

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



November 2022

Covering Thoughts

Discovering beautiful trees, painting them, and reflecting as I work is an enriching experience. So, when I heard this reading from one of Spurgeon's sermons during the service this morning, I thought immediately that this was worth sharing again in Covering Thoughts.



I was sitting one day in the New Forest, under a beech tree. I like to look at the beech, and study it, as I do many other trees, for every one has its own peculiarities and habits, its special ways of twisting its boughs, and growing its bark, and opening its leaves, and so forth. As I looked up at that beech, and admired the wisdom of God in making it, I saw a squirrel running round and round its trunk, and up the branches and I thought to myself, 'Ah! This beech tree is a great deal more to you than it is to me, for it is your home, your living, your all.'

Its big branches were the main streets of his city, and its little boughs were the lanes; somewhere in that tree he had his house, and the beech-mast was his daily food, he lived on it.

Well now, the way to deal with God's word is not merely to contemplate it, or to study it, as a student does; but to live on it, as that squirrel lives on his beech tree. Let it be to you, spiritually, your house, your home, your food, your medicine, your clothing, the one essential element of your soul's life and growth.

Christine

Pastoral Letter

Hymns and Things

When I first went regularly to church, hymns seemed to me to be the least important element in the service compared to prayers, readings and of course the sermon, a sort of limp salad compared (apologies to vegan friends) to the red meat of expounding God's word. Perhaps I held this simplistic view partly because of my inability to read music or to hold a simple tune.

There were a couple of major exceptions. *Love Divine All Loves Excelling* (a precis in 150 words of the Protestant faith) just happened to be my school hymn and a number of people posted on the old pupils' web page about how their necks were covered in goosebumps when it was played at the funeral of our late Queen, who of course was queen even when we were at school.

Jerusalem on the other hand seemed to possess a powerful symbolism that tapped into the collective unconscious, without having a clear literal meaning. (A recent hilarious letter to the *i* newspaper wanting it banned along with the national anthem, 'Land of Hope and Glory' etc from the last night of the proms was a particularly ill-aimed salvo in the culture wars, given that Blake was a deeply radical thinker who supported the French Revolution, and who detested militarism, poverty and the exploitation of women).

My view on hymns changed with what I like to think of as a spot of maturity and this was brought into focus by the truly moving spiritual experience of Songs of Praise at St Mary's on Jubilee Day where fellow-Christians of all denominations introduced hymns, saying how instrumental they had been in their personal and spiritual journeys.

This in turn led me to think of the lives of hymn writers. The medieval church used lives of saints (not all of them historically accurate) to illustrate truths of faith. How much do we know of the writers of some of those hymns used?

JOHN BUNYAN's *Who Would True Valour See* was the first one sung on that jubilee day in an Anglican church, an irony of fate, as it was through the withdrawal of religious tolerance on the restoration of the monarchy that he was persecuted, spending 12 years in prison for preaching his faith. During the much-maligned Commonwealth, his non-conformist church, Bedford Meeting, had happily shared

premises with Anglicans. I am pleased to note that his life is now celebrated by our Church of England friends with a Lesser Festival in late August.

JOHN GREANLEAF WHITTIER who wrote *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind* was, oddly enough, a Quaker who disapproved of singing in church, believing that God was best worshipped in silent meditation. An anti-slavery campaigner several times mobbed, stoned, and run out of town, Whittier stuck to his belief that moral action apart from political effort was futile. The verses used in the hymn are part of a long eccentric poem describing the supposed Hindu use of hallucinogenic drugs as a way of attaining religious knowledge, but they stand alone as a powerful image of God's quiet, insistent voice, which, unlike Elijah on Horeb, we sometimes miss in the pressures of day to day life.

From a living singer-songwriter with one parent an Anglican the other a Pentecostalist, RICHARD GILLARD's *Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You* was probably the most recent hymn used and it was one that moved me most during the height of the pandemic; remembering the effect of the virus and lockdown on family and friends still often brings tears to my eyes when we sing this hymn. The author, born in Wiltshire, emigrated to New Zealand when he was three, and perhaps it was there, in the gentler pace of life, that he found a stronger feeling of community coherence as expressed in the very scripture-driven lyrics.

Cheshire vicar JOHN ELLERTON is said to have written *The Day Thou Gavest Lord Is Ended* in 1870 on his nightly walk to teach at the Mechanics' Institute. It was also used at Queen Victoria's Jubilee and of course at our late Queen's funeral, and at my Covid-victim mother-in-law's funeral last year, as well as at the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, which may assuage the hostility of those who are particularly sensitive to the history of colonialism and haven't noticed the way it contrasts God's eternal kingdom with the way 'earth's proud empires pass away'. Another aspect of song in church is the way some of us can become somewhat disorientated by the times when a congregation suddenly bursts into song. The 'higher' the church the more frequently it happens, but oddly it occurred on our first visit to Wheatley URC when (in the seemingly parallel universe of offering collection in pre-pandemic days) the word Doxology appeared on the order of service. Neither an English degree nor O-level Greek left me a clue as to what one of those was, but I did follow up the words and they illustrate another aspect of hymns, that they aren't all written for Sunday service. What we used to sing appears to be the last verse of a night-time hymn by Thomas Ken written for the scholars of Winchester College:

**Glory to thee, my God, this night
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
Beneath thine own almighty wings.**

**Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son,
The ill that I this day have done,
That with the world, myself, and thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.**

**Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;
Teach me to die, that so I may
Rise glorious at the judgement day.**

**O may my soul on thee repose,
And with sweet sleep mine eyelids close—
Sleep that shall me more vigorous make
To serve my God when I awake.**

**If in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply;
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest.**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

May the blessings of this prayer apply to us all, particularly those who suffer from insomnia.

Mike Matejtschuk

~*~

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Advent

Flower arrangements during Advent usually consist of a very basic idea for the first Sunday (27th November) – could be stones/branches/material (not flowers), then each week a small change is made – something is added – until Christmas Day, when we have flowers. We would be delighted if someone or several people working together would be interested to do the Advent decoration.

Please speak with Allison or Christine.

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Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members of Robert Harding's pastoral group; Wendy Bailey, Charles & Sue Bennett, Barbara & Albert Joiner, Ellen & Bob Webster, Angela & Rob Holdaway, Christine & Richard Bainbridge and Phyllis & Mark Williams.

Also remember members of the Care for the World Ministry Team; Liz Barry, Ann Bettess, Rob Holdaway, Robert Harding, Ellen Webster and Elaine & Mike Matejtschuk.

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REFORM MAGAZINE

Group Subscription

It is time to renew subscriptions to REFORM, which is published 10 times per year and the annual subscription for 2022-23 is £29.50. The December/January issue is combined, likewise July/August.

The group subscription is organised by Moira Watson, who receives the magazines and then delivers them to the group members. If you would like to join the group, get in touch with Moira, either at the church or phone her on 873689 for more details.

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Board Game Café - the First

On the afternoon of 9th October, we hosted the first - of hopefully many more to follow - Board Games Café for families in the URC hall. At least half a dozen game masters were ready to teach and play two packed tables' worth of board games.

A game of Scrabble went on for hours and a battle for world domination was carried out in Risk all while a Rubik's cube-solving robot was waiting for a worthy opponent to beat it.

Lovely cakes, biscuits and popcorn were provided by Karen Betts to keep everyone going.

The next Games Café will be on November 13th in the URC hall.





Elisa Pizzo



A Book Review

The Escape Artist (The man who broke out of Auschwitz to warn the world) **By Jonathan Freedland**

You are almost certainly familiar with the names, Anne Frank, Primo Levi and Oskar Schindler. Jonathan Freedland's book suggests that the name Rudolf Vrba should stand alongside them. His courage and tenacity led to the saving of thousands upon thousands of Jewish lives.

The Escape Artist is a very detailed account of the life of Rudolf Vrba, who with his fellow prisoner, Fred Wetzler, were the only Jews ever to break out of Auschwitz. Their mission was to warn the world about what was happening in the Nazi death camps. The book which charts his life from childhood to his death in Canada in 2006, is a compelling and very detailed read.

The book tells us about his young life, when he was known as Walter Rosenberg, the change of name came later, and how he was determined to escape from his homeland, Slovakia, so as to avoid deportation by the Nazis. However, as the title suggests, he eventually found himself a prisoner in Auschwitz. Some of the details about life in the camps are quite fascinating, and a testament to people's ability to be resilient and caring under the most appalling conditions imaginable. But, to quote from the flyleaf *'in the death factory of Auschwitz, Vrba had become an eyewitness to almost every chilling stage of the Nazis' process of industrialised murder'*. Some of the details of life in the death camps are explicit, harrowing and upsetting to read. Of course, as the title also suggests he eventually made his escape, after several different plans went awry, and the account of the escape is incredible.

The escape though is only the first part of this amazing story. What happened once they were 'free' is equally compelling, full of danger, disappointments, and raw emotion. If you get to read this book you will understand why I have put italics round the word 'free'. One of the important threads through the second and third parts of the book is how he is never really free from Auschwitz and how it influenced the rest of his days.

After the accounts of life in the camps and their escape, comes the story of how they wrote a 32-page report of their experiences, how much detail was

remembered and how, perhaps most tellingly, the report was disseminated and received by those in power in the free world.

The book finishes with the story of his life once the war had ended and, as hinted above, how all these experiences impacted on that life. The themes in this book include: peoples' ability to overcome the most extreme conditions and cruelty, how easy it is to dismiss someone else's story because it doesn't fit nicely into what you want to believe, how trust is a two edged sword and when you are unable to trust anyone, what a destructive force that can be and how easy it is to judge someone harshly because we misread their reaction to events or we just simply don't know much, if anything, about them.

I **tentatively** recommend this book to you. I have a copy if you wish to borrow it.

Robert Harding.

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Christian Aid

We are pleased to report that the collection at our Harvest Festival Service and Lunch last month raised a grand total of £560 for Christian Aid.

Most of this (cash) has been paid in through the church account to claim the full benefit of Gift Aid. Cheques sent directly have been nominated as eligible for Gift Aid.

Very many thanks on behalf of the charity for your generosity in supporting their work in many countries around the world who are in desperate need of our humanitarian help.

Many thanks,

Liz and Tony Barry

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Falcon School News

As they say in common parlance **we're into the 'hard yards' now in terms of properly finishing this major phase of the school's developments** i.e. completing (and in a few cases, improving) a surprisingly long list of fittings, decoration and equipment to achieve a basic level of comfort for pupils and staff.

We have agreed to continue supporting the school in our own modest way as they tackle this work in the short term through to the first part of 2023.

Following on from our help with installing proper, improved toilets from our August donation (**you could look away now!** .. but this is the reality on sandy 'Plot 194 Rainham', outside Harare!!)



.... Wilbert has confirmed their **priorities in the short term** are now: installing smoother toilet floors to aid cleaning/hygiene; providing and fitting new writing boards in 4 classroom areas; fitting new ceilings in teachers' accommodation and providing additional second hand lap-tops and other 'equipment' to help the older pupils meet their curriculum requirements.

As for the longer term moving through next year, Wilbert and the folks at the school all agree they would love to achieve greater self-sustainability so they can self-fund their own requirements.



They are continuing to consider how this might be achieved but, like others with similar challenges in their part of the world, they are very aware that this is easier said than done.

Let us pray for them as they do so and thank you once again for continuing to support the Falcon School ...

..... Your Care For The World team.

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Deadline

16th November is the deadline for the December Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont. Please type all contributions 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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Blended Service Rotas for November 2022

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	Intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
6 th	Colin Thompson – HC	Pauline Shelley	Malcolm Benson	Charles Bennett	Chris Shelley/Liz Barry
13 th	Richard Bainbridge – Remembrance	Chris Shelley	Barbara Joiner	Ann Gajda	Ellen Webster/Ann Hardiman
20 th	Kate Hartford	Mike Matejschuk	Tom Goss	Robert Harding	Moira Watson/ Pauline Shelley
27 th	Mark Williams			Elaine Matejschuk	Malcolm Benson/ Barbara Joiner

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Hospitality Ministry Team

We enjoy our times of sharing stories, ponderings and refreshment. All we need now is someone to offer to co-ordinate the Hospitality Ministry Team when food is planned. Through the year we have a number of regular events such as the Church Anniversary and Harvest when we enjoy partaking food together. Occasions such as funeral teas also arise when we are happy to offer appropriate refreshments. A team co-ordinator would ensure that there are sufficient helpers to take care of each event - appropriate food lists are already available and expertise on hand for advice at any time.

Please let Phyllis or me know if you are interested in taking on this role.

Many thanks, Ellen

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Wheatley Harvest Funday – Gratitude for all God’s Gifts.

On Saturday 1st October Wheatley celebrated our Harvest Funday. This was an afternoon of family friendly activities from 1.30 – 4pm on the Wheatley Rec organised by Fusion and supported by local churches and businesses including the parish council. What was really striking was that the whole event was free and included delicious refreshments and a BBQ of hot dogs!



After the rains on Friday the weather forecast was a concern, but the sun shone all day and hundreds of people attended to enjoy the event, young and old were able to come and spend time together in a welcoming spot.

There was face-painting, balloon modelling, biscuit decorating, a gratitude tree, a craft activity of creating a face out of fruit and vegetables and a bouncy castle. There was also a stand from Christians Against Poverty (CAP) run by Jill Ewbank to raise awareness about debt advice and money management courses, which the organisation runs.

It was fantastic to have a refreshment tent headed up by the URC and a big thanks to Phyllis Williams, Tony and Liz Barry and Bev Paton (as well as anyone I may have not named!) also all the countless bakers who supplied a wonderful array of cakes, biscuits, and treats. I know there were repeat visitors to the tent as the cakes and drinks were so good. Even when the electricity to the kettles failed the team were able to overcome the problem and found another source of power – well done all! If people wanted more than a cake, there were hot dogs at the BBQ and the gift of drinks and food was a great way to celebrate harvest with our community and show God’s love and abundance. It reminds me of the feeding of the 5000 where Jesus transformed a small offering by a child into a meal that fed a crowd and there were even leftovers. It was a real blessing to the community to be able to receive free hospitality and was the foundation for a great afternoon.

There was singing from Rachel Cave’s choir as entertainment and plenty of group games including some very well fought tugs of war and fortunately no injuries. The Wheatley Good Neighbours Scheme spoke about their work in the village and put a shout out for more volunteers. Some of the young people played a game called 9 square which involves a frame and keeping a ball - or in their case a space hopper – in the air. Much fun was had, and it was great to see the teens enjoying some games together.

Throughout the afternoon there was a steady stream of visitors to the activities and the balloon modelling and face painters were kept particularly busy. There were plenty of balloon animals and painted Frozen tiaras, paw prints and emojis and the reactions of the children when they saw the creations were beautiful.



Overall, it is one of the most successful Fusion Fundays I have been part of. The glorious sunshine made it even more enjoyable and after the period of COVID where we haven't been able to gather in large groups it was refreshing to have an opportunity to meet new people and reconnect with friends and neighbours. We were able to share news, catch up and just spend time together. We heard comments from people saying how good it was to be able to come to events again and how they had been missed. The gratitude tree had paper leaves where people were able to give thanks for good things in their lives and some of the comments were for family, friends, and face paints! It was a lovely sight.

At the end of the event after the gazebos had been packed away plenty of families stayed around in the Rec enjoying the afternoon sun, chatting, and playing. What a wonderful image of community and thank you for the support from all at the URC that made it possible.

Lucy Betts

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Common Lectionary Readings

November 2022

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	6th	13th	20th	27th
First Reading	Job 19: 23-27a	Malachi 4: 1-2a	Jeremiah 23: 1-6	Isaiah 2: 1-5
Psalm	Psalm 17: 1-9	Psalm 98	Psalm 46	Psalm 122
New Testament	2 Thessalonians 2: 1-5 and 13-17	2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13	Colossians 1: 11-20	Romans 13: 11-14
Gospel	Luke 20: 27-38	Luke 21: 5-19	Luke 23: 33-43	Matthew 24: 36-44

Nov 6th - Death awareness, or reflection on death and dying, can bring harmony and peace to our life.

Nov 13th - The world is not like a picture painted by an artist centuries ago which now hangs untouchable in a museum. It is more like a work of art in constant process of creation, still in a studio.

Nov 20th - Jesus saw the true fulfilment of the kingdom's earthly hopes in a more radical way than many of his contemporaries.

Nov 27th - There is an increase in economic prosperity when there is an abandonment of arms in favour of agricultural production.

Richard Bainbridge



Dates for Your Diaries

Weekly

Monday 8:45am	Mindfulness Sitting Group (contact Mark Williams Tel 876288)
Thursday 8:45am	Mindfulness Sitting Group (contact Mark Williams Tel 876288)
Friday 10am	Table Tennis (contact Val Farmer)

Monthly

Alternate Mondays (14 th & 28 th Nov.)	Not So Young Club (contact Frances Simpson)
First Thursday	Prayer and Reflection 10:00am followed by coffee (contact Liz Barry & Barbara Joiner)
Second Thursday	Memory Café (contact Laurence Devlin)
Second Tuesday	Lunch Club (contact Laurence Devlin)
Third Tuesday	Lunch Club (contact Catherine Harding)



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