

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



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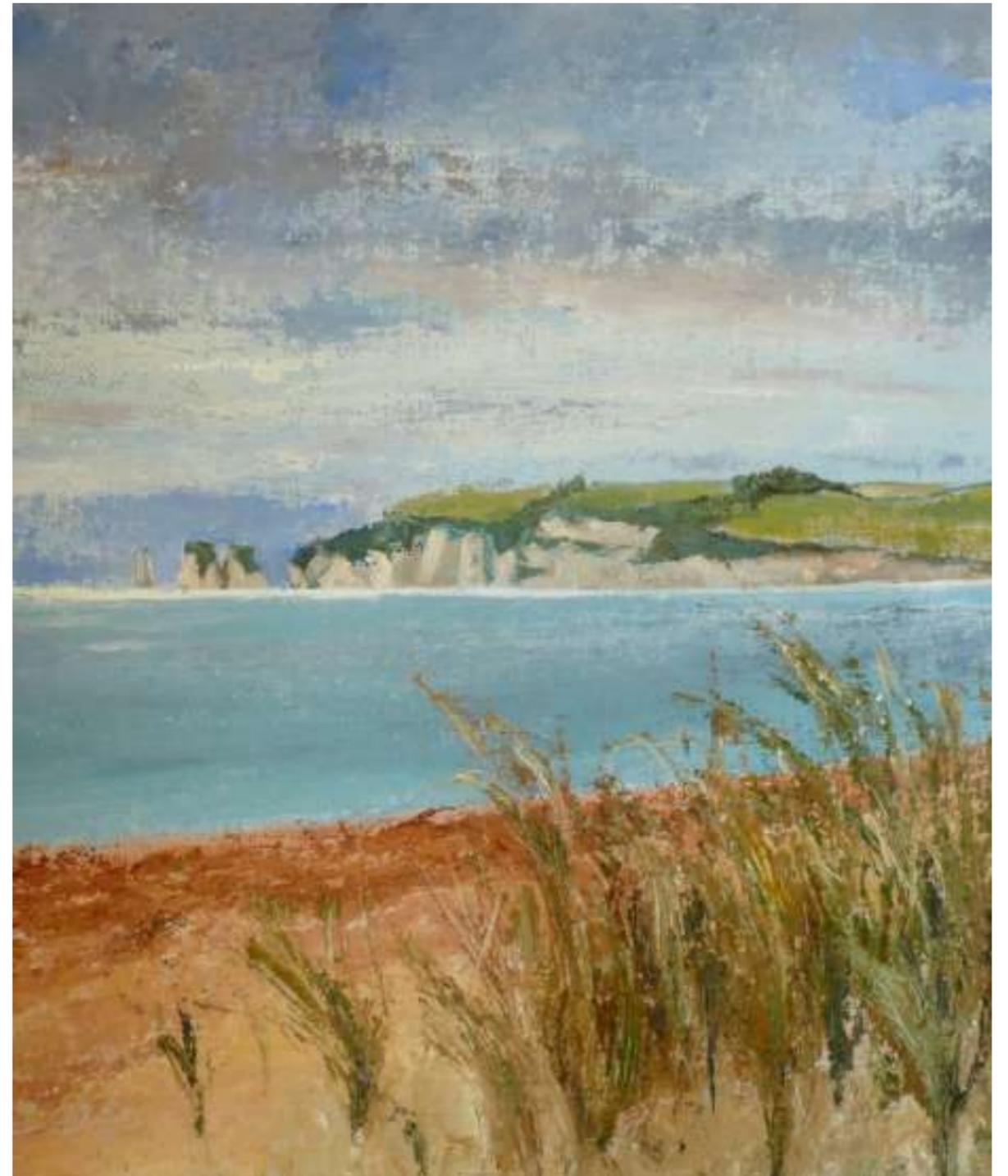
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November 2017

Covering Thoughts

After two days on the Dorset coast my spirit is revitalised and returning home brings awareness of the loveliness of autumn roses in the garden and appreciation of all that friends and family mean to me.

Solitude is so necessary for touching base with the miracle that is life. To watch the movement of the clouds and their effect on the colours of the sea, the ebb and flow of the waves along the shore, everything in flux, a state of impermanence, yet for ever renewed. To recognize that I am part of that impermanence makes for a clearer focus on appreciating the given moment, even when it seems that moment has gone wrong.

After painting in the sand dunes of Studland Bay the bus I was relying on to return me in time for the train home failed to stop. My mood changed from contentment to despondency. But I reflected that I had two choices: accept the situation and enjoy a three mile walk to the next bus stop, or feel disappointed, anxious and tired. I chose the former, repeating the phrase "I'm so pleased that I missed the bus", as I walked along. At last I reached the chain link ferry and allowed myself to accept that I was rather weary!

Then from the line of stationary cars waiting for the next boat I was offered a lift. Squeezed between two young people, high up in their van with all my paints on my knees, they told me all about a new venture they had started called Art and Soul. The kindness and enthusiasm of these strangers concluded a very special break, and I eventually caught my train with just five minutes to spare.

'Do not be anxious' Jesus told his followers, as he directed their attention to the beauty of nature around them. 'Give thanks in all situations' Paul recommended. But it is so hard to be positive in the face of difficulty, pain or sadness. Practising contentment in the small irritations of experience can be a bit like practising scales on the piano. Eventually our fingers will perform on their own, and after all scales are but a prelude to playing beautiful music.

Christine

OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

30 th Oct.	Monday	2.00 – 4.00pm	Not So Young Club
2 nd Nov.	Thursday	10.00-12.00 7.15pm	Coffee in the hall church open Elders meet
5 th Nov.	Sunday	8.00am 2.30 – 4.30pm 7.00 – 9.00pm	Morning Meditation, Foodbank Afternoon Tea Pulse Group Discussion 17 Bell Lane
12 th Nov.	Sunday	7.00 – 9.00pm	Pulse Group Games URC Hall
13 th Nov.	Monday	2.00-4.00pm	Not So Young Club
14 th Nov.	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club 2
18th	Saturday	10.00-1.00pm	Christmas Fayre St. Mary's
19 th Nov.	Sunday	11.30am 7.00-9.00pm	Church Meeting Pulse Group Discussion 17, Bell Lane
21 st Nov.	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club
25th Nov.	Saturday	10-4.00pm	Creative Day in URC Hall
26 th Nov.	Sunday	7.00-9.00pm	Pulse Group Games URC Hall

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

Toddlers Group	Monday 9.30 -11.30am
Brownies & Rainbows (Term time)	Monday 5.30pm to 7pm
Choir Around the Piano (Term Time)	Monday 7.30pm to 9 pm
Wheatley Singers (Term Time)	Tuesday 7.10pm to 9pm
Pre-School Music Group (Term time)	Wednesday 9.30am and 10.30
Guides (Term time)	Wednesday 7pm to 8.30pm
Prayers and Breakfast	Thursday 8.00am
Mindfulness Sitting Group	Thursday 9.00am to 10.00am
Brownies & Rainbows (Term Time)	Thursday 5pm to 6.30pm
Table Tennis	Friday 10.00 – 12.00.
Hymn Practice	Sunday 9.30-9.45am

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.

Science Corner – Air Pollution by Jim Watson

If we really ‘Care for the World’ then we are going to have to reduce air pollution worldwide. Maybe we all know about the problems in the largest Chinese cities and Indonesian rural areas but air pollution is more serious closer to home than most of us realise. The European Environment Agency says that ‘*air pollution is the single largest environmental health risk in Europe*’. The City of Oxford is no exception and the Council intends to ban diesel and petrol vehicles from the City Centre, in the not too distant future. Diesel vehicles are particularly bad and it is claimed that there are more buses and bus companies in the Oxford streets than any other comparable city in the UK!

The main pollution culprits are tiny particles which hang in the air and are not immediately obvious to either pedestrians or occupants of vehicles. These particles are just 2.5 micrometres (PM_{2.5}) across and diesel engines are the main source in Oxford. A micrometre is just one thousandth of a millimetre – so the particles are extremely small and virtually invisible! Across Europe it has been estimated that close to half a million early deaths are caused each year from these particles. But nitrogen dioxide from vehicle exhausts is also a serious pollutant in cities, and is estimated to cause about 70,000 early deaths in Europe.

What can we do as individuals? At a personal level we could change our diesel cars for petrol engines and even consider going partly electric. At the community level we could encourage the Oxford City Council to implement a ban on diesel vehicles in the city, particularly in the centre where there are so many buses. It is in all our interests to do something about the pollution!

Dear Friends,

Some time ago, I attended a discussion evening at Aston Tirrold on the subject of assisted suicide. One of their members is a member of the House of Lords which was due to debate the issue. He wanted to gauge public opinion. I was in a minority in opposing assisted suicide, a conclusion ultimately reached by the Lords and the Commons. It has however recently resurfaced in the courts as opposition to it being an infringement of our human rights.

Whilst I am sure we all feel sympathy for those who are reaching the end of their life, and find life intolerable, a major reason for people seeking the option of dying at the time of their choice, is fear of loss of independence and becoming a burden. This latter may seem altruistic, but the general acceptance by society of ‘burdens’ becoming ‘dispensable’ is a serious cause for concern despite, or may be because of, the fact that it would solve a lot of problems within the health service and social services!

At our Thursday morning prayer breakfast, the following was one of our prayers.

Blessed are they who understand my faltering steps and arthritic hands.

Blessed are they who know my ears today must strain to catch the things that are said.

Blessed are they who seem to know that my eyes are dim and my wits are slow.

Blessed are they who clear away the coffee I spilt on the table today.

Blessed are they who never say “You’ve told that story twice today”.

Blessed are they who know the way to bring back memories of yesterday.

Blessed are they who accept me as I am and not as they would like me to be.

Blessed are they who ease the days of my journey home in loving ways.

Blessed are my friends and helpers on whom I depend.

May those who are reasonably fit and healthy be prepared to help those in greatest need with love and compassion. May those who need help accept it with grace and gratitude. May all of us, as we travel on life’s journey, know that our Lord travels by our side.

With every blessing, Malcolm

Biblog by Laurence Devlin

“It is hardly an exaggeration” writes Brendan Byrne “to say that Paul’s letters have formed the battleground upon which women’s role in the church has been so bitterly contested.¹ Indeed **Paul’s view of women** is one of the most controversial subjects among Christians of different hues with some arguing that Paul was a great **egalitarian** who asserted the independence and equality of women and others that, on the contrary, he was a terrible **misogynist**, “the eternal enemy of women” according to George Bernard Shaw, who despised women and advocated a subservient role for them both in society and in the church.

What makes the discussion difficult and never really resolved is that passages and statements can be found throughout Paul’s letters that point to each of these opposite positions. Let’s then have a look at the textual evidence and consider whether we can find a satisfactory explanation for these troubling contradictions.

First, Paul the egalitarian: The first piece of evidence is of course the justly famous statement of Galatians 3: “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*”. It is highly probable that this passage was not Paul’s own composition but rather a quotation from a pre-Pauline baptismal formula. By quoting it in his letter however, Paul clearly indicates his own conviction that “in Christ” all former distinctions of ethnicity, socio-economic status and gender have been abolished and that “a new creation”, a new order has dawned.

This is made more obvious by a second element: Paul’s many mentions of women co-workers that he often described as “apostles” (for Paul, a divinely appointed and officially authorized representative of the church) who have “laboured side by side” with him, the same formula he uses to describe his male companions: Phoebe, “a *minister* of the church at Cenchreae”, Junia who with her husband Andronides are “prominent among the apostles”, Prisca, Julia, Tryphena, Chloe, Tryphosa, Syntyche, Euodia and others. This implies not only that many women had the same pastoral and

“Longest Night Worship” - Thursday 21 December 6 pm.

After the experimental service I led last year for the longest night of the year, it has been decided that it should be repeated this year. Let me say however that this service is called “the longest night” because it is the shortest day of the year i.e. the winter solstice and NOT because you are asked to spend the whole night in prayer as some people thought!

It is also called the longest night because at this time of year i.e. very near Christmas, dark and sad moods seem for many people to weigh more heavily on their hearts and souls. The constant refrain of family, happy gatherings, celebrations and affluence can rub salt into the wounds of people who are dealing with the death of a loved one, are facing life after divorce or separation, are coping with unemployment, or are living with a serious disease. There are many such situations of loss and emotional trauma in people’s life and big family reunions and joviality are painful, inappropriate or unwelcome. Increasingly Christian churches have been recognising that the approaching Christmas festival does not necessarily bring the joy that is often taken for granted.

The Longest Night service aims therefore to create a sacred space for people living through such dark times and has a reflective and meditative feel. It comprises readings, music, meditations and uses candles, with people invited to come forward and light a candle in memory of someone or to mark an event in their lives. The service hopes to be a time when participants have an opportunity to reflect and acknowledge their pain in God’s presence and experience new hope.

The service lasts about 40 or 45 minutes and will start at 6.00 pm. Several people have expressed the wish to participate, which is great. If you have ideas, poems, pieces of music you think could fit the mood of this service, don’t hesitate to let me know.

Thank you and please spread the word around you.

Laurence

¹ Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Christian woman*, (St Paul Publications, Brisbane, 1988)

Dates for your Diary



St Mary's Church, Wheatley
Christmas Fayre

in the church on Church Road, Wheatley on

Saturday 18th November from 10.00am - 1.00pm

Come along and bring your friends for:-

Delicious refreshments, tombola, Christmas gifts/decorations, Preserves,
Books, Raffle, Jewelry, Toys, Cakes and more.

Creative Day - Saturday 25th November.

Journey into Stillness through creative activities at the Wheatley United Reformed Church on Saturday 25th November 10am – 4pm. Using quality materials, all provided, come and paint, whittle, felt, write, draw, arrange flowers, weave, make graffiti and more. Explore the place of stillness within that we can experience as our hands are busy making and creating.

Sharing or watching, chatting, or in quiet, it's an opportunity to have fun together, be inspired and take time to reflect. No previous experience is needed and both men and women are very welcome.

Why not bring a friend or treat a friend to an early birthday or Christmas gift.

Cost for the day: £5 Final date for booking is 15th November. To book a place or find out more: contact Christine on 01865 872865, email:

the.bainbridges@btinternet.com OR Pauline on 01865 873908; email: pauline.shelley@googlemail.com Refreshments will be provided including delicious cake but do bring a packed lunch.



Advent Sunday 3rd December.

The Advent ring will **not** look quite like the one above this year. Pauline has come up with a new idea you will have to come to admire her handiwork!!

evangelistic activities as men within the early Christian communities but also that Paul does NOT suggest *in any way* that men and women should play different roles, perform different functions or that women should be subservient to men. On the contrary, he speaks of women as respected and equal partners and leaders.

A third line of evidence concerns Paul's views on sex, marriage and divorce. Until recently, chapter 7 of I Corinthians had almost universally been understood as an argument against marriage and, at least by implication, as a denigration of women. Increasingly, however, scholars and commentators are reading the chapter as an affirmation of complete equality within the marriage relation and the right of *both women and men* to refrain from marriage *if they so choose*. The principal concern of the chapter is whether sexual relationships have any place in the Christian life. Apparently, *some sections* of the Corinthian church regarded the body and all bodily functions and activities as inherently evil or at least "unspiritual" and for this reason, opposed sexual activity both within and outside the marriage relation. This is what Paul reflects when he quotes *their* slogan "It is well for a man not to touch a woman" (1Cor.7:1b) but it does NOT mean that he endorses or condones it. Indeed in his response, he rather carefully advises the Corinthians in three different ways: 1) most Christians should marry and consider sexual relations as a vital part of the marriage relations, 2) husbands and wives have the same rights and responsibilities within a relation of *mutuality* and equality and 3) most significantly, he encourages those men and women *who so desire* to remain unmarried (1 Cor.7:8) not because marriage and sex are sinful but because of the nearness of the end-times (as Paul believed) and for the sake of their "undivided devotion to the Lord."

This last point (*choosing* not to marry) was truly revolutionary for it represented a radical break from the most basic of all patriarchal expectations whereby women's fate was to marry, have children and stay at home. Paul on the contrary insists that both men *and women* may legitimately choose to remain single. This however quickly became a bone of contention in the early church where the increasingly exclusively-male leadership viewed the unmarried state of women as an occasion for instability and disorder within the church and of criticism from outsiders.

All this is in stark contrast to how women are described elsewhere and points towards **the misogynistic Paul**. The main “negative” texts are chapters 11 & 14 of 1 Corinthians., Colossians 3, Ephesians 5 and, more than any other texts, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. There, women are described as “silly”, “overwhelmed by their sins”, “idle”, “gadding about from house to house”, “unable to arrive at a knowledge of the truth”... even when instructed! To these descriptions are added many injunctions: to cover their heads, to dress modestly, to concentrate on childbearing, to submit to their husbands and especially, to be silent in the Assembly.

According to these texts, this subordination of women is justified by the “natural” hierarchy in which “the husband is the head of his wife just as Christ is the head of every man and God is the head of Christ” (1Cor. 11:3). Moreover, this hierarchy is rooted in creation itself as “woman is the reflection of man as man was not created for the sake of woman but woman for the sake of man” (1Cor.11: 4-9). To be sure, within the passages just quoted, there are a few qualifications that appear to somewhat “soften” their impact: husbands are to love their wives and “not to treat them harshly” (Col 3:19) ...phew!!! Nevertheless, the controlling presuppositions of even these qualifications are characteristic of a patriarchal society where women are to be obedient and silent and play no leadership role in religious and public affairs.

How then to reconcile such extremely contrasting positions? You may remember that last month, I said that there is now an almost unanimous scholarly consensus that some letters attributed to Paul are **certainly not** by him and that some others are **probably not** by him. This explains the contradictions: *the passages depicting women in a negative light do not come from Paul himself* but were written in the beginning of the second century when members of the expanding church who were striving for some measure of peace, stability and acceptance within the prevalent Hellenistic-Roman patriarchal society, felt that it was necessary to tone down and “domesticate the radical egalitarianism of the apostle” as William Walker Jr. explains. It is also certain that some passages were “added” (what is called in technical terms “interpolation,” an extremely common practice in ancient texts) and this, even to some genuine, original Pauline letters such as 1 and 2 Corinthians and Philippians.

Commitment for Life.

As many of you know, Wheatley URC is registered as a ‘Commitment for Life’ church.

Commitment for Life encourages all United Reformed Churches and Local Ecumenical Partnership churches to take action, pray and give for people living in poverty across the world. 75 per cent of all income raised goes to Christian Aid to be divided equally between the partner countries and 10 per cent to ‘Global Justice’ formally known as ‘The World Development Movement. The remaining 15 per cent is spent on grants, resources and administration. Last year more than £550,000 was raised to help alleviate the root causes of poverty.

I would encourage you to do two things. Please keep up to date by reading the short booklet enclosed with your newsletter. Also, would you please donate towards this crucial work, to which we are committed, using the envelope provided and putting it in with the offertory during the next few weeks. **If your donation is in the form of a cheque, please make it payable to Wheatley URC.**

In addition, I can supply you with a small collecting box to keep at home, into which you could put any small change you have. In the last couple of years this amounted to very nearly £150.

Thank you very much indeed.

Robert Harding

Pop-up Soup Lunch for Hurricane Appeal, 30th September 2017

The Care for the World ministry team held a Soup Lunch to raise funds to help victims of this year’s hurricanes in the Caribbean, Irma and Maria. It was called “Pop-up” because of the short preparation time. Huge amounts of delicious soups were made and consumed. We had a cheerful and chatty morning, and were able to send the proceeds to the British Red Cross Hurricane Appeal.

£135 was gift aided which means it was worth £168.

Donations without gift aid amounted to £233, including cash donations after the event.

So all in all it was a very worthwhile effort. Many thanks to all who helped and brought guests.

Ann Bettess.

REFORM MAGAZINE

Group Subscription

It is time to renew subscriptions to REFORM, which is published 10 times per year and the annual subscription for 2017-18 is £28. The December/January issue is combined, likewise July/August.

The group subscription is organised by Moira Watson, who receives the magazines and then delivers them to the group members. If you would like to join the group, get in touch with Moira, either at the church or phone her on 873689 for more details.



What makes a disciple?

As the United Reformed Church prepares for “Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today”, a renewed emphasis on discipleship, we ask What makes a disciple.

One question, four answers.

Richard Church, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Susan Durber, Church Minister in Taunton,

Neil Hudson, Imagine Team Leader at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

Jill Segger, Associate Director of the thinktank Ekklesia.

All give their reasons.

Part of an article in the October Reform Magazine. Why not borrow a copy from one of our members who regularly order it and find out what they think. There is also an interview with John Bell the hymnwriter and member of the Iona Community.

So, it was not Paul who imposed the yoke of inequality and subservience on the women of the emerging Christian movement but rather later “paulinist” disciples who wrote letters in his name and/or added materials to his own letters. As history shows, it was their views and not those of Paul himself that triumphed, at least until recently. So, the real Paul, the “First Paul” as the biblical scholars, Marcus Borg and Dominic Crossan call him, is therefore better understood in light of the Galatian affirmation: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

Festival of Prayer – Ripon College Cuddesdon – September 2017

On Saturday 9th September I attended, together with over 180 others, the seventh ‘Festival of Prayer’ at Ripon College, Cuddesdon. This festival offers people the opportunity to focus on their inner life of prayer and to enhance their spiritual life by attending three workshops on different aspects of prayer and the spiritual life. I was privileged to be there as one of seven spiritual directors from the Oxon/Bucks /Bucks Spiritual Director’s network. Although not a tradition in the Reformed Church, spiritual direction or companionship is a growing ministry across faith communities and 27 people took up the offer of talking with a director during the day about their faith journey. You can find out more about spiritual direction at <http://soulfriend.org.uk/>

The workshops this year encompassed topics such as Silence and Praying for Peace, the Path of Celtic Prayer, How to be a mindful Christian, Mysticism for Today, Thomas Merton, Rule of Life and much, much more. Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, opened the day with a talk on the Lord’s Prayer. I wasn’t able to attend this but Emma Pennington, the vicar of Horspath, Cuddesdon and Garsington described his talk as “stimulating and profound” and continued; “through his words and insights, it felt as if Bishop Steven was giving the Lord’s Prayer back to us as a gift to cherish and own once again for ourselves with a new and deeper reverence for it”. You can read his talk at <https://tinyurl.com/yaugjhtm>

Next year the ‘Festival of Prayer’ takes place on Saturday 7th July 2018 when the main keynote speaker will be John Bell from the Iona Community. I will keep you posted in case anyone would like to attend.

Bobbie Stormont

Church Calendar for November 2017.

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

Date	5 th Nov.	12 th Nov.	19 th Nov.	26 th Nov.
Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service
Time	10 .00am	10.00 am	10 .00am	10.00am
Worship Leader	Revd. Colin Thompson	Richard Bainbridge	Revd. Pauline Main	Laurence Devlin
Vestry Elder	Moira Watson	Charles Bennett	Pauline Shelley	Malcolm Benson
Welcomer	Ellen Webster	Tom Goss	Peter Devlin	Catherine Harding
Steward	Barbara Joiner	Laurence Devlin	Angela Holdaway	Ann Bettess
Reader	Malcolm Benson	Liz Barry	Laurence Devlin	Sybil Beaton
Prayers	Bob Webster	Richard Wood	Tom Goss	Christine Bainbridge
Flowers	Angela Holdaway	Tony Barry	Peter Devlin	Moira Watson

Simple Sunday evenings in the style of Taize will take place at 3 Barns Close Holton at 7.30 pm on Sunday 19th and 26th November

Deadline for the December newsletter is 6pm on Wednesday 15th November. Please send email copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy may be handed to Barbara Joiner

Common Lectionary Readings for November 2017

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.

Date	5 th Nov.	12 th Nov.	19 th Nov.	26 th Nov.
Old Testament	Micah 5: 5-12.	Amos 5: 18-24.	Zephaniah 1: 7; 12-18.	Ezekiel 34: 11-16. & 20-24.
Psalm	Psalm 43.	Psalm 70:	Psalm 90: 1-8, 12.	Psalm 95: 1-7a.
New Testament	1Thessalonians 2: 1-2.	1Thessalonians 4: 13-18.	1Thess'. 5: 1-11.	Ephesians 1: 15-23.
Gospel	Matthew 23: 1-12.	Matthew 25: 1-13.	Matthew 25: 14-30.	Matthew 25: 31-46.

Please remember in your prayers the members of Charles Bennett's Pastoral Care List: Malcolm & Wendy Benson and Catherine & Robert Harding.

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Worship Ministry Team:- Pauline Main, Colin Thompson, Richard Bainbridge, Charles Bennett, Laurence Devlin, John Kidd, Pauline Shelley & Allison Towner.

International Bible Reading Association

It's time to order next year's Bible Reading Notes. The writers of the Notes include theologians and biblical scholars, church leaders and activists for peace from across the world, all of whom share a passion to bring the Bible into conversation with day-to-day concerns. The Notes are in booklet form and are written by over 50 international writers. If you would like a copy for 2018, please sign the list in the hall or see Ann Hardiman.

Prayer Handbook Have you put your name down for your copy of next year's Prayer Handbook I think it will be possibly called "Walking the Way".