

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**February 2021**

# Covering Thoughts

*One of the most popular places for people to exercise in Wheatley is the lovely avenue of trees which runs down from the top of Shotover. Most of the undergrowth has been cleared giving stunning views over the village and on to the Chilterns beyond. This clearance has revealed an old chestnut tree on the village side of the avenue, out of line with the rest of the trees. Most of it has been dead for many years. No bark remains and the knobs and undulations of its long history gleam in the light. It has been called the blanket tree because it appears as if there is a fold of blanket hanging from one of the dead branches.*

*Of all the trees in the avenue it is this one that I look out for each time I am there. It is far more fascinating than all the others despite its lack of leaves and broken branches. Is it the last remaining tree of a previous line of chestnut trees that formed an earlier avenue? That is a question not easily answered but I constantly ponder on what can be learned from it.*

*It is evident that even after death when this tree has been stripped of its bark and damaged by the elements it still stands as an inspiration, uniquely beautiful and more impressive than the younger, living trees. Its strength will survive its death for years to come, and be a focus for people to wonder at.*

*If such a tree has the power to inspire long after it's death how much more can be claimed for the lasting influence of a person? It is consoling to reflect that age and death itself do not destroy the inner beauty of a person. Instead they may reveal values and graces which will be remembered and be a continuing inspiration in the lives of those who survive them. Birago Diop in his poem *Breaths* writes of the presence of the ancestors in this way:*

*The dead are not gone for ever.  
They are in the paling shadows,  
They are in the rustling tree,  
In the murmuring wood,  
In the flowing water,  
In the still water,  
In the lonely place, in the crowd:  
The dead are not dead.*

Christine



# Pastoral Letter

## **“All shall be well”?**

A few years ago now, I led a study day for the Summertown-Wolvercote churches on Julian of Norwich. Julian, as you are probably aware, was a 14<sup>th</sup> century anchoress – someone dedicated to prayer and reflection and living a solitary life in a cell attached to a church. Julian’s life and times may seem a world away from our own, yet her writings have brought comfort and inspiration to many, and we might ask “Why?”.

*‘All shall be well’* says Julian, in perhaps her most famous phrase, words that can seem blindly optimistic, typical of someone isolated from the realities of the world. But Julian was not as isolated as might first appear. She lived in harsh times – the nation was involved in a European war costing lives as well as money. Life was cheap and the Black Death was an ever-present threat. Julian herself suffered an agonising illness from which she almost died, and out of which arose her visions, on which she meditated for the rest of her life. Julian would have been aware of what was happening in the world: an anchoress was expected to offer guidance and help to any who came to her cell window, so it is likely that she was well-known in that busy commercial city, listening to many people’s troubles.

Julian wrestles with all this. How can all be “well”, she asks, when there is so much evil and suffering in the world? And like so many before and since, she arrives at no definite answers. But what sustains Julian – and those who find inspiration in her writings – is her understanding of the love of God, a love which encompasses everything, and which holds her fast.

She sees in her hand a “little thing, the size of a hazel-nut”, which encapsulates “all that is made”. The little ball – our earth? the universe? – seems so tiny and insignificant, but it is safe and secure, because it is held, not just in Julian’s hand, but in God’s hand. God made it, God cares for it, God sustains it. Held in that assurance, all can indeed be well.

Julian’s visions centered on Christ on the Cross: *There were times when I wanted to look away from the cross, but I dared not. For I knew that while I gazed on the cross I was safe and sound. ...* As we move into Lent, we also reflect on Christ’s suffering and death and how they relate to our own lives and the wider situation of our world, perhaps setting them in the context of Immanuel, God with us in all the pains and joys of this world.

When we look around the world and see the global pandemic, political division, ecological challenge and so much suffering, perhaps our times and Julian's are not so different after all. May we find that same assurance Julian had, that in all of this we are held in God's love.

Life, emptied of all meaning,  
drained out in bleak distress,  
can share in broken silence  
our deepest emptiness;

And love that freely entered  
the pit of life's despair,  
can name our hidden darkness  
and suffer with us there.

Christ, in our darkness risen,  
help all who long for light  
to hold the hand of promise,  
and walk into the night. *(Brian Wren)*

Every blessing, Pauline *Rev Pauline Main, Minister*

~ ~ ~

## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers** the members in Laurence Devlin's pastoral list: Liz & Tony Barry, Wendy & Malcolm Benson, Ann & Roger Bettess, Pat Simpson, Allison & Colin Towner, Bobbie Stormont & Tom Goss, Moira & Jim Watson and Phyllis & Mark Williams.

**Also remember members of the Maintenance Ministry Team** Tony Barry, Malcolm Benson, Chris Shelley and Bob Webster.

~ ~ ~

# Lockdown Walks

Who would have guessed that we would once again be so grateful to be allowed out for a walk! This time round the season is different and so the conditions and nature we encounter are contrasting. However, there are still beautiful and interesting sights to see. These are just a few photos of things Keith and I have seen.



Taken on Shotover during our brief dusting of snow.



I wonder where all the others end up!



A fairy house.

Please share any photos you may have [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk)

## Zena Knight

This tribute to Zena was read at her funeral and it was thought appropriate that it be shared with friends who were unable to attend via Zoom.

Zena was born – Zena Mary Court - on the 1st September 1942 at Elms Gardens in Wembley. She was the only child of George Court, an engineer, and his wife Nell. In those early years, she regularly saw her cousins Valerie and Vivienne East, who lived just a few miles away in Enfield. During her childhood, the family also lived in Harrow on the Hill, where she went to the County Grammar School and then Hemel Hempstead. She later studied for an Open University degree.

In the early 1970s, Zena worked as a cataloguer at Watford College. Later in the decade, she briefly moved to Oxford when she took a job in library support services at the County Headquarters in Holton. She went on to make her home in the village of Tiddington, where she was to spend the rest of her life. Although she had left home in 1975, family meant a lot to her. She had a close relationship with her dad and made sure his 80th and 90th birthday parties were celebrated well.

Zena met her husband Geoff Knight at Badminton Club and they married at Wheatley United Reformed Church on 1st March 1980, followed by a reception back at Tiddington Village Hall.

It was Geoff who introduced Zena to camping and later caravanning, and the couple enjoyed travelling to sites all over the country including Kent, Cornwall and Stratford-Upon-Avon. They often met up with cousin Vivienne and her husband Derek or visited Ferry Meadows in Peterborough to spend time with cousin Valerie and her family. This would include evenings at the Shakespeare Open Air Theatre at Toleshorpe Hall, near Stamford. On a recent visit, Zena invited her family to afternoon tea in her caravan at Deeping St James in Lincolnshire.

Zena and Geoff shared their home with their dog Ky and then later, after Ky died, with Lucy, a springer spaniel. Lucy proved to be a great comfort to Zena after Geoff's death. He died on 16th January, 1996. This was a very difficult period for her.

Despite this tragedy, Zena continued to be a pillar of her community and clearly loved being part of life in Tiddington. Among her many roles, she was secretary and president of Tiddington WI and was a parish councillor and clerk to the Parish Council as well as helping to organise the Millennium celebrations in the village,

which involved raising money to build a children's play area. A keen watercolour artist, Zena decided to share her passion for drawing and painting by starting up an art class in the village hall. She was also editor of the local village magazine for a number of years, giving it up only when her father's health began to deteriorate.

Zena's link to the URC in Wheatley started when she and Geoff were married here, by Charles Brock in 1980. Her faith, she said, was a simple one (she remarked once that she wasn't always sure what the sermons were getting at). But she also said that her faith was important to her even at times in her life when she didn't belong to any particular church. Once she joined the URC, church became an important part of her life, and she became an important part of this community too.

She was a wonderful support in so many ways. As an ex-Parish Clerk she was a hugely valuable member of the Communications Team – an excellent proof reader for the church magazine, and writer of the regular items for the Wheatley Parish News on behalf of the church. She knew from her experience in Tiddington how important it was to communicate what was happening beyond the bounds of those 'on the inside'. Most recently, she was on the Steering Group for the Church's programme to refurbish the hall and rebuild the meeting rooms. Again, she drew on her experience of where there might be funds we could apply for....it proved invaluable for our plans. The church here has a Pastoral Care team, and she was very supportive of that too – helping out at the Sunday Teas when needed, and bringing friends from Tiddington who had no transport. One of the friendships with a member of the team was cemented when she had a hip operation and needed someone to live in the house and help her over the first few days after leaving hospital. It proved a happy time for them both. Then, when that same friend gave up driving, Zena would do the driving so they might enjoy outings together – including theatre and concerts.

Her enthusiasm did not stop at the *local* church. After Geoff died, Zena had joined the United Reformed Church Caravan Club Fellowship, and was the secretary for several years. Her dog Lucy would be by her side at all of the rallies she attended. Zena was faithful in everything she did - yes, a really trusted administrator, but also putting her skills to work for others - a willing helper, a faithful cousin and good friend. She will be missed by so many.

# When... Then...

Lord God, I know that You love me!...

When I consider  
The works of Your hands,  
Then I am amazed!

When I meditate  
On Your greatness,  
Then I am humbled.

When I think of  
The suffering of Your Beloved Son,  
Then I weep.

When I sing of  
The Glory of His Resurrection,  
Then I rejoice!

When I remember  
His undying love for me,  
Then I am thankful.

When I feel  
The shared love of His people,  
Then I am blessed.

But when I sense, just a little,  
The black hole He willingly entered  
For us all,  
Our otherwise hopeless destiny,  
Then words cannot tell,  
And I bow the knee  
To Him: Infinite Love, Grace, Mercy,  
Forgiveness, Kindness and Understanding,  
And I whisper...

'Lord, I love You.'

David Herring

# New Year Resolutions

A tradition common in the western world in which a person resolves to continue good practices, change an undesired trait or behaviour, accomplish a personal goal, or otherwise improve their life at the start of a new year. How many of us have made a resolution? How many have kept one for a whole year?

Peter Devlin and Bobbie have both commented on New Year resolutions and wonder what resolutions people will make for 2021 in the light of Covid 19. Maybe positive things that, but for Covid 19, they might not have done. For some it might mean appreciating friends more or changing the way they care for the natural world. Bobbie came across these ideas on the internet which some people may be inspired by.

## New Year's Resolutions based on Spiritual Practices

1. I will live in the [present moment](#). I will not obsess about the past or worry about the future.
2. I will cultivate the art of making [connections](#). I will pay [attention](#) to how my life is intimately related to all life on the planet.
3. I will be thankful for all the blessings in my life. I will spell out my days with a grammar of [gratitude](#).
4. I will practise [hospitality](#) in a world where too often strangers are feared, enemies are hated, and the "other" is shunned. I will welcome guests and alien ideas with graciousness.
5. I will seek liberty and [justice](#) for all. I will work for a free and a fair world.
6. I will add to the planet's fund of goodwill by practising little acts of [kindness](#), brief words of encouragement, and manifold expressions of courtesy.
7. I will cultivate the skill of deep [listening](#). I will remember that all things in the world want to be heard, as do the many voices inside me.

8. I will practise [reverence](#) for life by seeing the sacred in, with, and under all things of the world.

9. I will give up trying to hide, deny, or escape from my imperfections. I will listen to what my [shadow](#) side has to say to me.

10. I will be willing to learn from the spiritual [teachers](#) all around me, however unlikely or unlike me they may be.

From Spirituality and Practice – resources for spiritual journeys

[www.spiritualityandpractice.com](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com)

What are your views on resolutions? Have you made any for the coming year? Did Covid 19 have any influence on the kind of resolutions you have made? All resolution thoughts welcomed for next month's edition to [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk)

Debi

~ ~ ~

## Thank you for the Christmas Cards...

We are deeply grateful for the many cards we have received from friends in Wheatley. Unfortunately for many reasons this year we have not sent out cards. Hopefully in the New Year we shall be able to make more personal contact with all of you to express our gratitude.

All blessings and peace for the New Year from Wendy & Robert Bailey.

~ ~ ~

# Birthday Wishes

A very happy 90<sup>th</sup> birthday to John Kidd for 27<sup>th</sup> February. We look forward to sharing a cake with him to celebrate when we are able.

~\*~

## COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS for February 2021

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

Date	7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	14 <sup>th</sup> Feb	21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	28 <sup>th</sup> Feb
<b>First Reading</b>	Isaiah 40: 21-31	2 Kings 2: 1-12	Genesis 9: 8-17	Genesis 17: 1-7 and 15-16
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 147: 1-11 and 20c	Psalm 50: 1-6	Psalm 25: 1-10	Psalm 22: 23-31
<b>New Testament</b>	1 Corinthians 9: 16-23	2 Corinthians 4: 3-6	1 Peter 3: 18-22	Romans 4: 13-25
<b>Gospel</b>	Mark 1: 29-39	Mark 9: 2-9	Mark 1: 9-15	Mark 8: 31-38

**Feb 7<sup>th</sup>** Contemplation is not a matter of watching, but of being watched, and he is there watching you. And if he is watching you, he loves you. And in loving you, he gives what you are looking for; himself [Carlo Carretto].

**Feb 14<sup>th</sup>** I dream against the rough climb still to come, against expectation, against pessimism and despair. I dream, I dream of the clear panorama of the vision of light right at the top of the mountain [Simon Bailey].

**Feb 21<sup>st</sup>** The desert waits, ready for those who come, who come obedient to the Spirit's leading; or who are driven, because they will not come any other way [Ruth Burgess].

**Feb 28<sup>th</sup>** To be a saint does not mean never to sin. It means to start again with humility and joy after each fall [Dom Helder Camara].

**Richard B**

# Many thanks .....

For over 10 years Jim Watson has been faithfully and skilfully co-editing our church newsletter. The January 2021 issue was Jim's last as he has decided to step down from this role within our community. I for one have been extremely grateful for all his help since I took over this role from Barbara Joiner some years ago. No question, and I had many, has ever been too much trouble for Jim to answer and we have had a few laughs along the way. On behalf of the Communications Ministry Team I want to thank Jim for his longstanding service and commitment to this role.

We welcome Debi Kidd as new co-editor to the Communications Team and she has begun her editing role with this month's newsletter. Moira Watson, with her excellent skills at checking text for errors, is still part of the Communications team and she and Jim will still be the first port of call to receive the newsletters from the printers for the foreseeable future.

Bobbie

~ ~ ~

## Zoom Services Rota for February

<b>Date</b>	<b>Worship leaders</b>	<b>Readers</b>	<b>Intecessors</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>	Pauline	Summertown & Marston	
<b>14<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>	Richard	Pauline S.	Ellen
<b>21<sup>st</sup> Feb</b>	Colin	Wendy	Ann B.
<b>28<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>	Cara	Summertown & Marston	

~ ~ ~

# 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, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021 is the deadline for the March Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont or Debi Kidd.

## Disclaimer

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

~ ~ ~







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

**CHURCH CONTACTS**

*Minister: Revd. Pauline Main 01865 513581  
email: [minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk)*

*Associate Minister: Revd. Dr Colin Thompson  
email: [colin.thompson@stcatz.ox.ac.uk](mailto:colin.thompson@stcatz.ox.ac.uk)*

*Church Secretary: Phyllis Williams  
email: [secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk)*

*Church website: [www.wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://www.wheatleyurc.org.uk)*