

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



JUNE 2016

Covering Thoughts

I have always been impressed by people who seem to be able to see the whole picture. They are clear headed and make decisions easily, they are not thrown by difficulties, know where they want to go and how to get there.

I guess that there are many reading this, who like me, do not fall into this category. They hesitate and change their minds, are thrown when people let them down, feel overwhelmed by problems which cannot be easily solved and consequently find it hard to achieve what they want or even to be clear about what this might be.

Some artists plan their work meticulously. If they are working on a pattern like Bridget Riley there needs to be a mathematical precision and probably lots of trial pieces. Behind all this there is a clear mind that looks to the result and plans to get there.

Many of my paintings are quite the opposite of this. They develop and change, and from a nebulous beginning gradually a structure and idea will emerge. In this picture the rower rests, contemplating the evening light and the still water. There will be a channel through the rocky islands but he has yet to find it. There are hidden dangers but for a while he does not think of them.

The first disciples did not see the whole picture. They had much to learn from observing and listening to their new master. We are familiar with Peter's question: How many times must I forgive my neighbour? Also how Jesus answered. I wonder what our hard question might be and what challenging answer Jesus would give us. How would he help us deal with our feelings of anger and frustration?

Consider the evening sunlight catching the rocks and rippling on the smooth water. Imagine the myriads of forms of life beneath the surface. Feel the cooling breeze and listen for the calling of the gulls, and just for a while let go of anxiety.

Christine

Pastoral letter

There is, I think, a general view that as a society we have become more hedonistic, that pleasure seeking is a way to happiness. Allied to this, the concept of service has been gradually eroded, whether it be at an individual level or within what has traditionally been regarded as our 'public services' such as health or education. However my faith was partially restored by a conversation with some of our grandchildren as to what makes them happy – holidays, eating hot dogs, parties, punting etc. Also included was 'making other people happy'. Pleasure often comes not when we are seeking it but as an unanticipated consequence of an act of kindness or generosity, a welcoming smile, a thank you or a listening ear.

Some years ago one of my philosophy essays was "Can 'self-realisation' provide a recipe for the conduct of life?" In it I included the suggestion that we might hope that by our actions we leave this world a better place than when we entered it, a wish that was dismissed as grandiose and pretentious by my tutor. I disagree. If we all made even a small positive contribution instead of trying to get as much as we could, what a difference it would make.

These thoughts were brought to mind listening to the Brexit debate. This month we have the opportunity to vote as to whether the United Kingdom should remain part of the European Union. The arguments for and against have been accompanied by much rhetoric despite the fact that there are considerable uncertainties as to the likely consequences. However one aspect has struck me in that all the focus is couched in terms of what is best for us, individually and as a nation. The question as to what we can contribute to the greater good has hardly surfaced. By comparison with many countries we have a tradition of being tolerant, democratic and relatively free of corruption. We are also an affluent country despite the fact that inequalities in wealth within the UK are becoming more apparent. We thus have much we can contribute to and share with other countries which are less fortunate. Can we do this better by working with our European neighbours as part

of the EU or would we contribute more by being a 'free agent'?
The Joint Public Issues Team (Baptist, Methodist, URC and Church of Scotland) has published a referendum resource for churches to consider. It acknowledges the diversity of opinion and does not offer a definitive view. It does however couch the question differently by asking 'To what extent does the European Union enhance or hinder our ability to love our neighbour and in so doing, our ability to love God?' It concludes with the following prayer:

Loving God

In the referendum that lies before us,
In the challenge of seeking an answer,
In our difference of opinion,
In our need to understand'
May you guide us in our decisions,
Make us gracious in our disagreements,
And may we join with you to work
For the building of your kingdom rather than our own.

May we use our votes wisely.

Malcolm

Retirement of Elders

The two serving Elders due to complete their current terms in September 2016, are Ann Bettess and Malcolm Benson. We are very grateful for all that they have contributed during their time as elders and in Malcolm's case as Church Secretary as well.

Total for Christian Aid will be in next months' magazine as will news of the Induction of Revd. Pauline Main.

WHEATLEY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

MINUTES of the CHURCH MEETING, 22nd MAY 2016

Chair: Robert Harding

1. Apologies: Liz Barry, Wendy & Malcolm Benson, Jean Boxall, Tom Goss, Angela & Rob Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Liz Stuart, Bobbie Stormont, Andy & Elizabeth Walkey, Mark Williams, Annette Wright

2. Minutes of last meeting: The Minutes of the meeting of 13th March 2016 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: The Special Church Meeting held on 17th April had approved the invitation to Revd Pauline to become Interim Minister. The Terms of Settlement have now been agreed (copies available on request) and the Induction Service is planned for 26th May at 7.30pm, with Revd Clare Downing to preach.

b) Discernment of new Elders: names of proposed new Elders should be placed in the box at the back of the sanctuary before the end of May. Robert Harding can provide details of “What it means to be an Elder”.

c) Fete: arrangements are in hand. Frances Simpson appealed for donations for the Tombola stall. Lists are on the noticeboard for help/items still required for the fete.

ii) Worship – Colin Thompson reported on the team’s recent meeting. The team proposed that the wooden cross be brought into the sanctuary for the period of Advent and also for Lent to Ascensiontide: a total of 16 weeks of the year for the time being. It was pointed out that the cross is the property of WAC. At some future date we might consider commissioning a small, lighter weight cross. Andrew Hazelden will participate in worship on 19th June by throwing a pottery item in the usual “sermon slot”. Andy Walkey will talk about “Neve Shalom – Oasis of Peace” during the service of 7th August.

iii) Communications – Fete posters are available for display.

iv) ACE – The “Journalling the Journey” event planned for October will have to be postponed due to illness. The team appealed for additional members, including possibly a representative from St Mary’s. An “Ethical Question Time” is being planned. The Bible study proposed for One World Week would also be postponed.

v) Finance – Chris Shelley outlined how Pauline Main’s ministerial expenses will be covered on a pro-rata basis with Marston & Summertown URCs. It was confirmed that the proceeds from the Fete will go to church funds.

vi) Care for the World – A stall at the Fete would promote Christian Aid. The service on 7th August would include a presentation on “Oasis of Peace”. Ideas would be welcome for celebrating One World Week in October.

vii) Hospitality – Catherine Harding outlined the arrangements for refreshments before the Induction service and appealed for cakes.

viii) Pastoral – The Not So Young Club is growing in numbers and seeking larger meeting premises.

ix) Maintenance – The portable electrical appliances have been tested and found to be safe. A fire inspection has been carried out and new signs are now in place, plus a further fire extinguisher. A fire drill will be held soon. The gas boiler has been very problematic and Elders have requested quotes for its replacement. Currently these range from £3,500 to £4,380, with a further quote still awaited. The meeting gave Elders the authority to proceed as appropriate.

5. Christian Partners - Tony Barry reported back on the WAC AGM which followed the recent LEP service and shared lunch. The constitution is to be amended to include the Community Church. Arrangements for the celebration of the Queen’s 90th birthday on 12th June were described; the churches are involved in the 2.30pm Songs of Praise and WAC will have a stall to distribute brochures for the occasion. It was suggested that we might offer one or two more representatives on the WAC Committee.

6. Dates

26 th May, 7.30pm	Induction of Revd Pauline Main
30 th May, 2pm	Church fete in Dr Flury’s garden
12 th June	Village Celebration of Queen’s 90 th birthday, 2.30pm Songs of Praise
26 th June	Church Anniversary
7 th August	Talk by Andy Walkey on “Oasis of Peace” during worship

7. Any Other Business

a) Peter Devlin suggested we might plan a short time after some services, set aside to discuss issues raised in the sermon.

b) Harvest Festival will take place on 25th September on the theme “Fruits of the Spirit”. It was suggested a small group might convene to plan the service.



How the Sunday Afternoon Tea table looks before and after!



Church Calendar June 2016

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

Date	5 th June	12 th June	19 th June	26 th June
Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Anniversary Service
Time	10 am	10 am	10 am	10 am
Worship Leader	Revd. Colin Thompson	Richard Bainbridge	Revd. Colin Thompson with Andrew Hazelden	Revd. Pauline Main
Vestry Elder	Ellen Webster	Phyllis Williams	Ann Bettess	Ann Hardiman
Welcomer	Ann Hardiman	Liz Barry	Phyllis Williams	John Kidd
Steward	Zena Knight	Moira Watson	Pauline Shelley	Christine Bainbridge
Reader	Tom Goss	Barbara Joiner	Chris Shelley	Catherine Harding
Prayers	Malcolm Benson	Christine Bainbridge	Tom Goss	Barbara Joiner
Flowers	Moira Watson	Catherine Hughes		Team Decoration

Elders on Communion Duty are shown in bold letters.

There is a crèche on the first four Sundays of the month.



Andrew Hazelden is a local potter who will give a live demonstration during his address in the service on the 19th June

Common Lectionary Readings June 2016

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.

Date	5 th June	12 th June	19 th June	26 th June
Old Testament	1 Kings 17: 17-24.	2 Samuel 11: 26-12: 10 & 13-15.	Isaiah 65: 1-9.	1 Kings 19: 15,16, 19-21.
Psalm	30	32	22:19-28.	16
New Testament	Galatians 1: 11-24.	Galatians 2: 15-21.	Galatians 3: 23-29.	Galatians 5: 13-25.
Gospel	Luke 7: 11-17.	Luke 7: 36-8: 3.	Luke 8: 26-39.	Luke 9: 51-62.

Simple evening worship in the style of Taize will take place at 7.30 pm at 3, Barns Close, Holton on June 19th and 26th.

Please remember in your prayers the members of Joan Kidds' pastoral group: Liz & Tony Barry, Jean Boxall, Pat Howard, Zena Knight, Frances Simpson

We also ask you to pray for the **Pastoral Care Ministry Team:** Ann Bettess, Jean Boxall, Joan Kidd, Barbara Joiner, Frances Simpson and Liz Stuart.

Study of this congregation.

In 2014 -15 I interviewed 61 people from the congregation as part of my study for an MA in Church History at the University of Nottingham. I have now completed the draft of the dissertation to be submitted in September. I am continuing to reflect and would thus like to hear your thoughts should you wish to read the dissertation [you are also welcome to spot split infinitives]. The final title is *What is the value of congregational studies for contemporary church history and historical theology? A congregational study of a village nonconformist church will provide an exemplar.* If you would like to read it I can provide it as a word document via email or I have a few hard copies that can be shared around. As during the interviews if you wished to discuss your thoughts you would be most welcome to our home or I can visit you or we could meet at places like the church or a cafe like Waterperry gardens. I look forward to hearing from you if you wish to read the study.

Richard Bainbridge

Biblog by Laurence Devlin

The Old Testament is full of flawed characters and I like that very much because it makes me feel better! Far from being perfect they are just human like us: selfish, coward, proud, vindictive, calculating, lying, lacking in trust and faith in God. Take Abraham for example...

Abraham? I surely cannot mean the man who obeys God even when it means leaving the place of his birth or sacrificing his beloved son Isaac? But yes in fact I do mean Abraham, the first patriarch of Genesis who is not so much the one-dimensional character we usually think he is - i.e. a giant of faith and obedience – but, much more interestingly I think, a man of frequent surprises and great contradictions, shifting between faith and lack of faith, between great courage and cowardice, between selfishness and altruism ... a lot like us. So in this month's biblog and in the next two, we will have a detailed look at this fascinating character, totally imperfect but with whom God establishes a covenant endowing him with a great mission and whom he never abandons.

Let's start then with the first familiar story: "Now Yahweh said, go from your country and your birthplace and your father's house to the land I will show you ... And Abram went as Yahweh had told him." (Gen.12:1-4). Well, can you think of a more admirable show of obedience? Yahweh calls and Abram (*not yet renamed Abraham*) goes. But the story in fact does not start here... If we go back a bit, we read in Genesis 11:31-32 that Abram has *already left* the place of his birth, Ur of the Chaldeans, to go with his father Terah to the land of Canaan. On the way though, they stop and settle in Haran. So when Terah dies in Haran, there is nothing to hold Abram there and his father's house back in Ur in no more. Therefore when the divine call comes, it might not be the show of great obedience that we think it is, as Abraham had already decided to leave as it is not a great act of obedience to do what one has already decided to do! Furthermore when he reaches Canaan, *where God told him to settle* remember, he does not and stays only long enough to build an altar and heads instead towards Egypt. Let's note by the way that he does not tell any of God's orders to his wife Sarai...

Once in Egypt then, this is surely where Abram will be demonstrating that through him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" as God told him. (Gen. 12:3) Not a bit of it! What preoccupies him is Sarai's exceptional beauty and the fact that Egyptian men will desire her. But his worry is not about

what this unwanted attention might mean *for her* but what it might mean *for him*! So what does he do? He orders his wife to pretend that she is his sister, so that “it may go well with me because of you and that my life may be spared on your account” (12:13). How nice and considerate! It does not enter Abram’s patriarchal frame of mind for one second to think about what Sarah might think or feel about this. In other words, Abram has no qualms about sacrificing Sarai as he puts his own physical and economic security first. But what is even more distasteful is that, when of course his life is spared - as that there is not the slightest indication in the text that his precious life would have been in danger anyway- he does very well, thank you very much, out of the transaction of in effect *selling* Sarai to Pharaoh: “for Sarai’s sake, Pharaoh dealt well with Abram. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys and camels”. (Gen. 12:16) And when he leaves Egypt, “he was very rich in livestock, in silver and gold.” (Gen.13:2).

We might also wonder at this point what Abram had exactly in mind about his own future with Sarai. She had hardly been “borrowed” by Pharaoh who “took her for his wife.” (Gen12:19). So it seems that Abram was not expecting to have her back... After all, even if she was beautiful, they had been together a long time so the excitement of novelty must have waned and she is barren anyway ... so time for a younger model no doubt! Abram must have calculated that God had promised that *he* will be a great nation, that *he* will be blessed, that *his* name will be great, that *his* descendant will have land so it could not be with a barren wife that such a destiny could be fulfilled so Sarai had to be got rid of... But lo and behold, God has a rather different plan as it is so often the case in the life of many of the Hebrew Bible’s greatest heroes ... and in ours!

What we see next is Pharaoh being “afflicted with great plagues *because of Sarai*” (12:17) which is quite unfair as Pharaoh did not know she was Abram’s wife. However, when he is finally told, he does not punish Abram for his BIG lie and just sends him on his way which is very magnanimous of him really. So Abram leaves Egypt not only *with Sarai* but with the wealth he has acquired in Egypt, thanks to Sarai’s favour with Pharaoh. I can’t help wondering what Sarai must have felt, “returned” to a husband who did not behave very nicely towards her, to say the least... In any case you must agree that Abram does not emerge from the story covered in glory.

However, when his nephew, Lot, who lives in Sodom is kidnapped by the enemies of Sodom, Abram wastes no time mustering the men of his household in order to save him, showing great courage and not stopping to think about the risk to himself. He liberates Lot as well as the people of Sodom and their possessions and brings them back to the King of Sodom but spurns the king's offer to take a share of these possessions as a reward: "I have sworn to Yahweh that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say I have made Abram rich." (Gen14:21-23). Quite admirable indeed and certainly very different from what happened in Egypt when he had no qualms about taking Pharaoh's sandals straps ... and considerably more!

So may be, starting out as an opportunistic and selfish person, Abram learns and grows... May be! He will continue however to often make a mess of things especially with women (Sarah and Hagar) but as we will see, he seems to *become* the person that God chose. We will also see that in spite of all his failures and quite a poor record, God remains faithful to him ... a great reassurance for us!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR WHEATLEY AREA CHURCHES AGM, 15/05/16.

For his second annual report, he re-iterated that the churches continued to work well together, successfully achieving, supporting and organising the usual core activities (too many to list here), but which included Lent Soup Lunches again this year, at the URC, raising over £600 for Christian Aid. However, WAC Easter Cards were not distributed this year, but instead decorative, detailed posters appeared around the village.

In addition, this year, we revised the 2004 WAC Constitution and updated it to include the new Wheatley Community Church.

No jazz themed joint evening services happened during last winter. Previous attendances were not sufficiently encouraging.

Not enough newcomers-to-the-village Welcome Packs, were distributed during the year. We are to try harder next year.

It has been a definite bonus, this year, to have the added support of The Wheatley Community Church at our meetings and events and it was to noted that they are progressing well towards becoming a fully established church within the village.

During the year, we have tried to encourage greater interaction with the outlying village churches in Waterperry, Waterstock and Albury with Tiddington, this is not easy due to their remoteness from Wheatley activities. A jazz concert was organized in March, by and mainly for Wheatley folk, but held at Holton Village Hall. Half the profits were sent to The Friends of St Bartholomew's Restoration Fund.

We missed the Revd. Tanya Rasmussen from the committee this year, but were pleased to note that the URC is about to appoint a new part time interim minister in Wheatley and look forward to welcoming her to the committee, very soon. She is The Revd. Pauline Main, currently working part time at Summertown and Marston URC's and as a chaplain at Bullingdon Prison.

Our lady of Lourdes also appointed a new priest, this year, following the retirement of Father John Bagueley. He is Father Mervyn Towers formerly from Kiddlington RC Church, and we hope he may also occasionally attend our meetings.

This year Bob Webster (URC) stepped down as WAC's Hon Treasurer, replaced by Margaret Wilson (St Mary's). Bob was thanked for his many years of service as Treasurer.

Malcolm Benson (URC) and Frances Collins (St Mary's/WCC) were also thanked for their work as Hon Secretaries. Sadly, for us, Frances is moving away to the Southampton Area soon, to be closer to her family. She was wished every happiness in her new life. A new Hon Secretary will be needed next year.

Vice chair, Edna Ackroyd (Holton) was thanked for her support and welcomed as the new Chair for the next two years.

Finally, the rest of the committee and the outgoing chair were thanked for their work during the year.

Sunday June 12th

is The BIG LUNCH and Queen's Birthday!

Why not run a street party to gather your community for the Queen's birthday celebration?

With the recently published Street Party Manual, it's never been easier!

[Click here to download your PDF copy](#)

or visit www.fusionyac.org/street-parties

Never
Such
Innocence
Again.



A chronicle of the Great War
On the centenary of the first
day of the Battle of the Somme
with narration, music
& songs from Black Fox



7.30pm, Friday July 1

The Merry Bells, Wheatley

Tickets £5.00.

Box office: Andy & Liz Walkey, 07900 041070,

Walkey.cake@ntlworld.com

There is no bar but feel free to bring your own refreshment

OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN JUNE

2 nd June	Thursday	10.00am-12.00	Coffee and chat in the hall & church open Elders meet
5 th June	Sunday	8.00am 2.30-4.30pm	Prayer Breakfast & Food Bank Sunday Afternoon Tea URC Hall
14 th	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club Two
21 st	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club 01844 215513
26 th	Sunday	12.30pm	Anniversary Lunch in the Hall

WEEKLY EVENTS

Brownies & Rainbows (Term time)	Monday 5.30pm to 7pm
Choir Around the Piano (Term Time)	Monday 7.30pm to 9 pm
Carers and Toddlers (Term Time)	Monday 9.30am to 11.30am
Wheatley Singers (Term Time)	Tuesday 7.10pm to 9pm
Pre-School Music Group (Term time)	Wednesday 9.30am and 10.30 am
Guides (Term time)	Wednesday 7pm to 8.30pm
Prayers and Breakfast	Thursday 8.00am
Mindfulness Sitting Group	Thursday 9.00am to 9.40am
Brownies & Rainbows (Term Time)	Thursday 5pm to 6.30pm
Table Tennis	Friday 10.30am to 12noon
Hymn Practice	Sunday 9.30-9.45am
Pulse Youth Group	Sunday 7.30-9.00pm

The deadline for the July newsletter is 6pm on Sunday 19th June. Please send email copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk or paper copy to Barbara Joiner.

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.



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