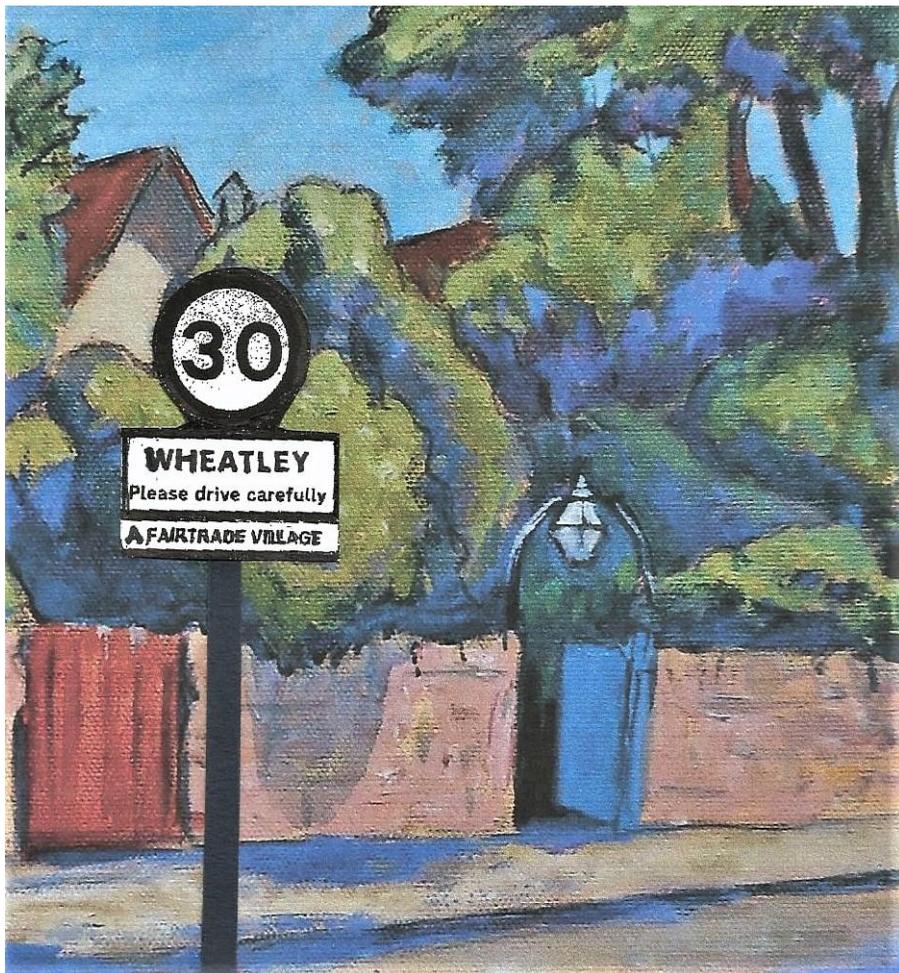


WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



February 2022

Covering Thoughts

The bus is late this morning, and I pace along Church Road admiring the old stone wall opposite. Behind it are the converted buildings of the original primary school where our two began their education. Happy are the memories of waiting outside the old sweet shop that was opposite, to meet them at the end of the school day.

Over the years much has changed in Wheatley and many things for the better. I am thankful for those pioneers, who discovering an injustice, spent energy and resources raising awareness of an issue overlooked by the majority. How could we know of the working conditions and low wages of the coffee and tea producers, or the child labour behind the cheap garments we wear?

The injustices and inequalities are endless and our knowledge of them only the tip of an iceberg. It is easy to be overwhelmed by our inability to live in a just way, or conversely to be arrogant about the choices we have made in the face of those who differ. Then conflicting values jostle for our attention. Do we advocate a fairly traded product or work to have recyclable packaging? Do we argue for higher prices in the shops in order that farmers are paid more, or do we expect the prices to be low because the poor cannot afford them?

Individually we cannot address every problem or give our support to every venture. However the quality of attention we give to the small steps we choose to take is important.

So I am back gazing across the road to the worn limestone wall, which is wearing away with the pollution of passing traffic. We can celebrate that we shared our visions and questions with our children and encouraged them to live responsibly. We can also celebrate all that has been achieved in Wheatley to make for a more just world, remembering the dedication of those who brought fair trade to our notice through the sale of goods after Sunday service. Who could have imagined that it would lead to the status of Wheatley as a fair trade village?

Christine

Pastoral Letter

When our grandson Ben recently had to start compulsory education at the ludicrously young age of just four, one of the school's laudable ways of mitigating the trauma was to invite his parents in for half an hour during school session. They eagerly accepted, despite their NHS work pressures, and Ben, a gentle and naïve little chap, solemnly told his mum 'I can show you which of the other children I don't love' to which she quickly responded that she'd much rather know which ones he did love.

Aside from Ben's misjudging the semantic nuances of 'like/love' this made me think about the two great commandments that are central to Jesus's teaching. Leaving to others the even more daunting injunction to love God with all your heart, the whole business of loving your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10, Galatians 5) often seems to me to be extremely challenging, compared to a set of restrictions about coveting your neighbour's livestock etc. It's more than not doing to people what you wouldn't like to happen to you, which can be found in other philosophies, as it also seems to include an emotional element, actively to love your enemies and those who do you harm. Are we, too, supposed to be able instantly to forgive those who are hammering nails through our hands? Yet forgiveness is undoubtedly at the centre of our faith. If so, this is another area of Christian life in which I'm an abject failure, despite my fervent wish to comply.

I'm not alone, I suspect. I well recall the same secondary pupils who genuinely supported Live Aid, with neighbours a convenient continent away, being utterly vile about the Travellers when they came to town, so much so that I wrote a Social Education unit about Travellers' lives with the help of Oxfordshire's Travellers' Education Unit, which itself was one of the first victims of austerity cuts in 2010.

Which brings me to an area of real struggle, politics. Are we really supposed to feel warm and positive about those who seem dedicated to increasing mistrust and inequality? Respect, moderation and tolerance seem to be badly lacking in a world of Brexit, Trump, cancel culture and identity politics. So should we give up on politics altogether, as some think St Paul suggested? When I have uncharitable thoughts about our leaders, I take refuge in the anger Jesus seems to have shown in overturning the moneychangers' tables in the temple, or even in the way Liam Byrne was so badly punished by his opponents for his chummy note left in the Treasury in 2010. Neither thought, however, quite assuages the guilt.

Sport is another area where loving one's opponents is increasingly difficult, as big money dominates the sports originating in Victorian muscular Christianity. The strictly amateur Corinthians team of that era would instruct their goalkeeper to stand off the pitch if his side conceded a penalty and even in my lifetime I recall a large crowd of cloth-capped West Midlanders applauding Stanley Matthews' skills even as they brought their own team closer to relegation. Nowadays, as sportsmanship has been replaced by gamesmanship, it is hard to admire a player who wins a major trophy by kicking the ball at an opponent's hand to gain a penalty, or a team whose match preparation involves practising screaming when tackled. Perhaps sport is easier to give up – though not for me.

Yet our faith does furnish us with examples of love in action, and writers such as George Herbert very much emphasising the emotion, not just the theological concept, of love. 'One enemy is too much', he writes.

Meanwhile Martin Luther King said 'Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy to a friend'

Even the atheist and undeniably racist poet Philip Larkin writes in one of his most famous lines of:

'our almost-instinct almost true: what will survive of us is love'.

One of the most moving TV discussions I've ever seen, tucked away early evening on BBC4, involved the South African leader FW de Klerk, himself a product of an unusual branch of Reformed Christianity, apologising to and being forgiven by Donald Woods, the journalist on whose experiences the heart-wrenching film 'Cry Freedom' was based. In her amazing book 'The Hiding Place' Corrie ten Boom, who had been arrested for offering shelter to persecuted Dutch Jews, talks of meeting in post-war times the concentration camp SS shower guard who had humiliated her and brought about the deaths of some of her closest friends. He offers to shake her hand, she forces herself, without 'the slightest spark of warmth or charity', to do so and amazingly 'through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me...When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives along with the command, the love itself.'

I pray, friends, that the next time we see a smug Leader of the House condescending to the mask-wearing multitude or a sportsperson earning his

fortune by blatantly cheating, we are granted the grace to feel just a little bit of what Corrie felt.

Wishing you this and every blessing,

Mike Matejtshcuk



Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members in Malcolm Benson's pastoral group: Colin Thompson & Herthe, Jeff Clarke, Cynthia Mancey, David Herring, Jill Cansell, Laurence & Peter Devlin, Ann & Norbert Gajda.

Also remember members of the Care for The World Team: Liz Barry, Sybil Beaton, Ann Bettess, Robert Harding, Rob Holdaway, Elaine & Mike Matejtshcuk,



World Day of Prayer Friday 4th March

2pm at Wheatley URC & 7pm at St Mary's Church

World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical organisation which enables people all over the world to share the ideas and concerns of the women of the country which that year writes the service. This year that happens to be England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Preparation for this day has taken several years and the service will celebrate the diversity which exists within our three countries and will welcome the contributions made by those who have made their homes here. The service will reflect some of the issues which face us and finds hope in the encouragement, help and love we can offer one another. Everyone is welcome. Do come to one of the services - or both if you like!

Care for the World Team – Ann Hardiman & poster Ellen Webster



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

2pm, FRIDAY 4th MARCH

at

**WHEATLEY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CROWN SQUARE**



New Year's Day Walk 2022

On New Year's Day morning a group of about nineteen walkers from the URC, St Mary's and Quakers joined together at various points around Wheatley and Littleworth to tramp the streets and byways of Wheatley. We called at the homes of a further fourteen URC members and friends, who were unable for various reasons to join the walk. At each home we sang a song wishing everyone a happy and healthy new year and gave them a "Spring" greetings card with two mini Fairtrade chocolate bars inside. Inside each card "we" wrote:

"Wishing you health and happiness in 2022.
Spring is just around the corner!
From The Wheatley URC New Year Walking Group."

Hungry and thirsty by 11.30am, we finished at the URC to be greeted by Laurence, Peter, Bobbie and Tom serving hot mulled wine, mince pies, stollen and baklavas.



The inspiration for this walk came from an experience that I had in the Western Highlands of Scotland, where I walked for over two hours around the shoreline of a sea loch from our isolated holiday bothy to the nearest kirk in the village of Arnisdale. I had arrived early for the Sunday service and finding the kirk locked, sat down outside to await the keyholder. About ten minutes before the service start time, I saw what appeared to be the minister at the far end of the single Main Street. As he approached, I noticed folk leaving their houses and joining him as he walked along the street. By the time he arrived at the kirk, he had gathered the whole congregation. He unlocked the door, we all entered together and the service began. There was no organ music for the hymns, but each was begun by an elderly Scotsman in his Sunday kilt, facing the congregation with one foot on

his chair, intoning in a strange monotone. From this, the congregation seemed able to pick up the tune of the Hymn! The minister preached for a long time about good sheep and bad sheep and how the shepherd still loved them all, regardless. We hid our offerings beneath a cloth over a tray on a stand and then we all quietly went home again. The highlight for me had been to see how the minister had gathered and united his flock as he approached the kirk and perhaps, we may have replicated something similar in Wheatley on New Year's Day.

Tony Barry

PS: 'Thank you to the New Year's Day walkers who brightened my day and gave me a lovely warm start to the year, by calling on me that morning, to include me in the URC family'.

Pat Simpson

~ ~ ~

Memory Cafe

At the very beginning of March 2020, before all our lives changed beyond recognition, we had our first "Memory Café" in the URC hall. This was a gathering of people living with Dementia, their carers and some volunteers. That session consisted of the all-important coffee and biscuits and various activities such as painting, jigsaws, various games, a great deal of conversation and a wonderful half an hour of music and singing together.

Dementia cafés (that we prefer to call Memory Cafés) are popping up all over the country as they can offer people with memory problems and their carers the chance to socialize and share information on dementia. It encourages them to keep active, make new friends and feel more confident.

We are hoping to start again in March this year, if the rate of Covid infections has decreased to a safe level. **IF** we do start again, it will take place on the second Thursday of the month, i.e. **10th March from 10.00 to 12.30** with the same activities as 2 years ago plus new ones... watch this space! It is free and if you know somebody who could benefit from such a gathering, family or friend, please contact Laurence Devlin on 077 13 15 88 13. Thank you.

Laurence Devlin

~ ~ ~

Falcon School

Thank you to everyone for making Wilbert, Mandie and Lauren so welcome on the occasion of their very first visit to our church on January 9th. We were all blessed with the opportunity for Wilbert to update us on progress with the school's development just before his next visit to Harare 2 days later. The card from Lauren following their visit, said, 'Thank you so much for a wonderful welcome at Wheatley URC, we all enjoyed our visit. Thank you for all your support for the staff and children at the Falcon School'.



Short term priorities .. 'getting over the line**'!

As we all heard from Wilbert, the urgent short term need now is to provide adequate living facilities within the newly completed shell of the staff accommodation block. These include (and it's good to learn of the nitty-gritty details 'on the ground!'): Connecting the water pipe from the borehole to the building, installing a septic tank, proving washbasins, toilets and a sink for the

kitchen, fitting front and back doors for security, fitting sockets for when they can 'generate' electricity and installing one or two solar panels. So our support in the next few months is very clear in its objectives.

We have just made our latest donation of £384, from donations collected up to the end of December, with much 'appreciation' from Lauren and Wilbert. AND one 'extra' small way to help this in the short term is by supporting ...

'The Falcon School Preserves' fund raising initiative.

Two very enterprising members of Wilbert's Richmond Hill St. Andrews church in Bournemouth have set up a non-profit preserves business ('T&D Pollinator Products') with all proceeds going to the Falcon School. We aim to 'test' sale these products (based on initial small quantities) over the next months to establish their potential for wider Falcon fund raising in Wheatley. The products, produced from a local sustainable 'pick your own' farm, come in a full line-up of products including Falcon Chutneys, Breakfast Preserves and high quality jams such as Pear & Blackberry and Raspberry & Rhubarb.



Care for the World Team – Rob Holdaway

PS We look forward to further updates from Rob and thank him for all the energy he gives in sustaining this important relationship on behalf of our church community.

~*~*~

'Talk Your Walk' - Coast to Coast

The death of a friend or family member is often a time to remember shared experiences. Thus it was when Robert Bailey died. I remembered a journey we shared with our mutual friend Philip Baker some 20 years ago when we undertook Wainwright's 'Coast to Coast' walk. This walk stretches from St Bees Head on the Cumbria coast to Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire all 192 miles of it, although allowing for occasional inadvertent diversions was nearer 200 miles, all to be completed in 10 days. Originally we planned to camp but a trial walk of 16 miles along the Ridgeway carrying tents, sleeping bags, cooking utensils etc, persuaded us that it was preferable to travel light and rely on the hospitality of strangers in the form of inns, B&Bs and youth hostels, the latter a misnomer.

Thus it was, on an overcast May morning, we set forth from St Bees Head with Sellafield looming in the distance. Wainwright takes pride in taking the walker across some of the highest paths in England through the Lake District to Shap, across the Yorkshire Dales National Park crossing the Pennines, and finally ending up crossing the North York Moors before descending to the coast.

The first day was a relatively easy 15 miles to Ennerdale, with gentle ascents from Cleator Moor to Dent with its extensive views across the coastal plain of Cumbria towards the Isle of Man. The rain started as we descended to Ennerdale Bridge where we had fish and chips followed by a sound night's sleep at the youth hostel.

The second day also covered about 15 miles from Ennerdale to Rosthwaite but much more challenging. We skirted Ennerdale Water, a glorious expanse of water with shadowy mountains beyond and it was here that the real work began. Wainwright takes you past Black Sail Hut, an isolated youth hostel, up to Red Pike and then in rapid order, if not speed, over High Style, High Crag and Haystacks each with spectacular views down to Buttermere or across to Great Gable, which I had previously ascended with Wendy. Descending from Innominate tarn, a small but jewel like sheet of water, we reached Borrowdale, at that time of the season relatively uncluttered by tourists, to Rosthwaite where another youth hostel awaited us.

The next day was even more of a challenge some 19 miles from Rosthwaite to Patterdale via Grasmere with what Wainwright describes as simple up and down

progression across the heart of the Lake District. Despite avoiding the 'optional' detour over Helvellyn we arrived exhausted at Patterdale. After a good night's sleep, we set off on the 16 miles to Shap leaving the Lakes behind us but not before more steep ascents initially to Angletarn Pike and the adjacent tarn. From there the path joins High Street, the highest Roman road in Britain which was as anticipated flat and straight. More climbing was ahead when the path branched off to ascend to Kidsey Pike, the highest point on our route yielding stupendous views back across the fells of Lakeland. A sad farewell. From there it was downhill to Haweswater, a huge reservoir housing the sunken village of Mardale Green, only visible during a severe drought. The dam at the end of Haweswater marks the end of Lakeland and although the next stretch to Shap Abbey (c 1191) was beautiful and unspoilt, it lacked the grandeur of what had preceded it. By the time we reached Shap, crossing the M6 motorway, we were hungry, tired and wet - it had started raining.

We woke to bright sunshine with a 20 mile stretch ahead of us to Kirkby Stephen, but encountered a major problem. Philip had large blisters, partly as a result of his ex Czech army boots having rather thin soles. Robert had an even worse problem with shin splints (medial tibial stress syndrome) and was considering abandoning the walk. What were we to do?

To be continued.....

Malcolm Benson



Blended Service Rotas for February 2022

Dates	Worship Leader	Vestry	Welcomer/Door Steward	Reader	Intercessors
6th	HC Rev Colin Thompson	Malcolm Benson	Elaine Matejtschuk	Ann Gajda	Ann Bettess
13th	Richard Bainbridge		Ellen Webster	Robert Harding	Christine Bainbridge
20th	Charles Bennett		Bobbie Stormont	Catherine Harding	Tom Goss
27th	Cara Heafy		Charles Bennett	Rob Holdaway	Barbara Joiner

The first Sunday of each month will be Holy Communion

February 6th: Any inner or visionary experience usually comes to people via symbols and thought-forms of their world [John Rogerson]

February 13th: Humans are capable of generous thoughts and actions; but their strength is limited and human hopes are disappointed time and time again [John Rogerson]

February 20th: An enemy who is loved is no longer an enemy

February 27th: The story of the transfiguration is surrounded by darkness

Richard Bainbridge

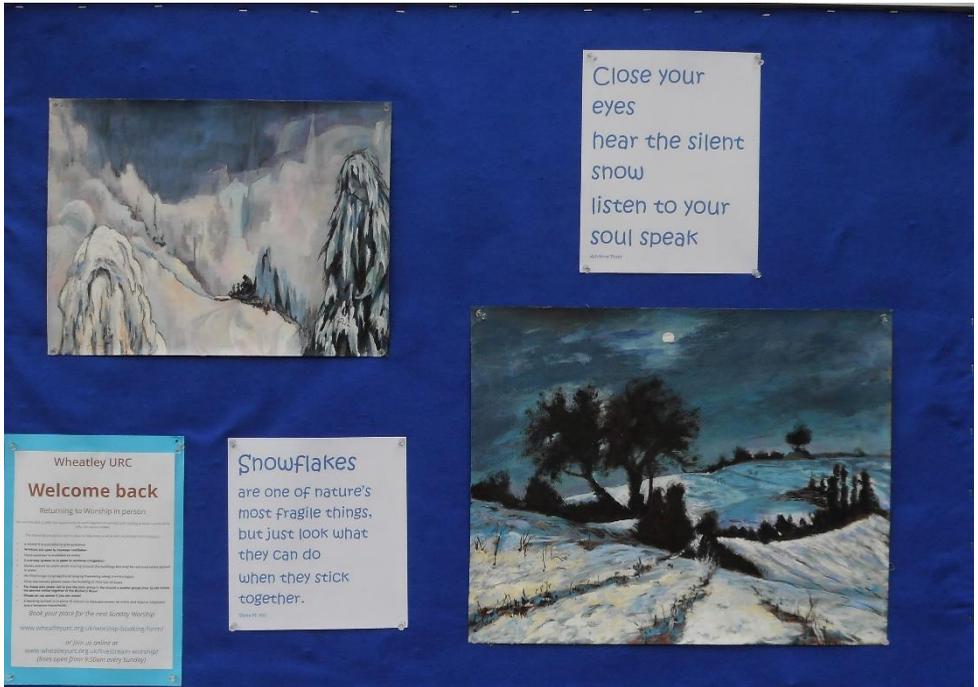
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Common Lectionary Readings February

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	Feb 6 th	Feb 13 th	Feb 20 th	Feb 27 th
First Reading	Isaiah 6: 1-8	Jeremiah 17: 5-10	Genesis 45: 3-11 & 15	Exodus 34: 29-35
Psalm	Psalm 138	Psalm 1	Psalm 37: 1-11 & 39-40	Psalm 99
New Testament	1 Corinthians 1: 1-11	1 Corinthians 15: 12-20	1 Corinthians 15: 35-38 & 42-50	2 Corinthians 3: 12- 4:2
Gospel	Luke 5: 1-11	Luke 6: 17-26	Luke 6: 27-38	Luke 9: 28- 36

Our Current Noticeboard



Deadline

Wednesday 16th February 2022 is the deadline for the March Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy can be given to Debi Kidd. 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.



Are Your Secrets Safe With Your Minister?

Have you seen the film “Confess” by Hitchcock in which a villain confesses a crime to a priest? Well, just suppose for a moment that you have committed a serious crime which has been on your conscience, gnawing away at you, so one day, to alleviate your guilt, you summon up the courage to talk *in confidence* to a minister you know well and trust, i.e. Pauline, Colin, Mark, or Cara. But unfortunately, your crime comes to light and you are put on trial. Would the person you talked to, *in confidence* remember, be legally obliged to come to court and be compelled to reveal what you have said? Or would he/she have an absolute right, recognized by English law, not to answer questions?

An interesting problem which straddles law, ethics and religion. The short answer is that you should probably choose to talk to Mark (or Nigel) if you want to keep out of prison but not to Colin, Cara or Pauline. The reason is clear which is that Mark and Nigel have been ordained in the Church of England while the others have not. But why should it make a difference?

All denominations of the Christian faith recognize the obligation to maintain the strict confidentiality of conversations told in confidence to a minister or elder by a lay person. In some churches, including our own, that obligation is qualified in that if required by law to do so, the content of the conversation can be disclosed by the minister. In the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches however, there is an absolute prohibition on a priest from disclosing to anybody anything they heard in confession. This is known as the “seal of the confessional” dating back to 1603. In Anglican churches which still offer confession (also called the ministry of absolution) and likely to be Anglo-Catholic or High Church, the canon law of the Church requires three conditions for the seal to apply: the priest must be robed, the confession must be carried out in a private space and the person confessing must be a baptized member of the Church of England.

This is the position laid out in Canon Law but what does the “ordinary” law say? English law does recognize pastoral conversations between a lay person and any minister of religion as *confidential*. This means in practice that all pastoral conversations between a minister of any denomination and a layperson can only be ordered to be disclosed to the courts if it is in the public interest, for example if there was an admission of child abuse or crime of terrorism. The one exception is the confession to an Anglican priest that I have mentioned above because *the canon law of the Church of England is part of the law of the land* (unlike Roman

Catholic canon law) and therefore the “seal” probably applies, although it has never been tested in the English courts. This means that confessions are privileged and there is an absolute right for a priest NOT to disclose a confession to a court. Of course, any minister of religion could be summoned to court and if legally obliged to give evidence could, like any other citizen in Britain, invoke his/her conscience and refuse to answer questions. If he/she is an Anglican priest, then they would **not** face any legal consequences because of the law of 1603. Ministers from other denominations on the other hand could be, *in theory*, committed to prison for contempt of court!

As there is *as yet* no law imposing a positive obligation on anybody (priests, ministers or members of the public) to report child abuse or other crimes to the authorities, churches have to strike a difficult balancing act between providing a safe space for lay people to talk openly about deeply personal issues while at the same time acting in the national interest by helping bring the guilty to justice. The issue has become all the more urgent in light of the revelations of systematic abuse of children by those meant to protect them.

So if you feel the need to confess, do so by any means but to an Anglican priest and be also aware that the prevailing view among lawyers is that the seal probably wouldn't apply if there were a test case!!!

Peter Devlin



Update - Remembrance Day Brass Flower Vase Inscription

In December, I asked whether anyone could throw any light on the connections to Wheatley URC of the names on the brass flower vase and I have received two responses. One from Ann Hardiman and one from Allison Towner.

EDGAR PRATT

Ann tells me that she remembers an older couple with the surname of Pratt, who lived in a house on the North side of Wheatley High Street, close to Laurence & Peter's house. Mrs Pratt is listed as a past member of Wheatley URC between 1960/70. But were they related to Edgar Pratt?

Allison has provided me with a copy of an account compiled by Kevin Harris, a nephew of Edgar Pratt, describing a reunion that he attended in Northern France

of families who were related to the airmen who had died, when their ill-fated Lancaster bomber was brought down by enemy fire in 1944. They gathered with the villagers of Freulleville on 20th July 2014, being the actual 70th anniversary of the loss of the bomber and its crew, close to that village, to dedicate a new memorial in the village church, to the memory of those lost airmen.

Allison also tells me that Doug Pratt, Edgar's brother, who was also at that 2014 French reunion with his wife Barbara, used to regularly attend Remembrance Day services at the URC in past years. Doug was a former work colleague of Colin Towner. I have Kevin's full account of the reunion and some supporting copy photos, including some of the aircraft and its crew, should anyone wish to see them.

CHARLES HAY

It seems that Charles Hay had originally joined the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Infantry which was later to join forces with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders to fight in North Africa, where he lost his life. Allison thinks that his parents may have lived in Crown Road, Wheatley?

Tony Barry



Fairtrade Fortnight

21 Feb to 6 March 2022



For two weeks each year at the end of February and start of March, thousands of individuals, companies and groups across the UK come together to share the stories of the people who grow our food and drinks, mine our gold and who grow the cotton in our clothes, people who are often exploited and underpaid.

Fairtrade is about social, economic and environmental justice. A root cause of the inability to adapt to and mitigate climate change is poverty. More money in the hands of farmers is needed if they are to adapt and survive the climate crisis. Choosing Fairtrade fights for improvements in producers' livelihoods with collective strength through co-ops and their bargaining power, the protection of a Minimum Price and Fairtrade Premiums.

Keep looking out for the Fairtrade logo in shops around our Fairtrade village.

Community Emergency Foodbank - “CEF”

At Wheatley URC we are resuming our regular monthly in-church collection of food in the porch every first Sunday, starting on February 6th.

CEF say: *“Despite our Welfare system in this country many thousands of people still go hungry through debt, sickness, sudden job loss, addiction, marriage breakdown, or simply delays in receiving benefit. We are proud that we have maintained an excellent service and have fed over 3,500 Oxford families and well over 5,500 individuals since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic”.*

The Community Emergency Foodbank runs drop-in cafes at three sites:

- St Francis Church, Hollow Way on Tuesdays & Fridays, 12pm to 2pm,
- Barton Community Church on Mondays & Wednesdays, 12pm to 2 pm,
- Baptist Church, Littlemore on Thursdays from 10 to 11.30 am.

People who have been referred online by social workers, doctors or other bodies can come for coffee and biscuits and a chat, while volunteers assemble bags of food for them.

CEF say: *“The following items are needed at the moment for the foodbank, *starred items most critical:*

Jams/other spreads

** Sugar*

** Tins Vegetables (not tomatoes or pulses)*

** Tins, Packets Puddings*

Biscuits

Bottled Sauces

Tins Meat

Tins Fruit

Cereal

Coffee/Hot Chocolate

Practical Toiletries

When donating food please ensure that items have a 'sell by date' of at least 3 months and are clearly marked”.

For more information see their website at [“ceford.co.uk”](http://ceford.co.uk).

(Search for “foodbank” will send you to the Food Hub - a different organisation)

Ann Bettess



**Saturday
7th May 2022**

Hollycombe
STEAM IN THE COUNTRY

Attractions for everyone, Largest Traditional Steam Fairground in Britain, Steam Railways, Listed Woodland Gardens including an Azalea Walk, Treasure Hunt, Reflective Labyrinth, Live Brass Band, Synod Marquee and Activity Field with Interactive Zones and Workshops, Refreshments and Worship.

Save the date, more information including booking information in the new year.



*A great day out for **all** the family
and for **all** ages*





High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE

CHURCH CONTACTS

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