

# **WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER**



**JANUARY 2021**

# Covering Thoughts

*Recently while lacking inspiration I was asked to link painting to language. Not having included words in my paintings before I reasoned that painting itself is a language and would try to communicate without them. I chose the word **energy**, and hoped to paint so energetically that the finished work would convey energy without the need for words. After mixing the colours I played lively uplifting music and worked in time to it, allowing the painting to emerge of its own accord without planning or intellectual thought. The experience was relaxing and reviving.*

*After the experience came reflection over a cup of coffee. What was begun had to be evaluated and completed. Quieter music this time and slower more considered brush strokes. It was some days before the work was finally finished to satisfaction. Whether it conveys the concept of energy to the viewer is another matter.*

*What did I learn from this? Firstly, to really enter into experience is important and that sometimes we have to create the right atmosphere or have the right attitude to benefit from it. Secondly that experience can be enriched and deepened by reflection. We can see this in the writings of mystics like Julian of Norwich whose insights deepened over time.*

*At the beginning of a new year when we look back and reflect on our experiences, what will feature in our memories of 2020, and what value will we ascribe to them all? We might consider listing all the things that have changed for the better or that we have learned to do differently so that we will not simply forget. In rural Oxfordshire we have escaped the extreme hardship that many have experienced, and may have a sense of deep gratitude.*

*With all this in mind these words attributed to Socrates might give us something to mull over in the New Year.*

***‘Those who are not contented with what they have, would not be contented with what they would like to have’.***

***Christine***

## Pastoral Letter

Some of us of a certain age can probably recall a Saturday evening BBCTV programme called 'That Was The Week That Was' also referred to as TW3 I think. We might well look back on 2020 as 'That Was The Year That Was'. Almost certainly a year we will never forget and it may become a useful aid, when in the future we are trying to remember when this or that event took place. BC might come to stand for 'Before Covid' and consequently AC for 'After Covid'.

In the light of this following quote, which I came across recently, I would like to suggest that we try to look back on 2020 as positively as we can manage. ***'In the New Year, never forget to thank your past years, because they enabled you to reach today. Without the stairs of the past, you cannot arrive at the future'*** Mehmet Murat Ildan.

So without wishing to gloss over or belittle the trials and tribulations of countless people across the world, I wonder if it might be a worthwhile exercise to spend some time trying to glean from our experiences of the past year, what we have learnt and will take with us into 2021? It might be related to a greater awareness of how uncertain and unpredictable the future seems, or perhaps an acknowledgement that changing the ways we were used to, isn't as difficult or threatening as we previously imagined. Perhaps some of our priorities have shifted. Perhaps we will continue to search out more of the quiet moments that 2020 has gifted us, as well as reflecting on how having to wait has provided some of those quiet moments. Whatever it might be for you, I hope you will find that these beautiful words of John O'Donohue help you, as you journey into 2021.

*At the end of the year.*

*The particular mind of the ocean  
Filling the coastline's longing  
With such brief harvest  
Of elegant, vanishing waves  
Is like the mind of time  
Opening the shapes of days.*

As this year draws to its end,  
We give thanks for the gifts it brought  
And how they became inlaid within  
Where neither time nor tide can touch them.

The days when the veil lifted  
And the soul could see delight;  
When a quiver caressed the heart  
In the sheer exuberance of being here.

Surprises that came awake  
In forgotten corners of old fields  
Where expectation seemed to have quenched.

The slow brooding times  
When all was awkward  
And the wave in the mind  
Pierced every sore with salt.

The darkened days that stopped  
The confidence of the dawn.

Days when beloved faces shone brighter  
With light from beyond themselves;  
And from the granite of some secret sorrow  
A stream of buried tears loosened.

We bless this year for all we learned,  
For all we loved and lost  
And for the quiet way it brought us  
Nearer our invisible destination.

**May 2021 bring us love and blessings. Robert.**

## **FINANCE**

### **Offertory Envelopes**

I have received our supply of offertory envelopes for 2021, although I appreciate that many of our congregation have changed to paying their offerings directly into the Church bank account during an extraordinary 2020. A big 'Thank You' to all who have been able to continue their financial support during the past ten months.

I don't know how many will want to go back to the envelope scheme, but that decision can be made at a later date when we can start getting back to our normal style of Sunday worship. However, if anyone would like their envelopes now, please let me know and I will arrange delivery or posting.

### **Charitable Giving**

During December, the Finance Ministry Team usually meet to decide which charities we will support with the remainder of our charitable giving for 2020. We have already paid out £1,500 during the year. We will be supporting the URC Commitment for Life with some of the funds as usual. It may not have been possible to 'meet' before you receive this newsletter and there are, of course, many charities which are struggling due to severely reduced income during 2020. If there are any charities which mean something special to you, let me know and they can be considered for support from our 2020 charitable giving.

For 2021, we will continue to support the Falcon School Project in Zimbabwe as part of our charitable giving. There are more details about this exciting and worthwhile project on pages 6 and 11 of this Newsletter.

**Chris Shelley**

## CARE FOR THE WORLD

**The Care for the World team** are delighted to hear that the roof is now in place , before the rains, at the Falcon School, in Harare. We look forward to cementing (no pun intended!) our relationship with them in the New Year, and being able to assist with the next phases of their school building.



FALCON JUNIOR SCHOOL – ROOF NOW IN PLACE

Following the last report we have clarified Falcon development/building priorities going into the first part of next year with Lauren (Elder in St Andrew’s URC Bournemouth ) and Wilbert.

These range from solar panels, classroom equipment, teachers 'cottage' with kitchen etc. but the specific work programme is quite flexible and dynamic and cost of specific items (eg. solar panels) could be beyond our 'donation' capability in the time required.

As a result, we are proposing not to elect specific items for our fund raising efforts but just highlight the range of items which are a priority during a certain time period ( e.g. 'first quarter/half of 2021).

Regarding financial clarity, at the end of October they agreed to our suggested procedures (with Chris's input) in keeping us informed/updated of progress and providing receipts...

... so now we have agreed to move forward with the opening of an account to hold donations prior to a focused push to raise awareness and funds in the new year.

It feels as if we are now in a position to confirm our intentions with them, and prepare to arrange for funds to be paid via the Falcon project account c/o SACB

**Rob Holdaway and Liz Barry**

## **WHEATLEY REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP**

Wheatley Refugee Support Group (WRSG) has been actively organising events and raising funds for the past couple of years. We have been encouraged by the goodwill and support of the community in helping us raise awareness of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers.

In 2019, we invited refugees and asylum seekers from Oxford to share their skills and culture, enabling us to appreciate and enjoy their languages, food and art. These occasions included open meetings addressed and supported by groups including Asylum Welcome, Sanctuary Housing and Refugee Resource. Using the Merry Bells, WRSG arranged for a refugee women's group to make traditional meals for a 2nd edition of their "Come to Our Table" recipe booklet. Local families, using some of these recipes, hosted over 60 people including some refugees from Oxford, raising over £850 for Refugee Resource and Asylum Welcome.

We are very aware of the continuing crises facing refugees and asylum seekers, especially with current Covid restrictions. According to UNHCR 79.5 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide, with 40% being children. Even for the 1% of refugees who have reached the UK there are hardships, while the abandonment of safe legal routes means more hazardous journeys and exploitation.

We have set up a number of sub-groups and hope we can make a difference even in the current situation:

- Advocacy and Campaigning;
- Event Planning and Communication;
- Practical Support.

If you would like more information or are interested in joining any of these groups, please contact us at [wheatleyrefugeegroup@gmail.com](mailto:wheatleyrefugeegroup@gmail.com)

**Nick on behalf of Wheatley Refugee Support Group**



## ZOOM SERVICES ROTA FOR January

| Dates | Worship leaders | Readers                         | Intercessors   |
|-------|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 3     | Colin           | Robert Harding                  | Malcolm Benson |
| 10    | Richard         | Rob Holdaway                    | Tom Goss       |
| 17    | Pauline         | <i>Summertown &amp; Marston</i> |                |
| 24    | Laurence        | Chris Shelley                   | Barbara Joiner |
| 31    | Pauline         | <i>Summertown &amp; Marston</i> |                |

### My recent virtual journey/ story

Some of you may remember being interviewed by me for a dissertation at the University of Nottingham [2016] entitled 'What is the value of congregational studies for contemporary church history and historical theology? A congregational study of a village nonconformist church will provide an exemplar'. I took my attachment to congregational studies to the Quakers and have just completed a thesis entitled 'An exploration of British Quaker Life Stories/Faith Journeys: "Performative Belief" in a place of belonging'. This has been accepted by the University of Birmingham [2020] with some minor corrections. I am now off to study Buddhism at the University of South Wales. I intend to undertake a dissertation on the way people are attracted to Buddhism so if you know such people, I would love to interview them. The net is wide and with my interest in performative belief this would include people who read Zen meditation books and even people who have a Buddha in their gardens or house. I am happy to talk about my journey and explain further.

**Richard**

# COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS for JANUARY 2021

**Note: leaders may choose to use other readings**

| Date          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan     | 10 <sup>th</sup> Jan | 17 <sup>th</sup> Jan     | 24 <sup>th</sup> Jan | 31 <sup>st</sup> Jan  |
|---------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| First Reading | Isaiah 60: 1-6          | Genesis 1: 1-5       | 1 Samuel 3: 1-10         | Jonah 3: 1-5 & 10    | Deuteronomy 18: 15-20 |
| Psalm         | Psalm 72: 1-7 and 10-14 | Psalm 29             | Psalm 139: 1-6 and 13-18 | Psalm 62: 5-12       | Psalm 111             |
| New Testament | Ephesians 3: 1-12       | Acts 19: 10: 1-7     | Corinthians 6: 12-20     | Corinthians 7: 29-31 | Corinthians 8: 1-33   |
| Gospel        | Matthew 2: 1-12         | Mark 1: 4-11         | John 1: 43-51            | Mark 1: 14-20        | Mark 1: 21-28         |

Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> On seeing a baby, most of us, with the honourable exception of grandparents, do not kneel down and pay homage. But that is why these men came all this way. I like to think that they were changed by the experience.[Rosalind Brown]

Jan 10<sup>th</sup> Grant that this day and every day, we may keep our shock of wonder at each new beauty that comes upon us [Kathy Keay]

Jan 17<sup>th</sup> I must lie down where all the ladders start. In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart [W.B.Yeats]

Jan 24<sup>th</sup> To bear new life or learn to love is an exacting joy; the whole self must waken ; you cannot predict the way [Anne Ridler]

Jan 31<sup>st</sup> Hope is a dimension of the spirit. It is not outside us, but within us. When you lose it you must seek it again within yourself and in people around you – not in objects or even in events. [Vaclav Havel]

**Richard Bainbridge**

## **Commitment for Life.**

### **An update from Zimbabwe.**

At Wheatley URC we have recently changed our Commitment for Life focus to Zimbabwe. We will be concentrating our attention on The Falcon School near Harare, but much other work continues. The following is an abbreviated version of a recent update we received.

The pandemic has had a similar effect in Zimbabwe as in the UK, with lockdown restrictions hitting the poorest the hardest, with struggling social services, a deteriorating economy and the effects of climate change and drought. What follows is a brief case study from one village.

In **Chingamuka Village** 18 households have benefitted from a community garden project. A Christian Aid partner 'Community Technology Development Organisation' has provided training for smallholder farmers. The training includes business skills, accessing good quality seed, profitable vegetable production, soil, water and pest management, and good storage of the harvest.

They have also had help installing solar power meaning they no longer have to carry buckets of water over a long distance but can pump water up to the garden.

This year's harvest has provided a better income due to new crops and better watering. The butternut crop has been especially successful as it is very nutritious for families but also fetches a good price at the market. One member of the garden group, Mrs Muronda, sold 50kg of butternut squash and earned \$200 which helped a lot with their family.

The update ended: **Thank you for your support through Commitment for Life, which has helped families to have food and income security through lockdown.**

**Robert Harding** on behalf of Care for the World.

## **Prayers**

Please remember in your prayers the members on Liz Barry's Pastoral List: Edna Ackroyd, Sybil Beaton, Ann Hardiman, Bev Paton and Family, Frances Simpson, Annette Wright, Ann Wild.

## **Deadline for the February Edition**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 is the deadline for the February Newsletter Please send copy to [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk). Paper copy can be given to Bobbie or Debi.

## **Disclaimer**

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

## **Cogwheel II - Youth and Families Project**

### ***Progress***

It's been obvious to us all that this project could not go ahead as quickly as we hoped due to the pandemic. But we are now much more hopeful, and are currently planning to advertise in March. Why March? Because it would be wonderful to have someone in post in the early summer so that he or she could participate in the August Holiday Club. It is the major children and youth event of the year in the area, and would allow the person to get to know many parents, volunteers, and the children and young people themselves.

### ***Funding the Project.***

We've sent a Pledge Form with this newsletter. If you are able to help, please would you return the form to our Treasurer, Chris Shelley, or leave it in the church letterbox, **by the end of January.**

Thank you so much for your support.

***Mark Williams on behalf of the Project Team***

## Reflections on Covid

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree  
I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea.  
I won't go down to the sea again, I won't go out at all.  
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from Kitchen to the hall.

There's a green eyed yellow monster to the north of Kathmandu  
But I won't be seeing him just yet, and nor I think will you.  
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay  
I'll make my bit of supper and eat it on a tray.

I shall not speed my bonny boat across the sea to Skye  
Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.  
About the woodland just right now, I am not free to go  
To see the Keep Out posters or the cherry hung with snow

And no, I won't be travelling much, within the realms of gold  
Or get to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.  
Give me your hands, I shan't request, albeit we are friends  
Nor come within a mile of you, until this freak show ends





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