

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



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**OCTOBER 2018**

## Covering Thoughts

### *Harvest is such a messy time!*

*I think back to spring and dug allotments with neat rows of planting; when the flowerbeds showed turned earth and green shoots, the apple trees crisply shaped with close pink blossom on bare branches. The garden seemed spacious, cool sunlight permeating every spot and allowing bulbs to thrive under leafless trees. I could go on, but suffice it to say that there was a feeling of promise and an element of order and planning.*

*Compare this with autumn and see the tiredness of summer's growth together with over abundance, grasses dry and brittle in the hedgerows, seed heads bent and empty, and rotting apples. Wasps, their work done, rolling drunkenly among them. Orienteering in autumn can be disastrous with paths overgrown with brambles or completely obliterated with fallen leaves.*

*Then what do we do with the harvest? Do we marvel at the amount of waste? Are we tempted to gather more than we can use? It is one thing to pick the apples and to gather blackberries; quite another to find the time to cook or preserve them. I am so impressed by those who arrange to pick excess fruit and recycle it in various ways so that none is wasted. Harvest is such a busy and messy time and I think we have to recognise this as well as celebrating its fullness.*

*As a parable of life it seems that often we do not know what to treasure and what to allow to quietly decompose. Our lives, full as they have been, may not have followed the path we expected in the beginning. Fruitful they may have been, but at what effort and at what cost? Let us be hopeful that there will always be those who will take up and make something of value from the fruits that fall unrecognised and unacknowledged.*

**Christine**

## REFLECTIVE EVENTS - WALKING THE WAY

### **Bobbie Stormont**

**Voicebox Choir, Saturday 6 October, 7.30 pm, Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford.** Songs about hope and survival in aid of the charity Freedom From Torture. This concert will include cappella singing, close harmony pieces, gospel songs, and choral favourites like 'Fields of Gold'. Tickets £12 (£10 concessions) can be purchased by email to: [fftoxfordconcert@outlook](mailto:fftoxfordconcert@outlook) or telephone 01993 773664 or on the door.

**Poppy Field, Christ Church Cathedral, 11–13 October.** A stunning sound-and-light display by renowned artist Peter Walker, with poetry recorded by the Oscar-winning actor Eddie Redmayne. It provides visitors with the chance to walk through a field of poppies as the Cathedral is bathed in light, and contemplate the poignant 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice. Tickets are free of charge but timed, to ensure the flow of visitors. Book at <http://ticketsoxford.com/whats-on/all-shows/poppy-field/11773>

**The Song of Songs: Set me as a seal upon your heart, Saturday 20 October, Corpus Christi College, Oxford.** Wisdom's song of love through word, music and silence led by Revd Graeme Watson. An event organised by The Oxford Centre for Spiritual Growth. <http://www.ocsg.uk.net/content/events>

**An Evening with Laurence Freeman: Christian Meditation in a Secular Age - Rediscovering faith and belief, Thursday 25 October, Wolfson College, Oxford.** An event organised by The Oxford Centre for Spiritual Growth. Laurence Freeman OSB is the founder of the World Community for Christian Meditation. <http://www.ocsg.uk.net/content/events>

**Light: A Spiritual Journey, 20 October - 6 January, Dorchester Abbey.** A multimedia installation. Embark on a spiritual journey through images from the Hubble space telescope accompanied by specially commissioned music by Dr Tim Cook. This mini pilgrimage down the Cloister Gallery is set against the maxi pilgrimage of the movement of the planets and stars encapsulated in lit shrines made of resin. <http://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/light-spiritual-journey/>

## PRAYERS

Please remember in your prayers the members on Pauline Shelley's pastoral list: Angela and Rob Holdaway, Phyllis and Mark Williams, Catherine and David Hughes, Joan and John Kidd, Elaine and Mike Matejschuk.

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Pastoral Care Team: Ann Bettess, Jean Boxall, Barbara Joiner, Joan Kidd, Frances Simpson.

## 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 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018 is the deadline for the November Newsletter. Please always send email copy to [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) and not to individuals. But paper copy may be handed to Moira or Jim Watson.

Please also inform [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) if your Church Calendar duty entries have been changed.

## HARVEST IS A MESSY TIME

Harvest is a messy time.  
A time of too much  
Glut and gloop,  
Of bruised and battered  
Mouldy fruit.  
All those dried and damaged flowers  
Empty seed heads  
Empty hours  
Of wondering just what to do  
With so much stuff  
To muddle through.  
Weed seeds scattered by the wind  
Nettles, brambles left untrimmed.  
Paths through woods obliterated.  
All this consumption  
Overrated.

Give thanks for those  
Who clear the mess,  
Recycle some  
And throw the rest.  
Who try to make the harvest fayre,  
Gathering here  
Sharing there.

And all those little micro beasts  
For whom the rotting  
Is a feast.



Christine

## PASTORAL LETTER

I've always been fond of fairs and fairgrounds. There is a big Fair in Hull, where I come from, and we lived quite close by when I was a child, so there were frequent visits. It was always magical to walk there through the back streets, then turn a corner and suddenly there was the wonderland of the fair, with its lights and noise and crowds. It was an old fashioned fair in those days, with a boxing booth, "wall of death" (motorcycle riders), food stalls with brandysnap and exotic pomegranates and coconuts, as well as all the traditional fairground rides.

So I generally try to visit St Giles' Fair, to link with childhood memories as well as to view the latest "thriller" rides. It's always an entertainment to see the rides and be amazed by what people find enjoyable. Mind you, I think fairs have got noisier over the years, or perhaps I've got older! Fairground food has changed too: fish, chips and mushy peas were a firm favourite in my childhood, whereas today there is everything from Caribbean to carvery, though I tend to stick to a hotdog!

I'm always struck by the huge variety of people who attend St Giles' Fair – dads in turbans with their little ones, lots of Muslim families, older people just having a wander, people in wheelchairs or mobility scooters, enjoying the atmosphere ... young teenagers showing off to their friends, smaller children with big smiles of delight ... It's great to see how this traditional event attracts people from all sections of society, a microcosm of our multi-cultural society.

Fairgrounds can be exciting, even magical places, yet behind the glitter, the reality may be rather different - cheap prizes, dirt, games made very difficult to win, hard lives of the fairground people, lived on the move. As an adult I know that, yet I still enjoy the magic of fairgrounds.

I may have quoted before some words of the late Eric Morecambe - "Life is not Hollywood, life is Cricklewood". I've lived in Cricklewood and it's a pretty unprepossessing place – definitely "reality", and removed from any fairground magic.

I enjoy that quote, but I don't entirely agree with it. Sometimes, I think, life needs to be Hollywood - not unrelenting work and ordinariness, but spiced with some lightness and fun, escapism if you will. Everyone will have their own "Hollywood" moments – visiting the fair will not be everyone's choice, but we all need such moments, I suggest.

Our faith teaches us that God has come into our reality, born in poverty, living amongst ordinary folk, dying a cruel death. God is with us in "Cricklewood" – an encouragement during life's day to day ordinariness, a source of strength during times of struggle.



# Wheatley United Reformed Church at Sandy Lane Farm Tiddington



## Real Harvest Festival Sunday 7th October from 10:30am

### Programme:

10:30 Welcome & Coffee  
11:00 Thanksgiving Service  
12:30 Lunch

All Gifts to: Asylum Welcome Foodbank  
and Refugee Council Therapeutic Service



To find out more about Wheatley United Reformed Church  
visit [wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://wheatleyurc.org.uk)

But God also invites us to celebration, to “Hollywood”, to the fairgrounds of life. Jesus shares times of fun and fellowship with his followers, attending meals and weddings, even facing accusations of gluttony and drunkenness because he does so (Luke 7:34), and he uses such moments as illustrations of the Kingdom of God. He invites his followers to that banquet which is the Kingdom – to life which is abundant and overflowing. And look who comes to the party: *“the King said to his servants ... ‘go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”* (Luke 22:10) Sounds rather like all those folk at the fairground to me!

Love and prayers, Pauline

### SCIENCE CORNER – ‘Magic Rice’ that needs no cooking

#### Jim Watson

According to the Indian Express, for the farmers of lower Assam, the 'magic' Boka Saul rice (*Oryza sativa*) has been a breakfast staple for centuries *“Just soak the rice in (cold) water for one hour, and it swells up like a charm. Mix it with curd, jaggery and banana, and it's ready to eat”*. In parts of lower Assam, especially during the hot season, farmers subsist almost entirely on this specific kind of indigenous rice. It is claimed to be highly nutritious with 10 % fibre and about 7% protein and allegedly *‘cools down the body!’* Those who know about this special variety, swear by it, and those who do not - well, the geographical indication (GI) tag, which has just been bestowed upon it by the Government of India's Intellectual Property India (IPI) body, should do the job.

### VISITOR

#### Ann Hardiman

A visitor to the church recently was Revd John Sturney who was minister here in the 1950s. He was looking at houses in the area as there was an idea of him moving back to the village to be nearer his daughter but he was finding the prices very high. He is now 87 and still takes services in Hungerford. Luckily the church was open as it was Table Tennis morning and we could welcome him!

## CHURCH CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER 2018.

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

Date	7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	21 <sup>st</sup> Oct	28 <sup>th</sup> Oct
<b>Service</b>	Harvest Service at Sandy Lane Farm	Morning Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service
<b>Time</b>	11 am	10 am	10 am	10 am
<b>Worship Leader</b>	Revd. Pauline Main	Richard Bainbridge	Revd. Colin Thompson	J. van Emden
<b>Vestry Elder</b>	Pauline Shelley	Catherine Harding	<b>Tom Goss</b>	Peter Devlin
<b>Welcomer</b>	Malcolm Benson	Moira Watson	<b>Charles Bennett</b>	Malcolm Benson
<b>Steward</b>	Bobbie Stormont	Christine Bainbridge	Sybil Beaton	Zena Knight
<b>Reader</b>	Bob Webster	Phyllis Williams	Pauline Shelley	Christine Bainbridge
<b>Prayers</b>	Richard Wood	Bob Webster	Liz Barry	Barbara Joiner
<b>Flowers</b>	Harvest on the Farm	Wendy Benson	Liz Barry	Ellen Webster

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 Sundays 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> October

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

Date	7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	21 <sup>st</sup> Oct	28 <sup>th</sup> Oct
<b>First Reading</b>	Job 1:1, 2:1-10	Job 23:1-9, 16-17	Job 38:1-7, (34-41)	Job 42:1-6, 10-17
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 8	Psalm 90:12-17	Psalm 91:9-16	Psalm 126
<b>New Testament</b>	Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12	Hebrews 4:12-16	Hebrews 5:1-10	Hebrews 7:23-28
<b>Gospel</b>	Mark 10:2-16	Mark 10:17-31	Mark 10:35-45	Mark 10:46-52

child, she is the one who speaks while Eli does not utter a word... She also sings, and some song it is: "A vigorous shout of triumph, enough to make Penninah and

Eli tremble" as Trevor Dennis remarks. It is indeed a song of battle fought and won and of triumph over the enemy, which is surprising in a woman's mouth. No more distress at being taunted by Penninah, no more reverence or veiled rebuke of Eli, she just sings, *addressing only God*. (1 Samuel. 2:1-10)

Hannah's story is a great example of a "simple woman" finding her voice, being empowered and no longer accepting to be bullied, demeaned or crushed by cultural expectations or by conforming rivals. She could be a great inspiration for many women around the world!

### HARVEST 2018

This year the financial proceeds from the Harvest Festival will go to the Refugee Council Therapeutic Service (which supports refugees and asylum seekers in this country who have been traumatised by what has happened in their lives). Also to keep the refugee "focus" the produce will go to Asylum Welcome's foodbank. Asylum Welcome say that the following food items are most needed at the moment –

- 1 litre bottles cooking oil
- uht milk
- 1 kg bags sugar
- 1 kg bags flour
- tinned fish in oil

**The Refugee Council Therapeutic Service** provides support and counselling to refugees arriving in the UK with no family, no home and no idea about what will happen in the future.

The Refugee Council's psychotherapists provide space to grieve loss, and help to those with overwhelming anxiety, post-traumatic stress and depression. This care will enable them to regain some of the self-belief they need to move on, and give a sense of hope for the future.

*Many thanks from the Care for the World Ministry Team*



sufficient.” ...Really?!!! Eli does not fare much better as his judgement is inept at best and lacks the most elementary kindness and compassion. In fact the moral high ground that he takes towards Hannah, is especially distasteful if you compare it to his lax attitude towards his two sons’ much worse and repeated transgressions. To her husband she gives no answer but to Eli, she has found her voice:

*“Not so, my lord, I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” (1 Samuel. 1:15-16)*

There is in Hannah’s dignified response two very interesting elements: first, in the most polite and subtle way, she rebukes Eli and his sons by saying she is not a “wicked woman” the very words that are used three times in Hebrew to describe Eli’s sons: The use of words and repetitions in the Bible are never haphazard coincidences as they are always used with a specific purpose. Secondly, in a great ironic twist, Eli, *who does not know what Hannah’s vow is*, asks God to grant her petition, therefore unwittingly spelling his own demise as it will be Hannah’s son, Samuel, who will bring about God’s judgment against Eli and his family. As Trevor Dennis remarks, “the narrator’s skill resides in showing Eli as a bit of a fool: he has mistaken Hannah’s distress for drunkenness, he has not spotted her veiled rebuke and has greatly contributed to the fulfilment of a vow which will bring about his own downfall.” The high priest of Shiloh has been duped by a mere woman!

This encounter with Eli marks the most dramatic turn in Hannah’s life, a turn which is however expressed by the narrator in the starkest of ways. No feeling, no comment, no judgement, just the facts as the Bible often describes the most important events:

*“Early the next morning they arose and worshipped before the LORD and went back to Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah and the LORD remembered her: Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, “because I asked the LORD for him.” (1 Samuel 1:19-20)*

Note that not only she is the one who names her son which was generally a male prerogative but when later she tells her husband that she will offer their son to God, she presents it as a fait accompli and does not ask for his permission which would have been the cultural norm. Hannah has not only found her voice but her personal authority too! And when she meets Eli again to dedicate the

## OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN OCTOBER 2018

1 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club
4 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Thursday	10.00 am to noon	Coffee morning, Church open
7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Sunday	2.30 to 4.30 pm 7.00 to 9.00 pm	Foodbank Afternoon tea in the Hall Pulse Group, Discussion, 7 Bell Lane
9 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Tuesday	1.00 pm	Lunch Club Two
14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Sunday	7.00 pm 7.30 pm	Pulse Group Trip to Bowling Alley Taize at 3 Barns Close, Holton
15 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club
16 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Tuesday	1.00 pm	Lunch Club
21 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Sunday	8.00 am	Morning Meditation & Breakfast
23 <sup>rd</sup> Oct	Tuesday	2.15 pm	St Mary’s Guild
28 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Sunday	7.30 pm	Taize at 3 Barns Close, Holton
29 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club

## WEEKLY EVENTS

(NB several activities are term-time only)

Brownies & Rainbows (Term time)	Monday 5.30 to 7.00 pm
Choir Around the Piano (Term Time)	Monday 7.30 to 9.00 pm
Wheatley Singers (Term Time)	Tuesday 7.10 to 9.00 pm
Pre-School Music Group (Term time)	Wednesday 9.30 am and 10.30 am
Guides (Term time)	Wednesday 7.00 to 8.30 pm
Prayers and Breakfast	Thursday 8.00 am
Mindfulness Sitting Group	Thursday 8.50 to 9.40 am
Table Tennis	Friday 10.00 am to 12 noon
Hymn Practice	Sunday 9.30 to 9.45 am

## BI-BLOG BY LAURENCE DEVLIN

The Bible is notoriously hard on women as it is a book, or rather a collection of books, shaped through and through by the patriarchal culture from which it sprang, a culture which silenced and oppressed women, at least in the public realm. However, if we look more closely, what emerges is a much more subtle picture as we encounter women who changed the course of Israel's history or whose influence was of paramount importance in the early Christian church. In the next few issues of this monthly bi-blog, I will therefore be looking in more detail at several of these women, some very well-known, some more obscure. So we start today with a woman who I think deserves to be better known: **Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel.**

Hannah appears at the very start of the book of 1 Samuel, a book which (along with 2 Samuel) is primarily concerned with the lives of three very important men, Samuel, Saul and of course David. Hannah's story begins with a pithy piece of information: the tragedy of her infertility:

*“There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite <sup>2</sup> He had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children”. (1 Samuel 1:1-2).*

Note that neither of the two women are introduced as individuals in their own right, but as “wives”. We are told nothing of their ancestry, character, physical traits or ethnic origin, just that one had fulfilled the essential role which was expected of women in that culture and the other had not. The barrenness of women is a recurring and highly significant motif in biblical narratives: remember Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and the unnamed wife of Manoah. All of them eventually bear sons so the reader may have high expectations for Hannah, but the beginning of the story is not encouraging:

*“Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh. On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give a portion to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters, but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because she was the one he loved, though the LORD had closed her womb. Her rival used to taunt her severely to hurt her, because the LORD had closed her womb. So,*

*it went on year by year; Therefore, Hannah wept and would not eat”.(1 Samuel 1: 3-7)*

We cannot miss here the strong echoes of the story of Jacob's two wives: Rachel, the barren wife who is loved and Leah, the fertile one who is not. For Hannah, the love of her husband is no compensation for the suffering and the bullying she endures year after year from her co-wife, Peninnah. Peninnah disappears very quickly from the narrative but she is the catalyst without whom Hannah's story would not exist, as it is Peninnah's cruelty that drives Hannah to make a desperate vow to God that will, when finally fulfilled, bring Samuel her long-awaited son to Shiloh as the servant of God, the one who will become one of Israel's greatest prophets: (1 Samuel 1:10-11)

*“As she was deeply distressed, she prayed to the LORD, wept bitterly and made this vow: “O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants and no razor shall touch his head.”*

This vow, as Trevor Dennis notes, “represents Hannah's first speech in the narrative and breaks her silence not just for the time of its utterance but for the rest of the story. After this, we will find her more vocal, indeed she will have far more to say than anyone else.<sup>1</sup>” However, Hannah's prayer receives no immediate answer from God. Clearly, this is NOT another annunciation type-scene that is so common in the Bible. In any case, God does not get the chance to answer as he is interrupted by Eli: Seeing her lips moving, the high priest of Shiloh thinks Hannah is drunk. His judgement appears quite rash and offensive, but we must remember that pilgrimages to holy places in Israel were one of the few occasions people had to drink wine freely and many got very merry and intoxicated. Rather prematurely, Eli thought that it was the case here.

These attenuating circumstances apart, here is yet another man showing great insensitivity towards Hannah. Earlier on, her husband Elkanah had said to her “Why are you crying, why are you not eating, why are you so upset? Am I not more to you than ten sons?” (1 Samuel 1.7b-8). This is an extraordinary crass thing to say to a woman who is profoundly distressed as she is unable to fulfil her longing for a child... The only thing he can find to say is “You have me, isn't that

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<sup>1</sup> Trevor Dennis, *Sarah laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament*, (SPCK, London, 1994)