

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**November 2023**

# Covering Thoughts

*In the August newsletter I wrote of the value of using contemporary writings and stories alongside the set Bible readings for the day and several people have expressed their agreement. Examples from our time help to keep alive the relevance of our faith. We have all enjoyed the personal faith journeys shared over the years and these are still available to read. But a faith story is not just about looking back to decisions and events of the past. It describes a journey that constantly changes as we find more light and truth on our path. To keep a record of these new insights so that we remember them and share them could enrich us all.*

*For myself I sometimes discover a quotation, poem, or reflection that I use on one occasion and then forget about. Often we hear an account in a sermon that strikes a chord and we would like to hear it again, or those of us not able to preach a sermon may well have a story to tell. I wonder if we could begin a collection of these treasures so that we could return to them just as we return to parts of the Bible.*

*I am not the best person to collect these together. Richard will tell you that I am disorganized with all my scraps of paper, so I am throwing this idea out to see if anyone feels drawn to making such a collection.*

*The cover this month is called The Dreamer. It is one of those paintings which seemed to have a life of its own. I had intended to paint an abstract but the figure emerged and was compelling in its presence. Perhaps we could imagine this person is collecting and reflecting on the treasures we have gathered in our 21st century Bible. All of us enjoy looking through the photos which make up such a lively record of our church, how interesting it would be to have a written collection of inspirational readings, stories and quotations that have helped us on our journey.*

Christine

# Pastoral Letter

Ploughing a lonely furrow or taking on a light yoke?

‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven’. I reckon I’ve said those words out loud many, many times, and coming so early in the prayer, sometimes my mind hasn’t been fully engaged, but what exactly do they mean and what is our role in bringing them about?

We might of course echo John Wesley’s famous injunction to:

“Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.” which hangs on our fridge but its simplicity contrasts sharply with the histories of organisations, political and workplace, set up largely via the free churches, in order to do this as a society.

In March 2020, I was due to go to Spain for some welcome sunshine and had downloaded to my kindle a copy of American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr’s ‘Moral Man and Immoral Society’ as holiday reading. Yes I know I should get out more. I was expecting to disagree with his central hypothesis that the immorality of groups is often stronger than that of individuals, that history is full of examples of our failing to create social cohesion and justice, despite putting in place laws and an education system that are intended to bring them about.

I recall the ways in which political developments had resolved some of the main issues that we prayed about in the closing quarter of the last century, sometimes almost feeling our request was impossible for even God to bring about: that some sort of peace would come to Northern Ireland, that racist regimes would be removed in southern Africa without the bloodbath predicted in the broadsheets, and that people in the old Soviet empire would be able to vote, live and worship freely as part of a community which represented their identity. In fact political and trades union action had indeed kick-started these processes.

Perhaps. Two years and a pandemic later, we finally took that holiday to Spain and the sun shone. However, while we were there, again in contrast to the predictions in the left-liberal press, on the most ludicrous of pretexts, Putin invaded Ukraine, where I have friends and family. This seemed to echo some other developments of the current century, which might give weight to Niebuhr's arguments: 9/11, the unresolved problems in the Middle East, the rise of ultra-nationalist populism everywhere from Brazil to Hungary, the vitriolic arguments from the increasingly polarised sides in the Brexit debate, and the rise in racial antagonism, even, to my horror, anti-Semitism, among populations that my generation of teachers had tried to protect from such things by sharing our ideals of tolerance and empathy. Alongside this, we see significant increases in violent crime (Tesco issuing body-cameras to its workers!) and an alarming loss of public faith in the whole political process. None of this is any easier to accept as the years of one's lifespan hurry by.

If Niebuhr is in essence correct, what can we do to enable the coming of God's kingdom? In 'Middlemarch' secularist George Eliot talks of an 'incalculably diffusive good' which is embodied in the simple but sometimes uncomfortable acts of generosity between individuals, though the standard biography shows her as being hostile to the enfranchisement and organisation of working people.

Niebuhr gives examples of well-meaning political acts that created unwanted outcomes: Gandhi's boycott of British cotton caused undernourishment in Manchester children and the blockade of Germany in WW1 starving German children. He calls the American trades union movement 'reactionary' and suggests that parliamentary socialism always betrays its ideals. Many years later, our last left-of-centre PM wrote: 'I suspect I was thought of as more like a technician lacking solid convictions. And, despite my strong personal religious beliefs, I never really countered that impression.'

So are you a lone worker or an optimistic joiner?

Whether you are trying to make God's kingdom through individual acts of love or via a party, union, charity, or pressure group, may God's strength and wisdom guide you. Niebuhr ends his book by implying that those of us who try to achieve peace and justice collectively, though bound to fail, are still a vital part of creating God's kingdom on earth.

Meanwhile, as so often, Bob Dylan has a useful thought in 'The ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest':

So when you see your neighbour carrying something'  
Help him with his load  
And don't go mistaking Paradise  
For that home across the road.

Mike Matejtschuk

~\*~

## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers members of Ann Gajda's pastoral group:** Moira & Jim Watson, Ann Wild, John Kidd, Keith & Debi Kidd, Sybil Beaton, Marian & Mike Mole and Wendy & Malcolm Benson.

**Also remember members of the Finance Ministry Team:** Chris Shelley, Robert Harding and Mike Matejtschuk.

~\*~

Deadline

15<sup>th</sup> November is the deadline for the December Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto: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.

# Harvest Festival October 2023

Here are a few photos of our recent harvest festival held at Sandy Lane Farm.



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# Common Lectionary Readings

## November 2023

**Note: leaders may choose to use other readings**

Date	5 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Micah 3: 5-12	Amos 5: 18-24	Zephaniah 1: 7 & 12-18	Ezekiel 34: 11-16 & 20-24
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 43	Psalm 70	Psalm 90 1-8 & 12	Psalm 95 1-11
<b>New Testament</b>	Thessalonians 2: 9-13	1 Thessalonians 4: 3-12	1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11	Ephesians 1: 15-23
<b>Gospel</b>	Matthew 23: 1-12	Matthew 25: 1-13	Matthew 25: 14-30	Matthew 25: 31-46

Nov 5<sup>th</sup> - Another word for disciple is apprentice. As disciples, followers of Jesus, we are Jesus' apprentices.

Nov 12<sup>th</sup> - Billy Graham once asked, if you were arrested for your faith, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Nov 19<sup>th</sup> - COP28 will be held this month. How might we honour the world that is given to us?

Nov 26<sup>th</sup> - Do we behave well only when it is seen by another? Would you still pay your parking late at night when the wardens are off duty?

Richard Bainbridge

# 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 (13<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>) Not So Young Club (contact Frances Simpson)  
 First Thursday 10am Prayer and Reflection (contact Liz Barry)  
 First Thursday 10.30am Coffee Morning (contact Barbara Joiner)  
 Second Thursday Memory Café (contact Laurence Devlin)  
 Second Tuesday Lunch Club (contact Laurence Devlin)  
 Third Tuesday Lunch Club (contact Catherine Harding)

# Blended Service Rotas for November 2023

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	Intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
5 <sup>th</sup>	Colin Thompson	Wendy Benson	Ann Bettess	Robert Harding	Chris Shelley/ Elaine Matejtschuk
12 <sup>th</sup>	Richard Bainbridge	Charles Bennett	Malcolm Benson	Pauline Shelley	Ann Gajda/ Tom Goss
19 <sup>th</sup>	Cara Heafey	Liz Barry	Barbara Joiner	Malcolm Benson	Moira Watson/ Peter Devlin
26 <sup>th</sup>	Mark Williams			Chris Shelley	Ellen Webster/ Ann Bettess

Dates	Organist
5 <sup>th</sup>	Jeff Clark
12 <sup>th</sup>	Frances Simpson
19 <sup>th</sup>	Jeff Clark
26 <sup>th</sup>	Frances Simpson



# Commitment for Life

As many of you know, Wheatley URC is registered as a 'Commitment for Life' church. Just in case you are unsure, 'Commitment for Life' is the United Reformed Church's global justice programme. It enables and encourages congregations to pray, advocate and take action for the most vulnerable people. Each church chooses one of the three areas covered by the programme. At Wheatley we support the work going on in Zimbabwe as well as having our own Zimbabwean project with our connection and support for the **Falcon School**.

**Please keep up to date** by reading the information booklet enclosed with your newsletter. If you can, would you please donate towards this crucial work, to which we are committed, over the next few weeks, using the usual on-line banking channels, making sure you mark it up, 'C4L'. **If your donation is in the form of a cheque, please make it payable to Wheatley URC, with C4L on the back.**

*In addition, Robert can supply you with a small collecting box to keep at home, into which you could put any small change you have. In the last few of years this has amounted to around £250.*

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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 2023-24 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.

# Christine Erica Bainbridge

Drop in to a Working Studio,  
3 Barns Close, Holton, OX33 1 QB

Two weekends:  
Nov 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>. Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>.

1pm – 5pm

or to visit at other times phone 01865 872868

Colourful paintings, sketches, cards and  
refreshments.



# Falcon School .... Don't Cry 'Fowl' .....

Following Kevin Snyman's Commitment For Life 'report' and video from the Falcon school, and especially Wilbert's return following his sabbatical, we are a lot clearer (for now!) on the next priorities for the school.

**Longer term:** during Wilbert's visit it was agreed that the essential need is to provide additional teacher accommodation in order to attract more high quality teachers prepared to accept low remuneration (circa \$50 per week).

So encouraged by a recent generous donation and in combination with our last donation for 'the new teacher's lodgings', plans changed and a start has been made on the construction of 2 semi-detached two bed room 'apartments' (see photo of footings).

Building work will be resumed when more significant funds become available (prayers all round!) ... which the '**Fowl Run**' project outlined below should contribute towards.



**Shorter term (now, through 2024)** there are three important projects we can potentially consider:

1. The development of a **students' vegetable garden** both as a 'learning facility' and as a cost-saving source of nutrition for children and staff (see photo above showing preliminary pupils' practice!)

2.Improving the **computer resources** ('lap tops', software) for students, which is imperative given that use of computers is now mandatory in Zimbabwean schools but without any central support funding.

3.And finally, and **MOST IMPORTANTLY NOW**, the completion of a '**Fowl Run**' to help raise chickens from ('bought-in') chicks and sell them on at a profit over 6 week cycles .....

..... the brick structure for the fowl run has just been completed and **our target is to donate \$1400 (£1140) as soon as possible** to cover the cost of metal roofing sheets, metal bars for exposed ventilation areas, and associated labour.

The **good news** is that we already have raised 80% of this target since our last donation in June, so a final 'push' in the next 2 months should hopefully get us there!



Our help will be really important in supporting the Falcon School in their first real steps towards some sort of limited 'self-funding' .....

.... the Falcon pupils join us in thanking you for your continued support in their crucial school development!

**Your Care for the World Team**

~\*~



***High Street,  
Wheatley, OX33 1UE***

**CHURCH CONTACTS**

*Associate Minister: Revd. Cara Heafey*  
*Email: [caraheafey@hotmail.com](mailto:caraheafey@hotmail.com)*

*Church Secretary: Phyllis Williams*  
*email: [secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk)*

*Church website: [www.wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://www.wheatleyurc.org.uk)*