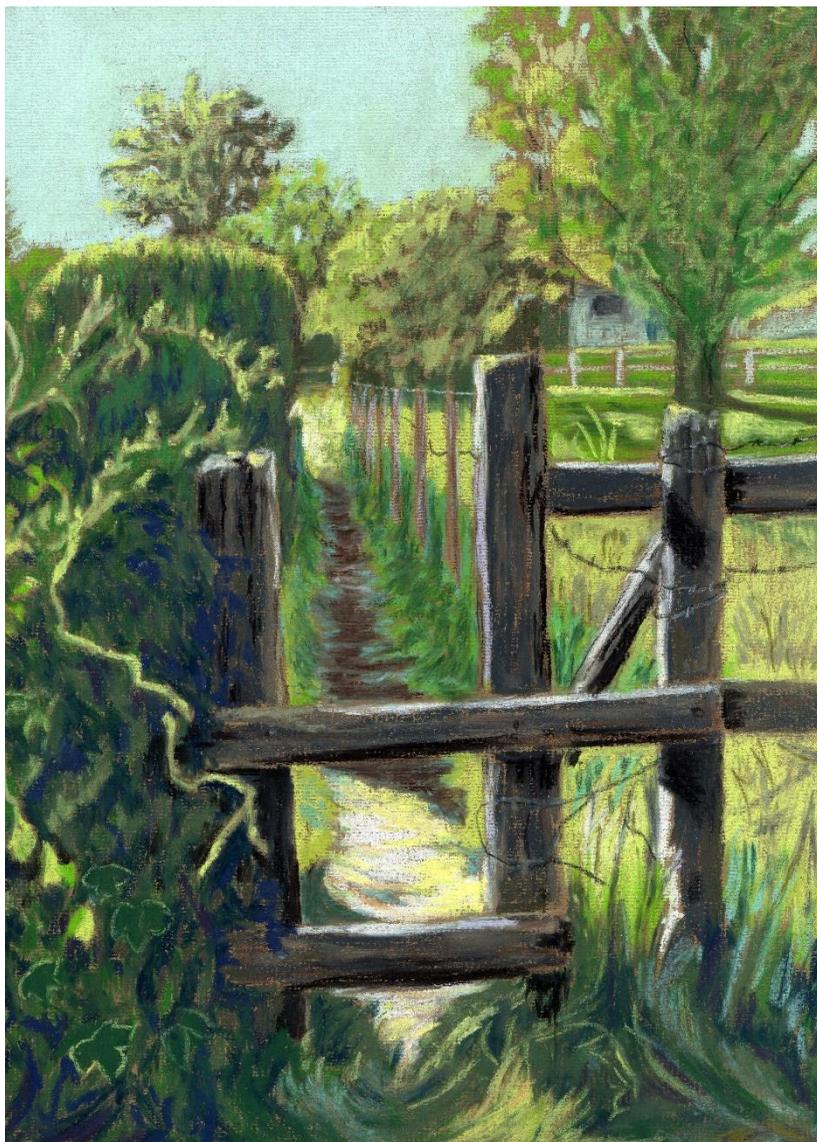


WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



August 2020

Covering Thoughts

Many years ago I was fascinated by the image of the kingdom of heaven which seemed so important in the teaching of Jesus. There was the debate about whether the kingdom was coming in the future or had already arrived. Then reading the kingdom parables led to reflections of what it was like, could it be recognized and even experienced? But then the term kingdom became less popular and some theologians suggested the alternative of kin-dom with an emphasis on the community of faith.

I have found it essential try to explore new images to describe crucial concepts and insights from that earlier time. One I find particularly evocative at present is the image of standing on the threshold. It began with the experience of an early morning walk from Holton. The footpath began in a dark scrubby little copse, muddy and with tree roots ready to trip the unsuspecting, but suddenly it opened out into an expansive field with a wide sky and distant hills. Even with familiarity it still takes my breath away and as I pause to take in the view my spirits lift.

It was my first threshold experience, but it did not end there. As the walk progressed there were repeated pauses and anticipation of moving to a new place, a different view, a changing atmosphere. There were times when one sense dominated over another – the smell of camomile, the sound of water, feet wet from the long grass. So now each walk has become a series of thresholds. Familiarity and novelty are held together.

The image of standing on the threshold brings me to a new understanding of what Jesus may have been saying. He implied that something new was emerging. It demanded complete attention, preparedness and openness to the unexpected, a recognition that each moment was not a repetition of what had gone before but pregnant with novelty. Seeing old things in new ways, and being observant, and poised ready to move, but holding still for that small moment of anticipation.

Christine

Pastoral Letter

Dear all

It's the traditional holiday season and yet it isn't. I grew up in a seaside resort (Clacton), where my father was the Congregational Minister. Every summer thousands of people came for a week or a fortnight and from Easter to September our church congregations grew so much that often extra seating had to be brought in. As children we spent hours on the beach, the pier and on the penny-slot machines in the amusement arcades (parents definitely not amused about that). But this has been a year like no other. Even though we can now go away, even abroad, many of us feel reluctant to do so. Even as mundane an activity as shopping is a bit of an obstacle course. You may have to queue. You sanitise your hands. You must wear a face-covering. Once inside you have to perform an elaborate dance to keep the required distance from other people (not always possible). It's extraordinary how so many of the things we did without thinking now make us nervous.

Will we come to value the mundane and the ordinary once we return to normality, supposing we do? I couldn't help noticing as I drove my mother the other day to see her first great-grandchild, that traffic seemed to have returned to pre-COVID levels. Have we been changed? Almost certainly. Will the human race change the way it lives? The jury's out on that.

I find myself thinking of the people who lived in my Otmoor village in times past. An old lady I met soon after moving here told me that until the 1950s no one had to go to Oxford more than once or twice a year. Everything they needed was to hand. A trip to the city by horse and cart was an adventure and a risk: all those people, the noise, the dirt, accidents on the way. They lived within the constraints imposed on them, though they were lucky to have unspoilt countryside on their doorstep. Many don't.

This year I have loved watching the seasonal appearance of butterflies- first the brimstones and the holly blues, then the orange-tips, then the gatekeepers, common blues, peacocks and red admirals. Nature has been flourishing in part because we have not been able to interfere so much. There's a holly tree in my garden which for the first time this year is covered in berries and promises a fine winter display. I love this tree because when I first came to live here in 1993 it was a tiny self-sown seedling. I wondered for a moment about pulling it up. I'm so glad I didn't. We flourish best when we are given the space to grow into our full potential. During these difficult months we have all felt frustration and

worry. Many have suffered heartache. We are right to voice these feelings. But we also need the grace to recognise and cherish the gifts that have come our way, unexpected and unlooked for, as little points of light amid the darkness.

With every blessing to you all,

Colin

~*~*~

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members in Tom Goss' pastoral list: Laurence & Peter Devlin, Colin Thompson & Hertha Thompson, John Kidd, Catherine & Robert Harding and Mark & Phyllis Williams.

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Pastoral Care Team: Ann Bettess, Jean Boxall, Angela & Rob Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Pauline Main and Frances Simpson.

~*~*~

Birthday Specials

I am sure many of our congregation have celebrated birthdays during lockdown. But here are 2 members whose special birthdays have been brought to my attention. They are - Hertha Thompson and Ann Hardiman.

Hertha was **97** on 17th July. This year she became a great grandmother for the first time and she and Colin saw her great granddaughter and Colin's great niece Florence on Hertha's actual special day. Congratulations Hertha.

Ann Hardiman will be celebrating her **80th** on 14th August. Ann, a Battle of Britain baby, would have liked to have gathered everyone together to celebrate with her but as she said, "We might have to wait till 2021!" We'll be there!

~*~*~

Another kind of Lockdown

Dearest W,

Yesterday you wet a hairbrush and opened your lips to clean your teeth, but I stopped you just in time. The day before you were struggling to put one soft slipper on and when I came to help we found two dinner forks inside. How often now have I found your small handbag by the front door bulging with a pair of shoes, two tooth brushes, yours and mine, and a tea towel.

This is not virus lockdown, but lockdown of meaning. Incomplete sentences that wander through many aspects of time and place. Some lady owns our house and needs to be placated before we go to bed. We need to go home, a place just occasionally identified as my Mum or my Dad or the children. These places are somewhere other than the home we live in every day.

Punctuating these thoughts is the constant metronome beat of two words: Oh dear! As you walk and sit, as you eat and drink, with every passing lost few minutes, Oh dear! Your face is now so frozen in an empty stare. But joy of joy when you meet a young child or a mother with a pram, when a dog crosses your path, your face lights up like sunshine, freeing itself of cloud and even some of the old phrases of mothering talk break free. So counter to the deadening beat of oh dear you can respond so unpredictably to the beat of song and dance.

Before the virus, you would reluctantly join a group which touched a deep place of rhythm. You might clap and tap your feet for minutes at a time and smile again and lift your head and shoulders, arms and legs, as at no other time. Release indeed of body if not of all your mind.

Most precious of all, oh dear one, are those two times of each day when you are for moments my true heart's beat of 60 years, my friend, my loved one once again.

By strange magic, whatever to come and whatever has been, when I wake you in the morning and when I tuck you in at night, you offer me a kiss and may well say "I love you" and open your arms to hug.

Why at these moments do you see me as I am, and I see you as you were and are still? It is a mystery rolled up in the warmth and safety of a bed - as if waking and sleeping are the moments of safety and lifelong assurance of love, present and undefeated by all the ravages of an encircling darkness.

Ever yours, R

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)

The DEC have just launched a 'Coronavirus Appeal' to raise funds to help the most vulnerable communities in the world fleeing from conflict and instability, who now face the deadly threat of Covid – 19.

The DEC Appeal aims to protect people in the world's five most fragile states; Yemen, Syria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, plus Afghanistan, the world's most fragile state in Asia, and the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. More information is available on the DEC website.

As a Church, we will, as usual with a DEC appeal, be sending £500 from our charitable giving funds. I would *normally* also receive anyone's personal donations that they wish to be added to this sum. However, with the situation we still find ourselves in, it will not be easy for me to co-ordinate personal donations. I would therefore suggest that if you wish to make a personal donation, please visit the DEC Appeal website, www.dec.org.uk where I am sure you will find donating quite straightforward.

Many thanks **Chris Shelley**

~ ~ ~

Commitment for Life



Following our announcement to support Zimbabwe during the coming year, the 'Care for the World' team held a very useful information-sharing Zoom meeting with the central URC Commitment For Life Team.

With their help, we have now reached out to other Zimbabwe-supporting Wessex Synod Churches, to explore ideas, sharing opportunities, before mapping out an appropriate way forward for these unusual times.

~ ~ ~

Bag a Bridge for Refugees!

Phyllis alerted us to this initiative by a group called “Refugee Tales” who organise annually, a walk in solidarity with refugees and detainees, worldwide. This year it was held on the 3rd to 5th of July and the theme was “Bridges”. We were invited to;

1. go for a walk
2. “bag a bridge” nearby
3. photograph it and
4. send it to the website for Refugee Tales where it could be added to a collective on-line display.

For the computer literate;

5. it might even get located on a world cyber map of all the bridges!

We managed stages 1, 2, 3 and possibly 4 (late entry!), but stage 5 proved a step too far for us mere mortals.



Anyway, here is proof of our walk(s) in support of refugees. This was the footbridge at Cuddington Mill, (Darkest) Buckinghamshire, just over the Oxfordshire border. The actual border can be found on Thame Old Bridge, (which

Bob and I had “bagged” earlier in the week), on a redundant stretch of road between St Mary’s Church, Thame and the “new” Thame by-pass.



Bridge over River Thame between Nether Winchendon and Cuddington, Bucks. It was built in 1945 - the year Bob was born.

If you want to see the wide variety of bridges that other folk managed to “bag”, go to - <https://www.refugeetales.org/thewalk2020>

Liz, Tony, Ellen & Bob

Common Lectionary Readings - August 2020

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	2 nd August	9 th August	16 th August	30 th August
First Reading	Isaiah 55: 1-5	1 Kings 19: 9-18	Isaiah 56: 1 & 6-8	Jeremiah 15: 15-21
Psalm	Psalm 145: 8-9 & 14-21	Psalm 85: 8-13	Psalm 67	Psalm 26: 1-8
New Testament	Romans 9: 1-5	Romans 10: 5-15	Romans 11: 1-2a & 9-32	Romans 12: 9-21
Gospel	Matthew 14: 13-21	Matthew 14: 22-33	Matthew 15: 10-20	Matthew 16: 21-28

2nd August: The gospel is not about spending time bargaining - it is about giving goods away.

9th August: The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth in the present moment [Thich Nhat Hanh].

16th August: John Hull tells his sighted readers 'these are images from your sighted world, and they have the effect of marginalizing my world'.

23rd August: Redemption is living on earth in a wholly new way [Bonhoeffer].

30th August: You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life or death to you [C.S.Lewis].

Richard B

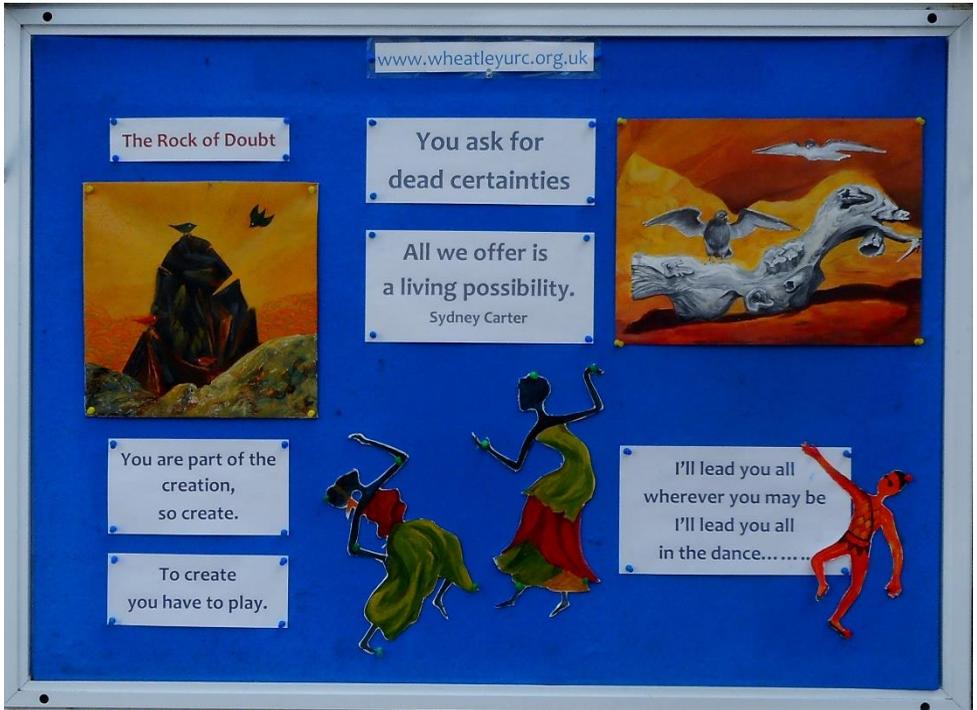
Zoom Services Rota for August

Dates	Worship leaders	Readers	Intercessors
2	Pauline Main (HC)	<i>Marston and</i>	<i>Summertown folks</i>
9	Richard Bainbridge	Moira Watson	Christine Bainbridge
16	Colin Thompson (HC)	Ellen Webster	Liz Barry
23	Pauline Main & Nigel Appleton	<i>Marston and</i>	<i>Summertown folks</i>
30	Cara Heafey	<i>Marston and</i>	<i>Summertown folks</i>

Zoom Services Rota for September

Dates	Worship leaders	Readers	Intercessors
6	Pauline Main (HC)	<i>Marston and</i>	<i>Summertown folks</i>
13	Richard Bainbridge	Phyllis Williams	Robert Harding
20	Colin Thompson (HC)	Malcolm Benson	Bobbie Stormont
26	Dr Shawn Henson	Barbara Joiner	Tom Goss

Our Current Noticeboard



Wayside Pulpit

Here is the latest edition of our outdoor Church Noticeboard from Christine. Through her contribution, often including some of her own original artwork, we hope to reach out to those passing by with art, poems and inspirational thoughts which often come from members of our community.

~*~

Deadlines

Wednesday 12th August 2020 is the deadline for the Annual Reports.

Wednesday 19th August 2020 is the deadline for the September Newsletter.

Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk . Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont.

Disclaimer

The Editors welcome letters, articles and announcements from individuals and organisations, but reserve the right to publish or not.

Lockdown Library

Books:

If Only they Didn't Speak English: Notes From Trumps America **by** Jon Sopel.

The Little Book of Being: Practices & Guidance For Uncovering Your Natural Awareness **by** Diana Winston.

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse: **by** Charlie Mackesy. The boy is full of questions, the mole greedy for cakes. The fox is mainly silent and wary because he has been hurt by life and the horse the biggest and gentlest thing they have ever met.

Captivity: **by** the Hungarian author Gyorgy Spiro. It's a novel about Jewish life in the first century and is incredibly detailed. One of the reviews says, 'it's a profound meditation on what Jewry meant and means and it's also a good story.'

Midnight's Children: **by** Salman Rushdie. True work of art. So descriptive.

Television/Film/Netflix/Podcasts

Unorthodox: 3 part series about a Jewish woman who flees NY to Berlin, from an arranged marriage (Netflix)

Mrs America: 9 part series relating the long-running passage of the US Equal Rights Amendment and the women involved (BBC2/Catch Up)

Selma: the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches involving Martin Luther King & John Lewis (Netflix)

RBG: A Netflix documentary about the USA Supreme Court Judge, **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**. She has an amazing life story and is a true inspiration. Well worth watching.

Summer with Greta: Podcast, delivered in about 11 short chapters outlining Greta Thunberg's last 12 months of global campaigning.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000kwcc>

Other:

Learn another language at www.duolingo.com – The Irish is going well.

Oxford OS Explorer: Witney & Woodstock – many lockdown walks made with this map and many hours of bedtime reading!

Arts:

With gallery closures, logging onto 'virtual'/on-line tours of exhibitions (e.g. 'Young Rembrandt' @ www.Ashmolean.org & the Nightwatch @ www.rijksmuseum.nl) & check out many good options @ [10 of the world's best virtual museum and art gallery tours ...www.theguardian.com › travel › mar › 10-of-the-world](http://www.theguardian.com/travel/mar/10-of-the-world-virtual-museum-and-art-gallery-tours).

Romeo and Juliet: "Live" streaming for the current production of the ballet from the Royal Opera House. A truly stunning performance of a fresh interpretation.

Two good reads by Allison Towner:

I have read two books during lockdown, very similar, one called *Ghost Cruiser HK33* and the other *The Sea Devil*. I found a mention of the first one, Ghost Cruiser, by H. J. Brennecke, in the newspaper, and discovered it was about a German ship in the 39-45 war. It was fitted out with guns, mines and torpedoes, but was made to look like a merchant ship from a neutral country, complete with appropriate flag, until near enough to sink an allied ship. It was interesting to appreciate their skill in maintaining their disguises, as they altered the ship's appearance after every allied ship which they sank, after they had rescued all those on board.

Mention was made of a similar ship in the first world war, and so I managed to find *The Sea Devil* by Sam Jefferson, which also hid it's real purpose - this time in the guise of a sailing ship, again taking on board all the sailors from the ship which had been attacked. Both of them were active in the Pacific and Indian oceans and did much damage there. This was an angle of both wars which I had never known before, as almost all the news and stories concentrate on the army and air force or areas where the allied fleets were defending Britain or the Mediterranean.

And one from Tony Barry:

At the beginning of lock-down I found myself reading "**The Last Tudor**" by **Philippa Gregory**, a strangely apt read, being a historical novel about how Elizabeth I, a quasi-protestant, (banished from court), kept the passionately protestant Grey sisters, Jane, Katherine and Mary, (contenders by birthright in the succession for the English throne), imprisoned in the Tower and at various country houses for the entirety of their young lives. Two died as prisoners and only the youngest, Mary, was eventually freed and survived to eke out her days in relative obscurity.

In Our Own Rooms

Blaise Pascal, French philosopher/scientist/mathematician and writer, allegedly said; “the sole cause of man’s unhappiness is that he cannot stay quietly in his room”. Whilst many of his contemporaries disputed this, it does give us pause for thought in our current situation, doesn’t it?

Alain de Botton, a contemporary French journalist, argues as follows; “another thing we can do in our own rooms is to return to travels we have already taken...”. How does this idea strike you as a partial remedy to whiling away the time in a moody thicket of an aimless meandering thought process?

Out with the old maps, travel guides, passepartouts and even dictionaries. Are you up for it?

Sybil



Debi’s Fruit Squares

Remember ‘Lockdown Baking’ in the July newsletter? We ran out of room for all our delicious recipes, so here are Debi’s fruit squares.

Ingredients:

225g butter plus a little extra for greasing	280g light brown sugar
140g cooking apples cored, peeled and chopped	175g plain flour
140g stoned dates chopped	1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
100g porridge oats	

Method:

1. Heat oven to 190C.170C fan/gas 5. Grease a 18cm square tin and line with baking parchment.
2. Tip the apples into a pan with 2 tbsp water. Bring to the boil and simmer on low heat for 5 mins until tender and slightly pulpy. Add the dates and 50g of the sugar and cook for a further 5 mins. Take off the heat and break the apples down with the back of a spoon until smooth and well mixed with the dates. set aside.
3. Gently melt the butter in a saucepan. Mix the flour, bicarb, oats and remaining sugar in a bowl. Pour in the melted butter and stir well until oats are coated.
4. Press half the mixture firmly into the tin, spread the apple mix on top and smooth over. Cover with the remaining oat mixture and press down. Bake for 30-35 mins until golden and firm. Cool in the tin before cutting into squares.

Sonnet 94

The Light of the Son!

The Holy, Pure, True Light left Heaven's Throne,
And shone upon the chosen maiden fair,
Became a Child, blessing a humble home,
Its love, its pain, its 'everyday' to share.
Soon some 'religious' could not bear that Light
Exposing every dark deed, loveless lie;
Seeking t'extinguish it with all their might,
Great darkness fell; the Light they'd cause to die;
THEY FAILED! Dazzling He shone, in darkest hell,
Then burst triumphant up, breaking death's chains!
Ever of God's great Love and Power to tell,
Releasing all who will, from many pains;
In their hearts, dancing in Life's colours bright,
Shining them Heaven-ward, robed in purest white!

David Herring

Holiday Humour

“We don’t laugh because we’re happy, we’re happy because we laugh”

William James

Ann Bettess contributed this quote to our morning Thought For the Day and Malcolm contributed the following for our newsletter. I thought they went well together.

The sermon this morning: 'Jesus Walks on the Water.' The sermon tonight: 'Searching for Jesus'

This evening at 7 PM there will be a hymn singing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice.

Pot-luck supper Sunday at 5:00 PM - prayer and medication to follow.

The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.

The Fasting and Prayer Conference includes meals.

Don't let worry kill you off, let the Church help.



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