

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



September 2019

Covering Thoughts

If like me you were fortunate enough to go away on holiday this summer I wonder what you brought back with you. Round our home there are little collections of shells and stones brought back from various places. Small and large, rough or smooth, each represents a moment of awareness, a treasure discovered on a beach which I want to possess for the visual and tactile pleasure of holding something beautiful.

*I have just been reading an essay by Anne Fadiman entitled **Collecting Nature** in which she recalls her childhood fascination for collecting butterflies. She gives a detailed account of how they were caught, killed and displayed and talks of her obsession with identification and nomenclature. She recognized her motivation to own what she desired. It was only when she was about eight that she grew uneasy with the pleasure that it gave her to kill butterflies and so gave it up.*

Our human curiosity and acquisitiveness leads us to collect things. Much of our knowledge is due to men like Charles Darwin and John Gould who travelled the world searching out and studying wild life. Gould's greatest obsession was hummingbirds. He identified 320 species and some were displayed in the Great Exhibition of 1851. Unfortunately their popularity led to thousands being killed for their feathers to adorn the hats of ladies of fashion.

Our museums today are the result of the earlier cabinets of curiosities amassed by the first tourists to travel the world. We benefit from these collectors of the past, but we are more cautious today about destroying nature for our own satisfaction. We abhor the killing of elephants for their ivory tusks, no longer allow the collecting of birds' eggs and discourage the picking of wild flowers. There are also beaches where the taking of stones is prohibited. We learn that we must protect our precious world rather than ravage it for our own satisfaction.

Christine

IT'S A SMALL WORLD!

A friend and I had a wonderful summer holiday, cruising to Northern Norway and Spitsbergen, which is part of the Svalbard archipelago, far north of the Arctic Circle (opposite the northern part of Greenland). The weather was glorious, so we were able fully to appreciate the magnificent and dramatic scenery of the mountains, fjords and glaciers - and even to enjoy warm sunshine for much of the trip, courtesy of the Gulf Stream (I learned some geography on the trip!).

Spitsbergen was particularly interesting. The places we visited there used to be mining settlements, run by a Russian mining company, though Svalbard is a Norwegian territory. Pyramiden is a ghost town, abandoned in the 1990's, left as it was during the Soviet era and fascinating to see with our young Russian guide; Longyearbyen is a thriving small town (population about 2500) which is developing tourism to replace the mining.

In Longyearbyen we popped into the church, 'Svalbard Kirke, the world's northernmost church', like the town, thriving. The church serves the whole of the archipelago, a population which includes Polish scientists from a research station in the north and Russian workers from Barentsberg, where there is still mining, as well as the local Longyearbyen community, and it also welcomes tourists like ourselves. So, arrangements are made for Catholic and Orthodox services as well as the regular Lutheran worship. Outdoor services are held at times, for instance to mark the return of the sun, after the long winter. Pictures show the priest and congregation well wrapped up! The church also hosts concerts and other events for the community, and it is always open. *'The vision of Svalbard Kirke is to be an open and generous church, diaconal and alert'*, says their information booklet.

I found it moving and inspiring to come across this lively Christian community in such a far-flung place. Their context is very different from ours, but they have the same concerns, to serve people where God has placed us: *'With the majestic Arctic landscape as altar cloth, the church meets with all kinds of people in all of life's situations.'*

But I said it is a small world. We chatted to the priest, an 'interim' holding the fort until a new priest is appointed. I told him I was also a minister, in Oxford. 'I have a friend who was a curate in Summertown in Oxford,' he said; it turned out to be none other than a colleague with us a few years ago. A special moment.

An issue we share with these folk from northern climes, and of particular concern in this Arctic region, is global warming. Svalbard Kirke speaks of itself as the church where the ice is melting. It expresses its concern for its own region, and for the world as a whole. People there have a unique perspective - a ringside seat, as it were. Svalbard is getting warmer and wetter, with less predictable weather. Those who live there 'will have to adjust to a new reality', says Longyearbyen Mayor Arild Olsen. For example, 150 families had recently been evacuated to new homes because of the risk of avalanche, and overall, the changes mean uncertainty, not just in the weather, but in the way of life.

For me, the visit put a human face on this enormous global issue, and I shall continue to remember and to think about Svalbard and Longyearbyen and the church which serves the people there.

Prayer from Svalbard Kirke

God of life, we pray for our fragile earth, for all creatures threatened when the ice melts, when the sea level rises, and the weather grows ever more extreme. Teach us to preserve nature in the Arctic.

We pray for moderation in the race to exploit the High North ... grant us the will and the charity to share the world's resources and cherish the natural world around us. Teach us to avail ourselves of energy resources that will not destroy our children's future. Amen.

Pauline Main

ACE BIBLE STUDY 2019

Our minister, Pauline is organising a **Bible Study for Thursdays 7th, 14th November and 5th December 2019**, which will have a "leading up to Advent and Christmas" theme, more details later! To be held in the Mulberry Room, we hope! Don't miss it; put the dates in your diaries now.

Tom Goss

HARVEST FESTIVAL and CHRISTIAN AID 2019

In line with door-to-door collections elsewhere, our donations in the Wheatley area were down on previous years. Christian Aid are encouraging us all to concentrate on more major fundraising events.

With this in mind, the Care for the World team are seeking donations for Christian Aid at the Harvest Festival and will be offering a short entertainment between Coffee and a Foodshare Lunch.

So – bring your lunch to share on Sunday 22nd September and bring your donation to Christian Aid with thankfulness.

Liz Barry

OXFORD HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST RIDE AND STRIDE EVENT SATURDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2019

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 building decay is once again almost upon us.

At the time of writing, I am only aware of two people who are riding in the name of Wheatley URC, (they are friends from WCC who are not actually part of our membership). Any money raised from sponsorship is halved between OHCT and our own church and is based on the number of churches visited by bike or on foot during the day.

For the Cogwheel Project OHCT generously allocated us a grant of £7,000 towards repairs to our existing buildings. Last year we collectively (but mostly from the efforts of the above two people) raised less than £300 from sponsorship, half of which only went to OHCT. Surely, we can do better than this?

We also need a team of folk to act as “welcomers” to riders and striders visiting our church during the day between the hours of 10.00 am and 6.00 pm, please. At the time of writing, only two folk have come forward to help for the first and final hours of the day. It involves being in the church hall for an hour to sign in the visitors and mark their sponsorship sheets, offer them a drink and a biscuit/cake, direct them to the loo and answer any questions they may have about our church or churches nearby. Ideally (for company and health and safety reasons) we need two people for each hour of the day. By now there should be a sheet in The Hall to sign up on, if you are able to help.

For any other queries or sponsorship forms, please contact me. By the way, you can also seek sponsorship for just sitting in church as a welcomer!

Tony Barry (872293 or [ah.barry@btinternet .com](mailto:ah.barry@btinternet.com))

His Peace

There is no peace like unto His,
Who gives not as this vain world gives;
His peace is gentle, pure and kind,
His loving heart, His caring mind.

There is no peace like He bestows,
When in forgiveness true love flows;
Chaotic thoughts are laid to rest,
Given to Him, His presence best.

There is no peace like He instils;
The body, mind and spirit fills.
When He assures, all fears depart;
Like manna He fulfils the heart.

And who is this of whom I speak?
'Tis our Lord Jesus, Him so meek,
Who comes not as a noisome sound,
But as a still, small voice, is found.

There is no peace like He breathes o'er
Our restless souls, to calm the more,
And bring us to eternal love,
That peace which is all peace above.

David Herring

CHURCH CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER 2019.

Everyone is invited to stay for coffee or tea after 10 am Sunday services.

Date	1 st Sept	8 th Sept	15 th Sept	22 nd Sept	29 th Sept
Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service Harvest	Morning Service
Time	10 am	10 am	10 am	10 am	10 am
Worship Leader	Rev. Pauline Main	Richard Bainbridge	Rev. Colin Thompson	Laurence Devlin	Rev, Mark Williams
Vestry Elder	Phyllis Williams	Tom Goss	Robert Harding	Moira Watson	Malcolm Benson
Welcomer	Charles Bennett	Laurence Devlin	Pauline Shelley	Malcolm Benson	Charles Bennett
Steward	Ann Bettess	Christine Bainbridge	Bob Webster	Liz Barry	Sybil Beaton
Reader	Laurence Devlin	Ann Hardiman	Barbara Joiner	Zena Knight	Robert Harding
Prayers	Richard Wood	Ann Bettess	Ann Hardiman	Christine Bainbridge	Tom Goss
Flowers	Ann Hardiman	Christine Bainbridge	Peter Devlin	Harvest	Sybil Beaton

Elders' names in **Bold** are on Communion duty

Simple evening worship in the style of Taize at Barns Close 8th and 22nd Sept

COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS FOR SEPTEMBER 2019

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.

Date	1 st Sept	8 th Sept	15 th Sept	22 nd Sept	29 th Sept
First Reading	Sirach** 10: 12-18	Deuteronomy 30: 15 - 20	Exodus 32: 7-14	Amos 8: 4-7	Amos 6: 1a, and 4-7
Psalms	Psalm 112	Psalm 1	Psalm 51: 1-10	Psalm 113	Psalm 146
New Testament	Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16	Philemon 1- 21	1 Timothy 1: 12-17	1 Timothy 2: 1-7	1 Timothy 6: 6-19
Gospel	Luke 14: 7-14	Luke 14: 25-33	Luke 15: 1-10	Luke 16 1-13	Luke 16: 19-31

** Apocrypha

OCCASIONAL EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER 2019

1 st Sept	Sunday	11.30 am 2.30 to 4.30 pm	Food Bank Church Meeting & AGM Afternoon tea in Hall
2 nd Sept	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club
5 th Sept	Thursday	10 am to noon	Coffee Morning, Church open
8 th	Sunday	7.30 pm	Taize Service, Holton
10 th Sept	Tuesday	1.00 pm	Lunch Club Two
15 th Sept	Sunday	8.00 am 6.30 pm	Morning meditation and breakfast Pulse Group Games in Hall
16 th Sept	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club
17 th Sept	Tuesday	1.00 pm	Lunch Club
22 nd Sept	Sunday	6.30 pm 7.30 pm	Pulse Group Discussion, URC Chapel Taize Service, Holton
24 th Sept	Tuesday	2.15 pm	St Mary's Guild
29 th Sept	Sunday	6.30 pm	Pulse Group Games in Hall
30 th Sept	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club

WEEKLY EVENTS

(NB several activities are term-time only)

<i>Mindfulness Sitting Group</i>	<i>Monday 8.50 to 9.40 am</i>
<i>Brownies & Rainbows (Term time)</i>	<i>Monday 5.30 to 7.00 pm</i>
<i>Choir Around the Piano (Term Time)</i>	<i>Monday 7.30 to 9.00 pm</i>
<i>Wheatley Singers (Term Time)</i>	<i>Tuesday 7.10 to 9.00 pm</i>
<i>Pre-School Music Group (Term time)</i>	<i>Wednesday 9.30 am and 10.30 am</i>
<i>Guides (Term time)</i>	<i>Wednesday 7.00 to 8.30 pm</i>
<i>Prayers and Breakfast</i>	<i>Thursday 8.00 am</i>
<i>Mindfulness Sitting Group</i>	<i>Thursday 8.50 to 9.40 am</i>
<i>Table Tennis</i>	<i>Friday 10.00 am to 12 noon</i>
<i>Hymn Practice</i>	<i>Sunday 9.30 to 9.45 am</i>

Prayers

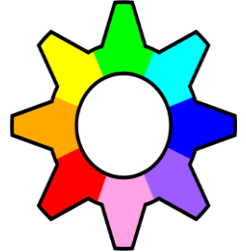
Please remember in your prayers the members in Pauline Shelley's pastoral list: Angela and Rob Holdaway, Phyllis and Mark Williams, Catherine and David Hughes, John Kidd, Elaine and Mike Matejtschuk.

Disclaimer: The Editors of this Newsletter welcome letters, articles and announcements from individuals and organisations but reserve the right to publish or not, and to edit.

Deadlines: Wednesday 11th September 2019 is the deadline for the October Newsletter. Please send copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk and not to individuals and please try to use A5 layout. Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont – again A5.

COGWHEEL QUIZ

Friday 11th OCTOBER
7pm for 7.30pm start



**Wheatley United Reformed
Church, Crown Square**

**Tickets £10 to include Ploughman's
Supper**
bring your own drinks

Teams of 6 per table
Tickets available nearer the time
from Ellen Webster or Robert Harding

*Proceeds towards funding
for the new community "Mulberry" Room*

SHARING OUR FAITH JOURNEY

Wilt Thou Love God ... by John Donne

*Wilt thou love God, as he thee? then digest,
My Soul, this wholesome meditation,
How God the Spirit, by Angels waited on
In heaven, doth make his Temple in thy breast.
The Father having begot a Son most blest,
And still begetting, (for he ne'r begone)
Hath deigned to choose thee by adoption,
Co heir to his glory, and Sabbaths endless rest;
And as a robbed man, which by search doth find
His stol'n stuff sold, must lose or buy it again;
The Son of glory came down, and was slain,
Us whom he had made, and Satan stolne, to unbind.
'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
But, that God should be made like man, much more.*

This sonnet by John Donne left me breathless the first time I read it. The middle bit is a little tortuous, but if you take it steadily it makes sense. However it is the last section which states in no uncertain terms that for us to be made in the image of God is amazing. How much more amazing then to think that God made himself in our image because that was the only way He could come to us, and die to expiate our sin. No one understood this at the time. He must have felt totally alone, and a hopeless failure. All of us can feel pretty bad about ourselves at some point in our life, with good reason, but Jesus had done it all right and still felt abandoned by all those who claimed to love him. To voluntarily submit to such rejection must have required huge courage, but more than that - His love was never in question. We know we will have that through death and beyond. Still breathing? I hope so.

Wendy Benson

If you too have a favourite bible verse, hymn, poem, image or book that has helped you on your faith journey in some way and would like to share this, then do please chat with Bobbie Stormont or Peter Devlin or send your contribution to newsletter@whetleyurc.org.uk. Your experience just might help, support or affirm someone else on their faith journey.

Bi blog by Laurence Devlin

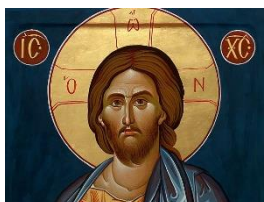
This month, I'd like to offer you what I would call "biblical snippets", interesting facts (I hope so anyway!!!) related to the Bible but that do not deserve a full bi blog. Let's start then with "manna". What is manna? When the Israelites, freed from Egypt, complained to Moses and Aaron that they were going to starve in the Sinai wilderness, God provided flocks of quails in the evening for meat and "*in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance as fine as frost on the ground*" (Ex.16:13), described a little later as "*looking like coriander seed, white, tasting like wafers made with honey*" (Ex.16:31). When the Israelites saw that mysterious substance they had never seen before, they asked in Hebrew: "man-ha" meaning "what is it?" and the name stuck. That strange substance called by the Psalmist "grain of heaven" (Psalm 78) is in fact quite earthly and has been researched by expert-botanists who think that it is a sort of lichen, which appears at certain times of the year in very dry regions of the Middle East. Other experts affirm that it is the honeydew secretion produced by insects that feed on the sap of the tamarisk tree: In a desert environment, such honeydew rapidly dries, due to evaporation of its water content, becoming solid and later turning whitish. Other scientists still, think that manna could be sweet-tasting tiny beetle cocoons! So, if you can source some manna, as several New York restaurateurs have apparently done, don't ask what it is exactly, just eat it and enjoy it!

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As early as the 2nd century after Jesus' death, Christians started to use monograms (combination of letters) when they needed to write the name of Jesus. Some of those well-known so-called "Christograms" which always refer to the name of Jesus *in Greek*, are "IHS" (the first 3 capital letters of "Yisous") and "ICXC" (the first and last 2 letters of "Yisous Christos"). But early Christians also commonly used another Christogram called the "Staurogram": combining 2 Greek letters (tau and rho), it represents *pictorially* Christ on the cross but also describes the crucifixion *in words*, as the word for cross in Greek is Stauros: S+tau+rho... Very clever!



Jesus



IC-XC on each side of head



Staurogram

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We know what **“going the extra mile”** means: to make a special effort to achieve something, to go beyond the call of duty. But we don't necessarily know that the origin of the expression is in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus says: *“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”* (5: 41) We don't get the cultural reference any longer but in first century Palestine, it referred to the law promulgated by the Roman occupier giving a Roman soldier on the march the right to grab any passing Jewish citizen and to demand that he carries his kit *for a mile but no more*.

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In the famous episode “the cleansing of the Temple” recounted in all four canonical gospels, we see Jesus expelling the merchants and **the money-changers**. But what on earth were money changers doing in the most sacred place of worship in Israel? Well, they had a very specific role: Every Israelite, rich or poor, who had reached the age of twenty was obliged to pay a half-shekel as an offering to God into the sacred treasury. But the standard currency in use in Israel at the time was Greek and Roman money with therefore foreign and pagan images on their coins, forbidden in Jewish law. So every pilgrim had to acquire Jewish or Tyrian shekels, the only ones acceptable in the Temple. The presence of the money changers was therefore legitimate, but they abused their position by practising a scandalous rate of exchange and added a fixed charge for their services on top, which increased the burden on the poor. Hence Jesus' condemnation of them as “robbers”.

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The might of the Roman army is always in the background in the Gospel text: We hear of Roman legions, of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, of Roman guards coming to arrest Jesus, of Roman soldiers mocking him and of two Roman centurions (the one who asks Jesus to heal his servant and the one at the foot of the cross) but 2000 years later very few of us realise the importance of **centurions**. They were formidable men and the most senior among them were only one level down from the level of Roman Senator. They had considerable prestige and their pay was commensurate with that prestige: the lowest grade of centurion received nearly 17 times as much as an ordinary legionary and the highest grade was paid 4 times as much again. It took many years for a Roman soldier to become a centurion and only the very best achieved it. According to the Greek historian Polybius, *“In choosing their centurions, the Romans look not so much for the daring type but rather for men who are natural leaders and possess a stable and imperturbable temperament, who will stand their ground and will die in defence of their posts.”* A centurion was therefore a man of considerable authority who was able to recognise other men of considerable authority like Jesus: *“Lord, I am*

not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." (Matt 8: 5-13).

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Early Christian worship was diverse, fluid and often intense. Some aspects, such as the "spiritual gifts" described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, took on very different forms from meeting to meeting; others, such as Baptism and the Eucharist, developed more standardized forms as the movement spread. Yet even these core rituals encompassed radically different practices and meanings: some groups for example used water instead of wine in the celebration of the Lord's supper! Other ancient Christian rituals are less familiar to us, such as the commemoration of **the dance of Jesus and the apostles** described in *The Acts of John*, an apocryphal book which therefore did not find its way in the Canon of the Church, but which is not a "fake" as many Christians continue to think, wrongly, about apocryphal books. In the book, the apostle John recalls how, on the night before his arrest, Jesus commanded the apostles to form a circle around him, and to dance with him while singing hymns. In a 9th century Coptic manuscript recently discovered in an abandoned monastery at Qasr el-Wizz in Nubia, a very similar dance scene appears. That would suggest that ritual dance enjoyed a place in established, orthodox Christianity in many places and for a long time. This should not surprise us really as groups of men dancing together was, and still is, a very common occurrence in most Mediterranean countries and it would be natural to use such a normal bodily form of expression in worship.

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