

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



October 2024

Covering Thoughts

In Tate Britain's Clore Gallery there is a room called The Room of Unfinished Works. There you can see some of Turner's paintings that are ethereal, luminous full of mystery and atmosphere. They are already admirable in their own right but they also leave the viewer with an expectancy and questions. Is it imaginable to actively continue where Turner has left off?

When someone close to us dies, especially unexpectedly, it may feel as if he or she are an unfinished life. So much was planned and so many hopes for a future unfulfilled. It seems as if the merry go round of life has been unseasonally stilled. But there are no finished works in the human sphere. There is no way that we can tidy up a life and say it is complete. The beauty of an unfinished life is that it leaves those behind to wonder and to assess, to admire and to imagine. For them there is a choice: to pick up the paint brush to continue what the unfinished work anticipates or to set it aside.

From the time when I was at school, which was within walking distance of the Tate, I have been drawn back time and time again. I have hardly missed an exhibition and am never disappointed. We all "stand on the shoulders of giants" who have challenged, intrigued, inspired us with their lives and their works. This month's painting is inspired by Kyffin Williams a Welsh artist whose work I admire. It is unfinished!

Looking round at our congregation I see a room of unfinished works. We are all in our unique ways building on the foundation of earlier experiences and in the midst of creating a living painting. We can never hope to achieve completion or perfection, but perhaps we will be able to pass on beliefs and values that are worthy of reflection for the next generation.

Christine

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Pastoral Letter

Verses from James chapter 1. 22 -25. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in the mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing.

One of the best things about taking The Guardian newspaper is the standard of the photographs. Each day the middle page spread is either one large photograph or if not then a series of smaller ones. These vary in subject matter from amazing wild life photos to stunning landscapes to pictures depicting religious festivals from across the world to fascinating and unusual street images, in fact the list seems almost endless and the pictures are always amazing and often challenging and thought provoking.

This standard of photography is replicated throughout the paper and a few weeks ago I was struck by a photograph taken in New York. In the foreground a small group of people had parked their bicycles beside one of that city's shorelines and appeared to be relaxing with something to eat and drink. Underneath it explained that this had been called out as 'a controversial picture' by some, probably on some social media or other. What I have yet to explain is that in the background the burning 'Twin Towers' can be seen very clearly. So we know exactly on which day this was taken.

Why was picture deemed to be controversial? Well of course I can only speculate, but given how frequently all sorts of people seem to use social media platforms to express their views and how much this seems to be a regular part of many peoples' lives, it was very likely someone expressing the view that this photo was utterly insensitive. How could anyone possibly think it acceptable to show a group relaxing in the foreground with those terrible events happening just across the water?

When I looked at this picture I got a very vivid, uncontroversial message. It spoke to me saying, 'terrible things are happening around us all the time and no matter what our reaction is, either immediately or later as time progresses, **life has to go on.**

As we are all too well aware as we listen to, or watch the news, or read a newspaper, people in many parts of the world, including our own country, are going through terrible suffering just now. There is no need for me to add examples here, within a few moments we can all summon up a long list in our minds eye.

I find it all too easy to say to myself, *'what can I do, how can I make a difference to any of this?'* **Life has to go on.** But then in the light of the verses from James it appears as though I am called to be a 'doer', rather than just an observer on the sidelines. How can I interpret this message for myself in October 2024? Perhaps I need to be realistic but not too cautious. Perhaps I need to be more prepared to have my voice join with others in calling out injustice, exploitation and cruelty. Is it enough to do what I can within my own sphere of influence, my own local environment, and if so how do I measure that?

What I am sure about is that as a follower of Jesus and his teachings I am called upon to put love at the centre of all I do, to love my neighbour, and try to be generous of spirit and not judgemental, all the while seeking God's guidance and forgiveness. Maybe if I can achieve these, if only to some degree, the answers to my questions will become at least a little clearer. But it's hard isn't it!

Love and blessings Robert Harding

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## **Prayers**

**Please remember in your prayers the members in Marian Mole's pastoral group:** Laurence & Peter Devlin, Cynthia Mancey, Alice Halliday, Ann & Roger Bettess, Nan Hixon, Christine & Richard Bainbridge.

**Also remember members of the Communications Team:** Phyllis Williams, Christine Bainbridge, Debi Kidd, Mike Matejtschuk, Pauline Shelley, Roger Robar, Bobbie Stormont, Moira Watson.

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CHURCH MEETING

SUNDAY 13th OCTOBER, 11.30am

At the AGM in July it was agreed that Church Meetings will be held quarterly, rather than six times per year.

The meetings are open to all friends, but only Church Members may participate in any voting (which happens quite infrequently). We look forward to sharing our church news and hearing your views.

from the Elders

Time to Celebrate

Saturday 19th October, 3pm

In the Church Hall

**Come for tea and cake to celebrate “special” birthdays
for many of our friends this year**

All are Welcome

Deadline

Wednesday 16th September is the deadline for the November Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk . Paper copy can be given to Debi Kidd. Please use Calibri font size 11 & no capitalized headings.

Disclaimer

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

A New Plan for Stipendiary Ministry in Wheatley URC

After Pauline Main retired at the end of 2021, our then Synod Moderator, Clare Downing, was very clear that it could be some considerable time before we could expect to be given permission to call another minister. The URC is wrestling with managing a decline in membership (though not here in Wheatley) and facing a time when many of its ministers are approaching retirement age. Wessex Synod had been asked to put a moratorium on calling ministers into the synod.

In July our local area Synod Pastoral Committee (covering Oxford and Oxfordshire, Reading and Berkshire) wrote to us¹ laying out a new plan for where ministers might be allocated. This plan is based on bringing churches together in 'clusters' with the resource to support a single minister. It is also hoped that the churches in a cluster could find ways of supporting each other.

In the case of Wheatley URC, the suggestion is that a cluster is formed of churches in Oxfordshire to the north and east of Oxford (known for the moment as Cluster 2). This would include: Wheatley URC, Christchurch Thame (LEP²), and the Bernwode Forest Group (Brill, Marsh Gibbon, Twyford Bucks, Banbury The Haven and Banbury St Francis (LEP)). In the past Wheatley URC has had up to a half-time minister and the Bernwode Forest Group also had a half-time minister. Together as a single cluster pastorate we would be able to call a full-time minister³.

Since Wheatley is approximately halfway between Oxford and Thame and so can look either way and at a junction to the M40 it is just a little over 35minutes from Banbury or Twyford so travel times between churches in the cluster would be very little different to that from Wheatley to the Oxford churches.

¹ A copy of this documentation is available at the back of the church if you would like a copy.

² LEP = Local Ecumenical Partnership

³ Arrangements for LEP churches are arranged on a case-by-case basis.

This proposal allows the Oxford group to be clustered with churches to the south of Oxford (Cluster 1). It is a practical suggestion in that it more fairly forms 2 separate full-time pastorates rather than one or two very large 'pools' of ministers for the whole area (a previous suggestion).

There are many questions to be resolved and the elders have taken some time over the summer to reflect on the proposal. They have written to the Pastoral Committee making the following points:

1. In common with many other churches, Wheatley URC would dearly like to move forward as quickly as possible to advertising a vacancy having been without a stipendiary minister for some considerable time but recognise that due attention to process will be essential to a successful outcome.
2. They agree the time has come to rationalise and adapt the current arrangements for deployment of stipendiary ministers to groups of churches. This will inevitably challenge all our churches in different ways (and also our ministers). The cluster model looks a workable and flexible solution.
3. They recognise that it will be important for all parties, both churches and individual church members within churches to support whatever pastorate cluster includes them. This will require careful work to explain the new model and how it can work for them and clear thinking about what it cannot do.
4. They believe it is essential that no particular cluster should go ahead with declaring a vacancy until:
 - a. a consensus has been achieved on the shape of *all* clusters. No church should feel 'bounced' into a pastorate to which they do not feel called.
 - b. The process of call of ministers needs to be defined ensuring all churches in a cluster can express their sense of call to a particular minister.
5. On balance, the option of becoming a member of Cluster 2, as opposed to remaining in a group with Oxford City churches, feels an exciting new challenge. In many ways and for some time Wheatley has felt itself part of Oxford. This proposal effectively adds Wheatley and Thame to the existing Bernwode Forest Group. How would other churches in the cluster feel about this? What difference might it make to an incoming minister?

In the meantime, Wheatley URC elders are:

- updating the church's pastorate profile
- planning discussions to ensure that all church members understand what is being proposed

and suggesting that, if the church decides to explore cluster 2 further, we reach out to other members of the proposed Cluster 2 an invitation to meet each other for an open discussion.

Time will be allocated to fully discuss this proposal in our next Church Meeting on 13th October.

Wheatley URC Elders

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A Notice from the URC Online Zoom Talk

Do you ever wonder how you can be comfortable sharing your faith with others? Are you worried you might be laughed at or dismissed or considered strange? Are you concerned you wouldn't know what to say if someone did want to know more?

Join the URC on-line FaithTalk, a light-hearted conversation exploring how we talk about our faith.

Thursday 3 October at 7.30pm

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Falcon School News - The 'Ups' and The 'Downs'!

They're emerging from winter in the sticks at Dzivarasekwa, near Rainham, close to the Old Bulawayo Road, 20km west of Harare (look it up!); the children at the Falcon School will soon be shedding their school uniform jumpers and beanies which had been warming them up in the *relative* cold (as low as 9 degrees at night!)



And it's a good time to **reflect on the latest status and events** related to the school with some encouraging developments but, equally, some **significant challenges**, so **first the good news**

School size is not growing but stable at around 65 pupils, with at one end some year 7's moving successfully on to state schools and, at the other end, a new intake of first years coming in afresh (you saw a video of them singing and 'shiver dancing' at the school!)

The Zimbabwe Ministry of Education finally visited to register the school which marks good progress and enables important benefits for the future (eg examinations can be undertaken at the school rather than having to pay for Year 7 pupils to sit them elsewhere).

Access to a Minibus ... with grateful thanks to Wilbert's the school has 'acquired' a Minibus to take outlying children from home to school and give lifts to local people for a modest fare!

First laptops! .. despite the unfortunate delay in securely purchasing new laptops for the school, they were delighted to receive a number of 'used' models from the UK, including Bob Webster's would have smiled with approval and appreciation!

And now some of the current challenges!

Teaching staff are in relatively good shape but one key teacher left mid-year... with no vacant available accommodation it was a long daily journey to work in the countryside... combined with no pay during school holidays, there was little option but to leave and work closer to the bigger towns.

A second teacher, who is waiting for additional accommodation to be finished, had temporarily moved off-site as his current 'cabin' was leaking but now back again (hopefully holding on until new accommodation is finished!)

The water borehole has just started to dry up (not helped by the lack of rain in 2023) which is not only a 'supply' but also a potential 'infection' issue which means great care is needed to balance both 'school' and personal care water needs.

SO THE OFTEN CHANGING (!) PRIORITIES MOVING THROUGH TO NEXT YEAR, towards which we have just donated £1000) and agreed the school may use the £1800 reimbursed for the missing laptops, are:

NO1: Finish building the extra teacher accommodation currently up to roof height (urgently required short and long term to attract and keep good quality teaching staff!)



NO2: Overhaul the existing water borehole or **drill a completely new one**, followed closely on hopefully during next year by:

Increasing solar power capability to the next level (only one solar power resource at present).

Purchasing at least one printer/scanner and Getting the new laptops out to the school on Wilbert's next visit!



**What great support from everyone .
Thank you so much!**

Your Care for the World Team

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The Kingdom

At Welford Gardens in September the service was led by the URC. Sybil read a poem by RS Thomas entitled 'The Kingdom'. This poem comes from *Selected Poems* by R. S. Thomas published by Penguin Press. For many of those present it struck a chord. Do look the poem up.

<https://mwerickson.com/2021/11/12/r-s-thomas-the-kingdom-poetry-for-ordinary-time/>

Each month a different Wheatley church leads the service and there are usually over 20 people attending, 10 of whom are residents. Last month Tina baked a loaf to share as the theme was bread.

Ann Hardiman

Blended Service Rotas for October 2024

Date	Worship Leader	Vestry Elder	Welcomer	Door Steward	Reader	Prayers
6th	H.C. Rev Colin Thompson	Ellen Webster	Bev Paton	Elaine Matejtschuk	Barbara Joiner	Robert Harding
13th	Richard Bainbridge	Ann Bettess	Charles Bennett	Liz Barry	Chris Shelley	Ellen Webster
20th	Pauline Maine	Marian Mole	Debi Kidd	Tom Goss	Andrew Thompson	Malcolm Benson
27th	Romily Micklem	Debi Kidd	Chris Shelley	Angela Holdaway	Moira Watson	Marian Mole

Common Lectionary Readings Oct 2024

Date	Oct 6th	Oct 13th	Oct 20th	Oct 27th
First Reading	Job 1:1 & 2: 1-10	Job 23: 1-9 & 16-17	Job 38: 1-7	Job 42: 1-6 & 10-17
Psalm	Psalm 26	Psalm 22: 1-15	Psalm 104: 1-9, 24 & 35c	Psalm 34: 1-8
New Test.	Hebrews 1:1-4 & 2: 5-12	Hebrews 4: 12-16	Hebrews 5: 1-10	Hebrews 7: 23- 28
Gospel	Mark 10: 2-16	Mark 10: 17-31	Mark 10: 35-45	Mark 10: 6-52

Oct 6th: In the patriarchal society no thought is given to how Job's wife feels about the deaths of her children.

Oct 13th: God is more often found in chance encounters with others, in unexpected places.

Oct 20th: David Attenborough has expressed his agnosticism despite all the beautiful and awe-inspiring things he sees because of the bad things he sees.

Oct 27th: C S Lewis explained he did not want his idea of God but he wanted God.

Richard Bainbridge

What's On – Dates for your Diaries

Weekly

Monday & Thursday 9.00	Mindfulness Sitting	Mark Williams jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com
Friday 10am	Table Tennis- Val Farmer	val_farmer40@hotmail.com

Contact

Monthly

Mondays 2, 16, Oct.14 &28	Not So Young Club	Frances Simpson frances_simpson@icloud.com
First Sunday 2.30	Tea - Ann Bettess	annsgoog@gmail.com
First Thursday 10am	Prayers for the World	Ann Hardiman Tel; 01865 873485
First & Third Thurs 10.30am	Coffee Morning	Barbara Joiner albarjoiner2@gmail.com
Second Thursday 10am	Memory Cafe	Laurence Devlin laurencelalanne99@gmail.com
Second Tuesday	Picnic Cub	Val Farmer
Third Tuesday	Lunch Club	Catherine Harding hardings64@btinternet.com



International Bible Reading Notes (Ibra)

Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of Canterbury, who wrote this year's Foreword to the Notes, believes that engaging with Scripture is a crucial part of the most exciting journey any of us will ever embark on.

He writes, 'The word 'new' appears many times in the Bible - new life, new hope, new beginnings: the Christian faith is new every morning'. That seems a very good reason to read part of the Bible each day.

The IBRA Notes are distributed across at least 32 countries of the world and feature powerful reflections about God's love. The contributors

include church leaders, educationalists, business people, theologians and poets, all united by the theme of Hope which has been chosen for 2025. This links in with Richard's sermon in September on Hope.

The Notes are entitled Fresh from the Word and cost £15 for the year. If you would like a copy please sign the list on the notice board or let Ann Hardiman know.



Table Tennis

The Table Tennis club, which meets every Friday from 10 am until noon in the church hall, recently took part in the Societies Fair which was held in St Mary's. There were stalls representing Clubs and Societies as diverse as Angling, Scrabble, Art, Sustainability and Singing.

At the moment the Table Tennis Club has 17 members and as we just have one table, we usually play doubles. If you happened to be walking by outside, you would hear gales of laughter, as we know how to enjoy the game, each other's company and the coffee! Pop in for a visit, several people already do.



Fire Drill

The recent impromptu fire drill provided a useful demonstration of what not to do if the fire alarm is activated. It's not appropriate to stand in the vestibule or porch discussing whether there is a real fire, someone has burnt the toast or whether it is a false alarm. It is not sensible to congregate on the adjacent pavement thus blocking egress of those behind. The proposed muster station was originally at the junction with Farm Close Lane but this is difficult for those with mobility problems. Although it will involve crossing Crown Square, proceeding to the area diagonally opposite the church to the small access road would seem to be the best option, provided care is taken when crossing the road. Finally, and this may be counter-intuitive, the slowest movers should be the last to leave - preferably escorted by a helper.

Thus the elders are proposing the following:

- 1) There will be 'fire marshals' at both exits wearing high viz jackets and both exits should be used provided it is safe to do so.
- 2) Move promptly to the muster station diagonally opposite, checking for traffic.
- 3) Ensure help is provided for those with mobility problems.
- 4) Do not disappear elsewhere until a head count has been done to ensure all have been accounted for. The steward on duty makes a note of numbers present during the service and should bring the book with them.

Although we have fire extinguishers and blankets, advice from fire safety experts is not to tackle any significant fire unless it seems safe to do so and you are familiar with the equipment, but to immediately dial 999 preferably knowing our post code (OX33 1UE)

Although these measures are specifically for use when there is a congregation present, it is also incumbent on other groups using the church premises to ensure that they are able to adopt similar recommendations.

Malcolm Benson

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High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE

CHURCH CONTACTS

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