

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



January 2022

Covering Thoughts

This morning I sat with my tea watching the eastern sky glow red with the promise of sunrise. Through the window behind me the western sky was grey. I cannot say what prompted me to turn and look behind but as I did a pink mist softened the grey and a complete arc of rainbow emerged.

Winter is pantomime season, and this experience reminded me of the audience alerting a character to look behind to where it is all happening. A pause to appreciate a moment of awareness and the recognition that we have the opportunity to look in another direction might lead to a pleasant surprise. For example that task or person we would automatically have avoided might bring a deep reward.

This short poem from Steve Garnaas-Holmes touches on this experience.

Weather Report

*Luminous,
as a low pressure area
disperses a fog of inattentiveness,
light coming, if not from above,
from beneath.*

Where do you think the light comes from in the winter painting?

Christine

~*~*~

Pastoral Letter

The following is an extract from an article, by Gaia Vince, in The Guardian newspaper, from 1st November, just as COP26 was about to get underway.

When things look especially bleak for humankind, it's worth reminding ourselves who we are – what makes us such a special species. Beyond our machines and our buildings, beyond our fiery conquests, beyond all of it, we're exceptional creatures because we are capable of love. And not just one to one and within our families, but on a massive scale.

This is especially pertinent as we face the climate crisis. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of our technological transition, which dominates the climate adaptation narrative. We are the technological ape, and our technologies will be vital in solving this crisis: windmills to decarbonise our energy systems, flood defences against rising seas, and air conditioners to survive b

*Just as essential to our survival, however, are social fixes. Love is often seen as a charming but irrelevant characteristic in our species' story – an evolutionary quirk, relegated to a footnote for poets and playwrights to ponder. But love is what draws us together to forge the strong, caring societies that make us so successful as a species. And it is what will, ultimately save us from this crisis. **Gaia Vince in The Guardian 1st November 2021.***

Just a few weeks earlier a small group of us met to review our status as a 'Bronze Award Eco Church', with the hope that we might achieve the 'Silver Award'. At the end of the exercise it was very clear that we have more work to do before we can get there. Andy Atkins who is CEO of A Rocha UK and Chair of Climate Sunday Coalition, titled his article in the Dec/Jan Reform Magazine about the climate crisis '**Now What?**'

In the article he points out that over the past 18 months 2,200 churches have acted as part of the Climate Sunday Initiative, which has support from the URC. Examples include holding a climate focused church service, committed to practical action locally and speaking up on climate issues by signing the 'Time is Now' declaration. He goes on to suggest that it is now critical for churches to do two things. '*First, we must act on commitments we made on Climate Sunday – for example, to achieve the next level of Eco Church*'. So maybe we are on the right track there, and more on how we might achieve this in a moment. '*Second, we*

must continue to speak up and hold the UK government to its own commitments at Glasgow’.

So let’s reword the question to, **‘Now What for Wheatley URC?’** We got some very clear pointers from the exercise we did to check up on our status. To start with, in the ‘worship and teaching’ category we were at gold level and in ‘buildings’ we were up to silver. What we are challenged with is to up our game in the two other categories. These fall quite neatly into two areas, firstly what we might do as a church community and then what we might be doing as individuals. As a church we are challenged to get more engaged in community and global events, for example sign up to the Climate Sunday Initiative, participate in national and global environmental issues or occasionally invite ‘environmentalists’ to speak. As individuals we are challenged to live as lightly on the earth as we can in the ways we travel, in what we buy and eat, and how we might encourage others to follow the same path.

There is a lot here and of course we can only take it a step at a time. Might it help if an individual or small group volunteered to champion the cause for us, and what about an ‘Eco – Church’ noticeboard in the hall? Contributions to the newsletter would also be really welcome. One place to start might be with that love which Gaia Vince talks about, and we are not bad at that. One thing I am sure of is that we shouldn’t just be sitting back and leaving it to others.

This fable comes to mind:

‘Tell me the weight of a snowflake,’ a coalmouse asked a wild dove.

‘Nothing more than nothing,’ was the answer.

‘In that case, I must tell you a marvellous story’, the coalmouse said.

‘I sat on the branch of a fir tree, close to its trunk, when it began to snow – not heavily, not in a raging blizzard: no, just like in a dream, without a sound and without any violence. Since I did not have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the 3,741,953rd dropped onto the branch – nothing more than nothing, as you say – the branch broke off’.

Having said that, the coalmouse flew away.

The dove, since Noah’s time an authority on the matter, thought about the story for a while, and finally said to herself: ‘Perhaps there is only one person’s voice looking for peace to come to the world’. From ‘New Fables’, Thus spoke the Marabou by Kurt Kauter.

Love and blessings Robert

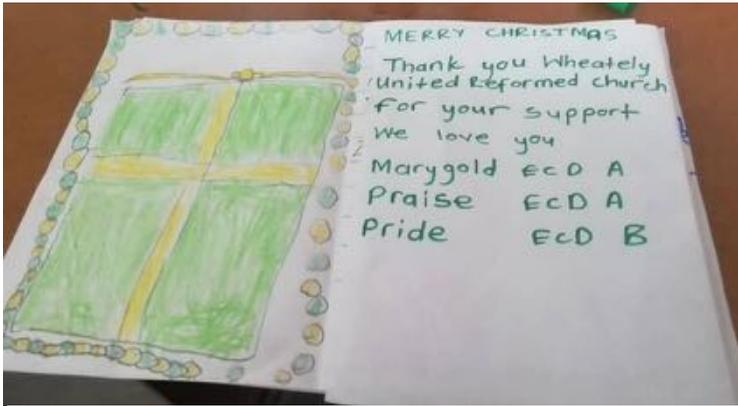
Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members in Moira Watson's pastoral group: Pat Howard, Bev Paton & family, Jen Yeates, Jean Boxall, Pat Simpson, Ann & Roger Bettes, Siobhan Fraser & Alyn Shipton, Alice Halliday.

Also remember members of the Worship Team: Laurence Devlin, Colin Thompson, Pauline Shelley, Allison Towner.

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The Falcon School



thank
you
thank
you
thank
you

and Happy New Year
from all at The Falcon School



see you in
January
.....
hopefully!!



Our
Advent
Wreath



Celebrating
being back
together



A Morning Offering – by John O’Donohue

I bless the night that nourished my heart
To set the ghosts of longing free
Into the flow and figure of dream
That went to harvest from the dark
Bread for the hunger no one sees.

All that is eternal in me
Welcome the wonder of this day,
The field of brightness it creates
Offering time for each thing
To arise and illuminate.

I place on the altar of dawn:
The quiet loyalty of breath,
The tent of thought where I shelter,
Wave of desire I am shore to
And all beauty drawn to the eye.

May my mind come alive today
To the invisible geography
That invites me to new frontiers,
To break the dead shell of yesterdays,
To risk being disturbed and changed.

May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dream no longer
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.

Wendy Benson

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Blended Service Rotas for January 2022

Dates	Worship Leader	Vestry	Welcomer/Door Steward	Reader	Intercessors
2nd	Rev Colin Thompson	Ann Gajda	Robert Harding	Tom Goss	Liz Barry
9th	Richard Bainbridge		Peter Devlin	Wendy Benson	Ann Hardiman
16th	Clare Downing		Angela Holdaway	Angela Holdaway	Malcolm Benson
23rd	Mark Williams		Barbara Joiner	Moira Watson	Ellen Webster
30th	Laurence Devlin		Ellen Webster	Marian Mole	Robert Harding

January 2nd: There is an old Latin phrase 'solvitur ambulando' which means 'It is solved as we walk' Perhaps this describes the wise men in the story.

January 9th: I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness [George Fox]

January 16th: Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds [Shakespeare Sonnet 116]

January 23rd: Really hearing the word of God is a moving experience

January 30th: The prophets ask the question 'Is it right' .The Church must keep asking the question 'Is it right?' [Jesse Jackson]

Richard Bainbridge

~ ~ ~

Wheatley URC Church Meeting 16th January

The synod moderator Clare Downing will be leading Worship and speaking to us at our church meeting

Common Lectionary Readings January

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	Jan 2 nd	Jan 9 th	Jan 16 th	Jan 23 rd	Jan 30 th
First Reading	Isaiah 60: 1-6	Isaiah 43: 1-7	Isaiah 62: 1-5	Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6 & 8-10	Jeremiah 1: 4-10
Psalm	72: 1-7 & 10-14	29	36: 5-10	19	71:1-6
New Testament	Ephesians 3:1-12	Acts 8: 14-17	1 Corinthians 12:1-11	1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a	1 Corinthians 13:1-3
Gospel	Matthew 2:1-12	Luke 3: 15-17 & 21-22	John 2: 1-11	Luke 54: 14-21	Luke 4: 21-30

Our Current Noticeboard



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Thank you - Pauline!

Wishing our minister Pauline a very happy retirement and giving thanks for her ministry amongst us.

We'll be formally thanking Pauline and wishing her well in the next phase of her life's journey at a service in Summertown URC on 8th January (Covid permitting).

'Silence is Golden' – My Electric Scooter

Reading Peter's article last month in the Newsletter, I sat for a while just thinking. The song by The Tremeloes, 'Silence is Golden', was a favourite and to quote from Simon and Garfunkle's song, 'The Sound of Silence', here is "the vision that was planted in my brain, still remains, within the sound of silence". Here is that vision.

A SILENT ELECTRIC SCOOTER.

From the time my mother pushed me in a pram, I have been interested in the means of getting from one place to another without great effort.

I am sure that there are plenty of people who are extremely keen on exercise who want to say that my desire to use as little effort as possible would be bad for my health. I think I can counter that by admitting to being 90 years old at the time of writing this.

I believe my first sashay was on a two wheeled scooter and at about the age of 4, a small three wheeled trike was given to me and my sister by my loving parents for Christmas, so that I would get some pleasure out of the "walks" that they were trying to encourage me to make (in reality to prevent me from sitting down and refusing to move). I had to share this with my older sister, and I no doubt created such a fuss that she was given a much nicer and bigger tricycle for her birthday in March. It was of course, the one I had wanted, but at least I got the old one for myself alone, and I looked forward to the day when I would fall heir to the bigger one.

Then the war came on when I was 8 years old and there was no chance that the self-propelled transport could be taken with us when we, my mother, sister and I, went to stay with my granny in Shetland. My granny's brother had a croft there. Oh dear! We went back to the Shank's pony again.

I really, really, really wanted a two wheeled bike but it wasn't possible as my parents didn't have enough money to buy even one for me to share with my sister. I was told to start saving all my pocket money and Christmas and birthday's money till I had enough to buy my own bicycle.

It was going to take a long time to save enough money because I got only half a crown old money (two shillings and six pence a month) for my pocket money and

I had other things to buy with it, like cream buns! That of course, did not help my figure. (I was only 8, for goodness sake.) Cream buns and the lack of a bike was a serious contributory factor.

My mother managed to borrow a proper two wheeled bike from a cousin when I was 12 and I learned to ride it, falling off and damaging my thumb (I still have the scar). Of course, the borrowed bike had to go back to its owner and again I really, really, really wanted one. I counted my money. No chance!

When the war ended we left Shetland, and tears were shed. Back in Glasgow things were very different, and there we were, still using the two legged method to get to school. I was 16 and I counted my money.

WOW, I had enough money to buy a two wheeled bicycle.

My dad took my sister and me to a bicycle shop and we each bought a bike. My sister had three gears on hers, because she had more money. She did not squander her money on iced cream buns, but my bike was the loveliest, shiniest most beautiful one in the whole shop. I LOVED IT. I did not care about gears. My BSA bike was black and gold and I went to school on it.

I kept my bike when I got married at 20, and then my husband bought me a second hand Singer sewing machine, which was black and gold and shiny just like my bike, but I did not have to save for 8 years to buy it for myself! I kept my bike for a few more years and then wept when I sold it to a neighbour.

I had five children so I had a number of years pushing prams and pushchairs and when my youngest child was 8, I became a school traffic patrol warden (it fitted in with the school hours and John's shift pattern). So I bought a bike but I did not feel the same about it as I did for the first one, then John bought our first car. I think we had had about five cars when I dreamed of a motorised caravan, but John did not like that idea and we bought a tent. There were seven of us and it was a four berth tent but we managed, and it was cosy so we had fun camping all over Europe with the children.

After all the children had gone through and left university and John eventually retired I started to think of a mobility scooter because I got a knee replacement and when I needed the car John used public transport. However he said he did not mind, and continued long journeys on the bus while I used the car for short trips. He was a very kind man.

Our penultimate car was 10 years old when John died and I had it for six more years when the question of a mobility scooter cropped up again because I had a second knee replacement and also a hip joint replacement, and in going round garages "just in case there is a nice car available" I fell in love with a white Honda Jazz which I had for three years.

When I was younger I said that elderly people ought not to be driving cars and because my 90th birthday was coming up, I decided I wanted to stick to my principles and get rid of the car. I thought it would take me at least a year to sell and surprise surprise it sold within two months.

SO I BOUGHT A MOBILITY SCOOTER.

It is bright yellow and I wear a bright yellow high viz ski jacket and over the back of the seat is a high viz sleeveless waistcoat such as worn by cyclists, making it appear a person is sitting facing backwards behind me.

It is silent and golden and it takes me wherever I want to go, just like my shiny black and gold two wheeled bike that I saved my pocket money to buy.

WHAT FUN!

Pat Simpson



Church Finances

If you were at our November Church Meeting, you will have heard me report that based on the ten months to the end of October, I have calculated that our offerings for the full year will be down between £1,500 and £2,000 compared to the 2020 financial year.

It is appreciated that many have been making their offerings by direct bank transfers during the pandemic and a big thank you for this. I realise that some do not use online banking, for various reasons and again this is appreciated.

When Covid first hit us in March 2020, I was unable to take cheques or cash for a while as access to the bank was difficult especially during lockdown. This is just a reminder that although Barclays have closed the majority of 'local' branches and only the Oxford main branch will be left when Cowley is closed early next year, I can accept cheques which can be handled by our local Post Office. Unfortunately it is very difficult to process cash, so regular cash receipts will not be restarted for the present time.

If you want to make your offerings or donations by cheque, these can be sent to me at 11, Keydale Road, Wheatley OX33 1NS, or they can be put in an envelope and placed in the Church letter box which I usually empty at least 2-3 times a week.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me either by email: treasurer@wheatleyurc.org.uk or telephone 01865-873908.

With many thanks for your continued support.

Chris Shelley

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Stepwise is making a difference!



What is Stepwise?

Stepwise is an integral part of *Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today*, the United Reformed Church's focus on whole-life discipleship and mission.

Wessex Synod is delighted that Stepwise is now part of the life of the Synod with people having completed the first stream, while others are just about to start. A

Synod Stepwise Advocacy Group has been formed and they have made sure all the procedures are in place to ensure Stepwise has been able to happen through the last 18 months.

Stepwise is a programme of learning and discipleship development for everyone – including you! – whether you are exploring and enriching your personal faith life, discerning where God’s call on your life may be leading, preparing for a new direction, or developing a specific role within your community or church.

As a Stepwise participant, your group will have a facilitator and you will also have a mentor with you throughout your Stepwise stream. The Synod Advocacy Group is ensuring safe recruitment and orientation of voluntary facilitators and mentors.

What is a Stepwise Stream? Stepwise has five streams: Faith Filled Life, Faith Filled Worship, Faith Fuelled Leadership, Faith Filled Confidence and Faith Filled Community. Everyone starts with Faith Filled Life, and then after that depends on you! You don’t have to follow any set path through it.

Stepwise is open to anyone who is keen to reflect on and develop their Christian faith. If you’re ready to be stimulated and challenged – and want to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others – then Stepwise could be just what you’re looking for.

Stepwise is designed to draw on the strengths and to address the needs of individual learners, in the context of their communities and churches. The programme emphasises the vital importance of people learning from their daily lives, wherever and whoever God calls them to be.

There are different start times, so there should be a group that is convenient for you – either online or in person.

This is what you need to know

- All participants wanting to engage in the Stepwise programme will have to begin with completing Faith Filled Life and fill in an application form, and send this to Ruth Heine, development@urcwessex.org.uk
You will then be contacted by a member of the Synod Advocacy Group.
- Synod will identify where the learning Hubs will be located within the Synod, and what online offering there may be.
- You will have a mentor throughout Stepwise, and if you are unable to identify one from your church, you will be given help to find one.

If you want to know any more about this, please contact

Mary Thomas dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk or Ray Stanyon dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk

GOOD OLD LOVE

Oh my God, it's five to seven
Time to get up and go to heaven:
Heaven on earth, a smile, a frown.
Don't let the mastheads grind you down.

Life's too beautiful for some
Who think that life should be more glum
And overruled and more controlled
But love of life is beave and bold.

Life's a miracle, life is wise
Joy is life's great sweet surprise.
Love a duck and pat a hound
And spread this good old love around.



Cartoon by Leunig

Happy New Year



Deadline

Monday 17th January 2022 is the deadline for the January Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont. If you type your contribution and send via email, please type it in Calibri font, size 11. Thank you.

Disclaimer

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



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