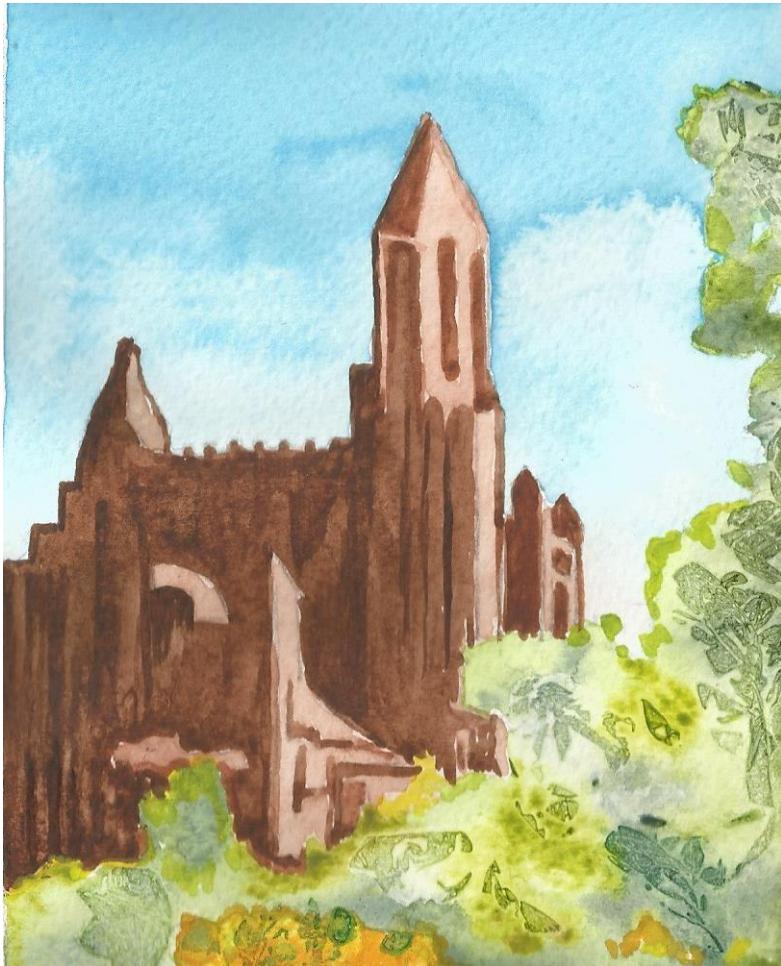


# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**NOVEMBER 2018**

## Quarr Abbey

Not sculpted now  
from quarried stone  
by fingers that fashion  
finely the curves and  
contours of beauty.

No! Basic in brick  
bluntly you stand  
mighty and massive  
lacking ornament  
to lighten your lines.

No sensuous angels here  
softening the sharp edges  
and points that would  
prick the conscience  
of all who enter.

Beneath angular bricks  
and weighty arches  
a pilgrim pauses back bent.  
What burden yours, carried  
in these sienna shadows?

Outside  
cadmium crocuses  
smile in sunshine,  
and fragments of azure  
fall  
through a filigree  
of branches.

The pilgrim,  
leaving clay to crumble,  
pockets a pebble.  
That small stone  
warm in the hand  
holds eternity.

## ***Covering Thoughts***

*On the final day of a recent painting weekend on the Isle of Wight I made a mini pilgrimage to Quarr Abbey, a Benedictine monastery about three miles along the coast from Ryde. The day was warm, the sky a wonderful cerulean blue and I was filled with anticipation. The feelings and emotions that the place aroused however were unexpected, and are perhaps best expressed in the poem opposite.*

*Reflecting afterwards I concluded that we must be prepared to accept disappointment in the very places where we seek encouragement, but in this acceptance comes the recognition that the divine can take us by surprise anywhere.*

*Christine.*



## **Pastoral Letter**

### **Quotes collected from 2016**

Religions are confluences of organic - cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and superhuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries. [Thomas Tweed].

No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can: give it as much care and attention as you would to the things you regard as most important. For it will be by those small things that you shall be judged [Gandhi].

When you find yourself, as I dare say you sometimes do, over-powered as it were by melancholy, the best way is to go out, and do something kind to somebody else [John Keble]

Tradition is not something you inherit – if you want tradition you must obtain it with great labour [T.S.Eliot]

We are closest to God in the darkness stumbling along blindly [Madeleine L'Engle]

That which truly counts in life can seldom be counted [Einstein]

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good things therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now.

Let me nor defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again [Stephen Grellet]

Question You don't seem bothered     Answer     Would it help? [from film *Bridge of Spies*]

When one does not have what one wants one must want what one has [Freud]

If everything in your house has a story it's a home [Jeanette Winterson]

[Following bombing] My home died but it remains my home. Since then I have lived in houses [Rabbi Lionel Blue]

The great religions are ships; poets the lifeboats. Every sane person I know has jumped overboard [Hafiz]

When the farmer has got his house, he may not be the richer but the poorer for it, and it be the house that has got him. [Henry Thoreau]

Tell them I've had a wonderful life [Wittgenstein] - used at Kit Arnold's funeral

To be able to enjoy one's past is to live twice [Martial, Epigrams, AD 86]

Stretching his hand up to reach the stars, too often man forgets the flowers at his feet [Jeremy Bentham]

While it is pleasing to be right it is more instructive to be wrong [Williams Gowers]

**Richard Bainbridge**

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## **Prayers**

**Please remember in your prayers** the members on Peter Devlin's pastoral list: Bobbie Stormont and Tom Goss, Sybil Beaton, Lynette and Richard Wood.

**We also ask you to pray for the members of the Maintenance Team:** Tony Barry, Malcolm Benson, Chris Shelley, Bob Webster



## Wessex Synod

The October-November edition of 'Sharing the Vision' is now available to download from our website [www.urcwessex.org.uk](http://www.urcwessex.org.uk)

It is called "[Sharing the Vision – October-November edition](#)" and is available in both Word and pdf formats. Links to both versions can be found in the scrolling news section or by clicking on the Newsletter icon.

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### **REFORM MAGAZINE Group Subscription**

It is time to renew subscriptions to REFORM, which is published 10 times per year and the annual subscription for 2018-19 is £28.50. The December/January issue is combined, likewise July/August.

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

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### **International Bible Reading Association**

Daily Bible Reading Notes are written by over 50 contributors from all over the world and from all walks of life and denominations. Themes for next year include Surprising Women of the Bible, Power of the Word, Music in the Bible and Struggles and Surprises. The price of a copy of the book is £10.50. If you would like to order a copy, please sign the list on the noticeboard or let Ann Hardiman know.

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## CHURCH CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER 2018

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

Date	4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	11 <sup>th</sup> Nov	18 <sup>th</sup> Nov	25 <sup>th</sup> Nov
Service	Morning Service with H.C.	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	Nigel Appleton	Rev. Colin Thompson
Vestry Elder	<b>Laurence Devlin</b>	Catherine Harding	<b>Robert Harding</b>	Moira Watson
Welcomer	<b>Pauline Shelley</b>	Charles Bennett	<b>Tom Goss</b>	Phyllis Williams
Steward	John Kidd	Barbara Joiner	Joan Kidd	Angela Holdaway
Reader	Bob Webster	Ann Bettess	Wendy Benson	Joel Rasmussen
Prayers	Ellen Webster	Christine Bainbridge	Malcolm Benson	Tom Goss
Flowers	Phyllis Williams	Tony Barry	Catherine Hughes	Barbara Joiner

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

Simple evening worship in the style of Taizé at 3 Barns Close at 7.30 pm on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November only this month.

### COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS **leaders may use other readings**

Date	4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	11 <sup>th</sup> Nov	18 <sup>th</sup> Nov	25 <sup>th</sup> Nov
First Reading	Deut 6: 1-9	1Kings 17: 8-16	Daniel 12: 1-3	Daniel 7: 9-10 and 13-14
Psalm	Psalm 119: 1-8	Psalm 146	Psalm 16	Psalm 93
New Testament	Hebrews 9: 11-14	Hebrews 9: 24-28	Hebrews 10: 11-14 and 19-25	Revelations 1: 4b-8
Gospel	Mark 12: 28-34	Mark 12: 38-44	Mark 13: 1-8	John 18: 33-37

## OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN NOVEMBER 2018

<i>4<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>11.30 am 2.30 to 4.30 pm 6.30 pm</i>	<i>Foodbank Church Meeting Afternoon tea in the Hall Pulse Group - Games in the Hall</i>
<i>5<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>2.00 to 4.00 pm</i>	<i>Not So Young Club</i>
<i>8<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>10.00 am to noon</i>	<i>Coffee morning, Church open</i>
<i>11<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>7.00 to 9.00pm 7.30 pm</i>	<i>Pulse Group, Discussion, 7 Bell Lane Taize at 3 Barns Close, Holton</i>
<i>13<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>1.00 pm</i>	<i>Lunch Club Two</i>
<i>18<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>8.00 am 6.30 pm</i>	<i>Morning Meditation &amp; Breakfast Pulse Group - Games in the Hall</i>
<i>19<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>2.00 to 4.00 pm</i>	<i>Not So Young Club</i>
<i>20<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>1.00 pm</i>	<i>Lunch Club</i>
<i>25<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>6.30 pm</i>	<i>Pulse Group, Discussion, 7 Bell Lane</i>
<i>27<sup>th</sup> Nov</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>2.15 pm</i>	<i>St Mary's Guild</i>

## 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</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 8.50 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>

## Bi-blog by Laurence Devlin

For the second instalment in this series on “Women of the Bible”, we will look at a woman mentioned in the New Testament and more specifically in Romans, one of the most important of Paul’s genuine letters. I am referring to **Phoebe**. As she is mentioned in only 2 verses (1&2) of chapter 16, you might legitimately wonder how we can get any significant information from such a restricted source. Well, surprisingly we can!

***Before we concentrate on Phoebe however, let me first say that she was only one of a number of women involved in various forms of leadership within Pauline communities: Some were itinerant leaders, like Prisca, who, along with her husband Aquila, travelled with Paul (1 Cor. 16:19) leading a church in their house in Ephesus as well as another one in Rome (Rom. 16:3). Other women are named as important leaders: Nympha, a house-church leader in the Lycus valley (Col. 4:15), Euodia and Syntyche, from Philippi, Lydia described in Acts 16 as a woman of considerable means as she traded in “imperial purple”, a highly-valued dye in the ancient world and Eunice and Lois, trainers of young converts, including Timothy, Paul’s protégé.***

And then there is the famous Junia whose identity and role has been one of the most hotly contested subjects in Pauline scholarship. Junia appears in verse 7 of Rom.16 where Paul writes: “*Andronicus and Junia, my relatives (= meaning Jewish, like him) who were in prison with me, prominent among the apostles and in Christ before me.”* The debate is centred around those 4 words “prominent among the apostles”. As the patriarchal slant gained increased influence within the early church in the years and decades following Paul’s death, many could not accept that a woman could have been - or could be - a fully-fledged apostle; It was alleged that Junia was actually a man whose name had been mis-spelt and was actually Junias! Others stated that “prominent among the apostles” did not mean that she was an apostle but that she was “remarkable in the judgement of the apostles” ... Amazing how a text can be twisted to mean what you want it to mean! In any case, neither of these refutations hold any water because first, the name Junia was a well-known female name in the Roman world, with many attestations, while what would have been the male version, Junias, is not found at all, anywhere! Secondly the words describing Andronicus and Junia as “prominent” or “outstanding” was a common way in Greek to describe someone with honour and therefore status among a group of people. So, let’s be clear once and for all: Junia was a woman

and an apostle and there were plenty of other women fulfilling leadership roles in the early church, whatever some commentators continue to recommend about enjoining silence upon women in church. They forget that one of Paul's greatest teachings was that the spiritual gifts of each and every Christian should be highly valued and nurtured.

That controversy put aside, let's now turn our attention to **Phoebe** proper. Paul writes in Romans 16: *"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well".* In spite of their brevity, we can infer quite a lot of information from these two verses: **First** her commendation by Paul to the recipients of the letter suggests that she is indeed the one who has brought the letter to Rome. This in itself is significant, because, as there was of course no postal system in the ancient world, being entrusted with important letters meant that the bearer was a trustworthy representative of the author. Only a woman of significance would have been given such an important task. It is also further confirmed by Paul's designation, "our sister" which places her at the heart of the Christian community.

**Secondly**, Phoebe is called a "diakonos" of the church of Cenchreae, the port-city of Corinth (like Pireus is the port-city of Athens). To translate it by "deaconess" (i.e. a non-ordained female worker, chiefly involved in the instruction of the very young or in charitable relief) is an anachronistic translation belonging to the later church. Paul routinely uses "diakonos" to describe his own ministry of the word (for ex. 1Cor.3:5 or 2Cor.3: 1-11) and as such, can be translated as "minister" or "deacon", both translations found in modern bibles. In fact, diakonos has a very wide meaning: it designates a person who hands out or facilitates the distribution of a benefit or of a service, so it can range from a simple helper to an officer commissioned by a superior for some particular task. If Phoebe is commended to the Roman converts as a "diakonos" of the church at Cenchreae" and Paul asks them to "help her in whatever she may require from you", it is quite likely that she was not simply a helper in her local community but more likely a minister or possibly a missionary of that church, in other words some sort of leader.

The **third** designation of Phoebe as “prostatís” reinforces that idea of a leadership role for Phoebe. Some commentators have dumbed down the importance of the word by translating the sentence as “she has been a good friend to many and to myself.” In fact, prostatís is much more than “a good friend” and should be accurately translated as “patron” or “benefactor”, in other words it probably describes a well-off woman who provided perhaps a household and other resources for the Pauline mission generally, and for the church in Corinth (or Cencheae) in particular.

From what precedes we can safely conclude that Phoebe was a Christian woman of considerable stature, one who shared responsibility for mission with Paul, possibly at times in an itinerant way. Indeed, from these two verses, along with other greetings addressed in other letters to Prisca, Euodia, Syntyche, Junia and others, emerges a picture which, according to Brendan Byrne<sup>1</sup>, “may only be the tip of an iceberg as far as the full extent of women’s ministry in the early period goes... The language of the greetings suggests great warmth, appreciation and even intimacy in the relationship with such female collaborators.” And he adds: “If later generations saw fit to curtail and even forbid the engagement of women in the apostolic mission, these texts suggest that it is not something which can be laid at the feet of Paul.”

In any case, whether or not it is Paul’s personal responsibility, it is clear that the real extent of women’s contributions in the early church has been obliterated. To remedy this, Dennis E. Smith and Michael E. Williams<sup>2</sup> suggest the following: “To tell Phoebe’s story in greater detail from the fragments left to us, would be one further step in the reconstruction of Christian beginnings, which would provide a new memory and a new imagination for contemporary women and men.” Well, I am very pleased to say that their suggestion has been taken up by the reputed English scholar, Paula Gooder<sup>3</sup> who very recently published a novel, simply entitled “Phoebe: A Story.” As I just mentioned, it is a work of fiction, but it is based on her extensive knowledge of the early Christian church and the life, activities and difficulties of these communities in Rome and Corinth come alive. I would highly recommend you to read it!

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<sup>1</sup> Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman*, (St Paul Publications, Brisbane), 1988

<sup>2</sup> Dennis E. Smith and Michael E. Williams, *New Testament Women*, in *The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible*, (Abingdon Press, Nashville), 1991

<sup>3</sup> Paula Gooder, *Phoebe: A Story*, (Hodder and Stoughton, London), 2018

**OXFORDSHIRE ARTWEEKS**  
**Nov 23th – 25<sup>th</sup> 11am – 5pm**

**Jackie Birchall**

Stained glass decorations and jewellery with sea glass  
Ambrose Cottage, Holton, OX33 1PS

**Christine Bainbridge**

Paintings, small original gifts and cards

There will be an opportunity to browse through and order a copy of the new book on Shotover produced by Shotover Wildlife. It is hard back, accessible to the non-specialist and has over 400 full colour illustrations.

**Drop in for refreshments and a chat and bring your friends.**

3, Barns Close, Holton, OX33 1QB

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 **Introducing Stepwise**

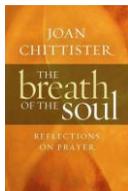
Stepwise is a new training initiative from the United Reformed Church to help all of us deepen and develop our discipleship. It is an integral part of Walking the Way, the URC's focus on whole-life discipleship and mission. There will be five learning "streams", focussing on community, leadership, worship, confidence in faith, and the first one, faith-filled life, which is just coming "on-stream".

Participants can sign up online, will join a local group, and will be supported by a mentor. For more details, speak to Pauline (Main), or look at the URC's website at <https://urc.org.uk/stepwise.html>

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## Book Share: The Breath of the Soul – Reflections on Prayer

*by Joan Chittester*



I am immensely grateful for this little book which I found while on retreat in the bookshop at Mucknell Abbey, an Anglican Benedictine order of monks and monastic women in Worcestershire (formerly Burford Priory).

These reflections on prayer are offered by Joan Chittester, herself a Benedictine nun, author, speaker and an international leader for peace and justice. The reflections are a continuing support, nourishment, surprise, challenge and comfort to me so I thought I'd like to share them with you.

I have used this book many times over the years, sometimes praying with one reflection each day and other times, staying with one reflection for many days. Returning again and again over time and reading a reflection again is such a joy. Feeling I have 'found' the piece of wisdom I needed the first time I read it, I am always surprised to find that I come to 'know' the same word, phrase or idea in a much deeper and often new way.

This small book does not teach a prayer form. Rather, as Joan says; '...it (the book) is a discussion of the attitudes that prepare us for prayer.....what we ourselves must bring to the discipline of prayer – whatever form it takes – in order to make prayer an authentic and real, a deep and profound part of our lives.' And some of the attitudes she reflects on are self-knowledge, enthusiasm for life, constancy, presence, vulnerability, blessing, purpose, simplicity, abandonment and many more.

Joan continues; "It (Prayer) is the beginning of a relationship with God who is closer to us than we are to ourselves..... It grows us into the fullness of ourselves, both spiritually and psychologically."

Each short chapter begins with a quote from Spiritual Elders from every tradition, followed by a reflection on their insights. Each chapter ends with a short prayer mantra that can be taken into the day and finally a Scripture passage from the Bible which illuminates the process of prayer. Joan encourages us to "let the book pour gently into your soul".

This little book has been an extraordinary gift. I am ‘walking’ with it again, and again it is taking me to new and deeper places and I hope it does for you too. It can be bought from Blackwells, online, for £8.40 or ordered through their shop .

**Bobbie Stormont**

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“True prayer is finding out who we are in God, finding the spacious place of the soul where we and God feel most at home”. (Richard Rhor - *Falling Upward*)

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**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:**

14<sup>th</sup> November 2018 is the deadline for the December 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.

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**Nature's Prayer Flags**



**Autumn Collage**





***High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE***

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