by Trevor Cottrell (weather permitting)
12th **Morning Worship** led by the Elders
19th **Morning Worship** led by Revd Kevin Swaine (with
Holy Communion if not held on 5th February)
26th **Morning Worship** led by Revd Richard Mortimer
5th *Morning Worship led by the Elders*

St. James', Buckhurst Hill

- 5th **Morning Worship with Holy Communion** led by
Revd Kevin Swaine (Sacramental Offertory for the
Bible Society)
12th **Morning Worship** led by Jenny Howland
19th **Morning Worship** led by Steven Neville
26th **Morning Worship** led by Trevor Cottrell followed by
Church Meeting

- 5th *Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Revd
Richard Mortimer (Sacramental Offertory for London
Churches' Refugee Network)*

Woodford Green

- 5th **Morning Worship with Holy Communion** led by
Revd Richard Mortimer
12th **Morning Worship** led by Revd June Colley
4.00 pm Messy Church
19th **Morning Worship** led by Revd June Colley
26th **Morning Worship** led by Revd Ulrike Bell
5th *Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by
Revd Ulrike Bell*

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

- Thursday 2nd **Forest Group Pulpit Supply meeting 10.30am**
At Ray Lodge Church
St. James 7.30pm Elders' Meeting in Church
Room
Friday 3rd **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Knit & Natter Group
Monday 6th **St. James** 2-3.30pm Craft/Prayer Group in
Church Room
Tuesday 7th **Forest Group Coffee & Conversation** 10.30am
at the Woodford manse
Woodford Green 8.00pm Elders Meeting
Friday 10th **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Neighbours' Club

Saturday 11th **Chingford** 9.45 am Art Exhibition and Book Sale
 Thursday 16th **Chingford** 8pm Elders
 Friday 17th **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Knit & Natter Group
 Sat/Sun 18th/19th **Chingford** 27th Chingford Scout Group 90th Anniversary event
 Saturday 18th **Woodford Green and Highams Park** 12 noon Meal out at The Eagle (nos. by 11th Feb to June Colley)
 Friday 24th **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Neighbours' Club

March

Thursday 2nd **Forest Group midweek Worship** 7.30pm on the theme of 'Lent' – venue to be confirmed
 Friday 3rd **Ray Lodge** 2.00pm Knit & Natter Group
 Sunday 5th **Forest Group Council** 2.00pm at Woodford Green
 Tuesday 7th **Forest Group Coffee & Conversation** 10.30am at the Woodford manse
Woodford Green 8.00pm Elders Meeting
 Thursday 9th **St. James** 7.30pm Elders' Meeting in Church Room
 Saturday 11th **St. Paul's Woodford Bridge** 7.15pm Bible Society Quiz



- *...is a fun and creative form of church, exploring a Bible story together in lots of different ways*
- ***Our Messy Church relaunch in January at Woodford Green URC was a great success. 40 people came of all ages to join in a number of activities around the story of creation. "Big Bang" was the theme, and big bangs were made: with real explosives, with colours, with giant bubbles and with the building of a huge dinosaur in the sanctuary.***
- ***Everybody, any age, welcome to this fun way of worshipping God! Do bring a friend! It's for families, everybody young and old and in the middle! Kids please bring a parent/carer.***



**"All you need is Love"
 (Valentine's Day)**

Sunday February 12, 4-6pm

Music Games Science experiments
Story celebration Crafts
Yummy food! Prayer Adventure

BIBLE SOCIETY QUIZ 2017

Saturday 11th March

7.15 for 7.30pm

Beginning with a Ploughman's Supper

Bring your own drinks and glasses

To be held at

St. Paul's Church, Woodford Bridge

Tickets £8

All proceeds to the Bible Society

Please book your place (or table of 8)

via June Colley

????????????????



WATCH AND TALK

This was the title of an article in November's edition of Reform. In it, Jeremy Clarke, a film critic and presumably a member or friend of the URC encourages churches to watch films together, either in cinemas, or gathered together around TV's to discuss DVD's. We have just enjoyed the Faith Pictures course in the Forest Group and in large part the course was enlivened by the very vivid use of video clips shown on DVD. They helped us to think and speak about how our faith affects us and how we communicate that faith within our own church and then to others beyond our walls. Films are part of our culture and as Christians we are part of our culture too- we may have varied responses to films as individuals but it is interesting to discuss together what messages the film conveys to us both as individuals and as part of a church- based group of Christians

One of the films Jeremy Clarke currently recommends to church groups is "I Daniel Blake", Ken Loach's blistering attack on the UK welfare system. The story is harsh and very

real yet Loach also manages to draw out the compassion and humanity of many caught up in the “system”. Several of us decided to go and watch the film at South Woodford Odeon early on Tuesday evening, 15th November. There were not many apart from ourselves in the cinema for that showing but we all came away profoundly affected by what we had seen and are still talking about the film several weeks on; the scene which shows the church’s role in helping at food banks was one example of how we could all think about how the church gets involved in poverty and its alleviation. There was much to reflect on and then act on.

We have also been to see “United Kingdom”, the true, incredible story of Prince Seretse Karma of what is now Botswana and the woman he fell in love with and married, a white office worker called Ruth Williams of Blackheath. Marrying across the colour divide in 1947 caused hostility in both England and Betchuanaland, both partners paying the price of alienation from their families as well as exposing the deceitful nature of Colonial policies at the time.

There are many films we could consider going to see together- how about we form a Forest Group Film Club? We may even find others who are not regular church-goers find a trip to the pictures a good way of getting to know us better? And us them? Local cinemas such as South Woodford Odeon charge about £7 for a ticket, with some daytime films costing seniors only £3 including a biscuit and cup of tea!

If you think a Film Club might be a good idea, please let your Forest Group Council rep know and we can discuss this at Forest Group Council.

Margaret Minoletti

FOREST GROUP PRAYER WALK **Thursday 5th January**

Fortunately, we were blessed with fine weather when thirteen of us set off on a circular walk at 11am, from Knighton Lane car park through Knighton Woods and Lords Bushes, on the first Thursday of the New Year, with Geoff Packe carrying a Forest Group flag which he had specially made for the occasion.

After an opening prayer by Richard in the car park, our first stop was at the Pulpit Oak, a 400 year old tree which marks the boundary between Redbridge and Epping Forest District. This may have been a rallying point for Commoners threatened by enclosure of the forest in the 19th century. It was easy to imagine this, standing under this noble tree which has seen so many changes in its life span. *Starting the Journey* was the theme of the readings and prayers there, led by St. James’ URC.

Then we continued our walk to the magnificent pine tree near the lake, where Janet Jackson from Ray Lodge URC, did some readings and prayers on the theme of *Stumbling Stones*, thinking about growing stronger through adversity.

We then walked on over the frosty ground, through some muddy patches, until we came to the unusual Red Oak tree, much taller than the common English oak, with its pointed, red leaves strewn beneath it. There Sandra Millan from Chingford

URC led us, with a reading and a prayer, thinking about *Directions and Getting Lost* - thankfully we didn't during the walk!



WINDERMERE CENTRE

LENT RETREAT

based on the film *Jesus of Montreal*,
6th-9th March

The Easter story is so central to Christianity that it can become almost too familiar. In addition, the pressures of putting together services for Holy Week and Easter can sometimes leave relatively little space for church folk to inhabit the story for themselves.

This retreat will draw on the film *Jesus of Montreal* as a way into the story. The film itself follows a group of actors, engaged to re-think an annual passion play that had lost its spark. As they are drawn into the story, they meet its freshness and its power -- which becomes truly transformative after the authorities, sensing that something is becoming beyond their control, seek to close it down. For this retreat, we will work as a group and on our own, in speech and in silence, reacting to film and to scripture, to explore where the aliveness of the story calls us.

For further details contact the Windermere Centre

Tel: 015394 44902

Windermere.centre@gmail.com

Many people find it helps to be able to go for walks on retreat, so it is worth bringing walking things, and waterproofs.

MOVING STORIES

An update on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories



The political situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories continues to be fractious and impact the socio-economic development of the region in a myriad of ways. Bitterness and violence are entrenched between Israelis and Palestinians and there is currently no peace process to encourage hope.

Since 2007, Gaza has experienced three military offensives putting ever greater strain on an already crumbling infrastructure. Israeli policies continue to control nearly all aspects of Palestinian lives and abuse their most basic rights. Israel's ongoing occupation continues to be characterised by its expanding settlement programme with approximately 600,000 Israelis now living in illegal settlements on appropriated Palestinian land.

The current Israeli Government is dominated by a right wing coalition which is creating facts on the ground in OPT at an alarming rate. In addition to regular settlement housing tenders, demolition of Palestinian property continues unabated. In January and February 2016, Israel unlawfully demolished or seized 104 donor funded humanitarian structures in Area C – in 2015 a total of 110 such structures were destroyed representing a significant increase in this practice. The government is also threatening civil society space, with new bills introduced in parliament which target NGOs that challenge Israel's human rights record, particularly on Israel's policies in OPT.

Palestinian political division between Hamas and Fatah has destroyed any effective representation and, along with Israeli policies, exacerbated the split between the West Bank and Gaza. Growing unemployment and a reliance on international aid have become the norm for Palestinians, and the economy is deteriorating. The Palestinian economy is fundamentally a developing one, which exists within an economic envelope, a sub-economy of the highly developed Israeli one, meaning that inputs and infrastructure are prohibitively expensive and contribute to de-development.

As well as the blockade of Gaza and the restrictions that Israel puts on the movement of people that make it almost impossible for most to travel, study or work outside the Strip, there are also restrictions on movement which make it very difficult for people to work in East Jerusalem or in Israel as well as other areas of the West Bank. There are also severe trade restrictions and economic penalties imposed upon Palestinian farmers and other businesses who wish to reach external markets, all of which are in the name of 'security'.

Israeli society is polarised, with the coastal region largely immune from the conflict and those who advocate for the rights of Palestinians and for peace and justice risk being dismissed in public as traitors and tools of foreign agencies or governments. Within both Palestinian and Israeli societies, it is rare to find positive images of the other and de-legitimisation is rife, and violent and often fatal attacks are increasingly common in Israel and in the West Bank.

Although the day to day impact of these factors are minimised by the remote management of partner programmes, inevitably there is significant impact on the work of our partners. Of particular significance, and increasing concern, is the de-legitimisation campaign against civil society, particularly those working in the area of human rights. Many partners have faced harassment, restrictions and challenges to their work, and all report that the environment in which they are working is becoming more challenging.

Another key challenge is the funding environment. As the crises in the wider Middle East region continue, inevitably attention and money is shifting away from the long-term conflict in IOPT to more immediate, visible issues. All partners report their funding opportunities are shrinking and partners (including Christian Aid in some cases) are withdrawing support due to limits on resources. This will inevitably impact on Christian Aid's ability to maintain our current level of work in IOPT, and to develop it further.

Christian Aid has continued to actively advocate and campaign on behalf of those whose voices are not heard in IOPT. Although considerable work is constantly underway, advocacy and campaigning towards policy change can take a

long time, often with little visible reward. The best result can sometimes just be to see things 'stand still' – while they don't appear to improve, they do not worsen. CA and partners in IOPT combine local and national advocacy efforts with projects on the ground to create international pressure on Israel on specific issues.

Palestinian Bedouin citizens of Israel, inhabitants of the Naqab/Negev desert since the seventh century, are one of the most vulnerable communities in Israel, facing a permanent threat of displacement, home demolitions and dispossession. A state plan developed in 2011, called 'the Praver-Begin Plan', envisioned 35 Bedouin villages in the south of Israel being threatened with destruction. If implemented, the plan was going to see the forced displacement of 70,000 Bedouin citizens of Israel, and the dispossession of their historical lands.

Christian Aid partners, ACRI and Adalah fought against the plan, developing position papers, holding meetings with government officials, raising awareness of the plan and advocating for the rights of the Bedouin people at the national and international level. Partly as a result of these efforts, the Praver plan was frozen in December 2013. However, the Praver plan has still not been cancelled, and Christian Aid is continuing to advocate on behalf of the Bedouin people at a number of levels and through a variety of networks.

We pray:

*From the land of the Resurrection
and the cradle of the promise of salvation
to all humankind through Jesus Christ our Lord, and with a
candle of hope,
we pray to you, God our Father,
that the actions of the peace seekers and peace makers may
bear fruit, so that:
Hope will take the place of despair,
Justice will prevail over oppression,
Peace will turn strife into love.*

(from Palestine Committee of Women's World Day of Prayer,
Jerusalem)

STORIES FOR CHANGE **Bangladesh**

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated and disaster-prone countries in the world. The country has a population of over 160 million people, of which 80 percent in rural areas and depend largely on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Christian Aid started working in Bangladesh in 1972, and they are currently working with 19 partners across the country. Partners range from national level policy and advocacy organisations that focus on climate change to partners that

work in the field dealing with the issue of secure livelihoods and gender.

As the global climate changes, Bangladesh is likely to experience more than most, making it an 'impact hotspot.' Recent extreme temperatures before the 2015 monsoon demonstrated how average temperature rise can also increase the likelihood of dangerous heatwaves. Both average and extreme rainfall is projected to further increase, which will raise flood risks from the large rivers that meet in the country's floodplains

This combination of increased flooding and moisture stress means that the 80% of Bangladeshis whose lives depend on agriculture will have to substantially increase their resilience.

Despite this overwhelming set of contextual circumstances, over the last year, Christian Aid Bangladesh has made strides in advancing and contributing towards 'positive change' and 'ending poverty.'

In total, 27,541 beneficiaries have been reached through Christian Aid's resilience livelihoods programmes over the last year. Beneficiaries have been able to increase their income considerably through adopting various new livelihood options including agriculture, fishing and poultry farming. Average household income has increased from BDT 89,502 in 2014/2015, to BDT 100,623 in 2015/2016, indicating progress towards escaping the cycle of poverty for the targeted households.

Christian Aid's work on inclusive markets has made considerable progress in Bangladesh over the last year with diversification in household income being made through activities such as block-batik dying, tailoring, crab fattening, vermin composting, new vegetable cultivation techniques, and cattle rearing for milk. These new sources of income generation have helped vulnerable communities adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

In order to cope with the unprecedented impact of climate change, 7,728 community members, of which 5,573 are females, are now practicing various climate change adaptation measure against various extreme climate events such as floods, droughts, cyclones, waterlogging, salinity intrusion and river erosion. These adaptation measures have included floating gardens, hanging vegetable gardens in water logging areas, saline tolerant rice varieties, saline tolerant maize and sunflowers; duck and lamb rearing. Such have paved the way for increasing and diversifying crop and vegetable production amid extreme and uncertain weather patterns.

Chingford United Reformed Church

ART EXHIBITION AND BOOK SALE

**Saturday 11th February
Buxton Road E4 7DP
10am – 4pm**

Come and look at some art work from different age groups and choose the ones you like best.

Take part in a workshop:

**Paint a card with Pam Raworth £5
– all materials provided – take home
Booking required**

and/or

**Make a seaside collage with Jane Mortimer
for a donation – all materials provided**

Refreshments including soup and cake



Fund Raising Event at Chingford URC

ART COMPETITION

Calling all ARTISTS!

The theme is Happiness



Open to all ages with 4 groups:
5 and under
6-10
11-14
15 and over
£1 an entry up to age14
15 and over £2 per entry

Entries can be framed, or with a cardboard frame, or on a backing sheet

If you would like to submit a painting or art work for our exhibition please contact Linda Smith
Lindavsmith13@outlook.com
by Sunday 5th February

Prizes for winners of each group

NOTES FROM MEETINGS OF CHINGFORD URC

Elders Meeting 17th November

- Christmas Fair – Forest Group Youth Group now known as 'Perspective' to advertise their homelessness project
- Arrangements are in hand for Art Exhibition/ Book sale on 11th February; Pam and Jane are running art workshops
- Following the Forest Group Day on 8th October we have been asked to give our views on Chingford's mission and the role of the Forest Group for discussion by Forest Group representatives on 28th November. The position is summarised in Richard's paper which was agreed at the last Elder's meeting and the recent Church Meeting. Malcolm Smith circulated the Church's Vision Statement, Outreach Action Plan and an updated Mission Statement as background documents.
- Richard Mortimer explained that Waltham Forest Citizens UK has been set up to bring together churches and other community bodies in promoting community activities such as helping refugees. Church meeting needs to agree the FG proposal to sign up as members of the body.
- The proposal from Revd Ulrike Bell that she become a full time minister after Richard's retirement was welcomed. It was noted that the allocation of ministry to the Forest Group will be reviewed on Richard's retirement by the Pastoral Committee. Ulrike's ministry could be extended by varying the call rather than reappointment. If the scoping was still 1.5 ministers, it was possible that a full time minister could be shared with the Heath and Havering group. .
- The proposed amalgamation of Highams Park and Woodford churches has now been agreed by the Woodford elders. If

their church meeting also agrees various resolutions will need to be agreed by both churches.

- We noted the proposals for closer cooperation between the FG Churches on finance and fabric issues.

Church Meeting 27th November – 19 Members present, Secretary in Chair

- Agreed proposal that terms of Elders Election be varied so that all 5 nominees who have agreed to stand can be elected to strengthen the Eldership in 2017, when decisions need to be made about the Forest Group and in view of the number of elders coming to the end of their term in 2017
- Result of Elders Election – elected Helen Haigh, Kevin Haigh, Heather Nicholaou, Jaqui Stolar, Jean Terry
- Thanks to outgoing elders Margaret Brown, Daphne Pollock, Sam Roney, Rob Stolar,
- Agreed proposal that the terms of the Forest Group representatives election be varied so that all 3 nominees who have agreed to stand can be elected on the basis that any two of three will attend Forest Group Council Meetings. David Nursaw, Malcolm Smith, Malcolm Allardwere duly elected.
- Agreed Forest Group Constitution document as circulated to elders and made available at Church Meeting.
- Agreed that FG of Churches can sign up to membership of WF Citizens UK on behalf of all the FG churches
- Agreed to accept revised Mission Statement and Vision Statement and Outreach Action Plan as a statement of Chingford's mission. We recognise that some aspirations such as bible study and retreats are best carried out with the other FG Churches. We suggest that the FG churches exchange their Mission documents so that common themes can be identified for the FG Mission statement.

Church Meeting 11th December 2016 – 20 Members present, Revd Richard Mortimer in Chair

- Agreed Revd Ulrike Bell's proposal to become a full time minister on the retirement of Revd Richard Mortimer
- Noted arrangements for viewing the Woodford church building on 21st January 9am-4pm and the Forest Group Day on 28th January at Woodford 10am-3pm.

Church Meeting 8th January 2017 Attended by 19 members (2 apologies) Revd Richard Mortimer in the Chair

- The meeting took the form of an open discussion on the Mission of the Chingford church and the Forest Group in preparation for Forest Group meetings later in January
- The Church Secretary set the scene by referring to documents previously circulated, which included a Vision statement, Outreach Action Plan, Mission statement and a paper prepared by Richard summarising our views on the relationship between our mission and that of the Forest Group.
- We appreciate the support of the Forest Group and the provision of shared ministry through the Forest Group
- However, we do feel that we need to give priority to own mission in our own local area.
- We need to keep our church open on Sundays for those members and adherents who want to come to their own local church every Sunday and for our regular work with the young people.
- We should co-operate with the other local churches in a mission to North Chingford.
- Although Churches Together in North Chingford is not as active as before because the parish church have their own priorities, the Ridgeway Evangelical and South Chingford

Baptists churches are attending meetings. Our co-operation with the Methodist church may improve once they have resolved their plans for the future

- Up to 7 children participate in the choir at the parish church and also support our Junior Family church and see this as a unifying Christian experience.
- Transport links for non-car drivers with the other FG churches are poor so our members find it difficult to attend services and events elsewhere.
- The Church Administrator gave us some background information relating to the other FG churches.
- We considered whether we could offer more help to the other churches on administration and finance, but felt that our officers were already fully stretched on the administration of our church and would find it difficult to identify spare capacity.
- It was suggested that we have another church meeting on 22nd January following the viewing of the Woodford buildings and before the Forest Group day.

Youth Council 12 January 2017

- 27th Chingford Scout Group Beavers are starting meetings at Gilwell this month. Cubs now have 17 members and are going well under their new leadership team. There are currently 14 Scouts; Malcolm needs to reduce his involvement with the Scouts, but there is no obvious successor. 90th Anniversary celebrations are continuing
- 5th Chingford Brownies and Guides – 32 Brownies and 26 Guides. Guides agreed to share the cost of a new Memorial Honours Board for Leaders and the addition of names, Norma Cooper as Cub Leader and Rosamund Stock as Guide Leader. We need to find someone who can help with the provision of the board and the addition of names.

- Youth Services In view of the poor attendance of uniformed organisations at the youth services we are going to give consideration to continuing these services ten times a year for the youth of the church, but only inviting uniformed organisations on four occasions ie February (Thinking Day), July (Church Picnic), September (Harvest), December (Christmas gifts).
- 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.
- Forest Group Youth Pilots' numbers are increasing but the unit may be moving to Woodford. Messy Church has already moved to Woodford and is starting again in January with regular services on the 2nd Sunday of the month.
- Forest Group Youth Group This is being organised by Red Balloon and meets at Costa Coffee, North Chingford from 5.30 pm to 7pm on Mondays. Meetings are being attended by 10/15 young people made up of junior members of Chingford URC and their friends. There are no young people from other Forest Group churches at the moment. They are carrying out a homelessness project and looking at ways that they can assist the homeless shelter in Walthamstow. The Guides agreed to publicise this among their members.
- Child Friendly Church Heather Nicholaou and Sam Roney are working on the reapplication for recognition. Training is being organised for leaders including first aid. Sebastian Roney is shooting a video for the church website. Arrangements will be made for Questers to take a church service.
- Next Meeting 6th April 7.30pm

HIGHAMS PARK NEWS

Prayer Partners

<i>Pam</i>	<i>Richard</i>	<i>Joyce</i>	<i>Ken</i>
<i>Francis</i>	<i>Margaret</i>	<i>Helen</i>	<i>Helen</i>
<i>Valerie</i>	<i>Kay</i>	<i>Lorraine</i>	<i>Bernice</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 Joyce on 2nd, Margaret on 9th and Helen Tindall on 20th February.

REFLECTION

Dorothy was looking very cheerful when I bumped into her, so I was surprised when she confided that she'd come from a dentist's appointment.

"I've just finished a course of treatment," she said. "I'm really thrilled it's over, because at first I was so nervous that I nearly backed out of having it done at all. It's silly, I know, but now I'm feeling quite proud of myself."

Silly? I don't think so. Everyone has their own particular fears in life, whether others deem reasonable or not.

It was Eleanor Roosevelt who said these wise words: "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do."

And if you can achieve that – yes, be proud, for you have every reason to be!

Thanks to The Friendship Book of Francis Gay

ST. JAMES' CHURCH MEETING NOTES NOVEMBER 2016

Our November Meeting was chaired by Margaret Minoletti, in the absence of Revd. Richard Mortimer, and was attended by sixteen people.

We began by exchanging news of the church family before moving on to other matters. Roger Neville presented the audited accounts for the last year and these were accepted by the Meeting. He also expressed some concerns about final draft of the Forest Group Constitution, so the meeting agreed we should wait until these were resolved before accepting the document.

We then discussed how we could act upon the ideas put forward for the future work of St. James' at the Forest Group Day on 8th October. These included working more closely with the Roman Catholic congregation who share our premises, linking up with the Parish Council by publicising our church activities and attending some of their meetings. We may hold a Harvest Supper next

Autumn to which allotment holders, hall users and other members of the local community could be invited. Margaret Minoletti will keep us updated about how we can help with the plight of refugees in our country and we will be open to any initiatives from the new youth arrangements in the Forest Group. Already three of our members are on the rota for helping with the *Play Cafe* which meets at Woodford Green UFC on Friday mornings, and two of our members will be helping with *Messy Church* when it re-opens in 2017 at Woodford.

The pre- Christmas Commuter Outreach at the station will take place in the week beginning 12th December, with three of our members helping to give out tea, coffee and cookies. Donations of money and cookies were needed for this way of linking up with our local community. The ecumenical Buckhurst Hill Money Advice Service now has four new volunteer advisers who will undergo training soon, so that is good news and a fine example of churches working together locally. The next Churches Together Meeting will be held at the Baptist Church on 16th January.

Twenty-five shoe boxes had been filled with suitable gifts for *Operation Christian Child* again this year, more than last year, and had been taken to the head office of Samaritan's Purse in Buckhurst Hill.

We were hoping our three occasions of Carol Singing in December would go ahead successfully with lots of people turning up to help with the singing, and we are indebted to Geoff Packe who accompanies us on his mandolin.

Donations of mince pies, and people willing to do readings were requested for our Carols and Mince Pies Evening on 17th December which should be an enjoyable event. The presents from our Gift Services in December will go to Mill Grove, a children's home in South Woodford this year and people were advised about suitable gifts.

The Church Directory and rotas for Reading and Door Duty will need to be updated for 2017 so hopefully the Church Secretary will get round to doing that soon! Members were reminded that when the organist starts playing before the service begins, we should be seated and the person lighting the candle should inform the organist of this. Quietness at the beginning of the church service is important as we prepare ourselves to worship God. Hopefully, we will be able to do this for many more years at St. James'!

Isabel Bala

ST JAMES' PRAYER PARTNERS

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

When I am lost

Guide me.

When I have decisions to make

Lead me

When I find caring costs too much

Challenge me.

When I find the routine dulls my awareness of you

Inspire me.

*When I walk in darkness
Let your light shine brilliantly
When I find myself in a land of shadows
Let your light shine on me,
filling me with the joy
that comes from knowing you have set me free.*

Wayne Hawkins



CAROL SINGING 2016

On the afternoon of December 2nd a small group of us from St. James' sang carols for half an hour in Queens' Road, Buckhurst Hill, as part of the Christmas Festival and on Monday 19th December, four of us sang carols for around forty-five minutes to

the residents of Loughton hall, including June Nugent. Many of them joined in and hopefully enjoyed it.

On December 21st, ten of us went to Buckhurst Hill Station, in the evening, and sang carols for over an hour to the people coming and going there and £226 was collected for the Redbridge Single Homeless Project.

Thank you very much to everyone who turned up to help, at such a busy time of year and especially to Geoff Packe, who accompanied us on the mandolin each time.

Isabel Bala

THAMES NORTH SYNOD Saturday 19th November 2016

The Synod was held at City Temple in London, and after being welcomed by the Moderator, Revd Dr Andrew Prasad, the Opening Worship was led by Josh Kane, on the guitar. Simon Fairington, the Synod Clerk, then gave a talk on the origins of the URC, before we moved on to the business part of the meeting. The Minutes of the previous Synod were scrutinised and after one amendment were accepted.

We then had news of Ministers. Revd Robert Courtney, who had celebrated sixty years of ministry in July this year, was congratulated and he spoke briefly of how he had enjoyed his time as a minister in the URC. Revd Maggie Hindley will leave the Interfaith Centre and the church of St. Anne's and St. Andrew's at the end of this year and she was thanked for all

her good work there. Thanks were also expressed to Fergus Urquhart, Trust Officer and Office Manager who is taking early retirement and will be leaving in January 2017. Revd R. Vaughan Jones was due to move from Islington URC to Union Chapel at the end of November and Keith Cootes has been appointed Health and Safety Advisor to the Synod. We heard of the recent death of Revd John Humphrys and prayers were said for six ministers who are unwell.

After that, Revd Francis Ackroyd told us that certificates had been awarded to four TLS students. He reminded us that TLS is in a transition period, the previous courses being phased out. Replacement courses would appear in around two years' time. At present eleven students are still completing the second year of the Foundation Course. He encouraged people to engage with TLS Lite which gives Lay Training, 'Aspiring to More'. Local sessions with study days are being held around the Synod. Three groups already meet in Amersham, and eighteen in Tottenham. He gave three reasons for doing TLS Lite - just for fun, wanting to become a Synod Lay Preacher, or becoming an Assembly-accredited Lay Preacher. Local Area groups could run these courses. Tutors would be needed to run the sessions, five of which would be Bible studies, five would comprise theology, and five would be preaching sessions. Course books would be provided by the URC and any Group wishing to run a TLS Lite course should speak to Anne Sardeson.

We then heard about some changes to Local Area Groups. Next, Tony Obi-Ezekpazu presented the 2015 audited accounts and the budget for 2017. These were accepted by

Synod and thanks expressed for all the work which had gone into their preparation.

We then had a presentation from Karen Eakins from CCPAS, an independent Christian Safeguarding charity, set up in 1977, which provides professional advice, support and training in all areas of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. We were reminded that each church must have a Safeguarding Policy and have appointed a Safeguarding Co-ordinator. CCPAS can provide training and assistance if this is required and their helpline is available 24/7. Churches are places where everyone is welcome but this can create problems which have to be addressed.

We then split up into groups to discuss how we could be a welcoming church and also have an awareness of safeguarding. We were reminded that Elders, being Trustees of their churches, are responsible for safeguarding, putting policies in place and ensuring they are implemented. They should respond appropriately to allegations of abuse. If the press become involved with a case, Church House should be contacted and they will deal with the matter.

Phase One of a Past Case Review is being undertaken at present with all current ministers' files being checked and Phase Two will be an open invitation to anyone to make known past cases. This subject will be re-visited at the March Synod.

We then moved on to consider the Deployment Policy which is due to be reviewed. Every church in the Synod must have a named minister to give ministerial support even if they share

ministry. The support of lay ministry is important with a collaborative approach needed. We have to find a way to share ministry as every church cannot now expect to have its own minister. By working in groups ministry can be shared.

We heard about the *Free Church Choirs Festival of Church Music* which will take place at Worcester Cathedral on Saturday 14th October 2017. Choirs and individual singers are being recruited for this event and more information about the festival can be obtained from the Free Church Choir's website.

The afternoon session began with a Gathering Song and then we had a report from Soo Webster on the Pilots' 80th anniversary event, *All Aboard*, which had taken place at Vine Church, Ilford on 15th October. Eighty children had attended to celebrate this event.

Simon Rudiger then told us about *Feasts and Festivals 2017*, which is the title of this year's Prayer Handbook. There are many reasons to celebrate in 2017:

- 500 years since the Lutheran Reformation
- 100 years since Constance Coltman was ordained as the first woman to enter Congregational ministry
- 45 years since the URC was founded
- 25 years since Commitment for Life was started

There will be special events held throughout 2017, including a *Big Day Out* at Warwick Castle on Saturday 20th May. Resources are available on the URC website and posters and information about this special year have been sent to all Church Secretaries.

Maggie Hindley then led us in groups to discuss how we should interact with people of other faiths. This was followed by closing worship led by Revd Jane Weedon. 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