

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



September 2022

Covering Thoughts

The images from the new James Webb telescope fill the mind with wonder. The incredible colours and shapes, light and mystery inspire me to paint abstracts, and the cover picture is one result. It was painted recently after one of my escapes to the coast.

I began sketching in Weymouth sitting on the beach with distant coastline and harbour views. But the remainder of my stay was spent on Portland Bill which for me is the equivalent of using the James Webb telescope.

For those of you who have been to Portland you will know that it is an island with sea defences creating harbours on one side and open ocean on the other. It is joined to the mainland by Chesil Beach which stretches for some 18 miles alongside the coast. My day began at sea level stopping first at Quiddles cafe for coffee before climbing up the cliff side alongside Fortuneswell where the houses seem to be tumbling down the hillside and competing for space on a slope so steep that even walking the streets is a challenge.

In my experience the views from the top are as breathtaking as those from the James Webb telescope, and available to any who choose to stop and enjoy them. Walking and sketching the views is totally engrossing. There is a combination of groundedness in the massive stones in the abandoned quarries and an experience of exhilaration and infinity from being at such a height.

The hot sunny weather allowed me to end the day sketching on the shingle of Chesil Beach. My eye had been attracted to a group of boats that morning and I returned to study them.

We can be grateful to the scientists who reveal the wonders of the universe to us, but equally it is available to each one to wonder at what is close at hand. Surprisingly the memory I took from that evening was not the hardness of the pebbles I was sitting on but the enormity of their number, banked high and stretching along the coast for miles.

Christine

Pastoral Letter

Happiness, Gratitude and Celebration

Do you remember how stunned we all were when lockdown was imposed on 23 March 2020? We realised that it was an unknown and unprecedented road we embarked upon but we had no idea how weird and difficult the whole experience was to become so quickly: streets, roads and motorways totally deserted, every church, shop, restaurants, theatres and pubs closed with dire consequences on so many livelihoods, all private businesses and public services stopped (except the NHS of course), all weekly activity, trips and entertainment cancelled, shopping in supermarkets rationed, close contact with friends or extended family forbidden... Instead, an almost daily dose of those strange new “zoom windows”, TV news dominated by the ghastly graph of the infection progress, detailing at national and international level the increasing number of dead, one hour of walking, cycling or running per day as only allowed exercise, too much binge-watching on Netflix series and the constant use of face masks and hand sanitizers.

No socializing, no celebrations, no joyful reunions, no touching, no hugging... It was lonely, boring, mournful and spirit-crushing, but we survived, and we learned or re-learned that even in dire circumstances, there is often a silver lining, if we are able to allow ourselves to be “surprised by joy” to use C.S. Lewis lovely expression. So, we came to wonder at the total lack of pollution which transformed ordinary flowers, bushes, and trees into marvels of nature, such as our white wisteria which had never been so abundant and heady smelling before (or since!). We became very aware of the total lack of traffic rumble which allowed clear-as-a bell daily concerts by birds we never heard before. We made significant savings as there was nothing to spend money on!!! Thanks to technology, some of us reconnected with people living far away in a different time zone and with whom we had lost touch over many years. I know of several people who as a direct consequence of this, now have a “Happy Hour Zoom Reunion” with long lost cousins or friends every week. Community spirit was definitely strengthened, as people pull together to help the needy and the vulnerable.

There was also more time to pray, to reflect and to meditate, whatever form those took. One example for me was regularly dipping in and out of a wonderful little book called *“Celebrating life: Finding Happiness in Unexpected*

Places” written 20 years ago by Rabbi Jonathan Sachs, one of the most remarkable thinkers of our time. The main idea of the book, particularly relevant to our circumstances then, is that whatever you are going through and whatever problems you have to face, *real happiness is not having what you want but appreciating and celebrating what you have*, in other words not taking things for granted, which in our culture of immediate gratification for any want, is often the case.

So, gratitude, defined by Sachs as “the acknowledgement that what we have, is a gift” is a powerful spiritual discipline that, like all disciplines, we should work hard at practicing because, he adds, “it is to the soul what serotonin - the chemical registering a state of wellbeing - is to the brain!” To be grateful to God”, writes Sachs, “is to know that I do not have less because my neighbour has more, I am not less worthwhile because someone else is more successful. Through prayer, I know that I am valued for what I am, I learn to cherish what I have, rather than be diminished by what I do not have”. And he concludes, “the daily discipline of thanking God for what we are and what we enjoy having, is the most ancient form of what is today called cognitive therapy. Making a blessing over life is the best way of turning life into a blessing.”

Laurence Devlin

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Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members in Robert Harding’s pastoral group: Wendy Bailey, Charles & Sue Bennett, Barbara & Albert Joiner, Ellen & Bob Webster, Christine & Richard Bainbridge and Phyllis & Mark Williams.

Also remember members of the Communications Team: Christine Bainbridge, Debi Kidd, Moira Watson, Ellen Webster, Phyllis Williams and Bobbie Stormont.

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Loving Insight from a Robot



I'm not usually keen on reading 'futuristic' books but as '**Klara and the Sun**' was written by one of my favourite authors, Kazuo Ishiguro, I just couldn't resist.

I am only sharing this because apart from it being (in my opinion) a beautiful novel, out of the total 340 pages there was one small paragraph in particular that really stood out and imprinted itself on my brain ... no, actually, in my heart.

To explain briefly: Klara is an 'Artificial Friend' who, in the future times in which this novel is set, can be purchased to keep one's child company or even (in the case of this book) to befriend and acquire and 'continue' the total personality of a young person who may be terminally ill. In 'Klara and the Sun' Josie is the dying person who Klara is charged with identically replacing when she dies.

But after the death of Josie, Klara considers herself unsuccessful in totally substituting herself for Josie and her insight is stunning, as her conversation with a friend about Mr Capaldi, Josie's 'clinician' shows. Klara says:

'Mr Capaldi believed there was nothing special inside Josie that couldn't be continued. He told Josie's mother he'd searched and searched and found nothing that couldn't be 'imitated'.

*But I believe now he was searching in the wrong place .. **there was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her.** That's why I think now Mr Capaldi was wrong and I would never have succeeded'.*

That's the line. One single line out of 340 pages. That is, the '**something special**' inside Josie that could not be 'continued' through Klara was not inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her.

Think about it. I still am 3 months after reading 'Klara and The Sun'!

Robert Holdaway

Oxford Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride Event Saturday 10th September 2022

This annual fundraising event day for the important work of helping to keep our ancient churches (and some not so ancient) open, against the ravages of time and decay, is again almost upon us.

I am unable to lead a walk between some of our local churches this year as we shall be away. However, if anyone else would like to take up the challenge, I am sure OHCT would be most grateful. I have a sponsor form etc.

WELCOMERS - As usual we shall need a team of folk to act as “welcomers” to riders and striders visiting our church during the day, between 10.00 am and 6.00 pm, please. It involves being in the church hall for an hour to sign in the visitors, mark their sponsorship sheets, offer them refreshments, direct them to the loo and answer any questions they may have about our church or other churches nearby. Ideally, two people are required for each hour of the day. Remember, you could also be sponsored for just sitting there! A signing up sheet is in the hall, if you are prepared to help in this way. For any queries or sponsorship forms, please contact me.

Tony Barry (872293 or ah.barry@btinternet.com)

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Deadline

Wednesday September 14th 2022 is the deadline for the October Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk Paper copy can be given to Debi Kidd. If you type your contribution and send via email, please type it in Calibri font and 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

Monday 8:45	Mindfulness Sitting Group (contact Mark Williams 876288)
Thursday 8:45	Mindfulness Sitting Group (contact Mark Williams 876288)
Friday 10am	Table Tennis (contact Val Farmer)

Monthly

Alternate Mondays	Not So Young Club (contact Frances Simpson) September 5 th , 19 th
First Sunday	Tea, 2.30 – 4pm (contact Ann Bettess 874353)
First Thursday	Meditation 10:00am, 10.30am Coffee (contact Liz Barry & Barbara Joiner)
Second Thursday	Memory Cafe (contact Laurence Devlin)
Second Tuesday	Lunch Club (contact Laurence Devlin)
Third Tuesday	Lunch Club (contact Catherine Harding)



‘Keeping the Faith’

‘Keeping the Faith’ is the title of a recent article in Prospect magazine, written by Jane Shaw who is Principal of Harris Manchester College. In it she laments the impending doom for small parish churches faced with declining attendances and lack of money. Many are of architectural and historic interest but are gradually falling into disrepair. As one vicar plaintively writes, “Appreciate what you have before you realise it’s what you had”. Whilst her focus is mainly on the Church of England, much of what she says applies equally to many other denominations. Her most important question is what and who is the church for? Is it for all who might have need for it, or is it a private members club which you have to sign up to before being accepted? To be a proper Christian you have to believe a specific set of doctrines about salvation.

Whilst a majority of the population do not believe in ‘God’ a significant minority seek some understanding of spirituality. Jane quotes Bertrand Russell

writing 100 years ago whereby people still seek the “quality of infinity” with “an insight deeper than the piecemeal knowledge of our daily life”. As one way forward she cites the example of St James church in West Hampstead which not only has a worshipping space but hosts a post office, cafe, shop, and children’s play area serving a bustling community, full of people all day. The concept which lies behind this is one of service to the community and as a result witnesses to God’s love, not creators of disciples. It is a model which we have at least in part tried to emulate not simply in what church members provide in the way of lunch clubs, memory cafe, Sunday teas, not so young club etc but also in extending our outreach to other groups. It has been one of the motivating factors in my role as booking secretary and is one which St Mary’s hope to adopt as part of their plans after renovation. Groups using our church include a mum’s and baby music group, choirs, drama groups, youth groups, mindfulness sessions, table tennis and more recently, the Wheatley wine circle, Allotment Association and Village Produce Association.

40 years ago the church had a social committee which focused on social activities both within the church and the wider community. Some of this function was taken over by the hospitality ministry team, some by Care for the World and some by the Pastoral team. Perhaps now is the time to pool our resources and work with other groups in the village to respond to unmet needs. Ideas, off the top of my head, include a monthly ‘repair workshop’ - not quite the same as the television programme, or to provide a warm venue in the winter for those who cannot afford to keep their homes warm. Other suggestions welcome.

I have quoted widely from Jane Shaw’s article, I hope without infringing copyright. A copy of the full article is on the hall notice board.

Malcolm Benson

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The Newbigin Pioneering Hub

Introducing the ‘Newbigin Pioneering Hub’ to train lay pioneers in church and community contexts.

A collaboration between the **United Reformed Church, the Congregational Federation, Church Mission Society and the Seedbeds** organisation and named in honour of the inspirational URC Minister and mission theologian Lesslie Newbigin, this new venture is open to all and is part of celebrating the past 50 years of the United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation.

Do you see..

- New possibilities?
- A way where there is no way?
- Ideas for mission in your community that just might work?
- A new community of disciples where there is none?
- How your local community can flourish in God’s love and shalom, but know this can’t happen alone?

The Hub is the space for training lay pioneers through the certificate and also for supporting those engaged in pioneering work. The desire is to bring people together to support one another- sharing experience and expertise in the Hub as well as offering support to those engaged in training.

To find out more see <https://seedbeds.org/newbigin-pioneering-hub-2/>

Phyllis Williams



Dance Chapel

‘Our prayers come alive as we lose ourselves in the dance’- John Coleman

We are still moving, we are still dancing, we are still dancing our prayers on behalf of one another, our communities and the world! Eight women, mainly from our church community and locale but not entirely, have gathered now for 3 ½ years to pray together through gesture, movement, dance, voice and stillness. We moved onto zoom during covid and this continues to be a safe and nourishing way to gather with ease.

We share our hopes, dreams, intentions, joys and concerns; we dance in response to poems from different cultures and faith traditions; and we dance on behalf of one other, whatever we would like prayer for, letting go of the need for words and let our wise bodies 'move' the 'talking'.

We also learn specific dances from 'Abbey of the Arts' Prayer Cycle, choreographed by Betsey Beckman who led one of our dance zoom sessions earlier this year from her home in the States. What a treat that was!

This year we have had the most wonderful gatherings, dancing our prayers, dancing life and celebrating creation in each other's beautiful gardens. This has been such a joy and so freeing.



Dance Chapels happen around the globe and were developed by Cynthia Winton-Henry of 'The Hidden Monastery' and 'InterPlay'. It is quite extraordinary knowing that so many people in other countries are also creating spaces '*where we hold sacred the wisdom of the body, dance, sing, and share poetic guidance from our diverse spiritual lineages.*' We may not all be together physically but prayer has no boundaries, the grace of God flows through all life everywhere.

Reflections from dance chapel:

Dance chapel is such fun. It delights and nourishes me. It calms, enriches, excites and restores me.

Jen Yeates

Dance takes me from thinking into feeling. It can be the rhythm or the melody which ripples through my body and expresses itself in gestures. These gestures are my prayer for others - for the world. These gestures project warmth and healing to someone, or bring light to a dark situation. For myself they simply

allow grief to flow in and through me and best of all is the receiving of joy and peace to energize me for action.

Christine Bainbridge



If you love to dance, are curious about dancing as a way of praying without words then 'come and see'. We would love to have you join us. All are welcome.

Bobbie Stormont

bobbiestormont@gmail.com

BR: Laurence, Fariba, Ann FR: Jen, Christine, Bobbie, Liz (Allison could not be with us on this occasion)
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Living Presence — Rev Nigel Hawkes

(shared by Ann Hardiman)

Living Presence,
bewildering and mysterious in your ways,
into whose silence we hurl all that is unresolved,
in the midst of our questions deepen our trust and in the midst of our trust
keep our questions alive,
that our eyes may be opened
to your trustworthiness
and our hearts purified to will one thing,
that we may indeed follow your way
through and beyond all that perplexes us
from which we cannot escape.
We pray this after the pattern of Jesus
and in the power of the Spirit.

Blended Service Rotas for Sept 2022

Date	Worship Leader	Vestry	Welcomer	Door Steward	Reader	Prayers
4th	HC Rev Colin Thompson	Ann Gajda	Malcolm Benson	Charles Bennett	Ann Bettess	Malcolm Benson
11th	Richard Bainbridge	Elaine Matejtschuk	Liz Barry	Ann Bettess	Christine Bainbridge	Barbara Joiner
18th	Mary Rose Gibson	Moira Watson	Robert Harding	Allison Towner	Ann Hardiman	Tom Goss
25th	Laurence Devlin	Malcolm Benson	Ann Gajda	Marian Mole	Malcolm Benson	Robert Harding

Common Lectionary Readings Sept 2022

Date	Sept 4th	Sept 11th	Sept 18th	Sept 25th
First Reading	Deuteronomy 30: 15-20	Exodus 32: 7-14	Amos 8: 4-7	Amos 6: 1a, 4-7
Psalm	Psalm 1	Psalm 51: 1-10	Psalm 113	Psalm 146
New Testament	Philemon 1-21	1 Timothy 1: 12-17	1 Timothy 2: 1-7	1 Timothy 6: 6-19
Gospel	Luke 14: 25-33	Luke 15: 1-10	Luke 16: 1-13	Luke 16: 19-31

Sept 4th: I must bear my brother's burden [Bonhoeffer].

Sept 11th: Read the parables with the question "Where do you find yourself in the story?"

Sept 18th: A crisis must be identified; a response to it must be planned; The crisis must be confronted, and only then can it be resolved. (Does this remind you of the parable for today?)

Sept 25th: One of the prime dangers of wealth is that it causes "blindness" [John Donahue].

Richard Bainbridge

Falcon News

Writing in July for the August/September newsletter we reported that ‘now’ was a good time at the Falcon School for a momentary ‘breather’, **time to step-back and assess** any finishing touches or improvements that are needed, as well as **deciding the ‘focus’ for the future**.

Well, during Wilbert’s visit out to Harare it was anything but quiet as you will see just from the photos!

- pupils are starting to be instructed on several (‘used’) lap tops that were purchased from donations
- work was completed on kitchen fittings in the new staff accommodation
- and solar panels were at last installed (another external donor) to provide affordable energy to the site.



But there was still time to consider the future!: **The remaining short term completion tasks were clarified** (internal painting, ceiling completion, toilet and bathroom improvement for ‘hygiene’).

We have agreed to donate our most recent accumulated Falcon funds raised towards these tasks, **amounting to £920** (from personal donations and preserves sales).

The **longer term** focus and objectives at Falcon are still being thought through and we will be discussing with Wilbert and Lauren, and within the CFW team, during September.



We will keep you ‘posted’ but thank you once again to all at Wheatley URC for you continued support to the Falcon School.

Your Care For The World Team

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Talk Your Walk

The Yorkshire Three Peaks - by Jim Watson

The Three Peaks comprise Wherside at 736 metres which is not far from Ingleton, Pen Y Ghent at 693 metres - close to Horton in Ribblesdale and Ingleborough at 723 metres which is close to the town of Ingleton. A circular walk or run to climb all three is about 24 miles. In the 1960s when I did the walk this was the traditional method, but fell running has largely taken over since then.

A central point is the Old Hill Inn close to Chapel le Dale on the B6255 - the Ingleton to Hawes road. The inn has been involved in many walking and running events over the years and can be very busy when fell races are organised.

I made two failed attempts to walk the Three Peaks in 1961 and 1962 and one successful attempt in spring 1963. In 1961 I was accompanied by two University friends. We started from Gisburn in Yorkshire by hitch hiking to Ingleton, where our walk started. We reached the Old Hill Inn at lunch time and contemplated what to do as one of my friends had sustained bad heel blisters. A middle-aged client in the pub, visiting from Bradford, suggested he take us to his farmhouse nearby for lunch, and we ended up staying there over night! Then we abandoned the walk and hitch hiked back to Gisburn and Barrowford!

In 1962 just one friend and I tried again. This time from Horton in Ribblesdale where we stayed a night in a 'caravan' owned by a family friend of mine from Nelson. Pen Y Ghent was the first peak we climbed successfully, and from there the target was Whernside. BUT it was raining hard and we came to a raging river which was too dangerous to ford – so we abandoned the attempt, went back to Horton where I had left my Lambretta Scooter and we fled to Barrowford, cold, wet and tired, to stay with my parents.

Together with one friend I repeated the operation in 1963, starting at the caravan in Horton but this time was quite successful and scaled all three peaks!

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Memories Shared – by Christine Jackson

“A lifetime in the shadows” brought back memories and some smiles. My father, William Tombs, had a grocery shop on the London Road, originally started by Keziah Tombs, my grandmother, and both were Chapel stalwarts.

As a very young child during the war, Gran let her bungalow to a Mr and Mrs Preedy and their daughter. All had been missionaries in China prior to the war, when they returned to the UK. The Preedys were very involved in the Chapel work and used to take me to Sunday school, 11:00 am and 3:00pm each week

where Miss Preedy took regular Sunday school classes. Gran, Dad and I always attended the 6:30pm Sunday evening service. Bob Dungey took the collection and Bruce Shepherd and he collected the hymn books afterwards and generally assisted. Gilbert Harris played the organ.

The 'regulars' always sat in the same seats. Marjorie Shepherd and her parents sat in the middle. Mrs Gooding always sat in the front seat and of course all the women wore hats. The Dodds from the local bakery who sat in the back of the Chapel always provided the harvest loaf each year for Harvest Festival. Mrs Pratt who lived next door, always provided special hymn sheets of 'On Valiant Hearts' for the annual Remembrance Service in memory of her son who died just before the Armistice in the final days of the war. The Hintons and Mr Huckster who lived opposite, also provided much of the work back up.

Sunday school was always well attended with sisters Marjorie and Alma Horwood and Vera Trinder (Shepherd) helping with the children's worship and their hymn choruses. There was one occasion when on exiting Sunday school, we were confronted by a man on a bicycle, who yelled at us to get home quickly and lock all the doors as the Canadians at the Shotover camp (to quote him) "had gone berserk and were threatening to smash up the local area around with their tanks". We did as we were told and next day saw the damage – roads smashed up and in the Forest Hill area - gardens and walls crushed. Apparently, the Canadians had completely "lost it" prior to the D-Day landings. At school next day we were forbidden to talk about it and at Sunday school the following week, the warning was repeated.

We did have our lighter moments as well. The Sunday School Anniversary was always 'special' when some of us would be organised into saying a recitation and some would sing a solo during the Anniversary service. At five or six years of age this was all serious stuff! There was always an Anniversary tea which I imagine was not easy to organise in view of the rationing at the time. Of course, the summer was the time for the Sunday School outing - sometimes to Burnham Beeches and sometimes to Bourton-on-the-Water. Happy memories!

I remember there were a number of new ministers - Mr Ives, Mr Cox, Mr Broad and Mr Mackintosh who joined us for a while. He was American and had some new ideas which did not always go down well, then of course we had Charles Brock who married my husband and I some 58 years ago. I think we were his first wedding at the Chapel and our daughter and her husband who celebrate

their silver wedding next week were among the final weddings that Charles Brock conducted! Those years have passed so quickly.

Please keep the church magazine coming! I always enjoy reading it - particularly at the moment as I have only recently been discharged from hospital and my walking is at present somewhat limited and I love reading. Best wishes.

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**To: All members and adherents of
United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships**

Dear Friends,

Is anyone back to normal?

After two years of pandemic and lockdown, and Covid still with us (thankfully, for most, in a much weaker form), we can now worship together in person and find fellowship again. But for most of us it is not simply a return to how it used to be; some people have not returned to church, some have died or become too frail, some churches have closed and others considering it.

Now we have significant European turmoil and its likely effect on fuel and food prices for us in the UK.

Thank God that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13 v.8). Whatever else changes, He is our rock, our cornerstone.

Financially, things were extremely tough for churches in 2021. Plate offerings had collapsed; some regular givers had to reduce or entirely stop giving to support God's work; and those churches which hire out their premises had

seen income from that source disappear. Even those churches where the majority of the giving was by standing order or bank transfer (*if you have not considered regularising your giving in this way, please do – it helps your treasurer significantly*) may have seen a 20%+ drop in income.

If this had been replicated in giving to the M&M Fund in 2021, we might have been faced with a serious financial crisis last year.

But no, through the generosity of individuals, churches and Synods, we can report that income only fell by 4.4%. With a similar reduction in expenditure the M&M Fund result was a deficit of only £80,000 (less than one-half of one percent of income), a deficit that can be comfortably covered by reserves.

So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2021 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

With churches and individuals under financial pressure, 2022 is not going to be an easy year either. The M&M Fund budgeted income (based on Synods' projections) will not be sufficient to cover expected costs and we are reconciled to dipping into our reserves more seriously as a result.

However, if we “ordinary Christians” are to fulfil the call of Jesus to be His witnesses in the world around us we need ministers and other workers “on the ground” and we need shared resources which are often best created centrally. That all comes from the M&M Fund.

Again, thank you all!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hardie (Treasurer)

Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)

The Zimbabwean Debt Crisis

I have recently been disturbed to read of the extent of the Zimbabwean Debt Crisis which is strangling the poorest people in Zimbabwe and seems so immoral.

“Together with Global Justice Now, Commitment for Life works to cancel the debt of the highly exploited nations like Zimbabwe”.

A copy of this write-up in ‘Moving Stories’, from URC’s Commitment for Life newsletter, **can be found on the noticeboard in the church hall.**

Liz Barry

God of Abundance, help us find alternatives to debt. Give us the wisdom, means, courage to forgive debt, thereby subverting empire’s economics for the sake of your kin- We pray for Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Israel and Palestine; all are caught up in a web of debt that suffocates everyone, even the planet.

Amen



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