

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



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

## ***CHURCH CONTACTS***

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**FEBRUARY 2017**

## Covering Thoughts

*I never cease to be taken by surprise when greeted by someone with the words: ‘What a horrible day it is!’ The temptation is to assent so as not to be disagreeable and to make their day worse. But if I am feeling more courageous I might chance a response such as ‘No it’s a great day just very wet.’*

*I love the percussion of rain on roofs and windows, umbrellas and leaves. I relish the enrichment of smells in the wet garden and in the tired hot street and the feel of rain’s icy fingers on the face in winter or its soft droplets on the skin of my arms in summer. Of course in polite company one does not stick out one’s tongue, but it is fine to do so in the quiet solitude of a rainy walk when there is no-one to see and one is free to wade through every puddle.*

*I suppose as a child I was encouraged to make the most of rainy holidays where the sea was a good place to swim in the wet, and the cosiness of a tent became magical with the sound of heavy rain outside. One holiday on the Isle of Wight my mother took me out in an evening thunderstorm to gaze at the sea and we giggled together as we hid from a friend who thought we needed rescuing in his car.*

*It can appear to be hard hearted to hold on to this love of rain and storms when the homes and livelihoods of others are at risk, but how can one not glory in creation in all its moods?*

*I recently discovered a beautiful piece of music with words inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson called “Something Sings”. Its theme lies in the truth that it is not in beauty alone that music is heard*

*“But in the dark and cold of things,  
there always, always, something sings.”*

*With an acceptance of all that comes to us, be it cold and fearful, ugly or wet, we can experience the music of creation and be uplifted.*

*Christine*

*Christ Jesus our hope, through you God’s fullness has come close. In the instability of the world and the frailty of our lives, your light is not extinguished, but is a source of serene joy. (A prayer from Taize)*

## OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb.	Thursday	10.00am-12.00 7.15pm	Coffee in the hall church open Elders meet
5 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	Sunday	8.00am 2.30 – 4.30pm 7.00 – 9.00pm	Morning Meditation, Foodbank Afternoon Tea Pulse Group Outing
6 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	Monday	2.00 – 4.00pm	Not So Young Club
11 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	Saturday		Church party
14 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club Two
19 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Sunday	7.00 – 9.00pm	Pulse Group Discussion 17, Bell Lane
20 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Monday	2.00-4.00pm	Not So Young Club
21 <sup>st</sup> Feb.	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club
26 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	Sunday	7.30-9.00pm	Pulse Games in URC hall
28th Feb	Tuesday	9.30-11.00am	Pancake Breakfast

**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.

## Women's World Day of Prayer Services

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

**2pm at URC, followed by refreshments**

**7.30pm at St Mary's**



Women's World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women who come together to observe a common day of prayer held on the first Friday in March each year, and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service.

It is a unique organisation, truly interdenominational and truly international. It speaks with the voices of women from all corners of the globe. Involvement in WWDP creates a network of Christian women on a worldwide scale which also reaches into our local communities.

Preparations go on for months in advance. The origins of Women's World Day of Prayer date back to the 19th century when Christian women in the USA and Canada initiated a variety of co-operative activities in support of women's involvement in mission, at home and abroad.

Although organised and led by women, this is essentially a day of prayer for everybody, demonstrating our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in other countries and all are welcome to attend.

The service is written by a different country each year and that country then becomes the focus of the world's prayers on the day itself. This year the program has been written by the Christian women of the Philippines and follows the theme of **Am I Being Unfair to You?** It tells the story of God's economic justice in contrast to the economy of the strong and powerful and is based on the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (*Mt 20:1-16*).

There will be a number of people from our congregations taking part in the devotional and thought provoking services. Do come along to support them and the women of the Philippines as they relate the stories of injustices within their society.

## Pastoral letter

That we live in uncertain times is an aphorism which has particular resonance at present. The uncertainties and unpredictability of President Trump and the consequences of Brexit mean that the future is less clear than normal. We may view this with excitement, despair, apprehension or a variety of other emotions.

The practice of medicine also taught me of life's uncertainties. As a junior doctor I attributed this to my own lack of knowledge but as I developed more experience and expertise I realised that there were some situations which nobody can predict.

A colleague was once asked by a patient with incurable cancer as to his prognosis. The cautious answer was that with appropriate chemotherapy he might live for 3 years. The fact that the patient was still alive after 5 years was not a cause for celebration but justification for suing my colleague (unsuccessfully). He had blown all his money in the first 3 years and now wanted financial redress for being impecunious.

The fact is that uncertainties face us in all aspects of our life. We never know, perhaps fortunately, what is round the corner. How does this uncertainty affect our Christian Faith? At one end of the spectrum there are those who adhere rigidly to religious doctrine and dogma. To challenge even one aspect of orthodox teaching runs the risk of the whole pack of cards tumbling down. Richard Dawkins' justified challenge of 'Creationism' leads him to conclude that all other aspects of our faith are unjustified. However he can no more prove that God does not exist than I can prove He does.

What do we understand by 'God'? What is our vision of 'heaven'? How do we interpret 'the resurrection of the body' or 'the virgin birth'? To live with these and many other questions is not a reflection of weakness but opens the doorway to better understanding of what our faith teaches us. Faith in Christ is not something which can be proved. It is something that we experience. It enhances our human existence and gives us a vision of how we should live our lives.

May we all grow in faith and understanding.

Malcolm

### **With Thanks**

I am deeply grateful for the very generous amount of money (£500) that has been sent to the development fund at St John' College, University of Durham. This is a very nice ending to 2016 which marked twenty five years of my being licensed as a lay preacher in the United Reformed Church. It has been a great privilege to arrange worship and gives a purpose to the week. 2017 will mark fifty years since both Christine and I graduated in theology from the university and also married. I gained a great deal from Durham and still love wandering up and down the shelves of the theology section of libraries in Oxford. We are privileged to live where we do and have the friends in the church that we do. I am sure the money will be used wisely by the Principal.

Thank you again.

Richard

### **From the Elders' meeting.**

As we reported at the November Church Meeting, the elders have been discussing the roles of Church Secretary and an assistant, this in the light of Malcolm having finished his five year stint and with Robert finishing next September. The elders agreed the following 'job spec' for the secretary.

Core tasks:

- Liaise with the minister over all appropriate matters.
- Make sure decisions are acted upon.
- Prepare agendas for elders and church meetings.
- Deal with correspondence, prioritising and delegating where appropriate.
- Write an occasional pastoral letter for the newsletter.
- Instigate the 'discernment of new elders' process each year.
- Help update both 'pastorate profile' and 'mission statement' when necessary.
- Complete the annual returns.
- Try to be aware of what is happening, who or what needs support, and try to ensure the smooth running of the church in all its different parts.

Other tasks, not necessarily to be undertaken by the secretary at all times:

- Chair meetings.

**SUMMERTOWN UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**  
**294A Banbury Road, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7HN**  
**member of the Summertown-Wolvercote Church Partnership**  
**All are welcome to our monthly**  
**SPRING LECTURES 2017**

**Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February, 3 pm**  
***'REFUGEES AT THE DOOR: how does Britain/we respond?'***

**Dai Richards, retired BBC documentary photographer, will talk about his work and show a film he has made recently on the work of our Oxford charity *Asylum Welcome* entitled *'Stepping into Safety'***

**Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 3 pm**  
***'LUTHER'S LEGACY'***

**Professor Henrike Laehnemann, holds the Chair of Medieval German Literature and Linguistics at the University of Oxford and is a Fellow of St. Edmund Hall. In the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Martin Luther's Wittenberg Promulgation in 1517, she will speak about his legacy since then to the present day.**

**Lectures are held in the rear hall from 3 – 4.30 pm and include discussion and tea.**

**Tickets: £5 per lecture, or £13 for the series payable in advance, or on the door, to Beryl Knotts (510055) in aid of the Church Building Fund**

### **Oxford Friends of Oasis of Peace**

The next meeting will take place on Monday 27th March  
at Oxford Friends Meeting  
House, St. Giles, Oxford,  
when two residents of the village will be our guests.  
The meeting will commence at 6.00pm.  
Further details to follow.

allow him to utterly change his ways. In a further episode in Egypt where he has fled because of a famine in Israel, he pleads to Joseph - not as a brother that he has not recognised but as the Grand Vizier—asking to save Benjamin’s life and to take him instead into slavery. At that moment, Judah becomes the incarnation of “teshuva”, the great virtue of repentance, the complete reorientation of mind, heart and behaviour. It is a total reversal of character: callousness had been replaced with concern and indifference to a brother’s fate has been transformed into courage on behalf of another brother. He is willing to suffer what he once inflicted on Joseph so that the same fate should not be Benjamin’s.

This is why it is Judah the penitent and not Joseph the righteous who became the father of Israel’s kings. As Jonathan Sachs says “however great an individual may be in virtue of his or her natural character, greater still is one who is capable of growth and change”. Does not that remind you of something you heard before?...“I tell you that there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” says Jesus in Luke 15:7. Repentance in its real sense of “turning around” is therefore the first step to real transformation and growth.

### Pilgrimage to the Edward King Chapel, Cuddesdon

I am organising a pilgrimage to the RIBA award winning Edward King Chapel at Ripon College, Cuddesdon on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March.

For those choosing to walk there, we will be leaving Wheatley URC at 2:00pm for a relaxing amble over the fields to Ripon College. Those choosing to drive will need to arrive there by 3:00pm.

I will give a brief talk about the building and its architecture and Mark Williams will lead us in a short period of reflection.

The pilgrimage will be followed by refreshments served in the Student Common Room at 3:30pm, after which we will return to Wheatley either on foot or by car.

A sign-up sheet will be placed in the hall nearer the time.

Elizabeth Walkey

- Represent the church at Synod and other meetings.
- Give notices in church on Sunday mornings.
- Email notices to all@wheatley each week.
- Help prepare, (and deliver) away-days.

For the time being the different roles of an assistant secretary have been divided up between the following elders:

**Ellen Webster** organises virtually all our rotas and lists, helps plan the agendas, files all the minutes from various meeting, including from ‘ministry teams’, tries to make sure important information is passed between ‘ministry teams’, and does the occasional notices on Sunday mornings.

**Liz Barry** will represent us at local meetings and with other URCs when appropriate as well as maintain links with local churches (WAC, LEP, Fusion etc.) and the local community.

**Laurence Devlin** will act as our local village contact and key holder. Her telephone number will be on the outside notice board.

### **The United Reformed Church 2017**

#### **Feasts & Festivals**

#### **A draft programme for Wheatley URC.**

- January:** The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. [Worship Team.](#)
- February:** Church party. [Elders.](#)
- March:** Women’s World Day of Prayer and Fairtrade Fortnight. [Care for the World team.](#)
- April:** Easter. [Worship team.](#)
- May:** ‘URC Big Day Out’ at Drayton Manor Theme Park and our annual fete. [Elders.](#)
- June:** Church Anniversary. [Worship and Hospitality teams.](#)
- July:** Wessex and SW Synods’ ‘Big Day Out’ in Fordingbridge. [All.](#)
- August:** Having a rest!!
- September:** Harvest, (perhaps at Sandy Lane Farm?). [Worship and Hospitality teams.](#)
- October:** 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran reformation. [ACE team.](#)  
One World Week. [Care for the World team.](#)
- November:** Festival of Remembrance [Worship team.](#)
- December:** Christmas. [Worship team.](#)

[Resources for worship, Bible study and action are available on www.urch.org.uk/feasts-and-festivals](http://www.urch.org.uk/feasts-and-festivals) or by tel: 0207 916 2020

**SIMPLE LENTEN SOUP LUNCHES FOR CHRISTIAN AID  
IN THE WHEATLEY URC HALL**

Following the success of previous years, Wheatley Area Churches will once again be running a series of Simple Soup Lunches on the Saturdays throughout **Lent** between 12.00 noon and 2.00 pm. Anyone is very welcome to attend.

Below is an early peek at the rota of churches hosting those lunches in The URC Hall.

Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup>	March	URC Team
Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup>	March	St Mary's Team
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup>	March	OLL/St Bart's Team
Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup>	March	WCC Team
Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup>	April	URC Team
Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup>	April	St Mary's Team

If you would like to get involved in helping raise money for **Christian Aid**, by making or serving soup on the day, please give your name, in good time, to myself or Malcolm Benson for the URC teams; Margaret Wilson or Val Farmer for St Mary's teams; Edna Ackroyd & Mike McIlvenna for the combined St Bart's & Our Lady's team and Gordon Ewbank for the WCC team.

Alternatively, it is hoped that each church will create some form of themed meditational experience each week in the URC's worship area (music, visual and/or liturgical) that people can take part in, before or after their lunch. So anyone that would like to volunteer to help create and set that up would also be much appreciated.

Tony Barry (872293)

**HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE (One Of Our Chosen Charities This Year. )**

Huntington's Disease is an inherited condition which damages the central nervous system affecting many cells in the brain. It is an incurable disorder causing problems with speech, balance, coordination, involuntary movements, and moods.

It is generally diagnosed in the sufferer between the ages of 30 and 50 but can affect people younger or older than that.

In 2012 UK research found that twice as many people carried the faulty gene as actually showed symptoms but those symptoms can be very severe and increase over time. There is a 50% chance of any children of one affected parent inheriting the faulty gene. More research needs to be done to find a cure.

Patricia Simpson.

confirmation of Jacob's bias but as a clear indication that Joseph would assume family leadership. This is reinforced by the fact that Joseph boasts to his brothers that he saw them bowing to him in a dream (Gen. 37:11). For the brothers, it signals that it is time to get rid of that arrogant little twit and they resolve to kill him. But it is Judah who instead of killing him, proposed to sell him into slavery, saying "what will we gain if we kill our brother. Let's sell him to the Arabs and not harm him with our own hands." (Gen 37: 26-27). This is quite a demonstration of unadulterated callousness as Judah does not recoil from the evil of murder but merely invokes pragmatic calculation "what will we gain?" At this point, Judah is the last person from whom we would expect great things. But Judah changes and the change is triggered by the actions of a woman, his daughter in law, Tamar.

The story of Tamar and Judah recounted in chapter 38 of Genesis has been dismissed by many commentators as an extraneous, irrelevant episode which did not link with the chapters before and after it and with the general story of Joseph. Nothing can be further from the truth! Tamar, we recall, has married Judah's two elder sons, both of whom had died leaving her a childless widow. Judah, fearing that his third son, Selah (obliged to marry her according to the Levirate Law) would share the same fate, prevaricates and withdraws Selah, leaving her unable to remarry and have children. Once she understands her situation, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and tricks Judah, now a widower, into sleeping with her. She becomes pregnant but Judah who had been unaware of the disguise, concludes that she must have had a forbidden relationship and orders for her to be put to death. At this point, Tamar, who while disguised, had taken Judah's signet, cord and staff as a pledge, send them back to Judah with the following message: "The father of the child is the man to whom those belong. Tamar does not shame Judah by naming him publicly and in this, behaves with extraordinary discretion and good judgement. Judah however boldly and *publicly* admits his guilt and repents.

It is that recognition of his wrongdoing ("she is more righteous than I am") which marks a turning point in Judah's life. For the first time, he not only recognises that he is wrong (and *publicly*, which in that sort of "honour and shame" culture and patriarchal society is amazing) but he expresses regret. Most importantly it is that recognition, that first step which will

## BI-BLOG by Laurence Devlin

If you read the Hebrew Bible as “simply” literature (without crediting it with any religious or spiritual dimension) as a lot of people have done and still do, its most interesting feature must be surely its remarkable wealth of stories. It portrays so many characters, presents such an array of different situations and expresses such various feelings that it is no surprise it is still considered as one of the greatest books ever written. Wars, murders, romantic love, sexual encounters, family feud, self-sacrifice, courage, intrigue, despair, rebellion, jealousy, betrayal, pride, injustice, deception. Name any situations belonging to the human condition and you’ll find it somewhere in the Old Testament!

One of the most interesting and longest narratives in this regard is the story of **Joseph (Gen. 37 to 50)**. We see Joseph in all sorts of interesting situations: as a child, beloved and even spoiled by his father, as an adolescent dreamer resented by his brothers and sold by them as a slave in Egypt, as a prisoner there after a false accusation and finally as the second most powerful figure of the greatest empire of the ancient world. At every stage, the narrative revolves around him and the impact *he* has on other people’s lives. So it is clear, as the great scholar and former chief rabbi of England Jonathan Sachs remarks: “Joseph dominates the last third of Genesis, casting his shadow on everything else. From almost the beginning he seems destined for greatness and yet it is *another brother* who leaves the biggest mark on the Jewish people.”

He is of course referring to **Judah**, Jacob’s fourth son. After the division of the kingdom and the conquest of the North by the Assyrians, it is the tribe of Judah who dominates the south and who, after surviving the Babylonian exile, gives a reborn Jewish nation its renewed identity. It is also Judah who becomes the ancestor of Israel’s greatest king, David and therefore for us Christians, the ancestor of Jesus. So, the question beckons: *why Judah and not Joseph?* The answer probably lies in the extraordinary change that takes place in Judah during the course of his life and what that radical transformation teaches us.

Joseph as we know is his father’s favourite, symbolised by Jacob giving him the famous coat of many colours. His brothers see the coat not only as the

## WHEATLEY AREA CHURCHES WELCOME PACKS REMINDER FOR 2017.

You will find several of these packs near the entrance, of each church. They are A5 size, white 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 or one of your church’s WAC committee members, who will be happy to visit or arrange for someone else to visit for you.

### WAC Committee members for 2017

**Our Lady of Lourdes, Wheatley** – Rev. Michael Walsh & Michael McIlvenna.

**St Bartholomew’s, Holton** - Edna Ackroyd (Hon. Chair).

**St Mary’s, Wheatley** – Rev. Nigel Hawkes, Val Farmer (Hon. Sec.) & Margaret Wilson (Hon. Treas.).

**Wheatley Community Church** - David Evans & Gordon Ewbank (**Fusion Rep.**).

**Wheatley URC** – Rev. Pauline Main, Malcolm Benson & Tony Barry.



### FAIRTRADE PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Sat. Feb 25<sup>th</sup> 9.30 – 11.00am

URC HALL

Contact: Liz Barry 872293 Care 4 the World Team.URC

**Church Calendar for February 2017.**

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

Date	5 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	12 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	19 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	26 <sup>th</sup> Feb.
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	Rev. Colin Thompson	Richard Bainbridge	Rev. Pauline Main	Rev. Mark Williams
Vestry Elder	Liz Barry	John Kidd	Phyllis Williams	Joan Kidd
Welcomer	Ellen Webster	Ann Hardiman	Laurence Devlin	Charles Bennett
Steward	Bobbie Stormont	Sybil Beaton	Zena Knight	Joel Rasmussen
Reader	Wendy Benson	Liz Barry	Sybil Beaton	Christine Bainbridge
Prayers	Bob Webster	Richard Wood	Christine Bainbridge	Malcolm Benson
Flowers	Ellen Webster	Zena Knight	Joan Kidd	Pauline Shelley

Simple Sunday evenings in the style of Taize will take place at 3 Barns Close Holton at 7.30 pm on Sunday's Feb 19th and 26<sup>th</sup>.

***The deadline for the March newsletter is 6pm on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February. Please send email copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy may be handed to Barbara Joiner.***

**Common Lectionary Readings for January 2016**

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

Date	5 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	12 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	19 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	26 <sup>th</sup> Feb.
Old Testament	Isaiah 58: 1-9a.	Deuteronomy 3: 15-20.	Leviticus 19: 1-2, 9-18.	Exodus 24: 12-18.
Psalm	Psalm 112: 1-9.	Psalm 119: 1-8.	Psalm 119: 33-40.	Psalm 2.
New Testament	1Corinthians 2: 10-12.	1 Corinthians 3: 1-9.	1Corinthians 3: 10-11, & 16-23.	1Corinthians 1:10-18..
Gospel	Matthew 5: 3-20.	Matthew 5: 21-37.	Matthew 5: 38-48.	Matthew 17: 1-9.

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

**We also ask you to pray for the members of the Hospitality Committee:-** Catherine Harding, Liz Barry, Angela Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Joan Kidd, Allison Towner, Moira Watson, Ellen Webster

**Dates for your Diary**

**11<sup>th</sup> Feb. – 6.30-9pm Church Party**

**26<sup>th</sup> Feb. – Special health related morning worship**

**28<sup>th</sup> Feb. – 9.30-11.00am Pancake Breakfast during One World Week.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Mar. – 2pm Women's World Day of Prayer service**

**20<sup>th</sup> Mar. – 7.30pm "God Stories" 1<sup>st</sup> session at Bettess' home**

**24<sup>th</sup> Apr. – 7.30pm "God Stories" 2<sup>nd</sup> session at Bettess' home**

The ACE team invites you to come along to discuss some of the short stories from the book *God Stories*. If you are interested and wish to order a copy of the book please speak to Tom Goss more next month.

"Empires of Faith" – a forthcoming exhibition at the Ashmolean. (date as yet unknown) more about it next month.