

WHEATLEY URC
ANNUAL REPORTS

2017



Annual General Meeting
Sunday 17th September 2017

11.30 am

Worship Ministry Team

Revd Pauline Main

The Worship Team met three times during the year. Pauline Main took over from Colin Thompson as convenor. Many thanks to Colin for his leadership in that role, and for his continuing guidance and wisdom as a member of the Team.

Following the inspirational worship led by potter Andrew Hazelden, the church agreed to commission him to create a baptismal bowl for us. Laurence and Colin took the lead in working with Andrew on the design, and a beautiful bowl has been made and is ready for use. Plans are now in hand for a student from Rycotewood College, which teaches furniture making, to design a wooden stand for the new bowl, and his tutor has visited the church to see how it will look in situ.

Acting upon a suggestion by Peter Devlin, a number of “sermon stormin’ sessions have been held after morning service. These are an opportunity for members of the congregation who wish, to stay after coffee and discuss the sermon with the preacher. The sessions have been interesting and helpful.

Services of Holy Communion have been shared by Colin and Pauline, Colin leading on the first Sunday and Pauline on the third. Next year they will swap, so that they don’t find themselves always preaching on the same readings! In order to facilitate this, Summertown has kindly agreed to move their communion service to the third Sunday.

Lent and Easter

Pauline introduced a Liturgy for Lent, used for several years at Summertown. Each week items relating to the Passion story were brought forward, accompanied by a short reading and prayer. This formed a good focus, though next time it would be good to have a small cross placed beside the items. The large wooden cross was decorated as usual on Easter Sunday.

The usual series of Breakfast Meditations were held during Holy Week, with leaders from St Mary’s, Wheatley Community Church and ourselves. These varied in style, and overall were well attended by members of our churches.

Christmas

Christmas services went well and according to plan. The Carol service was well attended, but there was a clash of dates with St. Mary's crib service which we shall try to avoid this year. A helpful addition to the usual Christmas programme was held on 22nd December, a service for "The Longest Night", organised and led by Laurence, particularly aimed at people who find Christmas a difficult time, either due to bereavement or loneliness. It was much appreciated by those who attended, but more publicity is needed next year, to help people understand the nature and timing of the service.

Shared services

There was a shared service with St Mary's at the URC in October, and a rather hastily-arranged service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January. Sadly, it proved impossible to organise the proposed shared service at Pentecost, but we hope this will be possible next year with better forward planning.

Elements of worship

The involvement of members of the congregation in leading prayers of thanksgiving and intercession is much valued. However, the Worship Team realise that people can find creating these prayers difficult, and agreed to hold a prayer workshop for those interested, eventually arranged for Sunday 20th August.

As part of our programme of looking at the elements of worship, we had a discussion about music in worship. The contribution of Frances Simpson in providing our organ music is much appreciated: many thanks to her for her thoughtful contributions in the "incidental" music and postlude, as well as in the hymns. The use of music (or silence) during the distribution of communion was mentioned, and Pauline agreed to try different options and canvass opinion. To date, quiet and reflective music, rather than singing or silence, seems to be what people find the most helpful.

And – we are also most grateful to the various creative folk in the church who enhance our worship in visual ways; Pauline Shelley with her artwork, and Allison Towner for the flowers deserve special mention, but there are others involved also. We are much blessed in having such a talented congregation.

Preaching rota

Many thanks to Laurence for her efficient organising of the preaching rota – something of a thankless task – and to all those who have led worship throughout the year. Especial thanks to our in-house lay preachers, Richard Bainbridge and Laurence herself.

Future plans – commemorating the Reformation

On 15th October Colin has arranged for Professor Henrike Lehnemann to give a talk on 'The music of the Reformation', followed by a shared lunch. It was suggested that in October Colin might use the sermon slot to give a brief history of the Reformation.

Sunday 29th October is Reformation Sunday, with a special service on that theme.

And finally ...

Once more, many thanks to all involved - we look forward to another year of fruitful worship.

Pauline Mains

Secretaries' Report

Robert Harding

I have decided to divide this year's report into two main sections. The first concentrating on all the new things which have happened in the past twelve months, and then all the issues we already have on our agenda for the future.

So, what are new things which we have achieved together in the last year? Just before Christmas Laurence led a 'Longest Night Service', a beautiful, quiet and meditative time together in the church. Hopefully this will be repeated, probably with a few minor adjustments, following a review of this first service. A month or so before this, in November, Pauline Shelley, (one has to distinguish these days!) and Bobbie, with the help of one or two others, mounted a 'Creative Day' in the hall and church. The variety of activities on offer was amazing, and all who attended were bowled over. In our attempts to follow the URC's environmental policy and become a more 'eco-friendly' church, we applied for and gained 'Eco-Church Bronze Award'

status. More of this below. Another first this year was the close cooperation between ourselves and the local Co-op store with our fete, culminating in two of their staff helping us out for the whole afternoon. In addition to these new projects, we have gone through the last year with just one secretary, the first time for many years. This has worked, I think, with the help of several elders who have taken on different roles.

As for the future there are a number of important issues in the pipeline. We continue to be involved in discussions about the future of URC ministry in the Oxford area. Currently the plan is to develop a team of ministers to work with the seven churches, each having specific responsibility for named churches. This has particular relevance for us at Wheatley, as a meeting to review Pauline Main's interim ministry here, will take place in September. Her ministry with us is due to finish at the end of this year, however, if all parties are in agreement, then there is every possibility this can be extended. Work has continued in the background on plans to improve the facilities in our two back rooms. Detailed proposals will be available for all to see and discuss, hopefully during September or October. Another future project will hopefully see us build on the 'eco-friendly' progress we have made, all being well with the help of 'Sustainable Wheatley'.

On a more general note, we have had to say farewell to Andrew and Elizabeth Walkey and Liz Stewart, who have moved to pastures new, we wish them well and thank them for their contributions to the life of the church. Although she had moved away some time ago, Hazel Hull was still officially a member when she died a few months ago. She contributed a huge amount to our church over very many years and we remember her with great affection. I think it is important to express our thanks to all four of our regular worship leaders, Pauline, who has been with us for well over a year now, Laurence, the newest member of the team, as well as Colin and Richard. We are so blessed to have all these folk who challenge and stimulate us week after week. If I start to pick out other individual names it's hard to know where to stop, but what is so wonderful about our church is how so many contribute so much. However, had said that, I need to express my thanks to Ellen, without whose help and support I would have found the last year very demanding indeed. Thank you Ellen and everyone else who has supported in me in different ways.

Children and Young People Ministry

Malcolm Benson

It is always a pleasure when young families share in our morning worship despite the fact that we have no Sunday School with which many of us were familiar in our childhood. Whilst much of our outreach is for older members of the community, there are opportunities to support our local youngsters in our thoughts and prayers and with our actions. Pulse, the youth group which meets on Sunday evening has gradually increased in numbers such that we may soon need more help. Activities alternate between a games evening and a discussion evening often centered around TED talks. One of the highlights of the year was an evening service largely organised and led by the young people. The festivals and summer club are also supported by church members combine community support with Christian witness. We give thanks for the children from the Community Church who meet regularly at our home on a Sunday morning and also for the outreach into the local schools. I am happy to provide further information of these activities for anyone who is interested or might be willing to help.

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TEAM, (ACE)

Tom Goss

Since last year's report we have initiated a very enjoyable Craft Day in the Sanctuary on the 26th November 2016 - in collaboration with other church members. This event is planned to be repeated in 2017. We set up two God Story evenings – one on 20th March 2017 and the other on 24th April 2017. These were well attended and generously hosted by the Bettess's. We tried very hard to organize a open Panel event but, sadly, due to the diary clashes of our chosen guests we were unable to make it happen.

The team changed this year and is now composed of: Tom Goss (coordinator), Sybil Beaton, Peter Devlin, Bobbie Stormont, Robert Harding and we warmly welcome Mark Williams on board. We continue to meet on a regular basis and plan to initiate one off events over the coming year which we hope will be enjoyed by all. The team will next meet on the 28th of September 2017.

Treasurer and Finance Ministry Team

Chris Shelley

The team members for the last year have been Chris Shelley, Bob Webster, Ann Hardiman and Christine Bainbridge.

The accounts for our financial year, 1st January – 31st December 2016 will be presented at the AGM on 17th September.

Although our weekly offerings decreased in 2016 (£29,809), compared with 2015 (£33,236) I am pleased to report that an increase was seen in the second half of the year and rather than the forecast decrease in the last report of 18%, the actual decrease was 10%. From the figures to date, it seems that our offerings for 2017 will be similar to 2016.

The Gift Aid receipts over the last few years have ranged from £6,100 to £6,700 (in 2015). I anticipate that the claim I will be making in the next couple of months for 2016, will be around £6000. At present, this decrease is not giving cause for concern, but it will be kept under review. Our main outgoing, as always, is to the URC Ministry and Mission (M&M), which for 2016 totalled £19,623. For 2017, this is £20,484. This payment goes towards the stipends of ministers in local pastorates, Church related community workers, ministers working in special category posts and resource centres for learning. We are presently looking at the 2018 figure, which may increase by about 2%, although it will be based on the number of Church members we have.

Our cooker had to be replaced during 2016 at a cost of £1,842, but this cost was covered entirely by personal donations.

Another major expense was the replacement of the boiler, at a cost of just under £4,000.

Looking forwards, we have major expenditure in the repair of the High Street wall of the Sanctuary, and also the re-surfacing of the Sanctuary floor. (see Maintenance report)

We are in the process of switching our suppliers of gas and electricity to a 'greener' supplier through the 'Big Church Switch' initiative. Further information will be given at the AGM.

Earlier this year we had a talk from Peter Stevenson about the Oxfordshire Credit Union. The finance team will be meeting to discuss whether we feel that the Church should make an investment in this worthwhile cause. More information will follow.

We made donations to two major charitable appeals in 2016, Haiti and Yemen, as well as our usual charity giving decided by the team when they

met in November. Full details of the Charitable giving will be shown in the accounts.

If anyone would like to sign up to the Gift Aid scheme or would like further information, please let me know. There is no additional cost to you, and the main criteria is that you pay sufficient tax to cover the 25% of your annual giving, which we can claim back from HM Revenue and Customs in any one year. As you can see, it is an excellent way of increasing the Church's income.

I am obliged to remind those currently in the Gift Aid scheme, that if your tax position changes, so that the tax you pay will not cover the 25% of your annual giving that we claim back, you must please let me know. Also, if you would like to join our offertory envelope scheme or pay your regular offering directly into the Church bank account, please let me know.

Finally, many thanks for your continued generous giving over the last twelve months.

Hospitality Ministry Team

Catherine Harding

The team 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. We would welcome more help serving coffee on Sunday mornings.

Flowers On Sunday

We all appreciate the flowers which are provided each week to enhance the decoration of the sanctuary and the porch. They add to the welcome offered to all who come our church, and we are grateful to those who give their time and flowers..

Allison Towner

Pastoral Care

We were sorry to say goodbye to Liz Stuart, who has moved to Northern Ireland, and very happy to receive the assistance of Angela and Rob Holdaway in running the Sunday Teas. Our core activities remain the same, to visit people in their own homes or in care homes, and to befriend those who need us in what ways we can, to hold a monthly tea party in the Church Hall and to support a long standing village club, the Not-So-Young club.

Last year the Not-so-young Club moved the venue of its fortnightly meetings to the URC Church Hall. This has been a successful and popular move. As well as bingo there are occasional talks and outings. An increasing number of members need help with transport if they are to come to the club, and we would be grateful for extra drivers, either regular or occasional, to bring members to the club for a 2 pm start, and to take them home after 4 pm finish.

The Pastoral Care team continue to hold a tea party in the Church Hall on the first Sunday of the month. We love to provide cakes, but conscious of the sugar load we have started to extend our menu by offering fresh fruit and savoury scones. Angela and Rob have added an extra liveliness to these occasions, for which we thank them. We continue to collect donations for the Alzheimers Society.

We have started to think about confidentiality in relation to our friends and guests. So far there has not been any conflict between respect for privacy and concerns for safety, but we are making ourselves aware of the possibility.

Ann Bettess

Communications Ministry Team Report

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 noticeboards and online presence are maintained.

Newsletter

Since Andrew Walkey moved away Moira and Jim Watson have taken up the reigns again and share with Barbara editorship of the Newsletter. Ann Hardiman distributes the paper copies and keeps in touch with old members. Contributions are 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 and to rely on the online version, which makes a very small saving in postage.

Stationery

Zena keeps an eye on our stationery, leaflets in the foyer etc.

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 180 sermons from 38 preachers.

They have been downloaded a total of 23,655 times, an average of 131 times per sermon. This is an increase of 15% on last year.

The most popular sermon is still Turning the world upside down, by Tanya Stormo Rasmussen, Sunday, 21st October 2012, which has been downloaded 127 times in the last year.

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. We hope to be able to produce some more attractive large posters for general use in the coming year.

Audio-Visual System

We continue to make good use of the AV system. As with all technology it requires a degree of 'tweaking' to keep it in best condition. Any volunteers to help with this would be most welcome.

Thursday Prayer Breakfast

This group meets on Thursday mornings at 8 o'clock to pray for the world, for peace, for an end to injustice, for compassion and to give thanks for so many aspects of life for which we are grateful. At 8.30 we enjoy breakfast together and by the time we've washed up, the meditative group are arriving. Both of these groups are small - about 7 or 8 of us - and we'd love to welcome you as well!

Ann Hardiman

Thursday Coffee Mornings

We are continuing with our coffee mornings on the first Thursday of the month. We have our regulars and so have lots of chat but love to see new faces. 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

Pat Simpson

The Table Tennis continues in popularity on Friday mornings at 10am until noon in the URC hall. It is open to everyone, and all equipment is supplied.

By request we start half an hour earlier than last year, to have more playing time and still enjoy coffee and chat, and find out all the local news.

It is run on a "come when you can" basis with members contributing £1 each time they attend. Last year we managed to donate £400. towards the use of the URC hall.

A most enjoyable social gathering was held in January, this year members opted for a meal at The Harvester. So come and have fun and meet friends old and new.

Taize Prayer at 3, Barns Close, Holton.

Christine and Richard Bainbridge

The simple evening worship in the style of Taize has continued on the third and fourth Sundays of the month at 7.30 pm. Those who come enjoy the community of silence and the opportunity to focus on a theme. Taize worship is still popular. We were able to visit Stanton St John Church where Bobbie arranges a service on the first Sunday of the month at 6pm and enjoy someone else arranging the music and readings. Christine and Richard attended the European Meeting in Birmingham in March and had the privilege of speaking with Brother Alois who took over from Brother Roger. There is a peace and integrity – a parable of community – when brothers meet – and we hope to share this on a Sunday evening. Not too many words but more of an experience of gospel simplicity.

Care for the World

Liz Barry

Many thanks to team members Ann Bettess, Ellen Webster, Liz Walkey, & Angela and Rob Holdaway who have joined in supporting the theme of 'Journeying'. This began with 'Travellers All' an evening of journeys in words and music with Paula Tait, speech therapist, in celebration of One World Week using poetry, story, song and music from all corners of the World. Her theme "Our journeys may be different, but we share the same roads" . . . We were delighted to be able to send £ 292.00 to Traidcraft from donations.

This year we have been working with the Midcounties Co-Op who generously granted Wheatley URC £150 towards the cost of Fairtrade ingredients for the Pancake Breakfast at the end of Fairtrade Fortnight. We were also able to buy Fairtrade aprons for use in URC kitchen and other events 'to promote awareness of Fair trade in the local community'. Although a team effort, huge thanks go to Liz Walkey for tossing pancakes non-stop from 10am to 12noon. We do miss her and wish her well in her life in Leeds. Lucky Leeds!

As always on the first Friday in March, we celebrated the Women's World Day of Prayer in Wheatley, with women from all the other local churches and following a service this year from the Philippines. Ellen has again helped us draw this together, and we are looking forward to Moira Watson and Ann Hardiman co-ordinating next year.

We have continued our association with the Co-op as two of their staff gave time to help at the fete with the Fairtrade stall games, and all in the interests of community.

Both Christian Aid and the Community Emergency Foodbank nominally come under this ministry team. Christian Aid has been well supported by Lent lunches and house-to-house collections, and the regular food bank donations are much appreciated.

Liz Barry

Traidcraft

Ann Bettess,

In the year to the end of July 2017, we have had a turnover of £2071.48. Part of this is from a monthly Traidcraft stall at St Mary's church, which has produced a modest but regular income stream, mostly from sales of chocolate and ginger.

I am sure that Wheatley URC could do more to support the work of Traidcraft, both in promoting self-reliance within poor communities through our sales, and in campaigning for trade justice. However, I am not the person to lead this, as I feel stale and jaded. If someone else would take overall responsibility I would be happy to assist if desired.

Maintenance Ministry Team

Chris Shelley

The team members for this year have been Chris Shelley (convenor), Tony Barry, Malcolm Benson and Bob Webster.

The gas boiler which was only a month old at last year's report, has been running trouble free during the year and should prove much more efficient than the old boiler.

Following concerns that the back door was sometimes being locked when the hall was in use, to prevent unknown access (not recommended under fire safety regulations), a second movement detector was fitted just inside the door. Second warning lights have been fitted alongside the existing ones in the hall and at the rear of the Sanctuary in the view of the stewards.

In order to improve the look of the area, the corridor from the back door round to the door into the hall was cleaned and repainted. A 'spring clean' was also carried out to the premises.

Quotations were obtained from three stonework companies for repairs to the north wall (High Street) of the Sanctuary. These ranged from approximately £4000 up to £12000, the main difference being the amount of stonework each considered should be replaced. After discussions and further advice, we decided to refer back to one of the firms for a re-quote, allowing for more stonework to be replaced. Unfortunately, this company had become insolvent and gone out of business. We are presently obtaining one further quotation, which hopefully should have been received by the time of the AGM. A decision will then be made as to which company we will instruct to carry out the work.

The Sanctuary floor is in need of being re-surfaced, as it has become quite badly worn and scratched. We are in the process of obtaining advice and a quotation, to see exactly what work needs to be done.

Many thanks to all who have carried out any items of work or maintenance during the past year. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Christian Aid Report

Liz & Tony Barry.

Chris & Pauline Shelley.

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 - £240 out of a total £700.

Fete (Refugee Cross Border Travel, Dice & Board Game) - £44.

Christian Aid Week Collections - £1,148 out of a total of £3,324.

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 continue to give of their time and money during the year to help maintain the ongoing essential work of Christian Aid.

Second Report For Buster's Jazz Appreciation Evenings (Aka "Buster's Off The Square")

Tony Barry

The Group has only met twice since last Summer as the organiser has been rather busy with lifestyle changes this year, but it is hoped to return to a fuller musical programme next year!

In September 2016 we met in the URC Hall and as an antedote to our sunny summer evening in the garden in July, we enjoyed an evening of Autumnal themed music ranging from Acker Bilk to Paul Desmond (two versions of "Autumn Leaves") with some Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Eddie Condon, Ken Colyer, The MJQ, Coleman Hawkins, Woody Herman, Humphrey Lyttleton, Johnny Mathis, Charlie Parker, Lonnie Donegan, Lawson/Haggart Band, Benny Goodman, and Joshua Rifkin playing Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag, on the way!

In December 2016 we went for an evening of "Blues" music, exploring it's history and development and it's links with jazz and other American music genres. During the evening Wendy & Malcolm shared with us highlights of their "recent" musical trip down the Mighty Mississippi River on a steamboat. We finished the evening with a tribute to the recently late, great Leonard Cohen and his music and poetry.

In appreciation of these two evenings members donated, over and above expenses, £20 for use of the URC Hall, £45 for The Oxford Foodbank, £55 for The Porch Day Centre and £115 for The Disaster Emergency Committee's work in The Yemen.

The History

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 Busters' 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 usually meets at the Church Hall when 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.

New jazz loving members are welcome. Join us just for an evening or for life!



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