

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



September 2023

Covering Thoughts

Throughout the year we have a series of new beginnings, and September is one such time. The vacation is over for the young and the challenges of study or work start again. Each beginning builds on what has gone before and I feel this strongly when it comes to paintings.

I love to sit in front of a dark, moody seascape in the home of a friend who reminds me that the artist has painted seven views of this beach. When he asked to see the others the reply came that each was under the one he saw.

The work of the late Fred Cuming has always inspired me. I remember discovering one of his beautiful seascapes in Canterbury art gallery last year soon after he died. So I give credit to him for the study I have painted for the cover of the newsletter this month. It is worked from one of my favourites and it has taught me so much about technique, colour and atmosphere.

We have said goodbye to Elisa and now welcome Wiebke to share our work with families and youth. She will build on the groundwork begun, making her own contribution and we look forward to seeing the new inspirations she will bring to this role.

It can be hard to move forward with the pains and difficulties of experience but hold in mind that every day, every moment, is a new beginning enriched by all that has gone before. Perhaps you know the song by John David called New Day. Here is a brief extract:

Send the sun in time for dawn
Let the birds all hail the morning
Love of life will let me say
You are the new day.

Christine

~*~

Pastoral Letter

“Affirming” as spiritual discipline.

You may be thinking what on earth does she mean by “affirming?”? Affirming what? Well, other people! But what does it mean in practice and what effect could it have on our own spiritual life?

In several of his letters, the apostle Paul describes what he calls “charismata” or Spiritual Gifts which are, as the word indicates, *freely given* by the Holy Spirit, for example wisdom, discernment, thirst for knowledge, healing, and others. Spiritual Disciplines are different: they are basically finely honed tools that help us in our spiritual journey but like all tools, we have to learn to use them which takes time, daily practice, and effort so that through meditation, prayer, fasting, bible study, service, worship, stewardship, spiritual guidance etc, we can get closer to God and be transformed.

Now, “affirming” I know, is not a recognised spiritual discipline, but I contend that it could be as what I mean by affirming is not only recognizing the value of what people are and of what they do but telling them so. The old saying “actions speak louder than words” may not always be true and the impact of words of recognition, praise and encouragement can be extremely powerful.

That implies that we should pause our busyness and be attentive, observant *and train ourselves to do a lot of noticing*, what I would call “holy alertness.” But this is only one part of it, as affirming implies first and foremost, as I said above, the willingness to *tell* people that what they are doing is great and that it makes a difference to peoples’ lives ... That takes not only time and effort, but it might go against the grain for some who are convinced that praising people openly and directly will embarrass the receiver or is “not done” and “over the top...”

I don’t think it is so, as someone who has been sincerely affirmed for something she or he has put of lot of work in, will surely, instead of possibly feeling resentment for being ignored or taken for granted, feel appreciated and therefore will be inclined to continue and do even more.

Affirming has also another important transformative effect: obviously words of appreciation impact others but *they impact us too* as the affirmation changes both the receiver and the giver. How? Because affirming is not neutral: when it becomes a spiritual discipline, a “holy habit” that we learn to practice, it changes

our mindset, will get ingrained in our subconscious and makes us more attentive, more caring and will nurture both the “affirmer” and the “affirmed”. It becomes part of living in a loving community where constructive criticism is also possible and accepted.

Mark Twain famously said” I can live for two months on a good compliment” but a compliment is different from an affirmation. A compliment does not “cost” much as it is fleeting and often concerns something fairly trivial and, even if it is sincere, does not impact the giver. Affirming does impact the giver, as it is more akin to *deep gratitude* towards the person you affirm as it implies *thankfulness*, a virtue which encourages us to have a more positive outlook in our life and I believe, makes us closer to God.

The American retired pastor, songwriter and blogger, Steve Garnaas-Holmes writes about all this in the following poem:

“We forget how thirsty we all are
for hope and gratitude.
Don’t pass up an opportunity today,
to offer a cup to one of the little ones
who of course are angels in disguise :
to encourage, to appreciate, to give thanks
to the one checking your groceries,
or delivering your mail
or doing their best to be a decent person.
Notice how offering a cup of grace
quenches your own longing, too.
God is thirsty for our love for each other
And every little cup is a delight
that satisfies us all.

Shall we try then to give each other more of those little “cups of grace and delight”? It might go some way to “quench our own longing” ...

Laurence Devlin

Prayers

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

Also remember members of the Hospitality Ministry Team: Liz Barry, Ann Gajda, Catherine Harding, Angela Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Debi Kidd and Allison Towner.

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First Thursday Prayer and Reflection

It is coming up to two years since Ann and I opened the Mulberry Room for quiet prayer and reflection at 10am on the first Thursday of the month.

Since then between 3-6 of us have come to share poetry, prayer, appreciation of readings, and thoughts, and to voice our concerns.

It is always quiet, there is no need to 'book in' and certainly no sense of attending out of duty.

We also appreciate the follow-up coffee morning, conveniently gathering from 10.30 in the hall.

This leads us to wonder if this is the time for change for our small group, maybe a change of day, or time or indeed if the moment has come to 'move on' altogether.

Do let us know.

Liz Barry and Ann Hardiman

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'Falcon Corner?'

Hello Everyone. We updated you on email regarding installation progress for the new Grade 7 teacher's accommodation and Wilbert's 'dance' with pupils to welcome the arrival of materials! So now here's just a reminder of how you can also keep abreast of any 'new news' occasionally coming through by looking in 'Falcon Corner', i.e. the dedicated notice board in the church hall



Wilbert went on 'project reviews' with Kevin Snyman (URC Head of Global Justice & Partnerships) can't reach him at all right now but we know that sometime before they were up the 'Great Zimbabwe' (see photo below) ... it's a medieval city in the South Eastern Hills of Zimbabwe built by ancestors of the Shona and other 'groups' and now recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (look it up, really interesting)



And thank you so much for your continued support for the Falcon School!

Care For The World Team

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Deadline

13th September is the deadline for the October Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy can be given to Debi Kidd. 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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Common Lectionary Readings

September 2023

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	3rd Sept	10th Sept	17th Sept	24th Sept
First Reading	Jeremiah 15: 15-21	Ezekiel 33: 7-11	Genesis 50: 15-21	Jonah 3: 10 - 4: 11
Psalm	Psalm 26: 1-8	Psalm 119: 33-40	Psalm 103: 1-7	Psalm 145: 1-8
New Testament	Romans 12: 9-21	Romans 13: 8-14	Romans 4: 1-12	Philippians 1: 21-30
Gospel	Matthew 16: 21-28	Matthew 18: 15:-20	Matthew 18: 21-35	Matthew 20: 1-16

Sep 3rd: The Greek word for church, ekklesia, means 'called out' which can be costly.

Sep 10th: The process to deal with community matters has parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Sep 17th: The failure to forgive can corrupt us through and through.

Sep 24th: The parables come in a context of widespread unemployment - the generosity of the gospel is life changing.

Richard Bainbridge

Blended Service Rotas for September 2023

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	Intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
3 rd Sept	Mark Williams	Malcolm Benson	Tom Goss	Chris Shelley	Ellen Webster/Liz Barry
10 th Sept	Richard Bainbridge	Tom Goss	Christine Bainbridge	Ann Gajda	Moira Watson/Ann Bettess
17 th Sept	Mary Rose Gibson	Rob Holdaway	Ann Hardiman	Malcolm Benson	Robert Harding/ Allison Towner
24 th Sept	Mark Williams			Charles Bennett	Pauline Shelley/ Marian Mole

Dates	Organist
3 rd	Frances
10 th	Jeff
17 th	Frances
24 th	Jeff

Dates for Your Diaries

Weekly

Mon & Thurs 8:45am Mindfulness Sitting Group (Mark Williams Tel 876288)

Friday 10am Table Tennis (contact Val Farmer)

Monthly

Alternate Mondays (4th & 18th) Not So Young Club (contact Frances Simpson)

First Thursday 10am Prayer and Reflection (contact Liz Barry & Barbara Joiner)

First Thursday 10.30am Coffee Morning (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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Could you help run one of our lunch clubs?

We are looking for volunteers to cook for our 2 lunch clubs.

Each club meets monthly and provides a 2-course meal for up to 20 people who live alone. Conversation over the meal is an important part of the experience. The cook leads a small team who help with preparation, serving, washing up and transport. The cook plans the meal (usually a roast dinner), sources the ingredients and manages the kitchen. The clubs are self-supporting with the members paying for the cost of the meal. We consider they are an important part of our church's pastoral care and service to our community.

A lunch club was started by Tillie Kowol in the 1990s. After her husband died, Tillie realised that living on her own meant she no longer cooked or ate a roast dinner. She missed them, so she decided to do something about it and gathered a group of friends in the same position to form the "Loners Lunch Club". At that time the church kitchen consisted of an oven and a sink in a corridor between the hall and the church, not suitable for cooking a lunch. Fortunately, Tillie lived diagonally across the road from the church, so she produced the roast and vegetables in her kitchen and carried them across the street. There were about 12 members with one providing the pudding.

Sadly, Tillie died very unexpectedly and, rather than disband the club, Ann Piggott agreed to take over. (By then the church had been refurbished and had a decent kitchen.) Ann moved away from the area in 2006 and, rather than lose the lunch club, Ellen Webster and Catherine Harding agreed to take it on with help from husbands Bob and Robert. By now membership had increased to 20 and there was a waiting list!

In 2016, Laurence Devlin and Ann Bettess started a second lunch club alternating roles as cook and helper each month with help from Frances Fielding and Frances Simpson and others in the support roles. When Ann Bettess had to give up, Laurence continued, now cooking every month.

By early 2020 Bob's health meant Ellen had to give up, and 2 months later we had to close for the pandemic lockdown. After lockdown numbers were depleted but they have built up again and both lunch clubs are again able to provide a sociable hot meal each month for their members. Laurence and Catherine now cook each month with assistance from others. We could not do it without help from church

friends who offer lifts, help prepare the food, wash up and serve. They are invaluable but we have now come to the point where both Laurence and Catherine would like in due course to hand over responsibility for planning and cooking the meals, perhaps on a rota basis at first.

Could you cook a dinner for 18-20 very appreciative people? You don't need to be cordon bleu, just a good plain cook. It can be a tiring day, but it is worthwhile and very rewarding.

If you feel that you might like to see what is involved why not speak to Catherine or Laurence who would both be very happy to talk to you. Please think about it and respond if you think you might be able to help.

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A Harvest of Wills for **Christian Aid**

Rather than organising fundraising events during this Harvest Season, **Christian Aid** is asking us to consider including them and our churches as part beneficiaries, in our wills (if you have not already done this). It is a simple thing for your solicitor to arrange, or you can ask **Christian Aid** to assist with this, especially if you do not have a will already. Charities often offer special arrangements with solicitors at discounted fees for drawing up a simple will. Another financial advantage is that such charitable gift arrangements in wills are exempted from Inheritance Tax calculations.

Should you wish to see further details from **Christian Aid**, please contact Liz and Tony Barry or Chris and Pauline Shelley, or go online to <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/faith-will>

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Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust

“Ride and Stride” – Saturday, 9th September

This annual fundraising event for the important work of helping to keep our ancient churches (and some not so ancient) open, against the ravages of time and decay, is almost upon us, again.

Striders - I shall not be leading a walk between some of our local churches this year as we shall be away in Cornwall during that weekend. **However, if anyone else would like to take up the challenge, I am sure OHCT would be most grateful. I have a sponsor form etc. should you need it.**

Welcomers - As usual we need a team of folk to act as “welcomers” to riders and striders from other churches visiting our church during the day, between the hours of 10.00 am and 6.00 pm. Many thanks to those who have already signed up on the list on the Church Hall noticeboard, but we do need a few more names please to cover the time adequately. It involves being in the church hall for an hour to sign in the visitors and mark their sponsorship sheets, offer them a drink and a biscuit/cake, direct them to the loo and answer any questions they may have about our church or other churches nearby. Ideally, for company and personal safety two people are required for each hour of the day. Remember, you could also be sponsored for just sitting there! A signing up sheet will be available in The Hall, if you are prepared to help in this way. I will delegate to someone to set up and close, on the day.

Riders – Once again **Gordon and Jill Ewbank** (gordon.ewbank@gmail.com) from The Community Church will generously be riding on behalf of Wheatley URC, **so please give them lots of support by your sponsorship.** Also, this year, for the first time, keen URC cyclist, **Graham Bell** will be riding separately on our behalf and has a sponsorship form for you to sign if you have not done so already.

Sponsorship and Tax - Don't forget that your sponsorship can be increased by 25%, if you are a taxpayer and you elect, at the time of sponsorship, for OHCT to reclaim the tax that you have already paid on your “donation”.

N.B. - Half of all money sponsored can be reclaimed by Wheatley URC from OHCT, for essential repairs to our own buildings.

For any queries or sponsorship forms, please contact me, **before** Monday 4th September, **Tony Barry** (872293 or ah.barry@btinternet.com)

May Away Day Follow-Up

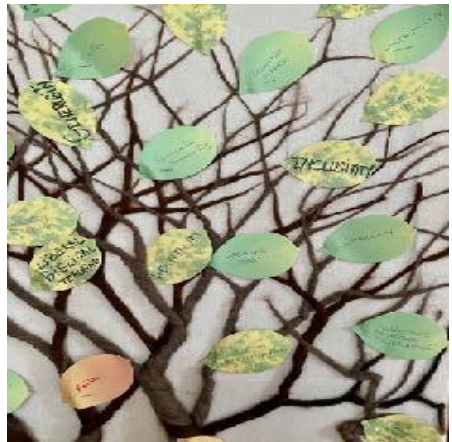
Wheatley URC's 'Tree of Life'

On May 13th in the Barns Centre many of us joined together for quite a different but very inspiring church Away Day.

Unlike many organisations' off-site days there was no pre-declared objective of 'achievement' in terms of agreeing specific new ideas.

Instead we used the occasion as a church community (established and newer members as one!) to explore our shared values, characteristics, strengths and current activities as a platform on which to build on the future development of the church.

We were superbly aided by Cara and by Pauline's special Tree



Separating out into smaller groups we asked ourselves how it felt to be WURC members; how we would describe the roots that bound us together; the 'branches' which supported our shared values and how this manifested itself in the way we behaved and the activities we undertook (those little leaves!)

A variety of words clustered into common themes, from descriptors such as 'ministry teams', 'meaningful services', 'open mindedness' and 'faith' to more value(s) related terms such as ... 'welcome to all', 'inclusiveness', 'service to the community' and 'care and support'.

In the afternoon we reconsidered all of these and began to think about how we could 'feed and nourish' our tree and how we could 'plant new seeds and shoots'. We even challenged ourselves with thinking about how the good gardener cares for their trees through judicious 'pruning'.

What might all this mean in the context of the church?

We believe that this shared overview of what binds us together, together with some initial ideas and 'pointers', can now act as a meaningful bedrock against which to review existing (and explore potentially new) ways of doing things in our church.



So with this Away Day outcome and learnings as a 'guide', we have recently formed a new, small ad-hoc group simply to start the process of trying out different ways of actually 'living the tree' as we go forward.

The emphasis will be very much 'step-by-step', in trying things out as we go along and, very importantly

..... harnessing the ideas and support of all church members.

Rob (with Brenda, Ellen, Cara & Phyllis)

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Transform Trade

While the Fairtrade movement sadly lost one of its pioneers earlier this year, when Traidcraft plc ceased trading, the crucial work in the sector continues.

It is fitting that four of the organisations Traidcraft helped to set up are able to continue to support the future of ethical trade. Transform Trade (previously Traidcraft Exchange), the Fairtrade Foundation, Cafedirect and Shared Interest all came out of the early fair trade movement. Now, together, we are well positioned to build on the legacy of Traidcraft – each in unique ways, while fair trade and ethical businesses in the UK continue to trade, proving every day that business can be done in ways which nourish people and protect the planet we all rely on.

To date progress has been promising. Transform Trade are utilising the well-known Traidcraft brand to improve access for producers. The branding is now used on products which have a transparent value chain that adhere to Fair Trade Principles but are not Fairtrade certified, such as charcoal, rubber gloves and coffins and potentially others in future.

Transform Trade are also supporting as yet uncertified organisations through endorsement in the hope of opening doors to markets and investment.

Amy Wilson, Head of Partnerships and Investments at Transform Trade, said: ‘We recognise how vital Fair Traders, individuals who sell our products, are to providing markets access for producers and have developed ‘ethical partnerships’ with various ethical organisations to continue to trade. We hope to work with ethical retailers in the UK connecting them with innovative producers around the world to increase the social and environmental impact these businesses have with their communities’

This article appeared in the Summer issue of QR, ‘Shared Interest’s’ regular magazine, and is shared with their permission. It looks as though the work of Traidcraft plc will continue which is very good news.

Robert Harding on behalf of ‘Care for the World’



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