

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**FEBRUARY 2018**

## *Covering Thoughts*

*In December the last of our Bramleys were made into chutney. It is always a sad moment when the stored apples come to an end, and this sadness was shared with a mouse who had taken up residence in an old boot in the shed, and had been happily feasting on the bird nuts and one of the huge cookers.*

*As the chutney was marinating I began reading Tracey Chevalier's novel 'At the Edge of the Orchard'. It tells the story of a pioneer family struggling to survive in the inhospitable Black Swamp of Ohio. Against all the odds they clear enough land to grow apple trees, sweet for eating and spitters used for cooking and making cider. Johnny Chapman, the man behind the legend of Johnny Appleseed, provides them with seeds and seedlings but also the applejack or strong apple brandy, to which Sadie gets addicted.*

*It was interesting to discover how a man who had a thriving business selling people the wherewithal to get drunk and dull the pain of settler life could later be turned into an exemplary figure used to promote generosity and a healthy lifestyle. The real Johnny Chapman was a very different person to the one we read about today for the facts of a situation can be manipulated or the character of a person misrepresented to meet the needs of the moment. We are all too aware of this ourselves with the way political figures are presented in the media. I was reminded that we are never able to know the whole truth of a situation and need to be careful of making hasty judgements and to keep an open and curious mind.*

*It also became clear that good apple trees are not grown from seed but from grafts from a chosen variety on the rootstock of another. Surprisingly my apple tree has probably come from a series of grafts from the original Bramley apple tree which still exists in a cottage garden in Nottinghamshire. It is 219 years old.*

*The story is a reminder that something like the apple may be neither good nor bad in itself, it is how we use it that determines its goodness.*

*Christine*

# PASTORAL LETTER

## Quotations collected between 2013 and recently

A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in. [Greek proverb]

The church is like a swimming pool ..... all the noise comes from the shallow end. [Vanstone]

Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies. [Nelson Mandela]

What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other? [George Eliot]

No ray of sunlight is ever lost, but the green which it awakes into existence needs time to sprout, and it is not always granted to the sower to see the harvest. All work that is worth anything is done in faith. [Albert Schweitzer]

Do something for somebody everyday for which you do not get paid. [Albert Schweitzer]

If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need. [Marcus Tullius Cicero]

Nothing is so apt to mask the face of God as religion. [Buber]

Comparison is the thief of joy. [Theodore Roosevelt]

In essentials unity, in non essentials liberty, in all things charity. [Appears in *The Friend*]

Fear cannot be without some hope, nor hope without some fear. [Baruch Spinoza]

By seeing with the eyes of love - a world of love no longer seems like a dream. [Global Retreat Centre]

The neglect of economics is a wound in the side of the Church. [Jurgen Moltmann]

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can. [John Wesley]

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does [William James]

Truth has no special time of its own: it is now, always. [Albert Schweitzer]

If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends, you talk to your enemies. [Desmond Tutu]

Be thine own palace or the world's thy jail. [John Donne]

The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays. [Soren Kierkegaard]

No social problem is as universal as the oppression of children. [Maria Montessori]

First there is the fire; then the words about the fire - then arguments about the words about the fire.....theology ..... God talk. [Richard Rohr]

**Richard**

## **BI-BLOG BY LAURENCE DEVLIN**

Imagine for a moment that we have borrowed Dr Who's TARDIS time-machine and that we land in Palestine 2000 years ago... It would not take us long to notice the obvious differences in language, religion, economy, political system and in class differentiation: a huge class of poor peasants exploited by a very small elite of absentee landlords and an aristocratic priestly caste. But it would probably take us much longer to perceive less obvious but extremely important differences in cultural values and modes of social interaction. We would soon discover however that people's sense of identity in that strange land is "group-orientated" not individual, that their social behaviour is totally regulated by the "honour and shame" code, that many of their public relationships are ruled by the existence of "patron-client" networks (linking individuals of different status for their mutual benefit) or that absolute hospitality is a non-negotiable obligation.

This of course is the culture in which our Gospels were written, a culture which is radically different from ours. Now I can hear you say: "We know that, so what?" We do indeed but for most of us it remains an abstract statement and we

do not realise that these cultural differences *greatly influence the meaning of these texts* because the words we use now might be the same as the ones used in the Gospels, but *they often conceal totally different realities*. We generally don't realise this because, as the Gospel writers were addressing people living in the same collective, pre-industrial, agrarian culture, they of course took for granted the dominant social values and social codes and did not need to add any explanations. But 2000 years later, in our western, individualistic, post-industrial, democratic culture, we do! So we need to recognize the implied cultural values the authors have woven into their texts because if we (involuntarily) divorce these texts from their original cultural context, we run the double risk of *not only* missing the instructions that the authors wish to give us *but also* importing what is not there and therefore resorting to often far-fetched allegorical interpretations and/or committing the sin of anachronism!

For example, when Paul (or whoever wrote that letter!) admonishes Christian women in Ephesus in 1 Timothy 2:9, to “dress modestly”, it is commonly assumed that he tells them off for being sexually provocative. But this is NOT the meaning of that admonition, as women in that culture would **never**, except if they were prostitutes, have worn racy clothing. This would have been totally contrary to the strict gender expectations in that highly patriarchal society, where women were worthy of love and respect but were constantly kept in check by the adult males of the family as they were potentially an object of shame for the entire family if they were perceived as transgressors. So, elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls and expensive clothes were *symbols of wealth not sexuality*. So, what the letter is saying to women is not to flaunt *their wealth* and it has nothing to do with being sexually restrained!

The realisation that social codes in which the New Testament texts are embedded, are much more than just a vague cultural backdrop but that they have greatly influenced their meaning, is a very recent insight in biblical studies. It was pioneered by an American university professor of Theology, called Bruce Malina, in his ground-breaking book originally published in 1981, “*The New Testament world: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*.” The book which has seen many editions, has had such an extraordinarily long-lasting and transformative influence on New Testament studies that no commentator or interpreter worth his or her salt can ignore these “socio-anthropological approaches” (as they are called!) which have mushroomed in the last 30 years. Don't think however that they are the preserve of rarefied scholarly studies, as they have also greatly influenced modern homiletics (the craft of preaching).

For example, if we know the importance of kinship (people related through descent or marriage) within the society of that time, we understand why

there are so many “boring” genealogies in the Bible, including Jesus’ different genealogies in Luke and Matthew. If we are aware of the huge social expectations weighing on family members in that sort of culture, we realise that “Honour your father and mother” did not mean the same thing then, as it does now. Or when Jesus declares in Luke 14 *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, he cannot be my disciple”*, it is difficult for us nowadays to understand how utterly shocking that instruction must have been to his listeners and what a radical leap of faith and counter-cultural change it demanded from his followers. A similar stunning claim is made by Paul in Romans 9: 6-8 when he makes the case that genealogical descent does not equal kinship and that gentile believers are worthy of being called Children of Abraham.

Belonging to the same kinship group influenced the way you behaved, in ways which were very often quite different from the behaviour you adopted to people outside that group. Given that kin understood themselves to be in unconditional cooperation and solidarity with one another, in order to advance the family’s honour, it also implied a tendency to cover up any disgrace or dishonour that your kin may have incurred. This explains Joseph’s reluctance to expose Mary to public humiliation when he discovers she is pregnant (Matthew 1:19: *Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly*). Mark 3:21 also shows a family guarding its collective honour when one of its members (Jesus) appears to be endangering it (*“When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “he has gone out of his mind”*): In this case they want to hide what they perceive to be censurable conduct of a family member not only to save that family member’s reputation but for the sake of the reputation of the entire family on which so much in village life depended.

It is therefore the honour/shame code which underpinned all relationships in the ancient world as it continues to do in the Middle East, China, Japan and in most societies of the developing world, without forgetting the Pakistani and Indian communities *here in England* where the concept of “izzat” (honour) is paramount. It is only us, westerners, who are the exception! Next month, we will examine what that honour code *concretely* means, looking in detail at the puzzling Parable of the Unjust Steward, which can only make sense through that lens.

## CHURCH CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2018.

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

Traidcraft stall on occasional Sundays.

| Date           | 4 <sup>th</sup> Feb     | 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb | 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb      | 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb |
|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Service        | Morning Service with HC | Morning Service      | Morning Service with H.C. | Morning Service      |
| Time           | 10 am                   | 10 am                | 10 am                     | 10 am                |
| Worship Leader | Rev. Pauline Main       | Richard Bainbridge   | Rev. Colin Thompson       | Laurence Devlin      |
| Vestry Elder   | <b>Charles Bennett</b>  | Peter Devlin         | <b>Malcolm Benson</b>     | Moira Watson         |
| Welcomer       | <b>Ellen Webster</b>    | Malcom Benson        | <b>Catherine Harding</b>  | Ann Hardiman         |
| Steward        | Ann Bettess             | Christine Bainbridge | Bob Webster               | Zena Knight          |
| Reader         | Wendy Benson            | Charles Bennett      | Ann Bettess               | Jean Boxall          |
| Prayers        | Richard Wood            | Ann Hardiman         | Liz Barry                 | Christine Bainbridge |
| Flowers        | Ellen Webster           | Zena Knight          | Catherine Hughes          | Pauline Shelley      |

Elders' names in **Bold** are on Communion duty

Simple Sunday evening services in the style of Taize will be at 7.30 pm on Sundays 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February, at 3 Barns Close, Holton.

### COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS (leaders may use other readings.)

| Date          | 4 <sup>th</sup> Feb    | 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb | 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb | 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb   |
|---------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| First Reading | Isaiah 40: 21-31       | 2 Kings 2: 1-12      | Genesis 9: 8-17      | Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16 |
| Psalms        | 147: 1-11, 20c         | 50: 1-6              | 25: 1-10             | 22: 23-31              |
| New Testament | 1 Corinthians 9: 16-23 | 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6 | 1 Peter 3: 18-22     | Romans 4: 13-25        |
| Gospel        | Mark 1: 29-39          | Mark 9: 2-9          | Mark 1: 9-15         | Mark 8: 31-38          |

## WEEKLY EVENTS

(NB several activities are term-time only)

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Brownies &amp; Rainbows (Term time)</i> | <i>Monday 5.30 to 7.00 pm</i>         |
| <i>Choir Around the Piano (Term Time)</i>  | <i>Monday 7.30 to 9.00 pm</i>         |
| <i>Wheatley Singers (Term Time)</i>        | <i>Tuesday 7.10 to 9.00 pm</i>        |
| <i>Pre-School Music Group (Term time)</i>  | <i>Wednesday 9.30 am and 10.30 am</i> |
| <i>Guides (Term time)</i>                  | <i>Wednesday 7.00 to 8.30 pm</i>      |
| <i>Prayers and Breakfast</i>               | <i>Thursday 8.00 am</i>               |
| <i>Mindfulness Sitting Group</i>           | <i>Thursday 9.00 to 9.40 am</i>       |
| <i>Table Tennis</i>                        | <i>Friday 10.00 am to 12 noon</i>     |
| <i>Hymn Practice</i>                       | <i>Sunday 9.30 to 9.45 am</i>         |

**Please remember in your prayers** the members on Catherine Harding's Pastoral Care List: Christine and Richard Bainbridge, Gillian and David Herring, Pat Simpson, Annette Wright.

**We also ask you to pray for the members of the Adult Christian Education Ministry Team:** Tom Goss, Sybil Beaton, Bobbie Stormont and Mark Williams.

**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.

**Deadline: Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018** is the deadline for the March Newsletter. Please send email copy to [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) or paper copy may be handed to Moira Watson.

## OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN FEBRUARY 2018

|                      |          |                             |  |
|----------------------|----------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb  | Thursday | 10.00 am to noon<br>7.15 pm | Coffee morning, Church open<br>Elders Meeting              |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Feb  | Sunday   | 2.30 to 4.30 pm<br>7.00 pm  | Afternoon Tea in the Hall<br>Pulse Group trip out          |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Feb  | Monday   | 2.00 to 4.00 pm             | Not So Young Club  |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Saturday | 6.30 to 9.00 pm             | Elders Party, URC Hall                                     |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Sunday   |                             | No Pulse Group   |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Tuesday  | 1.00 pm                     | Lunch Club Two   |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Sunday   | 8.00 am<br>7.00 to 9.00 pm  | Morning Meditation, Foodbank<br>Pulse Group, games in Hall |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Monday   | 2.00 to 4.00 pm             | Not So Young Club  |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Tuesday  | 1.00 pm                     | Lunch Club   |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Saturday | 9.30 am to 4.00 pm          | Away Day, Friends Meeting House,<br>Oxford                 |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb | Sunday   | 7.00 to 9.00 pm             | Pulse Group Discussion, Bell Lane                          |

## FINANCE

It is the time of year when the Church treasurer's thoughts turn specifically to income and expenditure, the preparation of last year's accounts and Gift Aid claims. There are three items to bring to your attention.

This year's **offertory envelope scheme** has just started and I have envelopes available. If anyone would like to join the scheme, or requires further information, please speak to me.

The **Gift Aid scheme** is an excellent way for the Church to increase its regular income with no additional cost to the scheme member. We can claim 25% from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on your giving, providing you have paid tax (income or capital gains) of at least the equivalent to the 25% claimed on all your gift aided donations. You just need to complete a simple form to join. Please speak to me for further information, or for a form to join the scheme.

A reminder for those presently in the Gift Aid scheme. If your tax position changes, so that the tax you pay will not cover the 25% claimed on your giving, you must please let me know, as HMRC can claim any overpayment back from you!

Finally, some members of our congregation prefer to make their regular offering directly into the Church bank account. Should you prefer to do this, please ask me for the relevant information.

**Chris Shelley**

## **“OASIS of PEACE” NEWS**

The British Friends of *Neve Shalom/Wahat-al-Salam/Oasis of Peace* have shared recent news from the primary school that they support in the Holy Land. Last year, funds raised by British Friends helped to employ second language (Hebrew/Arabic) teachers in each class and also to construct a new Library. The next project is to raise funds to fill the Library shelves with books.

The School for Peace Director, Dr Nava Sonnenschein, stresses the importance of promoting inter-group dialogue and this is borne out with over 60,000 High School students attending Youth Encounter workshops over the years. She is convinced that the School for Peace is making a deep contribution to Israel-Palestine harmony.

If you would like to support this project please let me know and I will give you further details.

On behalf of “Care for the World Ministry Team” **Ellen Webster**

## **WOMEN’S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER**

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March**

**Wheatley URC at 2 pm, St Mary’s Wheatley at 7 pm**

‘Women's World Day of Prayer’ is a world-wide movement led by Christian women of many traditions. More than 170 countries participate in an annual day of celebration which brings together people of various races and cultures, sharing in worship.

Each year the service is prepared by women from a different country. This year the country is Suriname. The Day of Prayer begins on the International Dateline and the first service is held in Samoa. Then, as the earth rotates, a great wave of prayer sweeps across Asia, rolls on to the countries of Africa and then to the Middle East. It continues into Europe across to the Caribbean and the Americas till the last service of the day is held as the sun sets over American Samoa.

In Wheatley there are two services on Friday the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, the first at Wheatley URC at 2 pm and later at St Mary's Church at 7 pm. Do come and join in this great day of prayer, the theme is 'All God's Creation is Very Good'. The services are open to all: men, women and children.

**Ann Hardiman**

# **'ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD'**

## **ST MARYS CHURCH – APRIL 2018**

Please come and support St Mary's latest fund-raising venture - a production of Tom Stoppard's dazzling comedy *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Peter Fanning will direct the play, which will feature many of the team that recently staged *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* and *Godspell*.

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is a play which, as it were, takes place in the wings of *Hamlet*, and finds both humour and poignancy in the situation of the ill-fated attendant lords. The National Theatre production in April 1967 made Tom Stoppard's reputation virtually overnight. Its wit, stagecraft and verbal verve remain as exhilarating as they were then and the play has become a contemporary classic.

### Performances

7.30 pm, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018: tickets, £8

7.30 pm, Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018: tickets, £10

7.30 pm, Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2018: tickets, £10

Students and under 18s: £7.50 for all performances

Tickets available by email [smg.wheatley@gmail.com](mailto:smg.wheatley@gmail.com) or telephone 872262.





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