

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE

CHURCH CONTACTS

Minister: Revd. Pauline Main 01865 513581

Email: minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk

Associate Minister: Revd. Dr Colin Thompson

colin.thompson@stcatz.ox.ac.uk

Church Secretary: Robert Harding

email: secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk

Church website: www.wheatleyurc.org.uk



JANUARY 2017

Covering Thoughts

If we ask what comes closest to the heart of religious ethics loving our neighbour, or even loving our enemy comes top of the list, and if we are making a list of resolutions for the New Year perhaps this challenge should be on it. However like many things we agree to I want to ask – but what does this mean? How can we begin to put this request of Jesus into practise?

If we are honest we will admit that there are those we find tedious, annoying, bullying or obnoxious, and often we will go out of our way to avoid them. If we cannot do this because they are one of our family or work mates we may feel oppressed and guilty because of the strong feelings of dislike which are so hard to hide. ‘It is not very Christian of me to feel like this’ I have often heard friends say, ‘I don’t seem to be able to like Mrs X’.

There is a difference between liking and loving as we all know. We may not be able to jump the hurdle of liking but I think there is a helpful way forward. It is simply taking a small step of kindness. Instead of the mountainous challenge of loving our enemy or neighbour the lesser request of showing him or her kindness is more manageable.

Most of us do not have to face frightening or life threatening situations and to show kindness by courtesy, patience and helpfulness is not beyond our capability. Forgetting about our feelings and just doing something positive is a good beginning to building happier relationships, and the kind word spoken to someone who fills us with dislike is invaluable in so many ways. It affects us just as much as it does the person who receives it. As Kahlil Gibran wrote: ‘Kindness is like snow – It beautifies everything it covers’.

Christine

Feb 11th Elders Party

OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN JANUARY

1 st Jan.	Sunday	8.00am 2.30-4.30pm	Morning Meditation, Foodbank Afternoon Tea in hall
5 th Jan.	Thursday	10.00am-12.00 7.15pm	Coffee in the hall church open Elders meet
9 th Jan.	Monday	2.00 – 4.00pm	Not So Young Club
10 th Jan.	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club Two
17 th Jan.	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club
23 rd	Monday	2.00-4.00pm	Not So Young Club

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 7.00-9.00pm

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.*

News of the Family

Congratulations to Hazel Hull who has reached the grand old age of **90!**

Please remember in your prayers the members of Joan Kidd's Pastoral Care List: Jean Boxall, Pat Howard, Zena Knight, Frances Simpson, Pauline & Chris Shelley.

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Finance Committee:- Chris Shelley, Christine Bainbridge, Ann Hardiman and Bob Webster.

Charitable Giving 2016

The Finance Ministry team met at the end of November, to decide which charities we would support this year and many thanks to everyone who gave us the names of charities to consider, for personal or other reasons. From the many suggestions, we have decided to make donations of £500 to each of the following :-

Huntington's Disease Association	Mind
Gatehouse Oxford	Save the Children
Commitment for Life	Artpeace
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity (SANDS)	
Disasters Emergency Committee – Yemen Crisis Appeal	

This will bring our charitable giving for 2016 from Church funds to approximately £5000 and does not include the funds received from specific personal giving to appeals or charitable collections, through the Church. The total figures will be shown in the annual Church accounts.

There may be some charities mentioned above which are unfamiliar and we are therefore hoping to put some brief details about the charities, in our newsletters over the coming months.

Many thanks for your continued generosity, which enables us to make significant charitable donations each year.

Chris



HAPPY NEW YEAR

TO YOU ALL !!

Dear Friends,

So here we are, another New Year. They do seem to come round very quickly don't they? Apparently the ancient Babylonians would make promises to their Gods at New Year, to return borrowed objects and pay their debts. In Roman times it was quite common to begin each year with promises to the God Janus, from whom of course January is named. In medieval times at the end of the Christmas season, knights would take the 'Peacock Vow' to reaffirm their commitment to chivalry. You might well argue that these are all versions of what we now call 'New Year Resolutions'.

I wonder where you stand on the subject of setting yourself resolutions at this time of year. I have never been impressed with the idea and cannot remember having set myself any since I was a teenager. A year is far too long a span for good intentions. Apart from any other factor there is at least 51 other weeks ahead in which you can decide to make a start. What is more, I have statistics to support my view. In 2007 a Richard Wiseman at Bristol University did a study, based on 3000 peoples' answers to his questionnaire. He claimed as a result, an 88% failure rate in maintaining or achieving New Year Resolutions. What was even more interesting in my view was that both men and women had far more success when setting themselves small, measureable goals. Many of you will be familiar with 'Small, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, Targets', commonly known as 'Smart Targets'.

As we approach the beginning of another year perhaps a New Year's resolution, (which of course I don't believe in) might be to see if we can set ourselves some daily or weekly targets, that might be manageable and also make a difference. Here are some I might try;

- Get a smile from someone I don't know.
- Give thanks for the weather whatever it is.
- Spend at least 10 minutes in prayer/meditation/silence.
- Go for a walk.
- Look for opportunities to give thanks/praise/encouragement.
- Accentuate the positive whenever I can.

Let's not forget to look out for all the new and hopefully exciting possibilities which will arise in 2017. Here is a poem which I think is about the excitement of an approaching New Year.

To the New Year

With that stillness at last you appear in the valley
your first sunlight reaching down to touch the lips of a few
high leaves that do not stir as though they had not noticed
and did not know you at all then the voice of the dove calls
from far away in itself to the hush of the morning
so this is the sound of you here and now whether or not
anyone hears it this is where we have come with our age
our knowledge such as it is and our hopes such as they are
invisible before us untouched and still possible

By *W.S.Merwin*

Best wishes for a blessed and peaceful New Year,

Robert.

Laurence's Personal Statement delivered during her Commissioning Service held on 27th Nov. 2016

Well, it has been quite a journey...When we moved to Wheatley, nearly 10 years ago now, I had, many years before, given up all external manifestations of faith and while I was still a seeker, I was certainly not a church goer. Then about 8 months after we moved, Wendy Benson invited me to talk to you all, about the charity I had founded in Benin. And so I did, oblivious of course of what it would lead to ...It was certainly an inspired move on her part!

I kept coming on Sundays, and then increasingly on other days, because what I discovered in Wheatley URC was not only a vibrant community of committed Christians who welcomed me with real warmth and interest but also an entirely democratic process of church management, something that surprised and delighted me in equal measure, coming from the tradition I came from ... But of course, the thing which surprised and delighted me the most was the exceptional preaching that was offered. I had never heard anything like it! I could remember - *or not as the case may be!* – a grey cloud of umpteen sermons I had sat through for years, that either bored me to tears or made me feel sinful, worthless and guilty. But here, I heard something exciting, profound, challenging, funny very often, and interactive ... I was amazed and I wanted more of it! So I kept coming and I stayed because I came to realise that I had found not only a new Christian family but my spiritual home.

have time to start our planning much earlier and gather ideas from some of you too.

Pauline and Bobbie

*The Artroom charitable organisation works with young people of school age, who are in need of therapy due to a wide range of social and emotional issues.

WHEATLEY AREA CHURCHES WELCOME PACKS REMINDER FOR 2017.

You will find several of them somewhere inside the back of or near the entrance into your church. They are A5 size and have a large blue dove on the front cover. Inside there are worship style details and other information for each of the five churches in Wheatley and Holton, that make up Wheatley Area Churches.

The idea is that when somebody new moves into your road or street you pick up one of these packs and go to the door of your new neighbour, introduce yourself as a church member and offer them a Welcome Pack, suggesting that they would receive a very warm welcome from whichever church they might wish to visit.

If you feel unable to make the call yourself, for whatever reason, please speak to me (872293) or one of your church's WAC committee members, who will be happy to do or arrange this for you.

WAC Committee members for 2017

St Bart's Edna Ackroyd (Hon. Chair)

St Mary's Rev Nigel Hawkes, Val Target (Hon. Sec.), Margaret Wilson.

URC Rev Pauline Main, Malcolm Benson.

Our Lady's Rev Michael Walsh, Michael McIlvenna (Hon. Vice Chair elect)

Fusion & WCC Gordon Ewbank

Community Church David Evans

Tony Barry (Hon. Welcome Pack Co-ordinator)

The deadline for the January newsletter is 6pm on Sunday 18th January. Please send email copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy may be handed to Barbara Joiner.

Journey into Stillness

How often do you have the time to engage in a creative activity just for you and with no pressure to produce something at the end; a creative activity where you might experience a place of 'Stillness'? How often have you had the opportunity to play with sand, shells and stones? How often do you give yourself permission to spend time mixing colours, drawing or writing poetry?

On 26th November, the ACE team put on an event, at the church, that we have never tried before. About sixteen adults, one child (and a baby!) came together to experience stillness through creative activities. These activities ranged from painting, contour drawing, needle felting, whittling to listening to music, writing, sand play and cooking.

One group walked up to the farm in Jackie's Lane to observe Autumn through magnifiers and cameras or just to walk and enjoy the views. Malcolm made a bird box outside; it was a little cold but that didn't deter him!

The Vestry was turned into a writing room for those who wished to create prayers, poetry or simply write their thoughts using a variety of pens and paper.

In the sanctuary there were a variety of art books, children's stories and poems for people to browse and a collection of natural objects of beauty on the altar; shells, stones, skulls, wood and feathers. Catherine Harding supported those who wanted to have a go at flower arranging.

During the morning we observed a 30 minute silence during which we continued our chosen activity without interaction but with awareness of how this felt. At other times people chatted while they created. Robert Harding commented, 'It was lovely to have the time and opportunity to sit and really talk to people whilst I was working'.

A delicious smell of bread permeated the space arousing our sense of smell and later on delighted our taste buds as we ate French 'Fougasse' with lashings of butter!

We all had such a wonderful day knowing that this day was not about creating a finished product to take home, but about the process. One friend, Clare, who works for the '*Artroom' commented, 'I kept having to remind myself that this day was for me, and stop trying to help others all the time!'

It is very likely that a similar event will happen again in the New Year. We have lots of ideas in addition to learning a lot from this day. We will also

And then Tanya was called as our minister...

I did not participate in that momentous vote as I was not even a member then, but I thank God every day that YOU called her!!! It is always very difficult to weigh the influence that somebody has had on the course of your life and it is often when they are gone that you reflect in sadness but also analyse in gratitude ... In this case I can say without a shadow of a doubt that this Commissioning Service would not have happened without Tanya's strong influence and leadership!

Only a few months after she came to us, she mentioned in passing (as she does!) that I might be interested to read an American theologian and biblical scholar I had never heard of *at that stage*, called ... Marcus Borg! Little did I know that he too would change the course of my life ... Through his books, I discovered a Christian religion I did not know, a faith based on a personal relationship with the Spirit and not on rigid doctrines or beliefs and a totally new perspective with which I was invited to re-read the biblical stories of my childhood. It was mind blowing and I kept thinking "why have I not heard or read anything like this before"?

So what I had started to glimpse with delight through the amazing sermons I kept hearing here, week after week, I came to understand more fully by reading Marcus Borg and by participating in the "Living the Questions" course, **which is** that I did not have to give up my critical faculties when I dealt with faith and I did not have to leave my mind at the door when I came to church... I had truly found my "way back" to a progressive, liberal faith which was meaningful and deeply transformative.

This is the reason why I embarked upon 6 years of intense study in theology and Biblical interpretation which I call i "my quest for meaning" because I discovered pretty quickly that it is not because you know what the Bible says that you know what the Bible means... I would have been happy to continue learning indefinitely as I found it so fascinating, exciting and fulfilling but then Tanya intervened again and suggested that I might have a call to teach and preach... Well, to be honest with you, I thought she was "away with the fairies" and I totally ignored her suggestion at first... However her light-touch but compelling power of persuasion and her very special gift for enabling and affirming people, worked its magic ... So I finally gave-in to her gentle insistence and I sent my application for the URC lay-preacher course...

Some of you know very well how immensely doubtful and scared I was at the beginning of the process... How could I be worthy of proclaiming the Word of God? But despite my doubts, I trusted Tanya's intuition and once I had started, I was determined to complete the course. And sure enough, little by little, thanks to yet another American pastor, Carla Grosch-Miller, the minister of St Columba's my attachment church and an incredibly gifted teacher, I learned the ropes - or some of them at least - and I started to relax into the role of preacher and even started to really enjoy it. So much so in fact, that I can truly say that the intense self-investment that sermon-writing demands, is indeed for me, as one commentator describes it, "a burdensome joy" which has deepened my faith further and energized me to serve the best I can.

I still have an enormous amount to learn but I am ok with that because I know that I can count on you, my church family, to continue to help and support me as you have done so faithfully during these amazing few years.

I could not have done it without you all and I thank you for it!

Laurence

Reflections on the Wall

'The Still Point'

The Still Point of the Turning World

At the still point of the turning world.

Neither flesh nor fleshless;

Neither from nor towards;

At the still point,

There the dance is,

But neither arrest nor movement.

And do not call it fixity,

Where past and future are gathered.

Neither movement from nor towards,

Neither ascent nor decline.

Except for the point, the still point,

There would be no dance,

And there is only the dance. (T S Eliot. From 'Four Quartets')

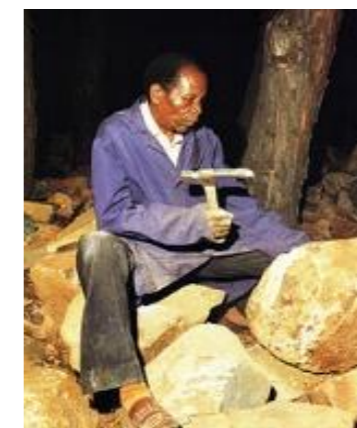
Artpeace Zimbabwe



Artpeace is our chosen overseas charity this year. Its aim is to help impoverished and oppressed Zimbabweans. Government agencies have made a small co-operative of sculptors homeless and often attack them when they go to the mountains to collect the stone they need to make their living. Having lost absolutely everything they are supported by Silveira House which is organized by the Jesuits, but their extended families who live mainly in rural areas are in desperate need. Small sculptures are brought to Britain by couriers in their luggage, and the proceeds from their sales go in full to the artists. The money they earn contributes to seed and fertilizer, food, hospital and school fees for their families.

Reading the regular newsletters that are emailed have made me aware of the desperate need of these people, but also the tremendous courage in the face of difficulty. The joy at gifts and the small changes that they can bring is also evident in the messages they send. Mobile phones have enabled regular contact with their supporters in Britain. I believe that St Andrews URC Walton-on-Thames is in contact most days.

There have been exhibitions of the sculptures in many places from Southwark cathedral to the URC Windermere Centre. I would encourage you to read more and see the many photos of the families as well as the artists' work at www.standrewsurc.org/artpeace



*returning victorious from battle. Some victory!
Prostitutes and foreigners aplenty scatter the litter:
women you'd not want your daughters taking after,
even if you can't help admiring that plucky Rahab.
Some came to a sorry end.
That poor Tamar! It makes me shudder to even think of her.
Don't let your children read her story,
it'll keep them awake for nights on end.*

*Best not ask about the ones
whose names have sunk into obscurity,
for fear of what you might uncover:
what unimaginable sleights of hand, sexual perversions,
brutal slayings or tortures.
Who now thinks of Nashon or Asa,
Uzziah, Joham or Jeconiah,
Matthan, Azar or Eliud?
Don't disturb their memories with your inquisitive fingers.*

*Keep going back and you end up at Abraham,
another one no better than he ought to be and a whole heap
worse.
Right bastard, if you'll pardon my English.
Played off his wife as his sister, he did,
had it away with his slave girl to get himself a son
and then didn't lift a finger in her defence
when Sarah sent her packing into the desert
in a fit of jealousy and rage.
Worse of all, he was ready to kill his own precious Isaac
on some highfalutin whim of the Almighty.
That story has been causing trouble for generations
down the family line,
still keeps the menfolk and their offspring fighting.*

*No, not what you'd call a promising pedigree.
Not surprising he didn't turn out a happy family man.
Little wonder he stayed single.*

Nicola Slee

'Our continual mistake is that we do not concentrate upon the present day, the actual hour, of our life; we live in the past or in the future; we are continually expecting the coming of some special moment when our life will unfold itself in its full significance. And we do not notice that life is flowing like water through our fingers.

The older I have become, the more elusive 'time' has come to be. It appears that I have no control over the now more precious minutes hours and days as they slip by, 'Like water through my fingers'. (From the diary of Father Alexander Elchaninov, Russian priest 1881-1934)

Advent is a time of waiting. I don't like waiting. Buses, appointments, results of tests, all these require waiting. How can I avoid having to wait all the time?

Advent is a time of watching. I watch but don't always see. I invariably miss the important bits and get caught up in the detail.

Advent is a time of listening to what God is saying to me. How can I hear anything when there is so much noise? TV, phones, radio, traffic, everyone rushing around in their busyness!

The diary entry from the Russian Priest, Father Elchaninov, beautifully and clearly illustrates, for me, the solution. Live in the moment, watch the detail, listen to the noise whilst waiting for the bus or that appointment. God is not waiting to speak to me in some imaginary queue, He speaks now, in the detail, in the busyness and noise, where I am now, here in this moment.

So live it!

This is where the dance is, the 'Still Point'.

May you grow still enough to hear the small noises earth makes in preparing for the long sleep of winter, so that you yourself may grow calm and grounded deep with-in. May you grow still enough to hear the trickling of water seeping into the ground, so that your soul may be softened and healed, and guided in its flow. May you grow still enough to hear the splintering of starlight in the winter sky and the roar at earth's fiery core. May you grow still enough to hear the stir of a single snowflake in the air, so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.

(Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB. Read more: Gratefulness, The Heart of Prayer)

Pauline Shelley

Church Calender for January 2017

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

Traidcraft stall on occasional Sundays.

Date	1 st Jan.	8 th Jan.	15 th Jan.	22 nd Jan.	29 th Jan.
Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service
Time	10 am	10 am	10 am	10.am	10.am
Worship Leader	Revd. Colin Thompson	Richard Bainbridge	Revd. Pauline Main	Laurence Devlin	Revd. Pauline Main
Vestry Elder	Pauline Shelley	Ann Hardiman	John Kidd	Laurence Devlin	Charles Bennett
Welcomer	Liz Barry	Ellen Webster	Phyllis Williams	Joan Kidd	Pauline Shelley
Steward	Bob Webster	Christine Bainbridge	Elizabeth Walkey	Joel Rasmussen	Malcolm Benson
Reader	Laurence Devlin	Bob Webster	Ellen Webster	Richard Wood	Jean Boxall
Prayers	Ann Hardiman	Liz Barry	Joel Rasmussen	Ann Bettess	Ellen Webster
Flowers	Catherine Harding	Allison Towner	Christine Bainbridge	Frances Simpson	Wendy Benson

Simple Sunday evenings in the style of Taize will take place at 3 Barns Close Holton at 7.30 pm on Sunday Jan 15th and 22nd.

Common Lectionary Readings for January 2016

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.

Date	1 st Jan.	8 th Jan.	15 th Jan.	22 nd Jan.	29 th Jan.
Old Testament	Isaiah 60: 1-6.	Isaiah 4: 1-9	Isaiah 49: 1-7	Isaiah 9: 1-4.	Micah 6: 1-8
Psalm	Psalm 72: 1-7 & 10-24.	Psalm 29:	Psalm 40: 1-11.	Psalm 27. 1& 4-9	Psalm 15.
New Testament	Ephesians 3: 1-12.	Acts 10: 35-43.	1Corinthians 1: 1-9	1Corinthians 1:10-18..	1Corinthians 1: 18-31.
Gospel	Matthew 2: S1-12.	Matthew 3: 13-17.	John 1: 29-42.	Matthew 4: 12-23.	Matthew 5: 1-12.

Biblog by Laurence Devlin

At the same time, last year, I wrote here about Jesus' genealogies as told by Luke and Matthew. These genealogies (Luke 3:23-38 and Matthew 1:1-17) are generally considered extremely boring (an awful lot of "begets" followed by obscure names of long-forgotten ancestors) and are thankfully never preached upon. They are however full of surprises and interesting theological points...Please refer to December 2015 newsletter to refresh your memory! One of the most interesting elements is undoubtedly to be found in Matthew's genealogy where, among a multitude of male ancestors, he includes the name of not only four *women* but also four "far-from-saintly" women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba) even if they all belong to the Davidic line.

This month I'd like to go back to Matthew's genealogy of Jesus and share with you a very original, albeit very irreverent poem by Nicola Slee. Dr Nicola Slee is a well-known practical theologian, and a radical poet who is currently Director of Research at The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, the main theological college in Birmingham. She is a regular speaker, both nationally and internationally, at conferences, festivals and events in both academic and popular settings. I Hope you like her poem entitled, appropriately enough, "**Genealogy**"

*He came from a dysfunctional family
And I am not just talking about his mum and dad
(The pregnancy out of wedlock
The pronounced age difference).
No, it went back much further than that.
There were more than a few skeletons in his cupboard.*

*Take great King David,
the one they all wrote and sang about, eulogised in the histories,
the family's pride and joy.
He wasn't all he was cracked up to be, believe you me.
He might have been Jesse's golden-haired youngest,
but later, he was conniving and horny,
spying on his officer's comely wife from the palace balcony
and taking her for his own,
sending soldiers to do away with unsuspecting Uriah*