

WHEATLEY URC
ANNUAL REPORTS
2016



Annual General Meeting
Sunday 18th September 2016
11.30 am

Worship Ministry Team

The Team has met three times during the past year and has been joined by Allison Towner. As usual, it has concentrated on arrangements for the Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter services, as well as reflecting on them afterwards. This year, for example, to remind us of our overall theme for the year of journeying, a stone cairn was built in the sanctuary during Lent and remained there for several weeks. Christine Bainbridge led meditations on her paintings on evenings during Holy Week. The creativity of our members and friends is astonishing. Frances Simpson has continued to lead our music, with occasional visits from Jeff Clarke, and we are deeply grateful to them for their untiring service. Music and visual symbols are an integral part of the offering of our worship.

There have, however, been a number of broader issues on the agenda. We believe that we have now found the best way for the candle-lighting which immediately precedes the entry of the Bible and minister(s) into the sanctuary. On that note, it is important to stress that our ministry is a shared one, which is why the elders who serve at communion join the presiding minister in following the Bible out of the sanctuary, since they are a visible expression of it.

We have given some attention to the issue of the large wooden cross and its place in the sanctuary (Charles Brock has assured us that it belongs to the congregation, though of course we are glad to let it be more widely used). The Elders have supported the proposal we asked them to consider, and we now bring it to Church Meeting for discussion and possible approval:

The large wooden cross should be placed in the sanctuary during Advent, Lent and Holy Week, and through the Easter season until the Sunday after Ascension. Advent and Lent are traditionally seasons of penitence in the Church's year, which is why it is particularly appropriate. It can then be draped in black for the Tenebrae service on Maundy Thursday. There is a good case for continuing to use it during the six Sundays of the Easter season, especially if it is decorated in some way to symbolize the Resurrection, as has

sometimes been done. This would mean that the cross was displayed for some sixteen Sundays in all, at times when its presence engaged most helpfully with the rhythms of the Christian year.

As part of our programme of looking at each element of the service in turn (which is where the idea of incorporating the lighting of the candle into the service originated) we have also given consideration to how Bible readings are best introduced. There is some unhappiness about the practice of giving out the page numbers in the two versions we use, because it tends to interrupt the flow of the service. We would like to suggest that readers begin 'Let us listen for the word of God in...', with the appropriate book, chapter and verses announced (but no page numbers); and end with 'Hear the word of the Lord', to which the congregation responds (as now) 'Thanks be to God'. We realize that some find the giving out of page numbers helpful, but that can be solved by the worship leader bringing a few slips indicating or extra orders of service indicating the readings so that people can find the lessons in advance. The lectionary readings are also printed in the magazine, though from time to time others may replace them. The Team would welcome comments from Church Meeting about this, before drafting a proposal.

The interregnum has drawn to a close. Laurence Devlin has done sterling work in organizing the preaching rota, and we have been blessed with a wide variety of worship leaders, many of whom we shall hope to invite again. A particular highlight was the visit of Andrew Hazelden, a potter working in Yarnton, who led a service which included the throwing and shaping of clay on the wheel to make a pot. He has designed baptismal bowls for a number of churches, and we would like to explore the possibility of commissioning him to make one for us. Any ideas about suitable designs are welcome (we already have one or two). We shall discuss this at the next meeting of the Team, towards the end of September.

Finally, we are delighted to welcome Pauline Main as a member of the Team; and I am even more delighted to hand over to her as its new convenor.
Revd. Colin Thompson

Secretaries' Report

This time last year we were still mourning the departure of Tanya and her family although it has been good to receive their news and have Joel

worshipping with us for some of the year. They remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Much has happened since then despite the fact that sometimes an interregnum is perceived as 'marking time'. We have been blessed with having Rev Duncan Wilson as our interim moderator. His calm and gentle approach has contributed to our worship and guided us through the process which has culminated with the Revd. Pauline Main being called as our 'Interim' minister, with unanimous support at our special church meeting and her subsequent induction at the end of May.

As part of the process of calling a new minister, we reflected on our mission statement and our pastorate profile at an away day in November. The revised profile was approved by church meeting and will form part of the ongoing discussions regarding future ministry to all the Oxford Group of URC churches. At a national level 'What is the Spirit saying to the Churches' prompted discussion of how the church provides ministry in a situation whereby few churches are of sufficient size to justify a full stipendiary minister. Possibilities included merging with other URC's, forming team or group ministries, merging with other denominations or a greater role for lay leadership. With recent resignations and impending retirements, Oxford is faced with the reality of how best to implement some of these ideas. Preliminary meetings have taken place and we have already shared ideas with our sister churches, Summertown and Marston, at a successful away day.

At a parochial level we said farewell to our longest serving member Hazel Hull who, because of failing health, moved to nursing home near to her son in Yorkshire. Hazel contributed hugely to the life of the church in so many different ways. One of our newer members Marjorie Wright, died peacefully earlier in the year and a number of us were able to attend her funeral in Brockworth. We will miss the Bullard family who have moved to Sonning, still close enough to pay us an occasional visit though. Whilst we currently have no children worshipping with us on a regular basis, the Sunday evening youth group is rapidly increasing in numbers such that additional help may be needed next term. We should also acknowledge the outreach to older members of the community with our lunch clubs, teas, coffee mornings and support for the 'Not So Young Club'.

Singling out individuals can be invidious, but thanks must be expressed to Colin Thompson and Richard Bainbridge for leading our worship on a regular basis. Their contributions are enlightening, thought provoking and challenging. Congratulations to Laurence Devlin who completed her lay

preaching course with flying colours. We look forward to her contributions to our worship. Of our visiting preachers, mention must be made of the visit from Revd. John Sturney who led worship on the 60th anniversary of his induction and ordination here at Wheatley. He regaled us with tales of how his accommodation was a caravan parked behind the church and access to the 'facilities' was across a plank and in through a rear window!

Thanks also go to Frances Simpson for her increased input as organist and music lead. Jeff Clark has given up his regular commitment but will still act as 'longstop'. Ann Bettess' term as elder comes to an end and Malcolm Benson completes 5 years of shared secretarial duties, initially with Catherine Hughes and currently Robert Harding. I (Malcolm) would like to thank both of them for their forbearance and support.

We are very blessed in the active support we have through our ministry teams. We look forward to our continuing spiritual journey and give thanks for the spiritual guidance and pastoral support which Pauline Main brings to our community.

Malcolm Benson and Robert Harding

Adult Christian Education Ministry Team (Ace)

Following on from last year we continue to organise one off events but with the addition of some weekly meetings. We had a well - attended meeting of four weekly sessions based on Dominic Crossan's ' **Living the Questions**' DVD lecture series (**Victory and Peace or Justice and Peace?**) in the spring. The lectures were followed by reflective discussion. We would like to thank Ann and Roger Bettess for their wonderful hospitality in hosting the meetings. We plan to have similar meetings in the future. We are currently organising an open question session later in the year mainly along the lines of the previous RQT. Sadly, a planned journaling workshop with facilitator Barbara Doubtfire has had to be put on hold as Barbara is unwell. We will be organising Bible study events through late autumn 2016 and spring 2017. We have other ideas which we will discuss and develop in due course.

The current group membership is: Tom Goss (coordinator), Sybil Beaton, Peter Devlin, Bobbie Stormont and Robert Harding.

Tom Goss

Treasurer and Finance

The full accounts for 1st January to 31st December 2015 will be presented at the AGM on the 18th September.

Looking at our offertory figures, 2015 was an excellent year and we saw an increase each year over the previous three years. However, looking at a comparison of the first seven months of 2016 with the similar period in 2015, our income from offerings alone, has decreased by about 18%. Full details will be provided at the AGM.

Our main outgoing, is to the URC Ministry and Mission (M&M), which for 2015, totalled £22,103. These funds are pooled with payments from all URCs to cover stipends of ministers in local pastorates, church related community workers, ministers working in special category posts and four resource centres for learning. Payments to M&M continue to be made, even when we are without a minister, so we have not had a 'free twelve months' . This payment is due to increase and the actual figure will be known in the next month or two.

The Disasters Emergency Committee have had no emergency appeals in the last twelve months, so we have made no emergency charity payments. The team met last December to decide which charities would receive our usual annual charitable giving.

In the May Church newsletter, there was an item about the Gift Aid Scheme. May I reiterate, that if you pay income tax and wish to join this scheme, the Church can claim 25p in the £ from the tax authorities on your giving to the Church, without any additional outlay from yourself. Also, if you would like to join the envelope scheme for your regular giving, or make payments directly into the Church bank account, please do not hesitate to ask me for more details.

Finally, thank you for your continued generous giving over the last twelve months.

Chris Shelley

Fête Results 2016

It has come to my attention that not everyone is aware of the final figures for the Fête. My apologies.

Here are the net figures for the various stalls, games etc.

Gate	£182.32
Tombola	£163.95
Books	£147.00
Raffle	£138.00
Pantry	£183.00
Plants	£250.00
Refreshments	£450.00
Ice Cream	£35.20
Putting	£36.30
Card Game	£11.30
Aunt Sally	£50.00
Quoits	£15.10
Target / Game	£26.00
Whisky	£27.00
Traidcraft (Donation)	£10.00
Not So Young Club (Donation)	£20.00
Net Total	£1745.27

Many thanks to everyone involved, in whatever way, for this great result.

Chris Shelley

Hospitality Team

The team meets when needed to discuss the requirements for any event requiring flowers or refreshments. It has co-ordinated the refreshments for Sunday morning coffee, shared lunches, the anniversary and the fête during the past year and the church decoration for the anniversary, Christmas and Easter. We review past events at our meetings to try and ensure that we are ministering effectively.

Joan and John Kidd stepped down from doing a monthly Sunday morning coffee stint after several years. We greatly appreciated their hard work. Also much appreciated was the number of people offering to do Sunday morning coffee, which means we have enough people to cover the 5th Sunday as well as the usual four.

Catherine Harding

Flowers On Sunday

It is always a pleasure to have flowers in the sanctuary and the porch, and we appreciate the generosity of those who provide them and arrange them for each Sunday.

Allison Towner

Pastoral Care

Team members continue to visit people in their own homes, in care homes or in hospital. They also provide a friendly ear by telephone, and the homes of some of our members have become meeting places for comfort and cheer.

The Not-so-young Club has flourished under the continuing leadership of Frances Simpson, meeting in the Merry Bells coffee room every other Monday afternoon, excepting bank holidays.

The core activity is bingo. Watching it being played I have been impressed by the concentration and alertness it creates among club members.

The club provides other activities to enjoy too. There was a Christmas Party in December, and in January we had a Christmas Lunch at the Kings Arms pub. We had coach trips, one to see the musical Annie at the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre, one touring the Chilterns, stopping for tea and cakes beside the Thames. There were speakers, one from the Lions club about a "Message in a Bottle" (essential medical information in case of an emergency), one from Wiltshire Farm Foods about frozen ready meals, and one from Ann Bettess about the fruit harvesting project of Sustainable Wheatley.

A local social worker has made successful referrals. The growth in membership has made the coffee room uncomfortably cramped, and we have had to start a waiting list. We look forward to moving into the URC Hall in September. We should be able to admit more members and move about more freely, as well as having space for walking frames. Another limiting factor is transport for frailer members. Our current drivers are working at maximum capacity. Could anyone else help by driving people to the URC every other week?

The monthly Sunday Teas continue in the Church Hall and are usually well attended. We were boosted this year by the cast of the opera "Lizzie Strata" as they rehearsed in the sanctuary. We continue to receive donations for the Alzheimer's Disease Society, which we pass on once they reach £100. It would be good to have drivers to bring villagers who are otherwise shut in to the teas. Also as illness and responsibilities elsewhere reduce the capacity of our

team, we would welcome help with setting up and laying the tables and clearing away.

Ann Bettess

Communications Ministry Team

The communications ministry team continue to support the activities of all our ministry teams through the production of the newsletter, maintaining leaflets and stationery, looking after our audio-visual systems, and ensuring our notice boards and online presence are maintained.

Newsletter

Andrew and Barbara have continued to edit the Newsletter. Annette has agreed to take over from Andrew when he moves away from the village. Contributions a welcome to the email address <newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk>

As well as producing a paper copy for all members and friends on the fourth Sunday of the month, our Newsletter archive is available for download at wheatleyurc.org.uk/about/newsletters/ This is a useful facility for friends who have moved away from the area and who want to keep in touch, but any members and friends of the church can register to be able to access it. It is not necessary to discontinue receiving the paper copy but some have chosen not to receive a paper copy but to rely on the online version, which makes a very small saving in postage.

Stationery

New URC logo. The URC has decided to update the church's logo and this has already been incorporated into stationery.

Online Presence

We maintain a presence online at www.wheatleyurc.org.uk and a Facebook page @WheatleyURC. If you are a Facebook user please like us! Events are posted in both these places as well as in the Newsletter.

Sermons Online

We continue to put a selection of sermons online. These can be listened to wheatleyurc.org.uk/worship/sermons/ or click through the link from the front page of the website. We now have an archive of 151 sermons from 33 preachers in a little over 6 years . They have been downloaded a total of 17,339 times, an average of 114 times per sermon. The most popular sermon is now Turning the world upside down, by Tanya Stormo Rasmussen, Sunday, 21st October 2012, which has been downloaded 663 times.

Noticeboards

Posters have been produced for the Fete, for Wheatley Area Churches Easter services, for One World Week. Every effort is made to keep notices tidy and up-to-date.

Audio-Visual System

We continue to make good use of the AV system.

Phyllis Williams

Thursday Prayer Breakfast

Week by week a small group meets on Thursday mornings to pray for the world, for the local community and those concerns closest to our hearts. We remember those known to us who are experiencing any sort of difficulty and each prayer is followed by a short period of silence. We bring before God those areas of the world in conflict and those undergoing famine, major disasters, drought or flood. This year, before eating our breakfast we have been using a book of graces, won by Richard in a competition. They range from college graces to the short and snappy, 'This happy meal will happier be if we, O Lord, remember thee.'

Ann Hardiman

Thursday Coffee Mornings

We are continuing with our coffee mornings on the first Thursday of the month. As with most meetings some weeks we are bursting with visitors and then we have a quiet one. I would like to thank all who help, in particular Frances Simpson, Zena Knight and Moira Watson. The books are still available for borrowing so do come along and enjoy the company

Barbara Joiner

Table Tennis

The Table Tennis Group continues to be popular in the URC hall. It is very well attended with approximately 10 players who contribute £1 each session. A celebratory lunch was held in January and a donation was made to the URC for the use of the hall.

It is a very social occasion and there is time to chat and have a cup of coffee. All are welcome on a Friday morning between 10.30am and noon. Come when you can, have fun and meet friends.

Pat Simpson

Taize Prayer at 3, Barns Close, Holton.

This has continued throughout the year on the third and fourth Sundays on the month at the earlier time of 7.30 pm. We have had some new visitors during the year including Pauline Main and others are always welcome. There is no need to feel you have to come on a regular basis. We value the short silence and the opportunity to continue to reflect on the gospel passage for the day. Sometimes this flows into the conversation over tea and coffee whilst at other times we talk about our own experiences and those of the wider world.

Christine and Richard Bainbridge

Care For The World

An enjoyable quiz and supper was held to promote One World Week in the Merry Bells in October. As a complete contrast, we listened to a most thought-provoking talk on Domestic Violence by Peter Devlin in November.

One of the Wheatley Area Churches Lent soup lunches was planned with a Fairtrade Fortnight theme. Also in March we held our annual Women's World Day of Prayer service on a theme "receive children, receive me" prepared by Christian women in Cuba. This enabled us to understand more of the country's increasing prominence on the world stage and we were delighted that St. Mary's had an evening service.

Christian Aid Week in May concentrated on Bangladesh and flood alleviation, with an assembly at Wheatley Primary School, a stall at the fete and a wonderful total raised in house-to-house collections in the Wheatley area of over £4,000.

Towards the end of the church year we have heard more of Neve Shalom / Wahat Al Salam "Oasis of Peace" during one of our services in August, brought to us by Andy Walkey who has been on the organising committee for many years.

Our monthly contributions towards the Oxford Community Foodbank continue to be appreciated by those in need in the local area. Please remember to make a special note of this on the first Sunday of each month.

With the assistance of Elizabeth Stuart and Angela Holdaway we have run a Traidcraft stall after church twice in most months this year. Attempts to make this a regular date have not been successful as we all have other responsibilities. Extra helpers would be very welcome and we very much appreciate those who simply step in with a helping hand setting up, clearing away, or minding the stall. This year from July 2015 to July 2016 we have

bought Traidcraft goods to the value of £2619.70, which is a good achievement. By the time of the AGM Ann Bettess hopes to have attended a Road Show, either in London or in Birmingham.

Traidcraft is an organisation which campaigns for justice in trade as well as demonstrating the possibilities of fair trade. This year there is a campaign, Justice Matters, which includes a petition to the government to make it easier for UK companies to be prosecuted if they cause serious harm abroad. Many thanks to all who continue to support Traidcraft from year to year.

Liz Barry

Maintenance Ministry Team

The team members have continued as before with Chris Shelley (convenor), Tony Barry and Bob Webster.

Two items have been carried out under 'Health and Safety.' Firstly, electrical PAT Testing has been carried out on all our electrical portable appliances. All items now in use have passed the test and are safe for use. The cream water heater, which is used mainly at the fete, has passed the test, but we are advised that it could need replacing in the next 12-18 months.

Secondly, we had our annual fire fighting equipment check and we subsequently asked for a review of our equipment and signage. This resulted in a second fire extinguisher (CO₂) being installed in the Sanctuary, to cover mainly the PA/recording system. Two extinguishers were also re-positioned. All the signage has been replaced, to bring us up to date with current legislation.

By the time you read this report, we will have had a new gas boiler in use for just over a month, hopefully working problem free. The old boiler, possibly about 15 years old, has been causing problems and the whole heating system needed a powerflush, due to the build up of sludge in the system. It was therefore decided to have the boiler replaced and the new model should operate much more efficiently than the old one.

The floor in the hall has been re-varnished during the year and the re-surfacing of the floor in the Sanctuary and the repair of the exterior of the High Street wall are still on our agenda.

Many thanks to all who carried out any items of maintenance during the year, whether large or small. Your help is greatly appreciated.

If anyone feels that they would like to join the team, please do not hesitate to speak to me.

Chris Shelley

Christian Aid 2015-16

During the year the URC has raised the following sums as part of the overall fund raising for Christian Aid through Wheatley Area Churches.

Lent Lunches - £169 out of a total £618 (plus £50 sent to Fairtrade)

Fete (Wormery Stall) - £21.55.

Christian Aid Week Collections - £964 out of a total of £4,204.

Additional money is also sent by our Church Treasurer to Christian Aid's 1% Commitment for Life Fund out of church funds, together with our individual charitable donations in response to various Christian Aid disaster appeals throughout the year.

On behalf of Christian Aid, many thanks to all who gave of their time and money during the year to help maintain the ongoing essential work of Christian Aid.

Liz & Tony Barry & Chris & Pauline Shelley.

First Report for Buster's Jazz Appreciation Evenings (aka "Buster's Off The Square")

This eclectic group of people originally came together back in 1998 to share their common interest in jazz music as a vehicle for raising money for the Wheatley URC Restoration Project. The URC Treasurer had put up stakes of £10 and challenged each member of the congregation to go away and make it grow! I invested mine in cakes and wine and invited jazz lovers to pay £10 each to join me for a series of evenings to play board games whilst listening to jazz. Sometimes we would have a speaker on a particular aspect of the music and on one occasion we invited local professional jazz musician, George Haslam to demonstrate the technique of improvisation and then, with two musicians from Wheatley Park School (Roger Simmonds and James Whitworth), they "jammed" together. As the size of Buster's membership increased we outgrew our lounge and ended up in the Church Hall. So "Buster's On The Hill" became "Buster's Off The Square". (Buster, incidentally, was the resident cat who detested jazz and the people who invaded his house and who was never present after the first arrival!) For new members, lifetime membership is £10, which goes to Wheatley URC general funds.

It waned for a few years, but then reformed more recently, by popular request and now meets regularly at the Church Hall whenever there is a fifth Friday evening in the month. At these evenings we usually raise money by donation, for an appropriate, named charity, but after first deducting a donation to the URC for use of the hall and the costs of wine and other

beverages consumed. Finger food for the evening is provided by attendees on a "bring and share" basis.

In the last twelve months we have only managed to meet twice at which we celebrated the music of New Orleans in January and enjoyed a warm evening of "Summery themed" music and prosecco in the garden back "On the Hill" in July. But in early March we organised, in conjunction with the Holton Village Hall Committee - a live big band jazz concert for 100 people, featuring George Haslam's "Swingtime" Big Band from Abingdon, to raise funds for The Friends of St Bartholomew's Church, Holton Restoration and Modernisations Fund and for a London based young peoples' music project in memory of locally educated young musician, James Whitworth, killed last year in a road traffic accident in London. A trio featuring James' sister, Carol Green, sang and played for us during the interval, which proved to be at least, if not more popular with the audience, as the big band!

Charities supported this year were:

Friends of St Barts' Church, Holton Restoration and Modernisations Fund, £300.00 and The Whitworf "Trust", £435.00

Tony Barry.

Chairman's Report for Wheatley Area Churches AGM, 15/05/16 (Abridged)

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.

The 2004 WAC Constitution was revised 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 WAC meetings and events and it was 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.

The Revd. Tanya Rasmussen was missed from the committee this year, but we were pleased to note that the URC is about to appoint (now appointed) 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 URC and Marston URC 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 Kidlington R.C. Church and we hope he may also occasionally attend WAC 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 for 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.

Tony Barry



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