

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



March 2024

# Covering Thoughts

*In my career as a teacher there was always the pressure to move forward, to adopt new teaching methods, to adapt to a multicultural society and to keep abreast of technology.*

*We can feel the same pressure within the church community. We might ask ourselves if we are doing enough, or are we called to take up new responsibilities and to begin new initiatives? There is nothing wrong with this, indeed discussions on church away days consider these questions. As individuals when the right opportunity suited to our skills presents itself we may feel confident to take up the challenge and gain satisfaction from it.*

*However as the years go by it may be difficult to find the energy to initiate something new. It was therefore refreshing to read Pastor Steve's response to Jesus' words: Follow me.*

*Sometimes the call is to stay.  
Not to head off on some new adventure  
but to work through where you're at,  
to make peace, to mend a relationship,  
to endure a struggle, to fulfil faithfulness.  
Sometimes Jesus needs you most crucially  
right where you are, to be his vessel  
in exactly what you are doing, with new love,  
to accompany him where you always go,  
to do the same old thing with new light,  
to bear grace, even at home.*

*The cover painting is my attempt to put this advice into practice. I chose three things in my kitchen and enjoyed painting them in a contemporary way.*

**Christine**



## Pastoral Letter - “More Birthdays”

In a previous pastoral letter I drew attention to birthdays especially recalling the celebration of landmark birthdays of the older generation. This year my focus has switched to a younger cohort. At the beginning of the year, twin grandsons Edward and Harry were 18 and the next day, their cousin Rosie was 20. In celebration of the latter, Rosie’s elder sister invited friends and family to offer a piece of advice for someone entering adulthood. She was going to collate the advice and produce an illustrated version as a present. I chose a message reflected in a Chinese Proverb “If you want happiness for an hour—take a nap. If you want happiness for a day—go fishing. If you want happiness for a year—inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime—help someone else.”

It was shortly after this, whilst browsing through my bookshelves, that I rediscovered a book published a few years ago “The Character of Virtue, Letters to a Godchild” by Stanley Hauerwas, an American theologian and ethicist. His published work and teaching encompasses political and philosophical theory as well as virtue ethics. One of his common messages relates to the Church in that he believes it acts as “a community of character that forms Christians in the likeness of Christ.”

In 2002 he was invited by a friend and colleague to be Godfather to his son and to celebrate this relationship by writing to him a letter each year on the anniversary of the baptism focusing on a particular virtue. In all there are 16 letters which are challenging to an adult let alone a child but which he hopes “that when you are older, you’ll read these letters and may discover a sentence here and there which helps you name the virtues that constitute your life.”

In his letters Hauerwas lists four cardinal and three theological virtues namely prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, faith, hope, and love. He also identifies ways in which other habits are components of a virtuous life which steer us between excess and defect. Thus neither sloth nor hyperactivity are virtues - even the hyperactive person values nothing for fear that taking time to enjoy something may diminish the value of ‘doing’. The mean between sloth and hyperactivity is peace within oneself.

His list of letters includes kindness, truthfulness, friendship, patience, hope, justice, courage, simplicity, constancy, humility, temperance, generosity and faith. Interestingly he does not include love or service although the latter is be

encompassed by other virtues. I will not attempt to expand all his 'virtues' but will give a flavour of some of his letters with selected quotes.

The first letter is 'Kindness' because it is something even a child would recognise and he believes "kindness to be the very character of God". He follows this up with 'Truthfulness' something which is currently in short supply in public as well as private life. In discussing this he draws on the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and stresses that truth means we must be what we seem to be both externally and internally. Constancy is not immediately something which one associates with the virtues but he identifies it as a key component of some English literature especially Austen and Trollope who were great "moralists" and can be defined simply as being true to oneself. "A person of constancy can be trusted to be who they seem to be".

Joy is not in itself a virtue but Hauerwas regards it as being a crucial constituent of being virtuous and is one of the characteristics that is associated with the virtues by Paul in his letter to the Galatians (5:22-23). Whilst the Puritan ethos of being virtuous means having to do things you don't want to do, he recognises that it may require sacrifices but also the deep satisfaction that can come from knowing what we have done is right.

One of his final letters is faith. He decries the commonly held notion that being a Christian is "to believe twenty-six impossible things before breakfast" but regards it as a matter of trust in a God who steadfastly cares for his people. Jesus invites us to be his disciples by faithfully following his lead. "That means faith and discipleship are interdependent." Righteousness isn't a matter of belief and works: it is a matter of whether we're faithful followers of Christ.

The final letter is not only addressed to his godson but to any who read his letters. In it Hauerwas reflects on what it means to "be of good character" and concludes "it is not simply a summation of virtues" but that it is "who we are when no one's looking". The Character of Virtue is a challenging book for an 'adult' let alone one on the threshold of 'adulthood'. It is not simply a book to commend to a younger generation but one which should call all of us to reflect on how we live our lives.

**Malcolm Benson**



# Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers the members in Charles Bennett’s pastoral group:** Wendy & Malcolm Benson, Alison Broadbent, Barbara & Albert Joiner, Bobbie Stormont & Tom Goss, Catherine & Robert Harding, Pauline & Chris Shelley, Phyllis & Mark Williams.

**Also remember members of the Youth and Families Ministry Team:** Mark Williams, Lucy Betts, Wiebke Keizers, Keith Kidd, Bev Paton, Chris Shelley, Phyllis Williams.



## What’s On – Dates for your Diaries

### Weekly

		Contact
Monday 9.00	Mindfulness Sitting Group	Mark Williams <a href="mailto:jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com">jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com</a>
Thursday 9.00	Mindfulness Sitting Group	Mark Williams
Friday 10am	Table Tennis	Val Farmer <a href="mailto:val_farmer40@hotmail.com">val_farmer40@hotmail.com</a>

### Monthly

Alternate Mondays	Not So Young Club 5 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup>	Frances Simpson <a href="mailto:frances_simpson@icloud.com">frances_simpson@icloud.com</a>
First Sunday	Tea, 2.30 – 4pm	Ann Bettess <a href="mailto:annsgoog@gmail.com">annsgoog@gmail.com</a>
First Thursday 10am	Prayers for the World	Ann Hardiman Tel: 01865 873485
First & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursdays 10.30am	Coffee Morning	Barbara Joiner <a href="mailto:albarjoiner2@gmail.com">albarjoiner2@gmail.com</a>
2nd Thursday 10am	Memory Cafe	Laurence Devlin <a href="mailto:laurencelalanne99@gmail.com">laurencelalanne99@gmail.com</a>
Second Tuesday	Lunch Club	Laurence Devlin
Third Tuesday	Lunch Club	Catherine Harding <a href="mailto:hardings64@btinternet.com">hardings64@btinternet.com</a>

# Two Big 'Falcon' Fun Events in March

## Sign-Up On Noticeboard Soon!

With the current Computer Resources project having made a really good start by January we are now set for 2 big Falcon School events in March to help them get closer to the target (15 Laptops by May!) and would love you all to share the fun and be involved, as follows:

**ON SUNDAY MARCH 17th ....**

**REVD WILBERT SAYIMANI VISIT + SHARED LUNCH**



Revd Wilbert Sayimani will be attending our service (accompanied by his new wife Regina, their daughters and 'prime mover' Lauren!) In between coffee and our lunch, Wilbert will update us on news from the school.

**SIGN UP PLEASE** on the noticeboard list confirming....

**(a) if you intend to join the lunch and**

**(b) stating the savoury or dessert dish you may wish to contribute.**



**THE FALCON QUIZ (with Pizza supper)  
ON FRIDAY EVENING MARCH 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6.30 for 7pm**

Get ready for an enjoyable evening when we raise funds  
for a **very worthy educational cause**

**(DONATIONS ONLY PLEASE)**

**Two requests:**

**FIRSTLY:** please spread the word to all family and friends to get your team together for the quiz. Maximum 8 per team

**SECONDLY:** to help us cater for the provision of pizzas, please add your **names/numbers in your team to the separate Falcon Quiz list on the notice board**

**BRING YOUR OWN DRINKS (glasses provided)**

**Thank you everyone. Let's have 'Fun for Falcon' in March!**

**Your Care for the World Team**

# Prayers for the World



The Prayers for the World group which meets on the first Thursday of every month grew out of the amalgamation of two other groups. The first was the ecumenical Prayer Breakfast group which used to meet every week on Thursdays at 7.30 am. This was always led by the same person and was followed by a shared breakfast. The second was the group which met on the first Sunday of the month at 8am before the church service and was also followed by breakfast. It was led by a different member of the group each time and often included music and artwork as well as prayers. Both these groups were in existence for very many years.

After Covid the two groups merged and the group now meets in the Mulberry Room from 10am until 10.30am on the first Thursday of each month. Whoever comes usually brings a prayer, a poem, a story or a picture related to concerns for the world, be that personal, local, national or global and afterwards we go to the Hall to join in the coffee morning.

The truly remarkable thing about Thursdays in the life of Wheatley URC is how well used the premises are, starting with Mindfulness which gives way to Prayers for the World which is followed by the coffee morning. The afternoon is taken up by the Community Larder and the monthly Elders meeting. In the evening Wheatley Drama Group occasionally use the hall and in the summer the Elders meet here.

The Awayday last year brought forward the request for quieter, reflective times in the life of our church. Joining the Prayers for the World group is one way of achieving that. Do come.

**Ann Hardiman**





# Blended Service Rotas for March 2024

Date	Worship Leader	Vestry	Welcome	Door Steward	Reader	Prayers
3 <sup>rd</sup>	H.C. Rev Colin Thompson	Robert Harding	Malcolm Benson	Ann Bettess	Andrew Tomson	Malcolm Benson
10 <sup>th</sup>	Richard Bainbridge	Bev Paton	Moira Watson	Angela Holdaway	Bev	Christine Bainbridge
17 <sup>th</sup>	Kate Harford	Ann Gajda	Charles Bennett	Barbara Joiner	Chris Shelley	Tom Goss
24 <sup>th</sup>	Mark Williams	Ellen Webster	Chris Shelley	Marian Mole	~~~	~~~
28 <sup>th</sup>	Maundy	Thursd	Tenebrae	Service	7.30pm	
31 <sup>st</sup>	H.C.Cara Heafey	Moira Watson	Pauline Shelley	Bobbie Stormont	Malcolm Benson	Barbara Joiner

## HOLY WEEK 25-29 March

**Prayers & Breakfast:** Monday, Tues, Wed, Thurs - 8am

**Procession of Witness:** Friday 10am Crown Square

Hot cross buns to follow procession of witness in the URC

## CHURCH AWAY-DAY

**KEEP THE DATE FREE : SATURDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> MAY**

**10am to 4pm**

*An invitation to all to attend a time away to look at  
ways forward for our church*

*A note for your calendar with further details to follow*

# Common Lectionary Readings March 2024

Date	Mar 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Mar 10 <sup>th</sup>	Mar 17 <sup>th</sup>	Mar 24 <sup>th</sup>	Mar 31 <sup>st</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Exodus 20: 17	Numbers 21: 4-9	Jeremiah 31: 31-34	Isaiah 50: 4-9	Acts 10: 34-43
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 19	Psalm 107: 1-3 & 17- 22	Psalm 51: 1-12	Psalm 18: 1-2 & 19-29	Psalm 118: 1-2 & 14-24
<b>New Testament</b>	1Cor. 1: 18-25	Ephesians 2: 1- 10	Hebrews 5: 5-10	Mark 11: 1-11	1 Cor. 15: 1-11
<b>Gospel</b>	John 2: 13-22	John 3: 14-21	John 12: 20-33	????	Mark 16: 1-8

**Mar 3:** The Benedictine Rule is committed to stability, conversion and obedience and these shape five practices: prayer, work, study, hospitality and renewal

**Mar 10:** 'In me there is darkness, but with you there is light' [prayer of Bonhoeffer]

**Mar 17:** Clara Barton founder of the American Red Cross was asked to remember a painful experience but did not do so. Her friend persisted that surely she must remember and Clara said 'I distinctly remember forgetting it'.

**Mar 24:** Do we, by concentrating on the mysterious and the crisis that Mark outlines, avoid the demands made on us as his followers to be peaceable and seek healing?

**Mar 31:** Do not look into the tomb but into the world.

**Richard Bainbridge**

~\*~\*~

*The United Reformed Church  
welcomes you to*

## *Morning Coffee or Tea*



*with Cakes or Biscuits*

*On*

*1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the Month*

*10.30am to 12 noon*

*Bring a friend*

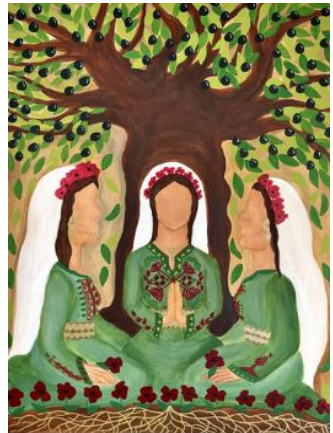


# World Day of Prayer Service

## *“Bear With One Another in Love”*

This year’s service with the theme ‘Bear with One Another in Love’, calls us to bear with each other in love, despite all difficulties and oppression. The programme was prepared by a group of ecumenical Christian Palestinian women quite some time before the current hostilities started. The topic is now even more poignant and relevant. The women wrote the material in response to the passage from Ephesians 4:1-7. They said “We reflected collectively on this theme from the context of our suffering as Palestinian Christian women. We hope to inspire other women around the world to bear with one another in love during troubled times.”

There is a perception/belief around the world that women in the Middle East region are passive, silent, and non-influential. However, the role of women in Palestine (both historically and in modern times) is active and influential. They are steadfast, strong and courageous. Although Palestinian women have played an influential role in society, there is still room for better conditions.



*Come and hear more; join in our worship;  
pray for the situation in Palestine; bring your friends;  
all are welcome.*

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2pm at Wheatley URC**

Refreshments will be provided in the Church Hall after the service.

\*\*\*\*\*



# Saturday Lenten Soup Lunches for **Christian Aid**

Wheatley URC Hall  
February 17 to March 23 12-2pm

**Soup, Serving and Company Needed**

Contact Liz or Tony on 872293 or [ah.barry@btinternet.com](mailto:ah.barry@btinternet.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

~ ~ ~

## Deadline

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March is the deadline for the April Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) . Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont. Please type in Calibri font size 11 with no capitalized headings. Thank you.

## Disclaimer

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

~ ~ ~

# Spring Arrives & 'the earth laughs in flowers'

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*



Thanks to Ellen Webster & Pauline Shelley for these beautiful photographs.







***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)*