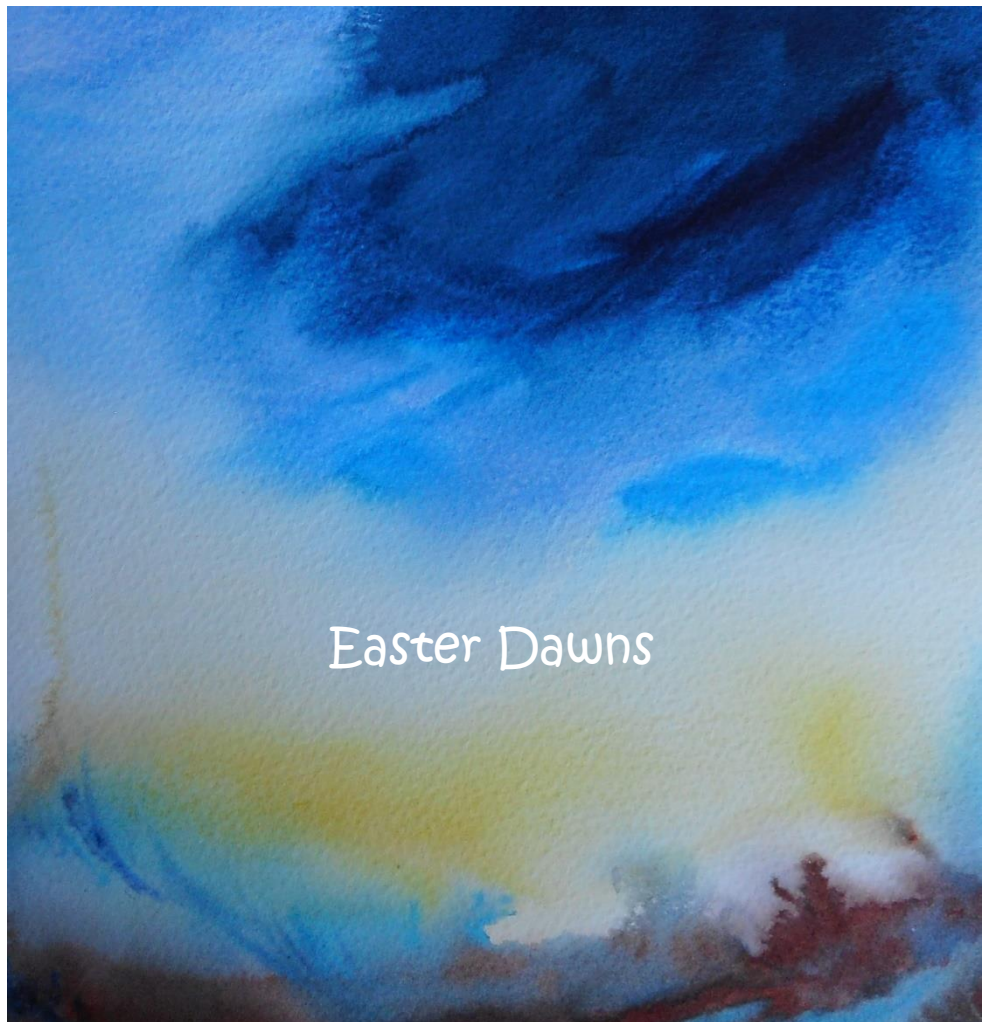


WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



Easter Dawns

April 2021

Covering Thoughts

Something that art helps one to do is to really look at things. Our eyes are so precious and knowing friends who have recently had operations on their eyes makes me more aware of how grateful I am for vision.

It was in watching television recently that I saw two inspiring interviews. The first occasion was watching Grayson Perry's Art Club. This programme has brought to light some remarkable people who during the pandemic have found art to be a great consolation. From the many works of art sent to him Grayson selected those he most admired to go into a special exhibition, and we saw some contestants who were interviewed. Sarah Ezekiel, who has motor neuron disease, was asked what art meant for her and she responded that while for every aspect of her life she had to depend upon others, she could escape into an imaginary world where she could create unique pictures. It became apparent that the only means of communication was through her eyes. Both the voice we heard and the pictures we saw were activated by them.

The second interview was a news clip from Yemen. A nine year old boy named Ahmed who had been blind from birth was enthusiastically speaking about his love of teaching, in what we could see was just the shell of a school. He spoke of the changes he dreamed of happening in his school and his aspirations to become a fully trained teacher. His enthusiasm and optimism in what many would describe as a desperate situation was very humbling. It can be so easy to make judgements that impose our values upon another situation. Having said at the beginning how precious is the sense of sight, I am coming to accept that an inner vision and enthusiasm for life especially in the midst of hardship is an even greater treasure. So rather than concluding that a person with a disability is diminished in some way we should be searching for the unique gift they have developed and have to offer to society.

Christine

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Pastoral Letter

For the past few weeks, I've been doing some sorting out, with a view to my house move in the autumn. It makes the manse look (even more) messy, with things waiting to be taken away, but it has been quite interesting, and as I take some possessions over to Abingdon, that is helping to make our bungalow my future home, rather than "Ruth's house".

With the charity shops closed, what can be done is somewhat limited, though I have been able to get rid of some items in the textile bins – sharing my favours over those in Summertown and in Wheatley! Mostly however I've been sorting and throwing away paperwork of all kinds, and also going down memory lane (which doesn't help the speed of the sorting). In my keepsakes box there are letters from friends with whom I've lost contact, some from people I've forgotten, and some which have taken me back to the time just after we left university – we all sounded very young and enthusiastic!

I suspect during these times of lockdown I'm not the only one. Partly it's because until recent, more Spring-like weather, we've all been looking for indoor tasks to do, but it's also, I suspect, that in the absence of face-to-face contact with family and friends – or indeed with strangers – we have all been somewhat turned in on ourselves.

Hopefully this has meant not just a longing for times past, or a sadness about the present, but an opportunity to reflect a little. The topic of one of our Lent sessions – just last night as I write – was *Silence and Contemplation*. Quite difficult to talk about, as it transpired, rather something to experience, which links to a quote I shared during the session –

Without silence, we do not really experience our experiences. We may serve others and have many experiences, but without silence, nothing has the power to change us, to awaken us, to give us that joy that the world cannot give, as Jesus says.

(Richard Rohr, an American author and Catholic Priest

<https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=1065> to read more.

The current pandemic has given us time to reflect, to process our experiences, to reflect on what we do in our personal lives, and as a church. During the pandemic, many of us have learned new skills and surprised ourselves at how we have

manged to cope with technology (thank you, Phyllis), and even, like the Queen, found ourselves enjoying on-line chats, and making new friends from our sister churches via Zoom. We have found all sorts of ways of keeping in touch with one another, and with the community around, yes, sometimes via technology, but also by more traditional means such as via our church noticeboard (thank you, Christine) or by taking around gifts of flowers.

We are now in the Easter season, when we celebrate the central message of our faith, that out of death and sorrow, God brings resurrection and new life. It is “new” life: the risen Christ is transformed from his earthly self and his followers experience his presence in a new way; but there is continuity with the past and an acknowledgement of what has happened: Christ’s body bears the scars of the crucifixion.

So, as life gradually begins to get back to normal in the coming months, as we hope and pray, let us not forget that phrase “the new normal”, so that we build on the experiences we have had during these difficult times, whilst not forgetting what has happened, and what has been lost.

With every blessing, Pauline
Rev Pauline Main, Minister

~ ~ ~

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members in Elaine Matejtschuk’s pastoral group, Catherine & David Hughes, Lynette & Richard Wood, Christine & Richard Bainbridge, Pat Howard, Ann & Norbert Gajda, Pauline & Chris Shelley, and Laurence & Peter Devlin.

Also remember members of the Care for the World Ministry Team Liz Barry, Sybil Beaton, Ann Bettess, Robert Harding, Rob Holdaway, Pauline Main, and Elaine & Michael Matejtschuk.

~ ~ ~

Falcon School News

A massive 'thank you' to all of you for your support for the school during the first quarter of this year. With all your help (and obviously no special fundraising 'events') we have together raised a further £500!

This generous, new donation for Falcon will go towards:

- Winter school uniforms (yes, it does get cold in the sandy wastelands outside Harare!)
- New fixed chalkboards for the new classroom
- Classroom supplies (e.g., coloured crayons, staplers)
- With any money left over chairs for the new classroom



Winter Uniforms



Chalk Boards

Lauren in Bournemouth did have some money put aside, to go towards the chairs, but this had to be diverted to give the teachers money to buy food (they have been unpaid since the latest lockdown in November).

However, the good news is that the school, like others in Zimbabwe, was due to open on 25th March to new and old pupils (the exam students actually started on 12th March).

We are also delighted to report that the **Reverend Wilbert Sayimani** has accepted Pauline's invitation to take part in **our first 'Focus on Falcon' Zoom service on April 25th**. Wilbert may join us on Zoom before that, to say hello, if time permits.



Reverend Wilbert Sayimani

'Walking for Falcon'

'Everyday' Walking

Pauline announced the walking theme in the March Newsletter, as a way of gradually raising money for the Falcon school and various people have found some novel ways of doing so (and keeping fit!):

One couple in our congregation are getting out daily, when they can, to tread the footpaths around Thame; someone else is using their Fitbit to gradually 'clock-up' the 'steps' and another is trading their U3A walking group 'miles' in support of Falcon!

Does anyone else have 'everyday' Falcon 'walking' stories?

'Have Fun for Falcon': Long Crendon Quiz Walk': End April!

Bob & Ellen, Rob & Angela have spent some time during lockdown (separately, of course!) planning a really interesting and fun walking quiz around the charming and historic village of Long Crendon.

The walk is around the centre of the village and should take an average of 1.5 leisurely hours, depending on one's preferred pace!

The plan is to launch the walk on 26th April (the day after Wilbert's attendance at our first 'Focus on Falcon' service) providing restrictions have been eased as currently planned.

Those keen to participate individually or with others (invite friends and family to 'enter'!) will be asked to make their donations directly using a 'Falcon Quiz' reference, at the same time as they request that the special 'LC Quiz Pack' be sent to them.

There will be a prize for the highest number of correct answers and suggestions will be provided for parking and refreshments etc.

Rob Holdaway

~*~*~

Thank You

Thank you to everyone for your good wishes, cards, and gifts that I received on my 90th birthday. I was able to celebrate with family members within my 'bubble' and with others, including my great-grandchildren, on a birthday Zoom call.

John Kidd

~*~*~

Charitable Giving 2020

Following various suggestions for our charitable giving from our congregation, the Finance Ministry Team has now made a final decision on which charities will share the final £1,700 from 2020.

£500 will go to the Gatehouse Oxford, where there is still a great need for the homeless in Oxford and we have been regular supporters for some years.

£600 will go to the Samaritans. The ever increasing problems with mental health have really been brought to our attention during the Coronavirus pandemic.

£600 will go to Oasis of Peace where again we have given significant support in the past. In particular their School for Peace in Neve Shalom was destroyed by fire last September (possibly arson) and this is in the course of being rebuilt.

Chris Shelley for the Finance Ministry Team

~*~

Zoom Services Rota for April

Dates	Worship leaders	Readers	Intercessors
4 EASTER	Pauline		
11	Richard	Liz Barry	Bobbie Stormont
18	Colin	Malcolm Benson	Barbara Joiner
25	Pauline with Rev. Wilbert		

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Scripture Cake

Following the inclusion of the Scripture Cake recipe in last month's newsletter, I can confirm that it is easy to make and is delicious. To save the waistlines of Keith and myself I made some for several church members to try. The verdict was that it was very tasty and was enhanced by a spread of butter.



Debi Kidd



Barabbas, You Are Loved!

Most of my life, I've felt that I am lost,
The love for which I crave cannot be found.
For this journey, I've paid a heavy cost,
My destination: six feet underground.
But now, Lord, You are here, gentle and kind,
Saying, 'For all, there is a second chance;
The Love you seek, in Me you now can find,
Forsaking sin, letting your spirit dance!
For I will suffer on your cross, for you,
Entombed in death, a fate meant as your own;
Yet I'll arise! as One Day, you can too!
And you need nevermore feel all alone!
I love you - trust in Me, give Me your love;
Live now for Me - then share My Home Above!

David Herring



COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS for April 2021

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	4th April	11th April	18th April	25th April
First Reading	Acts 10: 34-43	Acts 4: 32-35	Acts 3: 12-19	Acts 4: 5-12
Psalm	Psalm 118: 1-2 and 14-24	Psalm 133	Psalm 4	Psalm 23
New Testament	1Corinthians 5: 1-11	1 John 1:1 - 2.2	1 John 3: 1-7	1 John 3. 16-24
Gospel	John 20: 1-18	John 20: 1-31	Luke 24. 36b -48	John 10: 11-18

April 4th As with all love, there are times to hold on and times to let go [Joyce Hollyday]

April 11th Christianity is essentially a social religion, and to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it [John Wesley]

April 18th Martin Buber recounts that someone once asked a rabbi how you tell a story, and he replies, of course, with a story.

April 25th The shepherd is Jesus, whose shepherding involves radical self-sacrifice for his sheep and for others which involves the breaking down of barriers. This is a profound choice for all of us when we consider the circle around us - when we get back to the bus we will know what it means.

Richard B

~ ~ ~

Fair trade revisited

Because of the many years I spent working in Africa and the Development Studies degree I undertook in SOAS when I left the BBC, I was particularly interested to read Liz Barry's article on Fair Trade in last month's newsletter with its special focus on *cut flowers*, one of the most lucrative and well established HVC (High Value Crop) also called HVAP (High Value Agricultural Products) in Development Studies jargon!

Liz's article intended to put into context the lovely initiative taken by the Care for the World Ministry team, i.e., to give a fair-traded rose to people in our congregation and to groups like the Lunch clubs and the NSYC. However, because of the necessity of having a short article, Liz did not have the space to substantiate the claims made in the article, especially that "fair traded flowers have a lower carbon footprint", that they are "reducing water-usage" and that they "protect the environment".

The Fair-Trade movement has been substantially and repeatedly undermined by false claims of products being fair-traded when many labour practices for example are anything but fair. I have seen it myself in Ivory Coast in cocoa farms where children are employed (more like *exploited*) but those farms are never shown to the Fair-Trade organisation representative, as "the road is impassable...!" and sometimes claims of a product being fair-traded are taken at face value by well-meaning people with an ethical conscience. So, Liz and I agreed that it might be beneficial and interesting to complement her article with some hard facts given by the Fairtrade Foundation who has commissioned several seriously researched studies.

So, let's deal first with the claim "*fair traded flowers have a lower carbon footprint*". Cut flowers, fair-traded or not, come by plane (essentially from Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia) which seems to increase the carbon footprint, not lower it. Not so! Greenhouse gas emissions from the production of Fairtrade roses in Kenya were found to be 5.5 times lower and with 6.5 times lower energy demand than cut flowers grown in the Netherlands, even taking into account air transport to Europe. Also, while the climate in many African countries (especially in the Kenyan hills) is ripe for growing flowers, in Europe the cost of recreating that environment (through heated plastic tunnels) comes at a heavy carbon footprint. What about the claim that *fair-traded flowers are reducing water usage*? Fair traded or not, flowers need a lot of water, a scarce resource in many regions of Africa. Well, fair traded farms tend to make more effort to collect rainwater for irrigation and are using wetlands to purify the water that comes out of the

greenhouses, through a series of carefully constructed and efficient pools. This not only purifies the water so that there is no water pollution, but it is cyclical; the water is re-used for watering the plants again and again. I have seen this done in Benin and it is highly efficient!

And then, what about *fair-traded flowers protecting the environment*? This seems to be a very vague and sweeping statement as chemical fertilizers are widely used in the cultivation of cut flowers, considering the huge scale of the production. But as the Fairtrade Foundation underlines, many Fairtrade flower farms endeavour to mainly use natural solutions (such as cow manure and compost) to increase productivity and tackle pests without harming the environment. In fact, all the Fairtrade farms in Kenya are making positive conservation steps such as planting trees, collecting litter for fuel for a community cooker, and even running a conservation park.

Finally, the cultivation of cut flowers is labour-intensive and heavily reliant on women employment. Fair trade farms are very much leading the way in empowering these women. One of the best signs is that women tend to stay longer on Fairtrade farms, indicating that they are happier with their working environment.

Laurence Devlin

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Deadlines

14th April 2021 is the deadline for the May Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont.

Disclaimer

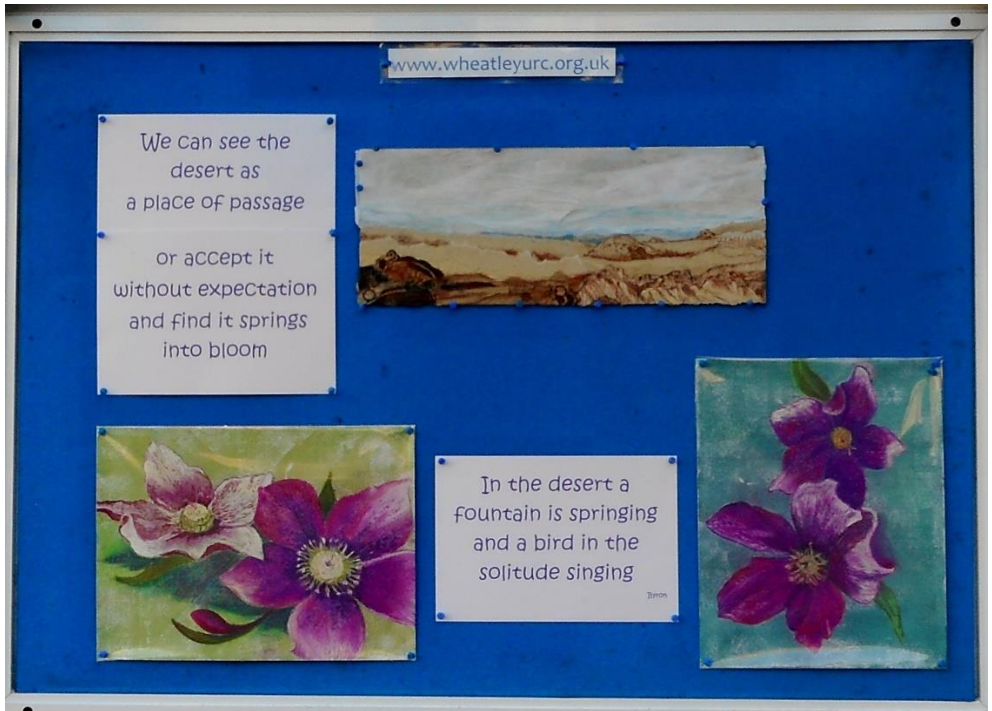
The Editors welcome letters, articles and announcements from individuals and organisations, but reserve the right to publish or not.

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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.



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Safeguarding Training

I am pleased to announce dates for the next two safeguarding training courses. Each safeguarding course is delivered across 3 sessions on Zoom. Participants must attend all 3 sessions to complete the training and gain a certificate. Please publicise these training courses widely and encourage people to sign up.

For anyone who is reluctant to attend the training, here is a recent feedback comment.

“The whole 3 sessions exceeded my expectations. I joined because I felt I ought. I came away having enjoyed it and having learnt a lot. Very many thanks.”

Safeguarding Training on Mondays in May 2021, 4pm – 5.30pm

Session 1 – 10th May 2021

Session 2 – 17th May 2021

Session 3 – 24th May 2021

Safeguarding Training on Thursdays, 7pm – 8.30pm

Session 1 – 24th June 2021

Session 2 – 1st July 2021

Session 3 – 8th July 2021

Booking is essential and places are limited.

To enable us to put you in the right breakout group, please say whether you are;

- a children’s and youth worker
- a worker with adults at risk
- or in church leadership (Safeguarding Officer, Elder)

If you are wearing more than one hat, then please rank them into your priorities for the training. You might like to consider which one you are less experienced in, or which one you have more questions about.

Ruth Heine - Development Team Administrator

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Tel: 023 8067 4513

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