

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2016

Covering Thoughts

Summer is drawing to its end but my thoughts are still full of sunshine, sandy beaches and the song of the sea. The cover therefore is part of a painting of a Devon beach. Do you think that the boat in the picture is used for work or simply for pleasure, and are the people in it setting out or returning home? I love to dream of being in places I have visited, and to relive the experiences of that time.

For many, summer is the main time for leisure, and there can be a sharp contrast to the treadmill of work. Seeing the packed beaches at Bournemouth in mid-August I was transported back to family holidays when I was a child, the noise, the liveliness, the crowds and the energy of it all. How different for retired folk who are free to take breaks throughout the year when beauty spots are quieter.

Having the freedom to choose how we manage our time is a gift, but also a responsibility to ourselves and also to others. We are no longer required to work every day, but some of us become so busy that our time is still given over to many tasks in our desire to be useful and needed. Sometimes we have no choice. There are demands that have to be met and illnesses that have to be borne. But if we do not give ourselves time now to reflect, to observe and to enjoy our world when will we?

Holidays are important whenever we take them. They will change in character as time passes and meet the needs of our later years. However when I listened to an elderly lady at the Stanton House describe her favourite place as the University Parks in Oxford I was reminded that special places are not just far away but also close at hand.

So let us take regular breaks to consider the lilies of the nearby fields and the wild flowers in our gardens.
Christine.

"Utterly Lost in Translation"

My Latin teacher at school insisted that we never ever used "pocket dictionaries" to help us translate English prose into Latin. Why? Because, he said, these dictionaries were too small to give the context for the words and phrases we'd need, so we would make mistakes. I clearly remember a friend of mine who had wanted to find the Latin for "all over the world". He knew the word for world was 'mundus' and found in his pocket dictionary the phrase "actum de" for "all over". So he wrote "actum de mundo". It turned out that "actum de", does mean "all over", but only in the sense in which the commentator at the 1966 World Cup final between England and West Germany shouted "They think it's all over". By mistake, he'd implied that it was the end of the world.

I remembered this incident when I saw that someone had written a book called "Utterly Lost in Translation". The idea for the book came to its author, Mark Mason, when someone told him of a car-hire company abroad, who had clearly not heeded our Latin teacher's advice. The company wanted to warn English-speaking customers how best to deal with errant pedestrians. "When the passenger of foot heave in sight" it began, "tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage, then tootle him with vigour".

Mason admits to feeling guilty about finding other people's efforts to write English amusing, especially since we are so reluctant to speak their languages. But he can't help smiling when a Prague menu translates "sliced peaches" as "peaches from the execution" and when the safety leaflet that accompanied some electric wire-cutters from China said: "Before use, please read this instruction for god's sake".

Few of us are immune to errors in our writing, even in our own language, especially since e-mail makes message exchanges so quick. We might try to check what we've said before pressing "send", but errors are inevitable from time to time. I very nearly replied to a colleague with the words "Thank you for your message..." : a lucky escape, but of course, I have no idea how many errors might have been sent without realising it.

Imagine, then, the possible confusion that can arise for translators of the Bible. The Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek between the 3rd and 1st century BCE, and it was the Greek version that was used by the writers of the New Testament. This means that mistakes in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible were then taken into the Christian New Testament. For example, the expression: "the voice crying in the wilderness" in the gospels (referring to John the Baptist) was one such error from the Greek. The original in Isaiah 40 had intended to read: 'A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord"'.

But there is a subtle problem that occurred *before* the texts were even written down in any language: the hearers of the original stories could not help but remember them slightly differently, or even elaborate them when it seemed right to do so. Scholars tell us that the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4; 3-9) originally may have existed by itself, but an early church sermon has got attached to it (Mark 4;10-20). The original parable is good news. It speaks about hope in the face of opposition, of continuing to sow the seed even though the response to it will vary. It is deeply encouraging to the struggling early followers, often meeting with rejection. It says: *If you carry on sowing, enough seed will fall on good ground*. The early church sermon, by contrast, focuses on diagnosing the waverers - it stares down from the pulpit accusingly and says - which are you - wayside ground, stony ground or thorny ground?

What message do we need to hear? The parable or the sermon? Both, perhaps, you may think. But ponder this: could you find the courage, right now, to give yourself a break from wondering about whether you're wayside, stony or thorny: to look at yourself with compassion and generosity and celebrate the fact that someone, somewhere in your past sowed the Word in you, and it has born good fruit. Impossible as it might seem, here you are, beautiful, loved, just as you are. Lovely in any translation.

Mark Williams

Wheatley Area Churches

As reported in June, Tony Barry has stepped down as Chair of Wheatley Area Churches after serving for the last two years. The mantle has now passed to me and I hope that I can live up to his impeccable style. Let me introduce myself. My name is Edna Ackroyd and although I live in Wheatley, I have worshipped at St. Bartholomew's Church in Holton for the last thirty years. Consequently, I have come to know people in Holton and the sister churches in Waterstock, Waterperry and Albury with Tiddington.

The mood of the times currently seems to be one of change, not only in the country but also in Wheatley Area Churches. It first started with the resignation of your Rev. Tanya Rasmussen from the United Reformed Church in Wheatley to take up a very challenging post in America. Next came Rev. Michael Grantham's decision to retire from being "priest for duties" at Holton and its three sister churches. His last service was on 31st July conducted by Bishop Colin Fletcher at St. Mary's, Wheatley. They will also be saying goodbye to their curate Rev. Lucy Gardner. Michael will be retiring to the village in Lincolnshire where he was born and Lucy will continue at St. Stephen's House where she has also been working during her curacy.

Our Lady of Lourdes has lost the Rev Father John Bagueley who has also retired. His place has been taken by the Father Mervyn Towers. Unfortunately it is not possible for Sunday worship to continue at Our Lady's. Alternatively, a communion service now takes place on Saturday evenings. Although this is a compromise situation, I am glad to report that worship continues in this lovely little church and we wish our friends well. What would St. Bartholomew's do without them when it is our turn to do Lent Lunches? With all the political changes taking place, it cannot be said that our area is not "on trend."

The Queen's 90th birthday was celebrated with special services and more.

At the time of writing, the next event is the children's Summer Camp at Wheatley Park School: over one hundred children a day. The energy and enthusiasm is amazing. Thanks must go to the Headteacher and her staff, especially the Caretakers, for their generosity and tolerance. Edna Ackroyd

Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust
“Ride and Stride
Saturday September 10th 2016

I now have all the paperwork for this year’s Ride and Stride for Wheatley URC. Please see me if you wish to take part and raise sponsorship for assisting in the repair and refurbishment of our church and other historic church buildings in Oxfordshire.

1. You can plan your own ride, walk or run around as many churches in the area as you can manage between 10.00 am in the morning and 6.00 pm in the evening. If you get sponsorship from friends and church members per church visited, the more you visit, the more money you collect for OHCT. Half of all you raise can benefit your own church if you nominate it on the form. If you can’t take part on the allotted day, it is now acceptable for you to do it on another more convenient day, so no excuse, now! Ask me for the necessary sponsor forms in good time, please.

2. Alternatively, I shall be organising the last of a trilogy of walks around churches that are, or have been, directly associated with Wheatley. This year, I am planning a “circular” walk that will start from St Mary’s and incorporate Forest Hill, Stanton St John and Holton, concluding with Our Lady of Lourdes and Wheatley URC. It would have been good to have gone as far afield as Beckley and perhaps return via Barton and Collingwood Road URC, but I think that would probably be a step or three too far for most of us, in the time allotted.

If you would like to join me, the cost would be a £10 per head donation for OHCT, unless you already have a list of sponsors to at least that value, by the day. Stout walking shoes or boots and some waterproof clothing would be advisable and a good supply of water and some snack food to eat when we stop, in case nothing is available to purchase, nearby. Most churches offer a drink and a biscuit, though.

3. To keep our church open during the day, we shall also need a rota of helpers please to welcome visitors. This involves signing them in, signing their sponsor forms, offering a welcome and refreshments and sometimes advice about finding other churches nearby. This task can also be sponsored by friends and church members, to raise additional money for OHCT. There is a rota list to sign on the church notice board or contact Liz or me about this, if you can help. Thank you.

Tony Barry (872293) Wheatley URC Ride and Stride Rep.

Church Calendar for September 2016

Everyone is invited to stay for coffee or tea after 10am Sunday services.

Date	4 th September	11 th September	18 th September	25 th September
Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service
Time	10 am	10 am	10 am	10 am
Worship Leader	Revd. Donald Norwood	Richard Bainbridge	Revd. Pauline Main	Harvest*
Vestry Elder	Ellen Webster	John Kidd	Ann Hardiman	Ann Bettess
Welcomer	Liz Barry	Ann Bettess	Joan Kidd	Phyllis Williams
Steward	Moira Watson	Pauline Shelley	Christine Bainbridge	Andy Walkey
Reader	John Kidd	Moira Watson	Pauline Shelley	Liz Barry
Prayers	Malcolm Benson	Barbara Joiner	Tom Goss	Bobbie Stormont
Flowers	Allison Towner	Ann Hardiman	Liz Stuart	Harvest Team

**Lay led by members of the congregation*

Traidcraft stall on occasional Sundays.

Simple evening worship in the style of Taize will take place at 7.30 pm at 3, Barns Close, Holton on Sundays 18th & 25th September

Sunday Morning Meditation

Come and join us In prayer, readings, art, poetry, music and reflection, we share finding God in everything.

First Sunday of the month. 8am. Followed by breakfast.

Liz Barry

Common Lectionary Readings September 2016

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.

Date	4 th September	11 th September	18 th September	25 th September
Old Testament	Deuteronomy 30:15-20	Exodus 32: 7-14	Amos 8: 4-7	Amos 6: 1a, 4-7
Psalm	Psalm 1	Psalm 51: 1-10	Psalm 113	Psalm 146
New Testament	Philemon 1-21	1 Timothy 1: 12-17	1 Timothy 2: 1-7	1 Timothy 6: 6-19
Gospel	Luke 14: 25-33	Luke 15: 1-10	Luke 16: 1-13	Luke 16: 19-31

News of the Church Family

Recently Andy and Elizabeth Walkey waved farewell to both their daughters. Claire to Kenya to further her research into Kenyan refugee policy and practice, as part of the PhD. Katherine on a travelling adventure, starting in Sri Lanka and continuing to Vietnam, where she will spend the next four months teaching English as a foreign language. Much to her parents' relief she is travelling with her boy friend, Jon.

Both Claire and Katherine have fond childhood memories of Hazel Hull, who we keep in our thoughts and prayers.

Please remember in your prayers the members of John Kidd's Pastoral Care

List: Graham Dobson, Ann & Fred Hardiman, Richard & Doris Sinfield, Barbara & Albert Joiner, Elizabeth & Andy Walkey, Sue & Charles Bennett.

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Adult Education Ministry Team, Tom Goss, Sybil Beaton, Peter Devlin, Robert Harding & Bobbie Stormont.

Biblog by Laurence Devlin

This is the third and last instalment of the mini-series on Abraham. Previously we saw how the great patriarch revealed himself as not quite the “giant of faith” we were always told he was but often a wavering, selfish and opportunistic person. However, we also saw him as an exemplary hero rescuing his nephew or fiercely arguing with God about justice over the fate of ten hypothetical righteous people. When we pick up the thread of the story in chapter 20, his behaviour towards Sarah however has not improved much as he still considers her as a useful and dispensable “asset” and introduces her, *again*, as his sister to the king of Gerar, Abimelek, who therefore “took Sarah...” (Gen. 20:1-2). After all, must have reasoned Abraham, it worked once with Pharaoh, so it will probably work this time too! And indeed it does, as Abraham acquires more wealth from the king!

But Abraham does not have the exclusivity of questionable behaviour: When Sarah (returned to her lawful husband by another godly intervention) finally bears the child she thought she would never conceive, the safety and the future of that precious child becomes her main preoccupation. She therefore fears for Isaac’s inheritance when she concludes (rightly or wrongly we don’t know) that he is threatened by his older and stronger half-brother, Ismael, the son of Hagar. *So again*, she asks Abraham to cast away the boy and his mother and *again*, Abraham agrees, albeit very reluctantly this time... This dreadful act seems however to be condoned by God: “Do not consider this to be evil on account of the boy and on account of your servant woman”. (Gen. 21:12). Really? To understand, we must keep in mind that the jealousy and competition between the two women would have inevitably spelt worse strife: both women are convinced that their worth only stems from the capacity to bear a son to their husband and they would have fought tooth and nails to make their own son prevail. So it might be that God decides that sending Hagar away is the least of two evils in order to avoid tragic hostility between the two women and their sons ...

Or it might simply be that sending Ismael away is an integral part of God’s plan to realise the destiny of *both* Isaac and Ismael. Let’s not forget that Ismael is *also* blessed by God who says “I will make a great nation of him also.” (Gen. 21:13). In the logic of the writers of Genesis, God’s plan for his chosen people can only incorporate *one heir* into the Covenant and the one is Isaac, *the second son*. Very significant by the way is the fact that special blessings given to second/younger sons, occur again and again in Biblical

narratives (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Perez, Solomon) in a culture where firstborns had the higher status, an interesting counter-cultural motif which would deserve further analysis and study... may be in a future biblog!

For the moment, let's turn our attention to the most devastating narrative in Abraham's story, the binding of Isaac: "It was after these things that *God tested Abraham*" (Gen. 22:1) The "test" hinges on God's command to offer his "beloved son" as a burnt offering. But what is exactly the *purpose* of the test? Well, to determine whether Abraham was going to obey God of course! But is it really that straightforward? If we accept this, what we are faced with, is a God who is at best, unfathomable and at worst "deranged", "sadistic," "perverse" or "monstrous", descriptions which have all been used by various commentators... It also does not make much sense after all the tribulations Sarah and Abraham went through to get to the birth of *this particular son*, destined to fulfil the promise of the Covenant, that God would ask Abraham to kill him.

Many people have tried to explain away the horrific nature of the command by saying that Abraham knew that God would never have let him commit such murder. But then what's the point of asking? It is not a test if you already know the outcome of that "test"! Another fairly common explanation is that God's command was given in order to instruct the Israelites that child-sacrifice, a very common practice in the Ancient world, was abhorrent to God and that he stopped Abraham to teach him not to do it. Not a very convincing explanation as when God decides to instruct the Israelites, he does not beat about the bush (Moses notwithstanding...) but simply *tells them*, in no uncertain terms, what to do and what not to do.

So may be, what God wanted to determine was how Abraham would react as, from what was revealed of his character in previous episodes, God is well aware that Abraham does not hesitate to abandon his family to danger, uncertainty and even sure death *in order to save himself*. So may be the purpose of God's test was to see *just how far Abraham would go in that direction*... And indeed Abraham could have reacted in at least three possible ways to God's command: **First**, *plainly refused to obey* but if he had, we know from other biblical narratives that disobedience usually results in divine punishment. So God's test was to see if he would accept the punishment to save his son OR choose self-preservation once again by killing his son? A

second possible reaction could have been to offer to *sacrifice himself* rather than the boy and bargain with God (Take me instead, I am old, I have accomplished my mission while the boy has his life in front of him and his destiny to fulfil) but we know that Abraham is rather partial to looking after himself first. A **third** possibility would have been to *challenge God directly* as he did regarding the Sodomites when he said “Far be it from you to expect such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent!” (Gen.18:25)

But nothing. Silence.... Why?

Well, there is another very interesting and VERY daring possibility: Abraham's apparent complicity with the sacrifice might have been *his own way of testing God*: Given the fact that he had previously argued with God in favour of the Sodomites, by silently complying with God's instructions to kill Isaac, Abraham was actually *putting pressure on God* to act in a moral way to preserve innocent life and therefore show his true nature : After all, this is the God who swept away many innocent people during the Flood but who acceded to Abraham's moral argument over the innocent of Sodom. **So which God is he?** If God had not stopped Abraham's murderous hand, goes that interpretation, the patriarch would have broken the covenant and said “If the God I am serving demands the same kind of immorality that I saw in my father's pagan society, I must be mistaken and I must look further”. But God sends the angel to stop Abraham's hand and therefore demonstrates that HE does NOT demand blind obedience to immoral superior orders... This is a seducing interpretation letting both God and Abraham “off the hook” as it were, but which is not really warranted by what the text actually says: “*God tested Abraham*”, not the other way around!

So in a way we are none the wiser and the Binding of Isaac remains one of the most difficult and controversial episode of the Old Testament.... However, there might be an important lesson for us: We have seen that every wrongdoing committed by Abraham has been met with God's intervention, restoring Sarah twice, saving the lives of Hagar and Ismael when Abraham sent them to a sure death in the desert and stopping his murderous hand on his son. So we see that in spite of all his despicable acts, God continues to renew his call and promise to Abraham and keeps trying to set right what Abraham does wrong ... Is this not intended to teach us that this is not a vengeful God but a God of grace, love, forgiveness and extreme faithfulness?

May be ... But then why does God say “now I know that you fear God”? Does fear here mean “awe” and “reverence” or does it mean that God sees a man who fears because of all his wrongdoings and is therefore in need of grace and forgiveness? The only certainty is that God chooses to bless Abraham anyway and that, in spite of everything, through his family “all the nations of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).

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Do you Fancy coming for a Walk?

A date for your diary. Saturday 17th September. More details will appear in the hall very soon, but this will be no longer than about 3 miles, unless you wish to go a little further. There is an excellent café for both coffee and lunch.

THANK YOU

A big “Thank You” to everyone who supported our charity sale tables in August. We are delighted to have raised a total of £235.00 which will be donated to *Helen & Douglas House* and *Oasis of Peace*.
From Ellen, Allison and Christine

Communication Team

We are delighted to announce that Annette Wright has agreed to become an editor of this publication, working alongside Barbara Joiner and Andy Walkey and eventually taking over from Andy when he moves. Annette has agreed to compile and edit the October edition with Andy and Barbara in support if required.

The deadline for the October newsletter is 6pm on Sunday 18th September. Please send email copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy may be handed to Annette, Barbara or Andy.



23 - 30 October 2016

Travellers All

An evening of journeys
in words and music

by Paula Tait

musician, singer, speech artist

www.speechandmusic.com

7pm FRIDAY 28th OCTOBER

Wheatley

United Reformed Church

in celebration of

ONE WORLD WEEK

poetry, story, song and music
from all corners of the world

*Our journeys may be different,
but we share the same roads...*

light refreshments

no charge

donations to Traidcraft

for further details please contact

Liz Barry – tel: 01865 872293

OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER

1 st September	Thursday	10.00am-12.00 7:15pm	Coffee in the hall church open Elders meet
4 th September	Sunday	8.00am 2.30-4.30pm	Morning Meditation, Foodbank Afternoon Tea in hall
10 th September	Saturday	10.00am -6.00pm	Ride & Stride. See Article for details.
13 th September	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club Two
17 th September	Saturday	Details from Robert Harding	Church Walk
18 th September	Sunday	11.30am	Wheatley URC AGM & Church Meeting
20 th September	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club 01844 215513

WEEKLY EVENTS

(NB Youth activities, Choir around the Piano and Wheatley Singers are term-time only)

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

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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