



# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER

***High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE***

## **CHURCH CONTACTS**

Malcolm Benson 01865 873843

[mkb@doctors.org.uk](mailto:mkb@doctors.org.uk)

*Associate Minister:* Revd. Dr Colin Thompson  
[colin.thompson@stcatz.ox.ac.uk](mailto:colin.thompson@stcatz.ox.ac.uk)

*Church Secretaries:* Robert Harding &  
Malcolm Benson

email: [secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk)

*Church website:* [www.wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://www.wheatleyurc.org.uk)



## **FEBRUARY 2016**

### Covering Thoughts

*My paintings come in different shapes and sizes and often it is necessary to provide a smaller section in a certain shape. That was the case this week when I needed to send a square image from a very long narrow picture. What section would be most representative of the whole, or what part would stand best on its own to make a new picture? There were so many different possibilities.*

*As I was deliberating and wondering what to do for the newsletter this month I remembered that the week of prayer for Christian Unity comes at this time of the year and what I was doing with my painting seemed to be a possible metaphor for our different denominations.*

*It was as if Christianity was represented by the complete picture, but each part of the Christian church had a section of this whole. Some of these sections were close to each other and even overlapped. Others were separate and appeared quite different. However each was essential for the whole painting and the weave of the underlying canvas was the common support.*

*I suppose the metaphor could be taken further. Just as I was responsible for creating my square image from the whole, we too have been responsible for creating a smaller Christian community which has a wholeness of its own. But it is important to reflect that there is also a bigger picture. Of course that picture is much larger than we can imagine, embracing other faith communities too.*

*Well the newsletter editors prefer square images so I thought that you could see what I selected from *The Eye of the Storm*. The complete painting can be seen below. I wonder what part you would have selected?*

Christine



### OCCASIONAL EVENTS – FEBRUARY

7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Sunday	8.00am 2.30-4.30pm	Prayer Breakfast & Food Bank Sunday Tea, cake & a chat URC Hall
9 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Tuesday	1 00pm	Lunch Club Two
11 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Thursday	10.00am-12.00	Coffee and cake in the hall and church open
16 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club 01844 215513

### WEEKLY EVENTS

Brownies & Rainbows (Term time)	Monday 5.30 pm to 7 pm
Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)	Monday 10 am -1pm
Choir Around the Piano (Term Time)	Monday 7.30 pm to 9 pm
Carers and Toddlers (Term Time)	Monday 9.30 to 11.30 am
Pre-School Music Group (Term time)	Wednesday 9.30 and 10.30 am
Guides (Term time)	Wednesday 7 pm to 8.30 pm
Prayers and Breakfast	Thursday 8.00 am
Mindfulness Sitting Group	Thursday 9.00am to 9.40am
Brownies & Rainbows (Term Time)	Thursday 5 pm to 6.30pm
Table Tennis	Friday 10.30am to 12.noon
Hymn Practice	Sunday 9.30 -9.45am
Pulse Youth Club	Sunday 7.00-900pm

**Disclaimer:** The editors of this newsletter welcome letters, articles and announcements from individuals and organisations but reserve the right to publish or not, and to edit.

## An Evening of Big Band Jazz

with

### George Haslam

and his

## AbINGdON SWINGTime BAND

at

HOLTON VILLAGE HALL,

on

### Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016

### at 8.00 pm

Doors will open at 7.30 pm Admission **£10**  
(concessions £8)

Limited hall capacity, so early booking is  
recommended.

For **RESERVATIONS** text 07836 373034, phone  
**01865 872293**

or e-mail [ah.barry@btinternet.com](mailto:ah.barry@btinternet.com)

Concert proceeds to be shared between  
The Whitworf Trust

(A new trust set up in memory of young local  
musician, James Whitworth) and  
Friends of St Bartholomew's Church, Holton,  
Restoration Fund

**Licensed Bar**

**Raffle**

Dear Friends,

I have been looking at some of the quotations that I put in the blank books that I have been given over the years. I have looked at some of the earlier books which come from the 1980s. The following caught my eye so I share them with you.

Confucius said that if you had two pennies you should spend a penny on bread and a penny on a flower.

The lamps are many but the light is one.

The old Persian carpet makers wove their carpets upside-down. Only when a carpet was finished and was turned over could the weaver see the pattern which all the dark and bright thread had made.

The dangers of life are infinite, and safety is among them [Goethe].

Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever the posture of the body, the soul is on its knees [Victor Hugo].

Much learning does not teach understanding [Heraclitus].

As soon as people decide that all means are permitted to fight evil, then their good becomes indistinguishable from the evil that they set out to destroy [Christopher Dawson].

Although history has long forgotten them, Lambini and Sons are generally credited with the Sistine Chapel floor.

The important thing is not to say: I'm special, but to say: everyone is as special as I am. [C.S.Lewis].

Do small things with great love [Mother Teresa].

The Kotzker Rebbe said there is no more perfect a heart than one that is broken, so why should my doubts not be a highest form of belief?

Is there not a certain satisfaction in the fact that natural limits are set to the life of the individual, so that at its conclusion it may appear as a work of art? [Albert Einstein].

Accept the fact that you are accepted. [Paul Tillich].

Theology is poetry plus, not science minus. [Swedish Proverb].

Richard

**Wheatley United Reformed Church  
MISSION STATEMENT**

**Our Vision**

We are a congregation which endeavours to be faithful to God and seeks to be guided by the Holy Spirit in order to live, proclaim and witness to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

It is our vision that all who share our faith and worship with us may come to know the love, freedom, justice, forgiveness and acceptance of Jesus Christ, and to live, proclaim and witness to the Gospel message.

**Our Mission**

We aim to be a reforming, enquiring, reflective, faithful, inclusive and effective part of the one body of Christ by:

- *sharing the Gospel in ways relevant to today's world through worship which is inclusive and life-affirming and through serving others in whatever ways we can:-*
- *making a difference in our communities and in the wider world, acting upon our concern for justice, peace and the integrity of creation:-*
- *discerning the gifts and vision of all our members, recognizing that we all have a ministry to offer, and providing support for each in the exercise of that ministry:-*
- *developing a deeper understanding of, and dialogue with, other Christians, peoples of other faiths, and those with no faith:-*
- *welcoming all who may wish to join us as we journey together.*

We realize and accept the challenge of such a vision but affirm with joy our determination to make the sacrifices and changes that are needed for us to play our part in the building of the kingdom of God. We believe that, by working together in these ways, we can, by the grace of God, be a church that is inspired by the Gospel and equipped for mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

January 2016

**NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION**

The Communications Ministry Team thought you might find it helpful and interesting to have a brief explanation of the process of production for this newsletter. The Team is responsible for compiling and editing the newsletter, with the current editors being Barbara Joiner and Andy Walkey. The editors gather and receive items to be published in a set booklet format. If you have something ready to contribute, please send as early in the month as you can. The deadline for submission has to be one week prior to publication and this date is critical for timely publication. Late submissions can cause complications for editors and printers alike. Once the newsletter is formatted in draft, it is circulated to all members of the Team for checking. After the content is agreed, it goes to the printer and an electronic version is provided for uploading to the church website. Ann Hardiman organises distribution of the paper copies to recipients.

A set of guidelines on how to prepare items for electronic submission has been compiled by the Team. If you would like to receive them please send a request to [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) or ask one of the editors.

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***Church Party***

**Saturday 13th February**

**The Elders invite you to a party  
in the church hall**

**fun, games and supper, 6pm-9pm**

Professor Paul Fiddes and Professor Adrian Moore, at New Road Baptist Church on Bonn Square, with refreshments.

The Faith in Action Group at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, New Road Baptist Church and St Michael at the North Gate. The events are open and of interest to all. Carla

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Trustees and volunteers of the Community Emergency Foodbank (CEF), I would be very grateful if you would pass on our thanks to the congregation of Wheatley URC for their generous support that we have enjoyed this year both financially and by way of food donations. Your church has donated over 400 items of food since April last year, as well as giving generously during your Harvest Festival.

There has been much publicity recently about the huge rise in the number of Food banks that have opened all over the country, almost exclusively run by church communities. You will have read of attempts to “politicise” food banks. Despite media pressure to comment, CEF chooses to not to speculate as to the reasons for food poverty. Suffice it to say that they are complex. We doubt that any government of any stripe could devise a benefits system that catered for the many hazards that afflict families: debt, desertion, alcohol addiction, gambling, divorce and imprisonment amongst them. The fact is that the demand for CEF’s services is constant. In 2015 CEF fed circa 3000 people. Without the generous support and encouragement of the churches, businesses and individuals, CEF could do little to help.

Having enjoyed the generosity of Nielsen UK, who have provided free warehouse space for us over the past 3 years, they are selling their site on the London Rd and we are having to move. The exciting news is that we have been able to purchase a purpose built portable unit which will be installed at St Francis Church, Hollow Way at the end of January. That will make the storage and distribution of food much easier and more efficient.

In March last year we opened our CEF café for a third day at Littlemore Baptist Church on a Thursday. After a slow start, the café there is now receiving more referrals and we are grateful for the enthusiastic volunteers who meet there every Thursday.

We would like to wish all our supporters a Happy New Year.

Best Wishes

Jane ([Jane Benyon CEF Direct](#))

## MINUTES of the CHURCH MEETING, 10<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2016

Chair: Robert Harding

**1. Apologies:** Malcolm & Wendy Benson, Laurence & Peter Devlin, Angela & Rob Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Pauline Shelley, Andy & Elizabeth Walkey

**2. Minutes of last meeting:** The Minutes of the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> November 2015 were accepted and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

**3. Pastoral Care Plus.** News and concerns about members and friends were shared.

### 4. Ministry Team Reports

**i) Elders – a) Vacancy up-date:** Revd Carla Grosch-Miller, minister of St Columba’s and Cumnor, will be stepping down at the end of March which gives more flexibility to the situation in the Oxford area. The Elders had met with Revd Duncan Wilson who is helping us work through our period of vacancy. He explained that our choice is either to wait for a minister scoped at 50% or to appoint an Interim Minister for a limited time, at most until the end of 2017. After further explanation, the latter option was commended to the meeting by the elders for consideration. The Interim Minister would take on a set of specified tasks on behalf of the church, with maximum 50% scoping, although this is open to negotiation. The elders have appointed a Vacancy Committee comprising Robert Harding, Malcolm Benson, Phyllis Williams, Colin Thompson and Ellen Webster and would welcome another member from the congregation. Duncan Wilson has been in conversation with Revd Pauline Main, current minister of Marston and Summertown URCs, as she has expressed an interest in discussing our Interim vacancy. A meeting is scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> February between Duncan Wilson, Pauline Main and our Vacancy Committee to explore this further. Within the next 2 weeks the Mission Statement and draft Pastorate Profile will be circulated to all members plus Pauline Main. It was stressed that Pauline Main would remain living in her manse in Oxford and the Wheatley manse would continue to be rented out. The meeting was in favour of pursuing the possibility of Pauline Main becoming our Interim Minister. The latest version of the Mission Statement was presented and approved by those present and thanks were expressed to all who have worked on it.

**b) Annual Theme:** The elders proposed the theme of “Journeying” for the coming year and this was accepted.

**ii) Worship** – The team is making plans for Easter and Holy Week. An LEP service is scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> January, when the preacher will be Fr Dusham Cros. The search for a preacher for the Church Anniversary is on-going. The meeting was reminded that the booklet of individual “Faith Journeys” is available to borrow and people are encouraged to offer to describe their own faith journeys during a future service.

**iii) Communications** - The team are compiling guidelines for submission of electronic items for the newsletter. Six people have offered to write the Pastoral Letter for inclusion in the monthly newsletter and more would be appreciated. The outside noticeboard has been re-organised to give more prominence to posters of up-coming events and/or to include posters of organisations that the church supports. An attempt is being made to make the hall tidier for all users. More training is scheduled in the use of the AV equipment.

**iv) ACE** – A guest speaker will participate in the service of 14<sup>th</sup> February. A friend of Sybil Beaton’s is to speak on ‘The Three Faiths Forum’ during April. Revised dates were announced for the 4 discussion evenings on “Victory and Peace or Justice and Peace”: Feb 29<sup>th</sup> and March 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. A course entitled “Journalling the Journey” is planned for October. Colin Thompson has been asked to present a further session on hymnody. A “Religious Question Time” evening is in the early stages of planning.

**v) Finance** – The Christmas Day collection amounted to £190 for the Refugee Crisis Appeal. The recipients of charitable donations for 2015 had been listed in the recent newsletter and it is possible that a further amount will be added once the year’s accounts are finalised.

**vi) Care for the World** – The team will meet soon to prepare plans for Fairtrade Fortnight, 29<sup>th</sup> February to 13<sup>th</sup> March.

**vii) Hospitality** – Catherine Harding reported that the oven has sustained damage beyond repair, so a new gas cooker has been ordered at a total cost of around £1800, including installation and removal of the old model. People are invited to donate towards this cost in the next 2 weeks by means of the blue envelopes at the back of the church. Attendees of both lunch clubs would also be invited to contribute.

**5. Christian Partners** - WAC Committee will be meeting soon to make plans for the Lent soup lunches, and possibly Lent meditations.

**6. Dates** 13<sup>th</sup> Feb - 6-9pm Church Party

Jan ,29<sup>th</sup> Feb, 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March – course “Victory & Peace or Justice & Peace”

If you would like to be involved or take part in the service either as a reader, actor or by reading prayers, please talk to Liz Barry in Church or telephone 01865 872293.

*Care for the World Ministry Team*

## Other Dates

**Fourth Fridays at Cumnor URC**

**Leys Road, Cumnor OX2 9QF**

**Peter Baldwin:**

**“My life changed when I joined  
Her Majesty’s Diplomatic Service”**

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

**Supper at 7.15 pm, followed by talk 8.00 – 9.00pm**

Free to attend, though donations welcomed

For catering purposes please contact Briony Newport

Tel: 01865 246497 email: [secretary@cumnorurc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cumnorurc.org.uk)

From Revd Dr. Carla A. Grosch-Miller, Minister St. Columba’s U.R.C. Oxford.

February 2016 is LGBT history month with the theme “Religion, Belief, Philosophy”. The Faith in Action Group of churches in the Oxford city centre have organised a series of events to explore these issues.

**Friday 5 February 7:30-9pm** *A reading from the book of exile* An evening of poetry, theological reflection and storytelling with Pádraig Ó Tuama, leader of the Corrymeela Community, at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, on New Inn Hall Street, with refreshments.

**Sunday 7 February 7:30-9:30pm** *Christ’s Table is Round* worship with *First Sunday*, a gathering of LGBTI Christians and Friends, at St Columba’s URC on Alfred Street, with refreshments.

**Thursday 25 February 7:30 for 8-9:30pm** *LGBT and Christian Belief, Challenge and Opportunity*. A panel discussion with Revd Dr Susan Durber,

## **Living the Questions: John Dominic Crossan DVD Victory and Peace or Justice and Peace?**

The **ACE** team invite you to engage with this thought provoking DVD, the excellent material it encompasses and the enjoyment of the discussion it will undoubtedly generate.

There will be four viewings followed by an informal discussion after each viewing.

It will be shown on the following Monday evenings: 29<sup>th</sup> Feb, 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, & 21<sup>st</sup> March. Venue: Roger and Ann Bettess, 7 Anson Close, Wheatley, OX33 1YD, tel 01865 874353. (Many thanks to Ann and Roger for the offer of their home for these meetings).

Time: 7.30 – 9.00

**Each meeting will be limited to 12 people so book early to avoid disappointment.**

**There is a sign-up sheet on the notice board.**

### **Ministry Teams**

Some years ago it was decided to set up nine Ministry Teams, made up of members of the congregation. Each team has an area of responsibility such as worship, hospitality, care for the world, maintenance, etc and meets to discuss and plan events a few times a year. They have proved an excellent way to involve many people in the work of the church and have enabled people to use their skills for the benefit of all.

All members of the congregation are welcome to remain in a Ministry Team year on year but are also encouraged to move to another team to share their skills and to learn new ones if they wish.

As a number of these Ministry Teams currently have vacancies, if you would like to join one, please speak to your Elder.

### **Women's World Day of Prayer**

This is aimed mainly at ladies, but men are certainly not excluded!

Our Women's World Day of Prayer services will take place on 4th March one at 2pm at the URC the other at 7.30pm at St Mary's. This year the service has been prepared by Christian women in Cuba.

Frances has been looking at the songs/hymns in the order of service and several of them are not very well known, so we will be having a short singing practice at our church on SUNDAY 14th FEBRUARY about 11.30am.

29<sup>th</sup> Feb – 13<sup>th</sup> March – Fairtrade Fortnight

4<sup>th</sup> March - 2pm Women's World Day of Prayer service

A walk is planned at some time during the year

### **7. Any Other Business**

a) The Table Tennis Club has discovered that a couple of blocks in the wooden floor of the hall are loose. The maintenance team will investigate and secure them.

b) Richard Wood explained that he has reluctantly had to step down from the eldership, due to pressure of working hours. He much appreciates the support he has received from the congregation and explained how much the church means to him and Lynnette.

**Date of next meeting: Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

### **"Bi-blog" by Laurence Devlin**

Humour is a very personal thing. For example, I can't understand anyone not liking the comedian Billy Connolly or the sitcom Citizen Kahn as they leave me belly-aching from laughter, while other people next to me roll their eyes at my bad taste in comedy... But then Father Ted, Mrs Brown or Benny Hill leave me totally cold so "chacun son gout."

The Hebrew Bible of course is not generally regarded as a humorous book – a truism if ever there was one! - and yet, as it contains the whole range of human situations, reactions and feelings, it also contains funny situations and humorous remarks. But humour does not always travel well, in time or space. The Bible was written a very long time ago in a language strange to most of us and in a culture totally different from ours so we often miss the cues. Also humour is often quickly "dated": I use to laugh a lot at "Fawlty Towers" when it first came out but I don't any longer as I feel it has really passed its sell-by date. And of course, we're conditioned by the whole "not-a-humorous-book" approach when we deal with the Biblical text.

I believe however that the person who recorded the death of King Jehoram in 2 Chronicles 21:20 by writing "He passed away, *to no one's regret*" did not lack a pinch of dry humour ... And what about David in 1 Samuel 21:15-16 who pretends to be insane before Achish, king of Gath, to avoid being returned to Saul. Achish says to his servants: "Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here?"... I don't know about you but I find the

remark quite funny! I also really enjoy Balaam's conversation with his donkey (Numbers 22: 21-30) as I can't believe that the words "Am I not your own donkey? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" were written with a straight face! Proverbs, of course, is a goldmine of humour, not all of it very politically correct: "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion" (11:22)... oops! And then what about Sarah laughing at the renewed sexual power of her husband age 99 when he was "as good as dead" in that department, (according to Hebrews 11:11-12) and then arguing with God whether or not she laughed: is there a better example of quirky humour when the joke is about laughing? Finally, dare I mention the episode in Judges 3:12-30 of the assassin Ehud plunging a dagger into the morbidly obese King Eglon causing a not so pleasant "gut reaction" ... if you pardon the pun!

There are many other examples but suffice to say that as the inspired Word of God comes to us through human voices and humour is part of what it is to be human, we should not be surprised that many of the biblical writers make use of the funny side of things too. If some play on words will always escape us because of the Hebrew language barrier, we can still appreciate satirical situations where inflated egos reveal their true selves in their bad temper, their vanity and their incompetence. None more so than in **the Book of Esther** where the author makes great use of irony, sarcasm, hyperboles and exaggerations in what turns out to be *a farce with a message*: Esther's comic aspects are not contained in a few jokes or in some witty repartees but in a "comic of situation" showing up men behaving badly.

Traditionally the story of Esther is remembered (or not as the case may be!) by Christians as one of only two books of the Hebrew Bible that does not explicitly mention God (the second one being the Song of Songs...). May be it is for that reason that it is rarely, if ever, read in church – never mind preached on - whereas in Judaism, the heroine Esther is at the centre of the festival of Purim, the merriest of all Jewish celebrations when people spend the day in a carnival atmosphere giving presents to each other, eating, singing, dancing, masquerading, drinking and merry-making. The celebration is joyful because it commemorates the Persian Jews being saved from extermination thanks to young Esther. Furthermore the Rabbis also saw something in the text of Esther that escaped Christian leaders: Calvin did not include the book in any of his commentaries and Luther considered it a "great

For forty-four years Ian Davis has been studying such threats in about fifty countries, advising and training officials in UN Agencies, the European Union, Governments and NGO's on effective Disaster Risk Management. For three evenings in Lent, he will introduce topics for general discussion that will explore the nature of these tragedies and how they challenge our Christian faith.

Each session will last an hour, starting with a twenty minute illustrated presentation followed by forty minutes of general discussion and summary.

Wednesday February 24<sup>th</sup> at 7.30 pm in The United Reformed Church  
Why do disasters occur? A Christian perspective.

Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7.30 pm in The United Reformed Church  
Is durable recovery possible? The impact of faith.

Wednesday March 9<sup>th</sup> at 7.30 pm in The United Reformed Church  
Can people and societies become more resilient to disaster and conflict? The Christian challenge.

Ian Davis, a recent member of St Mary's church, is Visiting Professor in Disaster Risk Management in Kyoto, Lund and Oxford Brookes Universities. He was trained as an architect and his PhD in UCL was on *Shelter following Disasters*. In 1996 he became the first British citizen to be awarded the United Nations Sasakawa Prize for his Contributions to International Disaster Prevention. He has been a board member of four NGOs including Tearfund and was one of the founders of Traidcraft, which became a leading Fairtrade organization. He is the author or editor of over 20 books on Architecture, Disaster Risk Management and Development.

## WHEATLEY AREA CHURCHES (WAC) CHAIRMAN'S BLOG FOR FEBRUARY 2016

**Our spiritual journeying together takes us on towards** Lent, **starting on** Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February (Ash Wednesday) **and running through to** Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March (Palm Sunday) **into** Holy Week **and to the** Easter Weekend, 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> March.

**On the six Saturdays of Lent there will be** simple Lenten soup lunches, taking place in the URC Hall, at Wheatley **with each church that makes up WAC taking a turn or two at hosting the lunches, with donations from the lunches going to support Christian Aid's work worldwide. One lunch (Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March) will have a particular emphasis on Fairtrade.** (Fair Trade Fortnight is 29<sup>th</sup> Feb to 13<sup>th</sup> March).

**We are also looking into providing some form of** study or meditation **on one evening each week during Lent, see below.**

The Women's World Day of Prayer Service will take place at Wheatley URC on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March at 2pm, and at St. Mary's at 7.30pm. **All will be most welcome. This year's service format has been prepared by the women of Cuba. (please see further information in this newsletter)**

**There is a fundraising musical event taking place at** Holton Village Hall on the evening of Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February, **in part, to support the ongoing restorative works and upgrading of** St Bartholomew's Church Holton. Please see separate entry for full details.

**I hope Lent will be both a peaceful and meaningful time for you this year and leave you ready and energised for Easter and the year ahead.**

Tony Barry

## WHEATLEY AREA CHURCHES LENT COURSE 2016 DISASTERS: A CHALLENGE TO FAITH?

Leader - Ian Davis

All too often our TV screens and newspaper headlines are filled with distressing images of disaster. We can recall a devastating earthquake in Nepal, or nearer to home floods in Somerset and Cumbria, possibly resulting from climate change and desperate refugee families escaping from Syria and North Africa.

enemy" as it contained, according to him, too much "judaizing" and "pagan naughtiness." As great as the two Reformers were, I am afraid they totally missed the point!

Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, the greatest empire of the time, is portrayed as an ineffectual, ostentatious, debauched buffoon who spends his time drinking, partying and womanizing: at the start of the book he throws a preposterously lavish party which lasts six months (!) culminating in a scene where the drunken king summons Queen Vashti to parade, in the nude, in front of his courtiers. When she refuses, he banishes her in a fit of uncontrollable rage. But then he feels lonely so his courtiers suggest that a harem of young virgins gathered from the four corners of the empire would brighten things up nicely, thank you very much... each night a different girl will come to him and the one who will satisfy him best will be the new queen! Before the young women can enter the King's chamber however, they must undergo a beautifying regime *for an entire year!* The whole thing would be infuriating and totally ludicrous if it was not so much over the top and therefore funny! Interestingly Esther wins the contest not only through her charms but also through her wits and her determination, cleverly manipulating a weak and greedy king.

In any case the whole book portrays the King as a vain playboy who lacks moral compass, prevaricates, does not properly govern and produces silly edicts that he cannot abolish, even if it was him who produced them in the first place! He is basically a ridiculous hedonist that you can only laugh at. His advisers, it has to be said, are not much better, especially the Grand Vizier Haman who swells with excessive self-importance in spite of having achieved nothing of any value and who is only hungry for honours he does not deserve. It seems therefore obvious that the essence of the book is highly satirical as it pokes fun at the Persian elite, mocking the decadence of empire, the absurdity of human pretensions and the vanity of useless leaders: Humour has always been a very effective weapon of the powerless and the oppressed. All this of course is in stark contrast with the Biblical tradition of the "good life" and of Wisdom which is the only righteous way to achieve human flourishing.

Read the book if you never have, it is a good story full of funny twists and turns!

## Church Calendar February 2016

Everyone is invited to stay for coffee or tea after 10am Sunday services.  
Traidcraft stall on occasional Sundays.

Date	7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	14 <sup>th</sup> Feb	21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	28 <sup>th</sup> Feb
<b>Service</b>	<b>Morning Service +HC</b>	Morning Service	<b>Morning Service +HC</b>	Morning Service
<b>Time</b>	10 am	10 am	10 am	10 am
<b>Worship Leader</b>	Revd. Colin Thompson	Richard Bainbridge + George Mullen*	Revd. Nigel Appleton**	Revd. Colin Thompson +Rebecca Bullard
<b>Vestry Elder</b>	<b>Ann Hardiman</b>	<b>Phyllis Williams</b>	<b>Ellen Webster</b>	<b>Liz Barry</b>
<b>Welcomer</b>	<b>Ann Bettess</b>	<b>John Kidd</b>	<b>Phyllis Williams</b>	<b>Ellen Webster</b>
<b>Steward</b>	Joel Rasmussen	Bobbie Stormont	Barbara Joiner	Zena Knight
<b>Reader</b>	Malcolm Benson	Robert Harding	Zena Knight	Joel Rasmussen
<b>Prayers</b>	Joel Rasmussen	Richard Wood	Malcolm Benson	Christine Bainbridge
<b>Flowers</b>	Ellen Webster	TBA	TBA	Pauline Shelley

*Elders on Communion Duty are shown in bold letters.  
There is a crèche on the first four Sundays of the month.*

### **Guest Worship Leaders:**

\***George Mullen** is a member of "Christians Against Poverty", an organisation founded in 1996 which provides free debt counselling.

\*\***Nigel Appleton** is a non-stipendiary URC minister who is a member at Cumnor. He runs his own business and is active in charity work in Zambia.

## Common Lectionary Readings February 2016

**Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.**

Date	7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	14 <sup>th</sup> Feb	21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	28 <sup>th</sup> Feb
<b>Old Testament</b>	Exodus 34: 29-35	Deuteronomy 26: 1-11	Genesis 15: 1-12 & 17-18	Isaiah 55: 1-9
<b>New Testament</b>	2 Corinthians 3: 12-4:2	Romans 10: 8b-12	Phillippians 3: 17- 4:1	1 Corinthians 10: 1-3
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 99	Psalm 91: 1-2 & 9-16	Psalm 27	Psalm 63: 1-8
<b>Gospel</b>	Luke 9: 28-36	Luke 4: 1-13	Luke 13: 31-35	Luke 13: 1-9

**Simple Sunday evening worship in the form of Taize, will take place on February 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm at 3 Barns Close, Holton.**

**New from the church family:** Andy & Elizabeth Walkey will be visiting Hazel Hull on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> February. If you have any messages or gifts for her, please get in touch with them. Our former minister Rev Charles Brock will be visiting from the U.S.A. over the weekend of Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February.

**Please remember in your prayers the members of John Kidd's Pastoral Care List:** Graham Dobson, Ann & Fred Hardiman, Dick & Doris Sinfield, Barbara & Albert Joiner, Elizabeth & Andy Walkey and Sue & Charles Bennett.

**We also ask you to pray for the members of the Care For The World Ministry Team:** Liz Barry, Ann Bettess, Bev Paton, Ellen Webster & Elizabeth Walkey.

*The deadline for the March newsletter will be 6pm Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February.  
Please send email copy to [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) or paper copy to  
Andy Walkey 5.Littleworth Rd, Wheatley, Oxon OX33 1NW*