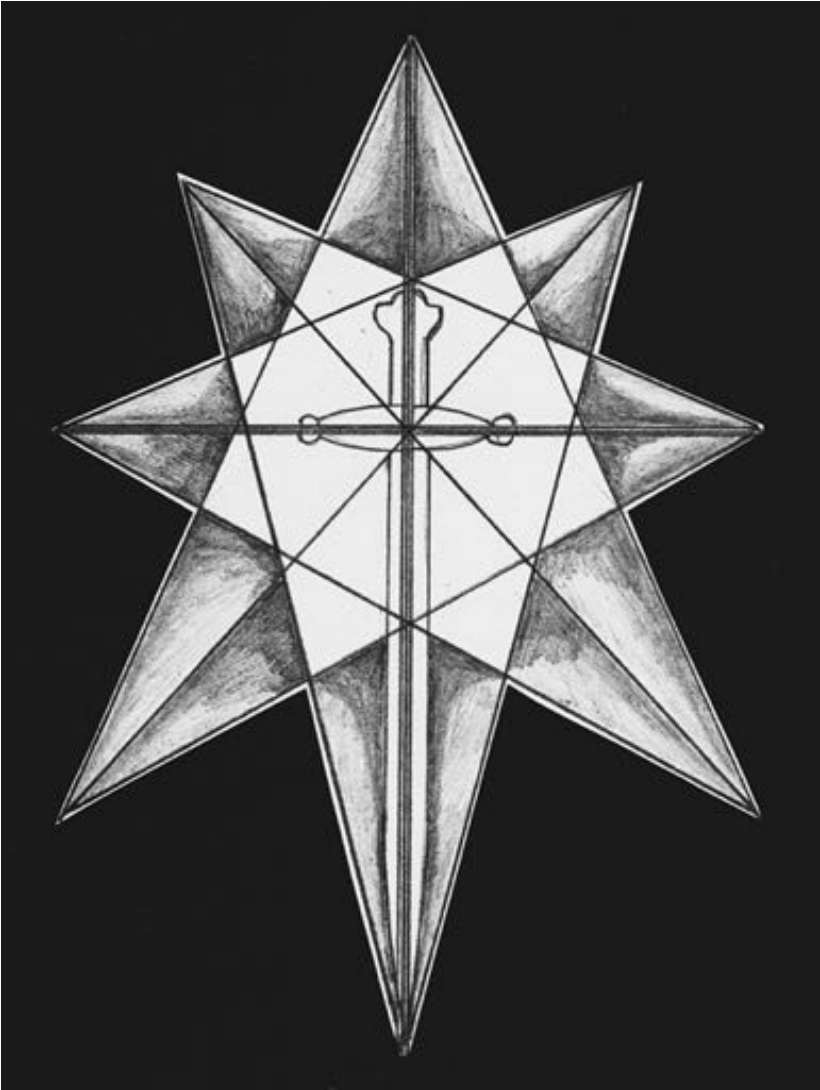


WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



December 2024

Covering Thoughts

This poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow seems a relevant reflection alongside our seasonal theme of Star of Wonder. My apologies for changing the format to fit it on one page.

The Light of Stars

The night is come, but not too soon; and sinking silently,
All silently, the little moon drops down behind the sky.

There is no light in earth or heaven but the cold light of stars;
And the first watch of night is given to the red planet Mars.

Is it the tender star of love? The star of love and dreams?
O no! From that blue tent above, a hero gleams.

And earnest thoughts within me rise, when I behold afar,
Suspended in the evening skies, the shield of that red star.

O star of strength! I see thee stand and smile upon my pain;
Thou beckonest with thy mailed hand, and I am strong again.

Within my breast there is no light but the cold light of stars;
I give the first watch of the night to the red planet Mars.

The star of the unconquered will, he rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still, and calm, and self-possessed.

And thou too, whosoe'er thou art, that readest this brief psalm,
As one by one thy hopes depart, be resolute and calm.

O fear not in a world like this, and thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is to suffer and be strong.

Christine Bainbridge

Pastoral Letter

Love came down at Christmas

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter in the days following the election of the new president of the USA. What change this threshold event will have on the world we can only wonder. My gut instinct is to prepare mentally and emotionally for a more chaotic, uncertain future for us. I hope and trust that kindness, compassion and love will continue, even increase and find expression in this world. This is a sadly misused world beset by increasing uncertainty: inequality, war, political unrest, economic difficulties, climate change, and systemic injustice. It is a place (for example) where we allow the dumping of untreated sewage into our waterways thus killing off our water-based ecosystems. Planet Earth though badly served by us is our only home. It is still seeped in divine love, if we can find a place within us where we can realise it.

Thankfully, our church is committed to supporting action on social justice, equality, and compassion in the world and to the pursuit of action on climate change policy. Part of our church mission is to embrace diversity in all forms—racial, gender, economic, and theological. Our church is a centre of hospitality and warm generous welcome to all. We give thanks that all our gifts and talents go towards making it so.

Christmas is the time in the church calendar to choose to enter more consciously into an experience of hope, love, peace and joy. We can once again welcome the newborn Jesus into our inner world as well as to our communal sanctuary. During advent we engage in reflective preparation for the arrival of Jesus at Christmas time. The themes of hope, peace, joy, and love are explored in our services over this four-week period. The vulnerable infant Jesus a symbol of the divine love offered to this earth

Regardless of our diverse backgrounds and histories we are connected more closely than we often realise in spirit and body. Matthew's verse on the coming of the infant Jesus illuminates to me this aspect of the call to be in the world in a particular way (God is with us).

Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, (which translated means, "God with us.") Matthew 1:23

I come from an Irish Catholic background which generally indoctrinated its children into an experience of God as the omnipotent Being delivering judgement and punishment, guilt, retribution (reinforced with some now very illegal teaching methods). It has always been a paradox to me that whilst God was supposed to be a God of love, what was shown and acted out by many religious professionals of that time was quite the opposite quality.

It was a sorry time for Ireland and much damage was done to its people. But there is better news! Christmas is coming again, reminding us that the presence of divine love continually provides potential to help us live more completely. In **Christina Rosetti's** beautiful poem (which has also been set to music - see YouTube) the world is infused by the Divine Mystery, Spirit, Love, Light and Peace and Wonder - God with us.

Love came down at Christmas

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, love divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, love divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love shall be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and to all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

We all know and will have experienced that life is at times difficult and painful. Sometimes however, like today, as I write, the clouds lift, the greyness disappears, and the world becomes an intensely colourful, beautiful place again filled with grace and love and suddenly I feel more complete in the world. Given the difficulties our world presently faces even moments of such connection to God's grace can be supportive and regenerative to our spirit and mental health. Small acts of kindness, attention to personal relationship and generosity to others – and to ourselves can connect us all to God's presence in our lives.

Christmas Blessing

May there be as much love in your heart when you look inwards towards your own child of history as when you behold the vulnerable infant Jesus.

We give thanks for the constant service, hard work, gifts and prayers of all our congregation which make our church such a vibrant and compassionate place to be. I hope that you are looking forward to the celebrations soon to be shared with family, friends, and at church during this Christmas period.

Happy Christmas to all!

Tom Goss

Blended Service Rotas for December 2024

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	Intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
1st	Colin Thompson	Catherine Harding	Robert Harding	Chris Shelley	Marian Mole/ Peter Devlin
8th	Richard Bainbridge	Tom Goss	Christine Bainbridge	Charles Bennett	Pauline Shelley/ Angela Holdaway
15th	Laurence Devlin	Mike Matejtschuk	Tom Goss	Marian Mole	Ellen Webster/ Rob Holdaway
22nd	Colin Thompson Carol Service 6pm			Ellen Webster	Marian Mole/ Elaine Matejtschuk
25th	Mark Williams			Ann Bettess	Bev Paton/ Liz Barry
29th	Pastoral Care Ministry Team			Charles Bennett	Debi Kidd/ Bobbie Stormont

Dates	Organist
1st	Jeff Clarke
8th	Frances Simpson
15th	Jeff Clarke
22nd	Jeff Clarke
25th	Frances Simpson
29th	Frances Simpson

Deadline

December 12th is the deadline for the January 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.

~*~

Dates for Your Diaries

Weekly

Mon & Thurs 9.00am Mindfulness Sitting Group
Mark Williams - jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com
Friday 10am Table Tennis
Val Farmer – val_farmer40@hotmail.com

Monthly

Alternate Mondays Not So Young Club
(9th, 16th) Frances Simpson – frances_simpson@icloud.com
First Sunday Teas - 2.30-4pm
Ann Bettess – annsgoog@gmail.com
First Thurs. 10am Prayers for the World
Ann Hardiman – 01865 873485
First Thurs. 10.30am Coffee Morning
Barbara Joiner – albarjoiner2@gmail.com
Third Thurs. 10.30am Coffee Morning
Barbara Joiner – albarjoiner2@gmail.com
Second Thursday 10am Memory Café
Laurence Devlin – laurencelalanne99@gmail.com
Second Tuesday Picnic Club
Val Farmer – val_farmer40@hotmail.com
Third Tuesday Lunch Club
Catherine Harding – hardings64@btinternet.com

~*~

Common Lectionary Readings

December 2024

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	1 st	8 th	15 th	22 nd	25 th	29 th
First Reading	Jeremiah 33: 14-16	Malachi 3: 1-4	Zeph. 3: 14-20	Micah 5: 2-5a	Isaiah 9: 2-7	1 Samuel 2: 18-20 & 26
Psalm	Psalm 25: 1-10				Psalm 96	Psalm 148
New Test.	1 Thess. 3: 9-13	Phil. 1: 3-11	Isaiah 12: 2-6 Phil. 4: 4-7	Hebrews 10: 5-10	Titus 2: 11-14	Col. 3: 12-17
Gospel	Luke 21: 25-36	Luke 1: 68-79 Luke 3: 1-6	Luke 3: 7-18	Luke 1: 46b-55 Luke 1: 39-45	Luke 2: 1-14	Luke 2: 41-52

Dec 1st - Jeremiah speaks into the bleak experience in the sixth century BC.

Dec 8th - Zechariah's song is known to many as the Benedictus.

Dec 15th - Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of the reforming king Josiah (640-609 BC).

Dec 22nd - An art competition was held on the theme of peace. The winner was a bird protecting its young in a gale.

Dec 25th - Not everyone finds a 'place' at Christmas.

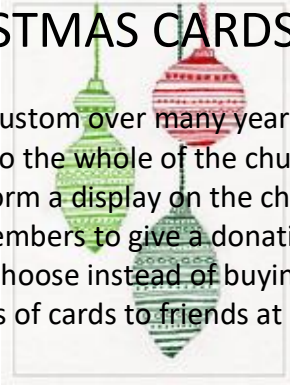
Dec 29th - This is the only account in the Gospels of an incident from the childhood of Jesus.

Richard Bainbridge



CHRISTMAS CARDS 2024

It has been our custom over many years to send just one Christmas card to the whole of the church membership. The cards then form a display on the church noticeboard. This enables members to give a donation to whichever charity they choose instead of buying and sending dozens of cards to friends at church.



~ ~ ~

Amnesty International ‘Write for Rights’ Campaign 2024

The Care for the World team would like to encourage everyone to take part in this scheme again this year. The letters and cards people like us send are hugely appreciated by those in prison for their political beliefs and the stands they take against unjust and often corrupt governments. It is just a small action we can take in our troubled and divided world.

We will provide all the information you need during coffee time on Sunday 8th December, but you can also visit [amnesty.org.uk/write](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write) beforehand if you wish.

Robert Harding on behalf of ‘Care for the World Team’

~ ~ ~

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers all members of Debi Kidd's pastoral group:

Charles & Sue Bennett, Colin Thompson, Herthe Thompson, Angela & Rob Holdaway, Ellen Webster, Cara Heafey & Carolyn Wheeler, Jeff Clarke and Ann & Norbert Gajda.

Also remember members of the Hospitality Ministry Team: Allison Towner, Ann Gajda, Catherine Harding, Barbara Joiner, Debi Kidd, Ann Wild and Jen Yeates.



High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE

CHURCH CONTACTS

Associate Minister: Revd. Cara Heafey
Email: caraheafey@hotmail.com

Acting Church Secretary: Pauline Shelley
email: secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk

Church website: www.wheatleyurc.org.uk