

# **WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER**



**April 2024**

# Covering Thoughts

*Some years ago we had a holiday in Switzerland and enjoyed easy access by cable car to walking high in the mountains. That meant that climbing was less strenuous and there was more time for painting. This month's cover is based on a small landscape done at Parsennfurka near Davos.*

*The original sketch focused on capturing details of the distant view, the shapes of mountains and the valley below, but in the current painting I wanted drama and atmosphere. I introduced weather. The threat of storm clouds massing and moving towards the viewer was a start, but then the contrast of sunlight catching the distant valley moved the eye deeper into the distance.*

*The mountains sketched so carefully before were being lost in either the storm clouds or the light. In order to make an effective painting I was having to lose more and more of the detail.*

*It can be hard to recall in detail the wonderful experiences we had in our younger days, and to accept that we can no longer do the things we loved then. But perhaps we can begin to paint a new picture more beautiful than the one before. It may be softer and less distinct but the drama of contrasts gives it power. The experience of living through dark times should direct our attention to the contrasting bursts of sunlight that will continue to reveal new surprises.*

**Christine**

~ ~ ~

# Pastoral Letter

Dear friends

As I write the world outside is visibly greening. Spring has come early this year, which is not a surprise after so mild and wet a winter. The snowdrops are long gone, the daffodils are going over, the first tulips are appearing, and I've already seen the first fledglings and butterflies in my garden. New life is growing all around us. At the same time, the news seems unremittingly grim. Wars and famines are taking their cruel toll in many parts of the world. At a more personal level, people are tested almost beyond endurance by the suffering and death of loved ones. There are no signs of new life there, only, it seems, destruction and misery. So it is that we find ourselves caught between the lifting of the spirits that spring brings with it and the despair that human beings seem incapable of rising beyond self-interest, greed and violence.

The Venerable Bede tells us that Easter takes its name from a pagan goddess of April, Eostre. There's another word for it which is found in some of our liturgies, Pascha, which comes from the Aramaic Paskha and the Hebrew Pesach, meaning Passover. Each Sunday we light a Paschal Candle at the start of worship to signify the presence of the risen Christ among us. It's intriguing to learn that both these words have their roots in a pre-Christian past, pagan and Jewish. New religions have usually overlain their festivals on those of the older ones, partly, I suspect, to help people adjust more easily to new ways. When Cortés and his soldiers captured the Aztec temple where human sacrifice was practised in what is now Mexico City, they placed the High Altar of their Church (now the Cathedral) on the spot where those horrific rituals took place, replacing them with the one sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, made once and for all for all people, the meaning of which was brought into the present moment in the celebration of Mass. The irony, of course, is that in doing so many thousands of Aztecs were slaughtered by Spanish troops and their local allies.

The Easter story does not make any sense without the violence and the horror which leads up to it. It does not pretend that everything is rosy in the garden. It takes our propensity to destroy whatever we perceive as a threat to our own security with the utmost seriousness. It shows us how prone humans are to

persecute those who stand up for justice and how threatened they feel by those who speak out against corruption in high places with a moral integrity they entirely lack. All the deep currents of our destructive selves are there. But alongside them is another story, glimpsed early in the morning in a garden by a grieving woman, encountered on the road by a man who had vowed to stamp out heretics, experienced by a man who would not believe what others had told him unless he could see and touch it for himself. Ever since then, astonished people have discovered Christ in their midst, often when they least expected it. It is why we are here as a church, to be an Easter people, a community which lives by the light of the risen Christ and strives to let its small light shine in the surrounding darkness. The power of Easter isn't like a steamroller that flattens all obstacles in its path. It's more like the seed growing secretly, the treasure hidden in the earth, the coin lost and found, and it is known when forgiveness creates new relationships and loving-kindness reaches out to those who are hurt or lost. For in such experiences the Resurrection stops being something to be argued about and becomes a reality.

May all the blessings of Easter be yours.

**Colin Thompson**



## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers the members in Pauline Shelley's pastoral group:** Liz & Tony Barry, John Hall & Tina Everett, Frances Simpson, Catherine & David Hughes, Elaine & Mike Matejtschuk, Allison Towner, Annette Wright, Jill Cansell.

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



# Christian Aid Week 2024: 12-18 May

## Move 70K in May “seven days, so many ways”

Will you join the year’s Christian Aid challenge to walk, run, cycle, swim, however you move is up to you. Or if moving is not your thing then sing, recite, read and feed. Let’s action 7 ways of being Wheatley URC for Christian Aid this May.

Watch this space!

**Liz & Tony Barry**



## Christian Aid Lenten Soup Lunches 2024

At the time of going to press we have completed five out of six of the Lenten Soup Lunches.

Donations so far for **Christian Aid** amount to £750. Many thanks to all who were generous with their time, their culinary talents and their financial support.

Should anyone wanting to see a breakdown of donations week on week and the final sum sent to **Christian Aid**, please speak to one of us.

**Liz & Tony Barry**



### 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*

# Falcon School News - Visit by Rev Wilbert Sayimani

What a great morning we shared and **here's how it unfolded:**

Our 'surprise' visitor, Kevin Snyman (URC Programme Officer for Global Justice & Partnerships) arrives, via the Mulberry Room, around 9.50am and hurries to take his 'leathers' off (he arrived by motor bike, you see!), while Kate Harford, (our guest minister for the day) prepares for the service alongside him.

Meanwhile, Wilbert and wife Regina, younger daughter Chedda and Lauren, arrive by the main entrance, unavoidably later than planned and get seated in the chapel at 9.59am, not noticing Kevin who is now already miraculously seated quietly in the midst of our congregation.

Rob gives the 'welcome' to all our guests at the start of the service. On mention of Kevin's presence, Wilbert turns with incredulity to see Kevin seated behind him! Following a lively 'communion coffee' we return to the chapel for a Falcon School update.

We start with the recently made latest video of the Falcon School which brings to life our project and underlines the genuine appreciation that Falcon staff and pupils feel for our support



This was followed by Rob reminding us of the significance of Kevin's visit and how our Falcon involvement started, specifically the Zoom meeting with Kevin and 'Commitment for Life' colleagues in June 2020 which convinced us that Zimbabwe should be our main Care for the World priority.

At that meeting Kevin quoted these words of Desmond Tutu regarding African nations which made a big impact on our decision:

***“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”***



What also had a big impact was Kevin agreeing to find us a direct, deserving cause for our support in Zimbabwe, a non-state unfunded Junior School set up by the Rev Wilbert Sayimani outside of Harare.

Kevin and Wilbert attended Rhodes University together (as did Brenda and Graham!) and then, subsequently, Theology college. Technology issues prevented us from showing Wilbert’s talk by projector, so, (to our delight!) Wilbert played his guitar and sung to us a Jesus themed Zimbabwean song , a song that took Bev right back to her childhood days in Zim!



When he spoke Wilbert’s main emphasis was on recognising our support to date for building projects, school equipment, the fowl run and emphasising the vital educational importance of our current project to help start up a ‘Computer Lab’ at the school with the initial purchase of laptops. The desire, going forward, is also to build more teacher



accommodation on-site to ensure that the best teachers available can continue to be recruited.

The talk was capped off by Kevin Snyman praising Wheatley URC for all the amazing work we are doing for Christian Aid, Commitment For Life, Zimbabwe and especially the Falcon School .

Following a fun group photo we enjoyed a lovely shared lunch together which Wilbert has since described as **'an exquisite lunch that of course was put together with all the love that you have'**.

Thank you for all your support and your enthusiastic welcome for Wilbert, Kevin and our other guests and thank you to the tireless team who masterminded the shared lunch and seamlessly cleared up before the Board Games group took over the hall by 2pm. Phew!



## Care for the World Team



# Social Media and Our Church

Did you know that Wheatley United Reformed Church has a Facebook page?

Following a visit to Synod last October, I learned how other churches are using their social media platforms as an outreach strategy. We looked at the top 3, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

*If you imagine church as a home, the website and social media channels are often the first places a potential guest will visit before ever setting foot inside the church. [[blog.outreach.com](http://blog.outreach.com)].*

Modern churches now use social media as a way to spread the Word of God outside the church walls and in the wider world. Facebook has over 2.7 billion active users each month and the largest demographic is made up of people from age 25 to 34. What better way is there to reach this audience? Social media is also an excellent way to interact with other churches and share our faith across the world.

We will be looking at this in more detail on our away day at the Barns Centre in Thame on May 11th. Meanwhile, if you have a Facebook account, take a look at our church page, Wheatley URC. You can post, like and share anything on there and this will help us to reach more people.

If you don't have a Facebook account you can still visit the page, but will not be able to post or comment.

**Pauline Shelley – Comms Team**

~\*~

## Parking on a Sunday Morning

Some of our neighbours in Mulberry Drive are a little concerned about how some cars are parked up there on Sunday mornings. Can we all be careful not to block anyone's driveway and always park thoughtfully.

**Robert Harding**

# Blended Service Rotas for April 2024

Date	Worship Leader	Vestry	Welcome	Door Steward	Reader	Prayers
<b>7th</b>	HC Rev Colin Thompson	Pauline Shelley	Bev Paton	Ann Hardiman	Moira Watson	Liz Barry
<b>14th</b>	WAC	<i>Service</i>	<i>Primary School for</i>	<i>Rev Nigel Hawkes'</i>	<i>Retirement</i>	<i>including HC</i>
<b>21st</b>	Mark Williams	Moira Watson	Ellen Webster	Rob Holdaway	~~	~~
<b>28th</b>	Laurence Devlin	Charles Bennett	Robert Harding	Peter Devlin	Rob Holdaway	Robert Harding

## Common Lectionary Readings April 2024

Date	April 7 <sup>th</sup>	April 14 <sup>th</sup>	April 21 <sup>st</sup>	April 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Acts 4: 32-35	Acts 3: 12-19	Acts 4: 5-12	Acts 8: 26- 40
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 133	Psalm 4	Psalm 23	Psalm 22: 25-31
<b>New Testament</b>	1 John 1:1 -2:2	1 John 3: 1-7	1 John 3: 16-24	1 John 4: 7-21
<b>Gospel</b>	John 20: 19-31	Luke 4: 36b - 48	John 10: 11-18	John 15: 1-8

**April 7<sup>th</sup>:** Congregations with questioners and sceptics should be generous in listening to them.

**April 14<sup>th</sup>:** Mistakes are woven into the fabric of life and can be productive.

**April 21<sup>st</sup>:** If you don't think there is a dominant voice at your meetings just consider whether it might actually be yours.

**April 28<sup>th</sup>:** Christianity existed in Ethiopia long before it was made a state religion by King Ezana of Aksum in the fourth century

**Richard Bainbridge**

# World Day of Prayer 2024

The services for the World Day of Prayer are held on the first Friday in March each year. Our 2024 service at Wheatley URC was attended by nearly 50 people from churches in and around Wheatley. The service had been prepared by a group of Palestinian Christian women two years ago and because of the current situation between Israel and Gaza it was particularly poignant.



The theme for this year was 'I beg you, bear with one another in love' from Ephesians 4. During the service we heard three stories of Palestinian women and sang a specially written song. Its first line is: 'I urge you to be patient with the calling you receive'. As we shared the peace we passed bookmarks to each other illustrated with an olive branch and the words 'Put peace into each other's hands and like a treasure hold it'. Frances played Fred Kaan's hymn quietly and then we all sang it with much feeling.

Following the service refreshments were enjoyed and they included Palestinian Namoura made by Ann Bettess.



Many people were involved with the preparation, the delivery of this service and the refreshments. We are grateful to each one of them and our thanks also go to everyone who attended. The offertory totalled £318.

### **World Day of Prayer Service – Marian Mole**

~~~

## **‘Laughter is the language of the soul’ -**

Pablo Neruda

A man parked his car on a double yellow line and left a note on the windscreen that read; “I’ve circled the block for 20 minutes. I’m late for an appointment and if I don’t park here I will lose my job. Forgive us our trespasses.”

When he came back he found a parking ticket on the windscreen and a note that read; “I’ve circled this block for 20 years, and if I don’t give you a ticket, I’ll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation.”

The following is an extract from an obituary of a High Court Judge. There was a defendant on trial for very serious offences. He had no lawyer. The judge told him that if found guilty he faced a lengthy spell in prison. The judge advised him to get legal representation. The Defendant replied. “I don’t need a lawyer, the Good Lord will take care of me.” The judge replied. “You would be well advised to get someone better known locally.”

**Peter Devlin**

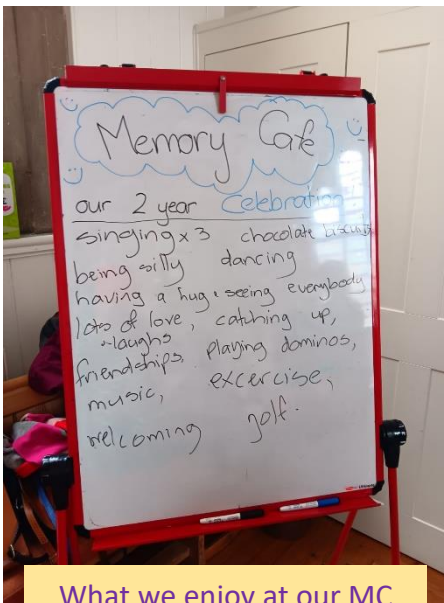
~~~

# Celebration Time – Come On!

The Wheatley Memory Cafe celebrated its 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday on 14<sup>th</sup> March. What a great time everyone had with cake, party games and much laughter.



Cheers to 2 years



What we enjoy at our MC



Our (almost) complete team of volunteers





Party game time. Balloon bonanza!



No Memory Cafe without singing

# 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 4 <sup>th</sup> & 18th	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	Simple Lunch	TBC
Third Tuesday	Lunch Club	Catherine Harding <a href="mailto:hardings64@btinternet.com">hardings64@btinternet.com</a>



## Deadline

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April is the deadline for the May Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk). Paper copy can be given to Debi Kidd. 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.





***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)*