

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



MAY 2018

Covering Thoughts

Faced with yet more pictures of conflict on the news I would like to share these words from Advices and Queries 31. “We are called to live ‘in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars’”. They made me reflect on the challenge that each of us, and the church community faces to consider any forms of behaviour which might ‘contain the seeds of war’.

Whether we would embrace pacifism or not I think this is something to which we might all aspire in our daily living and it could be our contribution to society, whether it be as local as in our families and church or more widely in our work and wherever we engage with others.

I wonder if we can become aware when we put others down, or openly celebrate when we are on the winning side in a vote or debate. Can we take on board that there are those who may find it difficult to express what they think, but whose views are as valuable as the more voluble? We think that we are a democratic church, but are we in practice? For the quieter members it may not appear so. Can we practice being more open to other perspectives when our own seems so right? Can we change our minds?

All these things are small in themselves, but unless we become aware of them and take action some will experience a feeling of powerlessness, hurt or quiet anger. These are some of the emotions which on a larger scale could lead to war.

It may be difficult to know how to address these problems, but considering the example of Jesus is a place to begin. His teaching raised questions rather than giving answers. He encouraged reflection on stories, used familiar examples gave a value to women, to the despised and the poor; saving his criticism for hypocrites and those in positions of power. He did not seek to justify himself in the face of false accusation. The most powerful statement he made was his giving in to the will of others. In our challenge to take away ‘the occasions of all wars’, let us be prepared to do the same.

Christine

Dear Friends,

‘Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear’ Mark 4 v 9.

As I mentioned in the last pastoral letter I wrote in October, The Emmaus Road story is one of my favourite Bible stories, let alone a favourite Easter story. Imagine walking all that way, listening but not hearing? I wonder if sometimes we are guilty of taking for granted our ability to hear. If perhaps we don’t pay enough attention to, not only listening, but actually hearing the words or the music. Perhaps the disciples on the Emmaus Road were so wrapped up in their thoughts about the crucifixion and the loss of their friend that they couldn’t bring their minds to concentrate on the words being spoken. How big an issue is that today in our lives, surrounded by seemingly constant noise and an unbroken stream of things to worry about?

If you want an example of what listening is all about then I recommend you tune into ‘The Listening Project’, a series of very short conversations broadcast from time to time on Radio 4. These conversations are generally between two quite ordinary members of the public, chatting about all sorts of ‘stuff’, often remembering stories or occasions, and it’s usually uplifting, heart-warming and fun. Most importantly people are listening to each other and hearing what’s being said!

In his Easter Day sermon Colin touched on this subject of what we hear when he talked about how often we find ourselves living in ‘echo chambers’. I think he was referring to how easy it is to be selective in what we hear; only reading certain newspapers or magazines that agree with our politics or world view, avoiding programmes or documentaries that we think might be upsetting, or challenge the view we have already decided upon. ‘We only hear what we want to hear’ was a quote he gave us.

In Wheatley URC we pride ourselves, and rightly so, on our openness, our ability to hear others points of view, to disagree but to continue in love, working together. I wonder how well we do in other areas of our lives when not in church, and not with people with whom we largely agree and are journeying together?

So what might Jesus be saying to us in 2018 when he says ‘*Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear*’? Perhaps he is telling us not to neglect the wonderful gift of hearing, to make sure that when we are listening we are also hearing, and when someone says something we profoundly disagree with, we listen especially hard so that we might understand them better and perhaps learn from them. I know it’s something I need to work at!

Love, blessings and good listening, **Robert.**



The Good Friday inaugural ‘procession of witness’1964 in Wheatley with the Rev H Robinson carrying the cross alongside Charles Brock, Carolyn Brock is at the back, Basil Brownless is on the left. After the 1964 procession, Basil Brownless said ‘what a puny cross.’ He promptly went home and made a new, heavy cross which is still in use today.



The Good Friday ‘procession of witness’, Wheatley, 2018 with the Revd. Nigel Hawkes and Dr Malcolm Benson



THE GOOD FRIDAY 'PROCESSION OF WITNESS' LEAVING CROWN SQUARE IN WHEATLEY 2018

GOOD FRIDAY PROCESSION OF WITNESS

The Wheatley Village Procession on Good Friday 2018, was the 55th year of the 'walk' and was again very successful, despite the rather cool and damp weather! The event began in the Catholic Church: Our Lady of Lourdes, at 09.30 am with Stations of the Cross followed by a short introductory service in Crown Square at 10.00 am. The Procession went along Mulberry Drive, Beech Road, Farm Close Road, Station Road and the High Street with several stops along the way for prayers and hymn singing. The final stop was at St Mary's Church where the walkers enjoyed hot cross buns and hot drinks which were much appreciated! A moving celebration of Easter which brings together many villagers and friends.

Jim Watson

WHEATLEY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH **DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR CHOOSING ELDERS**

Introduction

The fundamental body by which we in the URC govern ourselves is the Church Meeting. All members of the church are entitled to attend and vote at Church Meeting.

As was the case in the earliest days of the church, we choose some of our number to work on our behalf, ensuring worship is held regularly and properly, providing pastoral care to members of the church meeting and friends of the church, and taking care of the resources of the church (money, building and so on).

These people we call Elders and we believe their role is sufficiently important in the life of the church, to hold them in that esteem which we recognise by using a process of 'ordination'.

How we choose our Elders is important.

The process, which is designed to encourage all of us to take part, will be the same as last year and focuses on discernment and a sense of call.

The whole Church community has been challenged to consider whether they have the gifts, talents and skills to enable them to fulfil the role of Elder and all are encouraged and given time to take part in the discernment process.

The process for 2018 is as follows:

MAY

During the month of May, the congregation will be invited to consider prayerfully who they think God may be calling to the role of Elder for the next three years. Any who worship with us are part of this process, and they may convey their suggestions by speaking to the Minister or a current serving Elder, or by completing a nomination slip. This slip does not need the signature of the person being nominated; they are anonymous, and individuals may put forward their own names if they wish. The only criterion is that the person named must be a member of Wheatley URC.

JUNE

The deadline for nominations will be the beginning of June. At the June Elders' Meeting, the names will be shared and time will be spent reflecting on individual gifts and talents and where these might fit with the needs and mission of the Eldership. For the time being, the names will not be publicised.

Elders will hold these names in prayer during this month whilst all church members and friends will be asked to pray for the process of discernment.

The Church Secretary or their elder will contact all those nominated early in the month and ask them to prayerfully consider their call. When approached, they will be told of their discerned gifts, talents and experiences. It is recognised that many of us share our gifts and talents in a number of ways through our home and work life, and through voluntary work outside the church. Some may feel they cannot take on the role of Elder at this time. However, it is important that anyone who has been identified by this discernment process has time to reflect on whether they are indeed being called to the role of Elder. In time for the July Elders Meeting, they will be asked whether they are willing for their names to go forward.

JULY

At their July meeting, Elders will then prayerfully consider the names brought forward, and will, with God's help, discern a number of people who they feel are being called at this time.

The list of names of those discerned to have a call, and who are willing to stand, will be brought to the July Church Meeting. During the months of July and August, each Elder will contact those in their pastoral group to ask them for any thoughts they may have. In this way the whole church will share in the prayerful discernment of our Elders over the summer.

SEPTEMBER

At their September meeting, Elders will once again prayerfully reflect on the list of names. Using a simple ranking system, if appropriate, Elders will then indicate who they believe are being called. In our experience, it will be clear at this time that a number of names will rise to the top of the list. The Minister or Church Secretary will then speak to those who are discerned not to be called at this time.

At the Annual Church Meeting in September members will be invited to consider the names of those whose call to Eldership has been discerned, and, after an opportunity for prayerful reflection, to approve them.

The serving Elders due to complete their current terms in September 2018, are Ellen Webster and Ann Hardiman. In addition we are still trying to find a new secretary to replace Robert. We are very grateful for all that they have contributed during their time as Elders.

WHEATLEY URC FÊTE - 28TH MAY 2.00 TO 4.30
IN THE DOCTOR'S GARDEN

For many years the Church Fête, together with the Christmas bazaar provided much needed finance for the Congregational Church. Although the latter ceased some years ago, the fete remains a village institution. In the 1930's it was a grand occasion which was usually opened by a village dignitary. My first experience of the fête was in the early 1980's when it was held at Mulberry Court, and rained all afternoon. It was shortly thereafter that the fete moved to 'The Doctor's Garden' mainly through the good offices of Ron and Dora White. They were members of the church and lived next door to Dr Flury. Ron's garden was his pride and joy and he won most of the prizes at the VPA. He also looked after Dr Flury's garden. Dora provided him with some of her home cooking and preserves. The offer of the use of 'the doctor's garden' was in part thanks for their help but is also greatly enjoyed by Dr Flury. He usually gets the pick of the cakes! Sadly his health and memory are failing but he still wants the fete to go ahead.

Partly for this reason we would like to make this year a resounding success and it will also see the public launch of our 'Cogwheel' building project. The local dignitary who will open the fête is our friend and local historian, John Fox. There will be live music; jazz provided by Alyn Shipton (double bass), Roger Simmonds (keyboard) and Michael Simmonds (violin) whilst vocal music will be provided by the Commissionaires, a barber shop quartet.

We need as much help as possible in setting up on the day (and clearing up afterwards) together with help running the stalls. In the meantime there will be a need for books (for the book stall), cakes, jams etc. for the produce stall, prizes for the raffle, contributions for the refreshments and plants (for the plant stall).

Lets hope it doesn't rain.

Malcolm Benson

**COGWHEEL LAUNCH!
MONDAY 28th MAY**



**COMMUNITY OFFERING GATHERING WELCOMING
HOSPITALITY ENABLING EXPLORING LOVING**

**We are delighted to announce that John Fox will be launching the
Cogwheel Rebuilding Project
at the Church Fête in Dr Flury's Garden**

**Planning permission has now been approved for the new
MULBERRY ROOM
and we are also forging ahead with preparations for
improvements to our existing buildings.**

**Fundraising is steaming ahead at full pace,
thanks to many generous donations and also to external grants.
The COGWHEEL fundraising team are on the lookout for your ideas too!
*Please share with us any ideas to generate additional income for this
project.***

**Mark Williams, Roger Bettess, Peter Devlin, Zena Knight, Chris Shelley, Ellen
& Bob Webster**

**Please remember in your prayers the members of Tom Goss's Pastoral Care
List:** Laurence & Peter Devlin, Colin Thompson, Joel & Kit Rasmussen. Not
forgetting Tom & Bobbie who are still in New Zealand.

**We also ask you to pray for the members of the Communications Ministry
Team:-** Phyllis Williams, Christine Bainbridge, Barbara Joiner, Zena Knight,
Jim & Moira Watson.

CHURCH CALENDAR FOR MAY 2018.

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

Traidcraft stall on occasional Sundays.

Date	6 th May	13 th May	20 th May	27 th May
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	Revd. Pauline Main	Richard Bainbridge	Revd. Colin Thompson	Revd. Mark Williams
Vestry Elder	Moira Watson	Malcolm Benson	Ellen Webster	Peter Devlin
Welcomer	Charles Bennett	Ann Hardiman	Pauline Shelley	Catherine Harding
Steward	Zena Knight	Christine Bainbridge	Sybil Beaton	Zena Knight
Reader	Angela Holdaway	Phyllis Williams	Chris Shelley	Bob Webster
Prayers	Ann Bettess	Christine Bainbridge	Barbara Joiner	Ellen Webster
Flowers	Catherine Harding	Moira Watson	Wendy Benson	TBA

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

Simple evening worship in the style of Taize at 3 Barns Close at 7.30 pm on Sunday **May 13th**.

COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS

(leaders may use other readings.)

Date	6 th May	13 th May	20 th May	27 th May
First Reading	Acts 10: 44-48.	Acts 1: 15-17.	Acts 2: 1-21.	Isaiah 6: 1-8.
Psalm	Psalm 98.	Psalm 1.	Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b.	Psalm 29.
New Testament	1 John 5: 1-6.	1 John 5:9-13.	Romans 8: 22-27	Romans 8: 12-17.
Gospel	John 15: 9-17.	John 17: 6-19.	John 15: 26-27, 16: 4b-15.	John 3: 1-17.

Deadline for the June newsletter is 6pm on Wednesday 16th May. Please send email copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy may be handed to Barbara Joiner.

OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN MAY

3 rd May	Thursday	10.00-12.00 7.15pm	Coffee in the hall church open Elders Meeting
6 th May.	Sunday	10.00am 11.30am 2.30 -4.30pm 7.00-9.00pm	Foodbank Church Meeting Afternoon Tea in the hall Pulse Discussion in URC Hall
8 th May	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club 2
13 th May	Sunday	2.00pm 7.00 – 9.00pm	W.E.A. Shared Picnic in the Rec. Pulse Group Discussion 17, Bell Lane
14 th May	Monday	2.00-4.00pm	Not So Young Club
15 th May	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club
19 th May	Saturday	9.30-4.00pm	Christian Aid All Day Tea Party at Merry Bells
20 th May	Sunday	8.00am 7.00pm	Meditation & Prayer Breakfast Pulse; Trip to Brill Hill meet at URC
22 nd May	Tuesday	2.00-4.00pm	St. Mary's Guild meet in the hall.
27 th May	Sunday		No Pulse Group Meeting
28th May	Monday	2.00-4.00pm	Church Fete in Dr Flury's Garden

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 am
Guides (Term time)	Wednesday 7pm to 8.30pm
Prayers and Breakfast	Thursday 8.00am
Mindfulness Sitting Group	Thursday 9.00am to 10.00am
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.

Wheatley Area Churches Shared Picnic And AGM

Wheatley Area Churches' AGM will take place this year at **2.00 pm on Sunday 13th May** at the **Church Road Recreational Ground** (or The Merry Bells, depending on the weather). It is proposed that it will be preceded by a **food share picnic from 12.30 pm** at whichever venue. **Congregations from all the churches are welcome and invited to attend.**

WHEATLEY AREA CHURCHES

URGENT RESPONSE PLEASE: The URC needs a **new representative** to join Pauline Main and Tony Barry on the **Wheatley Area Churches Committee**, which meets about four times each year to plan and discuss how best the churches of Wheatley and Holton can work together through joint events and worship to be a united presence in the community of Wheatley and beyond. If you think that you can help, please, please get in touch with Pauline or Tony to find out more and come along to **the picnic lunch and AGM on Sunday 13th May** to meet the rest of the committee.

There will be a **Welcome BBQ from 12.00 noon on Saturday 19th May in The Vicarage Garden, 18 London Road**, for the **new residents at the Mill Green** housing development, but it is hoped that members of the churches will go along to be part of the **"Welcome to Wheatley from the Village Churches"** event.

Tony Barry

**Worminghall Christian Aid Group
warmly invite you for**



Afternoon Tea

**On 16th May 2.30-4.30pm
At the Village Hall With Card Stall, And Traidcraft**



ALL DAY TEA-PARTY

Dear Supporters /Collectors

Christian Aid are having an All-Day tea party outside the Merry Bells
Sat May 19. 9.30-4pm

Come and bring your Christian Aid envelope to us and watch the Royal
Wedding live with us in the coffee room.

If you can't make the event, bring your envelope to church or post it
through the letterbox of **82.High St.**

Liz & Tony Barry. Chris & Pauline Shelley

OXFORDSHIRE ARTWEEKS IN HOLTON

Saturday May 19th – Bank Holiday Monday May 28th inclusive.

Open 11am – 6pm daily.

Venue 361 Ambrose Cottage, Holton, OX33 1PS.

Jackie Birchall of Purple Urchin

Jackie works mainly with stained glass, but also has a tendency to use anything she can get hold of. She will have several different collections of new work for you to enjoy, most of which are works in progress. She will be doing demonstrations and displaying her work indoors and in her parents' beautiful cottage garden.

Venue 362 3 Barns Close, Holton, OX33 1QB.

Christine Erica Bainbridge

This year Christine's work has been mainly inspired by winter seascapes along the Dorset coast, mountain scenes from the Lake District and the Bernese Oberland, as well as iconic trees. However recently her paintings have taken a dramatic turn towards abstraction and a new collection entitled On the Threshold will be exhibited. As usual there will be exhibitions in the garden, house and studio, with art activities for families, and delicious refreshments.

For more information visit www.artweeks.org venues 361 and 362 and pick up a free booklet to discover other studios to visit during May.

NEWS OF THE TRADCRAFT STALL

You may have noticed the absence of a Traidcraft Stall this year. As announced at the last AGM, I am standing down as the Traidcraft rep for this church. I feel that it calls for more active development and I don't have the spirit for it. Until someone else volunteers to take on the role, you will be able to buy direct from Traidcraft online (orders over £50 are carriage free), or at the Windmill shop in Headington or from St Michaels at the North Gate in Oxford. Oxfam also stocks a lot of Fair Trade foods.

I do have some remaining stock which I will sell off at a discount, at the Christian Aid tea in Worminghall Village hall on 16th May at 2.30, and at the URC Fête on 28th May.

Many thanks for your support for Traidcraft over the years – since the days of Jane and Philip Baker!

Ann Bettess

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY FOODBANK

In April we celebrated the 10th anniversary of CEF with a party, so it seems a good time to let everyone know a bit more about this Foodbank.

The concept of people in the City of Dreaming Spires needing foodbanks was met with scepticism in 2008 but the Revd. Howard Thornton was familiar with church run foodbanks in Canada and offered his church in Holloway Road as a venue. St. Francis's Church has been CEF's home every Tuesday and Friday since 2008 and at the warehouse since 2015.

After a slow start when Jane was sorting out a system by contacting social services and other agencies, we now receive referrals from 40 agencies. Clients come with a referral form and receive a wide range of mainly tinned food from a standard list. There is often fresh Veg./ bread etc. donated by the supermarkets and which clients can take.

Clients can come 3 times in a year which sounds very little but this is an EMERGENCY foodbank which helps people over a crisis in their lives but discourages dependency. Sometimes there is greater need and no-one is sent away with nothing.

CEF puts a great deal of importance on making people feel as welcome as possible. Especially when someone is coming for the first time we hope that a welcome smile and a cup of tea or coffee can make the visit less traumatic. Mostly the volunteers are not professionals (though some are), but we can all provide a listening ear. We cannot solve their problems but perhaps make that day more bearable.

Sometimes we can point them to other available services.

A big thankyou to everyone who brings contributions on the first Sunday of the month (and, I notice, on other occasions too) thank you so much. Food is also given occasionally by businesses, schools and individuals, especially at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. I'm told we give out about 40,000 items each year!

However good the benefit system, I fear there will always be people who fall through the gaps and our contributions will continue to be needed. So thank you once again for your generous donations.

Frances Simpson

BI-BLOG BY LAURENCE DEVLIN

Following our away-day discussions, Church-Meeting voted overwhelmingly last March in favour of applying for our church building to be registered for the marriage of same-sex couples. However, as Colin wrote in the April newsletter, "not everyone is happy about that and it is a big change in a short space of time."

Indeed, even among our generally liberal-minded and progressive congregation, some members still have reservations, convinced that the Bible condemns homosexuality unequivocally. They, and many other Christians, find therefore difficult to reconcile what they think the authority of scripture teaches about sexual morality and their willingness to be inclusive of individual homosexual people they know, like and respect. But this conflict need not occur as the biblical "evidence" is far from conclusive, either because it is taken out of context or because the bible writers did not benefit from the modern advances in the knowledge of human sexuality.

It might be useful to remind ourselves first, that none of the four evangelists makes any mention of homosexuality, probably, I guess, because it was not a matter of major concern either for Jesus or for the early Christian movement. After all, Jesus had a few other "small" issues on his mind such as promoting distributive justice for all, establishing the Rule of God here on earth and teaching the importance of loving service! And yet, the obsession that some Christians show regarding homosexuality, exclusively of other issues, is astonishing and totally belittles the spirit of the Gospels. It is also worth remembering that 150 years ago, the issue of slavery was tearing Christian churches apart and threatened to fracture entire denominations, an issue which nowadays has thankfully been resolved and mainly forgotten.

Let's have a look then at the so-called biblical "evidence". Some passages that have been advanced as pertinent to homosexuality are in fact totally irrelevant: one is the attempted male gang-rape recounted in Genesis 19:1-19, where heterosexual males intend to humiliate strangers by treating them "like women" thus "de-masculinizing" them, something which in such a male-dominated culture, was a terrible offence and an insult. A similar account can be found in the episode of the "Levite's concubine" in **Judges 19 to 21**. In both cases, the brutal behaviour of the aggressors has *nothing* to do with any homosexual relationship between two consenting adults as the intention was inflicting humiliation and loss of honour. We can also put aside Deut. 23:17-18 as it refers to male and female *prostitutes* involved in Canaanite fertility rites that had infiltrated Israelite worship. So, we are left with two groups of relevant texts: One from the Old Testament, **Leviticus 18: 22** more or less repeated in **Leviticus 20: 1** and the others in Paul: **Romans 1: 26-27** and to a lesser extent, **1Corinthians 6: 9-10** and **1Timothy 1: 8-11**

Let's examine **Leviticus 18** first: "*If a man lies with a male as with a woman, he has committed an abomination*". As the American scholar, Walter Wink explains¹, there are two essential reasons why homosexual acts are described as an "abomination": *First*, the bible writers had no knowledge of the role of female eggs and ovulation in the process of reproduction and for them, the female womb was only an incubating vessel. It was the male semen which contained the whole of potential life! Consequently, in the Bible, any spilling of semen for non-procreative purpose i.e. coitus interruptus, (such as Onan's sin in Genesis 38: 1-11) male masturbation or homosexual intercourse was considered murderous. This is also the reason why female homosexual acts are not even mentioned in the Old Testament, not because they did not happen but because they would not warrant such condemnation as no semen was involved. *Secondly*, in such a patriarchal society where maleness was so highly valued while the female condition was considered inferior, men engaging in homosexual acts were acting sexually "like a woman" and therefore were degrading not only their own male honour and dignity but also *those of other males... an abomination!*

Now for **Paul**: Both **1Corinthians.6** and **1Timothy 1** refer to a list of people

¹Walter Wink, *Homosexuality and the Bible*, in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches*, ed. Walter Wink (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1999) , pp 33-49

who will “not inherit the Kingdom of God”: fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, male prostitutes and sodomites.” Now there is no ambiguity here and Paul is indeed referring to homosexuality, right? Well, yes and no because what is far from clear is what *form of homosexuality* the 2 letters (one of which, 1Tim. is not by Paul anyway!) are talking about. Several scholars have suggested that “male prostitutes” (“malakoi” in Greek) designated attractive young men or boys whose sexual services were either purchased or coerced by older men, called by Paul “sodomites” but using the rare Greek word “arsenokoitai” and not the usual term “sodoma”. So, it would mean that Paul is condemning not homosexuality per se, but rather the prostitution, the coercion and the exploitation that typically accompanied that particular type of relationship between two men.

Now the only passage that seems to condemn homosexuality outright is **Romans 1: 26-27**: “For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another.” Earlier in this same passage, Paul has been talking about the worship of false gods, i.e. idolatry and in verse 24 and 25, he identifies the results of idolatry as “lust, impurity and bodily degradation”. In other words, the whole passage when put into context *as it should be*, is not about homosexuality but about idolatry. But as William Walker² explains, three assumptions result from that famous verse which, in view of modern knowledge regarding sexual orientation are quite frankly ridiculous: *First*, because of their sins of idolatry, “God gave them up” to homosexual activity. In other words, homosexuality is not so much a sin but a punishment for sin”!!! Consequently, this would also mean that no monotheist worshipper (Jew, Christian or Muslim) could ever engage in any homosexual activity as they are not idolaters but worshippers of the one and true God! This is in fact the most dubious pre-supposition that underlies **Romans 1:26-27** as we clearly know that this is not consistent with what we see in the world today where there are believers of the three religions who are homosexuals. The *second* assumption is that homosexuality is “unnatural” i.e. “contrary to nature”, a statement which again flies into the face of recent scientific discoveries demonstrating that homosexual behaviour occurs in nearly 500 animal species and this, in every major geographic region and every major

²William O. Walker Jr, *Some Surprises from the Apostle Paul*, (Polebridge Press, Salem, Oregon, 2017)

animal group. The third and last assumption is that homosexual behaviour is an expression of an insatiable lust and that people choose to turn to homosexual activity because heterosexual activity fails to satisfy them, another thought that seems totally far-fetched to modern minds and modern science.

Now if Paul was the real apostle he claims he was, following Jesus “on the way”, what would he have said about loving, committed, monogamous homosexual relationships, something we see more and more in modern Western open societies where people can be who they are and are accepted as such. I bet he would have revised his wonderful inclusive affirmation in [^]and would have written: *“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, there is no longer homosexual or heterosexual for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”*

SCIENCE CORNER

It may soon be possible to make flavoursome beer without hops, which are expensive and need lots of water to grow. Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, have engineered a yeast which makes beer taste of hops – without any actual hops. The research focused on two active compounds: linalool and geraniol, which are known to be crucial to beer flavour.

Mint and basil have the enzymes which make these chemicals. The research team identified the genes which control linalool and geraniol, and then inserted these genes into a yeast. Surprisingly, beer made from the engineered yeast had more consistent levels of the chemicals in the beer than regular beer. Perhaps even more surprisingly, a tasting panel said the beer was more flavoursome than comparable beers made with hops.

Jim Watson

Wheatley URC
www.wheatleyurc.org.uk

Walking
the Way
Living the life of Jesus today

Traditional Bank Holiday Fete

Come & meet friends at

Dr Flury's Garden
116 Church Road Wheatley
2pm Monday 28 May



Cream Teas

Aunt Sally

Plants

Books

Cakes

Tombola

Children's Games

with Live Music:

Barbershop Quartet

& Jazz



Launch of the
Cogwheel Project
for the new
Mulberry Room



The
Mulberry
Room



High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE

CHURCH CONTACTS

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