

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



February 2020

Covering Thoughts

There is something mesmerising about the moon. We see it in its different phases, marvelling at its fullness or the delicacy of its newness. We wonder at the apparent hugeness of the glowing harvest moon at its rising, and search out its soft ghostly presence lingering in the morning sunlight. It is fascinating to reflect on its gravitational power to move the oceans and influence our emotions.

There are many stories featuring the moon. My favourite tells the story of an Indian hermit who was visited one night by a robber as he sat outside his barren hut on the mountainside. 'I have nothing for you to take my friend', said the hermit. 'So you shall have my robe'. As the robber slunk away into the night leaving him naked the hermit sighed 'Poor fellow, I wish I could give him this beautiful moon'.

Some nights, stay up till dawn.

As the moon sometimes does for the sun.

Be a full bucket pulled up the dark way

Of a well, then lifted out into the light.

Something opens our wings. Something

Makes boredom and hurt disappear.

Someone fills the cup in front of us.

We taste only sacredness.

Jala ad-Din ar-Rumi (1207-1273)

As the moon absolves the dark of distance

May thought-light console your mind with brightness.

From A Beauty Blessing by John O'Donahue

Christine

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends

A few weeks ago I attended a funeral for someone I knew quite well. One of the things I was looking forward to was sitting in the quiet of the church beforehand remembering him and thinking about his family and how much joy he must have brought them. I was very disappointed. The church was full of people chattering away to each other, some in quite loud voices. I suppose it was understandable if there were folk who hadn't seen each other for some time and were catching up, but I was left wondering if they might have waited until the wake following the service. It put me in mind of another very noisy disappointment from several years ago. The occasion was my only visit to 'The Sistine Chapel', which was crammed full of very noisy tourists, and to make matters worse the attendants were shouting 'SILENCE' every few minutes. The atmosphere was not at all conducive to quiet contemplation.

As I thought about the experience in the Vatican I remembered entering the 'Taizé Community' church, with young people posted at each entrance silently holding a simple sign with the same word 'SILENCE' written loud and clear. There was no noise and no fuss. The silence inside the Taizé church is overwhelming and beautiful. The following is part of an article I read by Christopher Howse.

Someone told me the other day that there are three places in which you keep silent: a hospital, a court and a church. In hospital it's out of kindness, just as, in Victorian days, they used to lay straw on the road outside a house where someone was sick, to muffle the noise of iron-bound wheels on the cobbles. In court one is meant to respect the law, but if you try to talk, they make sure you shut up.

Why keep quiet in church? Mothers tell children that it's to prevent other people being distracted in their prayers. This is plausible, but not the real reason, I think. In hot countries women play with their fans like mad in church. It's like being in a butterfly house in a zoo. To English people this is distracting, but Latin folk are made of sterner stuff and take no notice. Indeed I've seen a Spanish congregation taking no notice whatsoever of a drummer practising in the street at the open church door. Not on their radar.

The more convincing line is that a church is the house of God. Logically that need not mean silence. God cannot be distracted from our prayers. But there is a strong

tendency to fall silent in a place of awe. Jacob, having dreamt of the ladder to heaven, woke up and said: 'This is a place of terror, none other than the house of God.'

These things can wear off. After all, we used to whisper in libraries, and now I find myself shouting at librarians who do nothing but encourage people to chatter and drink cups of coffee. Since a lot of people only go to church for weddings or funerals, where nervous relations stand and talk to distant cousins, they never get to see a crowd in church keeping quiet all at once and saying their prayers without a word. There's an impressive experience of calm, like being in a forest, but with people not trees.

In Wheatley URC the silence at the end of our worship has become an important and integral part of our worship, which I imagine we all appreciate. Perhaps we're not quite so disciplined in the five minutes before our services begin?

I wish everyone a 2020 with many opportunities for times of silence.

Robert.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - Friday March 6th at 2 pm

The World Day of Prayer written by women from different countries of the world, started nearly 100 years ago. This year's service "Rise, take up your bed and walk" has been written by the women of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is going through a very difficult time politically and commercially and there is also a great deal of hunger there. The wave of prayer will start at daybreak on the International Dateline in Samoa on Friday March 6th this year and end as the sun sets over American Samoa, having travelled throughout the world. Our service will take place at 2pm that day and we hope as many of the congregation as possible will be able to come. The service is on Friday MARCH 6th at 2pm and will be followed, as usual, by refreshments.

Simple worship in the style of Taizé will take place on the following Sundays at Barns Close Holton at 7.30 pm: Feb 9th and 23rd

“BABY, WON’T YOU LIGHT MY FIRE”

On Sunday 12th January we had our fires lit by Richard and six of our lady members when we were treated to an alternative form of morning service which culminated in a wonderfully spiritual “Fire Dance” first performed and then taught to the whole congregation, with the exhortation that we might go forth, fired-up to light somebody else’s spiritual fire.

Lighting a fire for someone in the East and South of Australia might not be quite so welcome at the present time! I have recently been in receipt of a first-hand account of life for a bush farming couple in New South Wales, providing alarming evidence of global warming on a catastrophic scale. Whilst we have all been watching horrendous news reports from Australia it is hard to fully understand how such a threat affects daily life. I thought that I would share with you this account of life, recently, for a 77 year old stock holder and his wife, who I have known since my training days in London in the 1960’s.

They both took early retirement from successful careers in the UK to emigrate to Australia (via New Zealand) about 25 years ago, to seek “The Good Life”.

Having failed to set up New Zealand’s first dry ski slope due to the bureaucratic planning system not favouring them as immigrants, they moved their base to New South Wales and bought a “small” acreage to become self-sufficient farmers and start a small beef rearing business. For many years they generally fared well, but now read on for Part One of “HOT” FROM NEW SOUTH WALES: A real-life drama of country folk from down under. Part 2 will be next month.

“In many ways 2019 has been a real “annus horribilis” for New South Wales. Droughts which were ongoing in many parts of the country for 3 years or more, started to impact on us 14 months ago, since when we haven’t had a single month with even an average rainfall (annual deficit about 900mm on an average of 1500mm) while both day and night maximum temperatures have been consistently breaking records and the fierce wind has done its best to desiccate anything growing (including grass for our small Angus breeder herd).

A mini tornado in February bowled over or snapped half a dozen mature trees on our farm but wreaked absolute carnage on even the sturdiest of eucalyptus trees

in the area. It was probably the tail end of the tropical hurricane that flooded much of Queensland's top end, which resulted in over half a million cattle being washed away and drowned. In the same month large swathes of previously unburnt forest in Tasmania were going up in smoke.

Not long after that, we discovered that one of our 25,000 litre water tanks had breached with the result that it had to be completely drained down before we could effect a lasting repair. This meant that the tank was only about one tenth full, when the bushfires struck our locality in earnest, in early November, although by mid-September we had already been treated to a lunchtime bombardment by two float planes of a grass/bush fire just behind a ridgetop on the opposite side of the road from us – rather too close for comfort!

By November 8 and 9 fires raged to the South, North and East of nearby Taree, destroying many properties and a number of communication towers and filling the sky with thick black and orange smoke to add to the white smoke haze we had been experiencing most days since August, when a peat swamp fire took hold, just up the coast, at Port Macquarie. We lost our wireless internet service and with it our phone service, so felt very cut off from the rest of the world, without even mobile phone coverage.

Local radio gave us some warning on 12 November that the fire to the West of Taree was advancing in our direction, so we spent the day setting up a sprinkler "safety zone", as far away from canopy trees as possible, in the middle of one of our riverside paddocks (no flow in the river since early September, but still some usable water in one or two dwindling pools) and loaded our "we're out of here" bags into two vehicles in case we had to abandon house – the surrounds of which we had spent much of the day hosing down with our precious tank water until the power went off later in the evening and we were left with just a small generator, able to keep one of our two pumps working.

What must have been a wind-blown burning ember touched off a grass fire on one of our ridges in late afternoon and by the time we got to it with limited water (back pack spray and 2 watering cans) it was already into trees and scrub in the bottom of a deep gully. Somehow, we managed to stop the grass burning up the ridge towards a neighbour's house and over the crown of the ridge towards another gully and then up a steep bush covered slope towards another neighbour.

A local Rural Fire Service “scout” vehicle arrived on the scene at the top of the ridge but as no homes were directly under threat, it left shortly after, to avoid being trapped by the fire.

Before long a treetop canopy fire swept up the mountain and from there along most of the interconnecting ridges and paddocks destroying 5 neighbouring homes and many other structures, farm machinery and vehicles. The house at the top of our ridge that we had “saved” from our grass fire was fire bombed from the far side and despite being built to the highest of bushfire safety standards only 10 years prior was completely trashed when two 45kg gas cylinders exploded. Meanwhile, we spent the whole night between watching for burning embers around the house, as fire headed down 3 ridges towards us, going down to the riverside paddock to switch on the sprinkler pump from time to time and sallying forth to put out any fire creeping through the grass that might reach our house from another direction.

The following day was spent extinguishing creeping fires along the dried out river bank and along the edge of two scrub and bush covered gullies that kept breaking out into what was left of our precious paddock grass at least half the farm having been burnt out (in accordance with Murphy’s Law, it was the half that had some available grazing on it, that we had been about to move the cattle onto). No sleep again that night either as we hunkered down on our front veranda to keep an eye on the fires still burning in many directions, with a timer set at two hour intervals so we could check on the fire still creeping towards the house - will they escape the fires?

Tony Barry

NEW YEAR’S DAY WALK

Sixteen of us (including three from St Mary’s congregation) and Dodger the dog set out from the Oakley Wood and Bernwood Forest car park at 10.30 am on a dry, windless morning with the promise of pockets of sun breaking through the grey cloud base. In view of the previous weeks of above average rainfall, it was deemed wise to stick to the main hard surfaced track through the woods and avoid the waterlogged and muddy trails in the forest itself. As we walked, we put up a small group of roe deer at one point, who leapt and bounded delightfully across the track right in front of us and then on into the forest on the other side. After a little over half an hour we reached the end of the track, where the M40 motorway creates an unnatural boundary between the wood and adjacent farmland beyond.

We then chose a lesser track with a good concrete base down to and alongside the rushing motorway, enduring the relentless roar of vehicle tyres on damp tarmac until our path turned back on itself, to return to the main track that we had previously left. The sound of the road thankfully diminished again. There had been a curious concrete and red brick, ruined, bunker type building close by the motorway fence and we pondered what use it might once have had, wondering whether this and the concrete track might indicate a once wartime military presence in the wood? Time was beginning to press with the thoughts of lunch at the back of our minds, so we started to retrace our steps along the main track, which looked remarkably different when viewed from the other perspective.

A half way stop was made to refresh with coffee and a biscuit for those who had brought a snack with them, whilst others walked on towards the carpark. Along the way, we had found time to read passages from three poems about walking – “Old Man Travelling” by William Wordsworth, “The Fall of Rebel Angels” by Sasha Dugdale and “Walk In A Wood After A Long Loneliness” by Stephanie Norgate. It was agreed that the walk had been a good start to the new decade (despite minor ankle injuries sustained by two of our party when a large dog leapt over enthusiastically onto poor Dodger and the slippery mud caused a fall in the carpark). We were welcomed back into Wheatley by Laurence and Peter and a veritable New Year Feast spread out before us in their lovely High Street home. Perhaps we should return to Bernwood Forest during the spring/summer months for an extensive exploration of the forest paths in dryer conditions, with lunch?

Tony Barry.



'The Courtyard'

O friend, your life and mine in sorrow met,
As driftwood cast upon the same soft shore;
To all intents, coincidence, and yet
A Guiding Hand sensed 'mid the breakers' roar;
And that fair isle to which we, suffering, came,
Was filled with gentle people, wondrous things,
And there was peace: no sense of any blame,
For love and care did hide us 'neath their wings.
That isle so kind shall never be forgot,
As long as all eternity shall last;
And so, my friend, give thanks, and tremble not:
One day your sufferings shall all be past,
And Heaven's sweet Isle shall all your blessing be:
No longer driftwood: LOVED, and ever free!

David Herring

*To my good friend David Dee-el
Rest in Peace*

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members on Peter Devlin's pastoral list: Bobbie Stormont & Tom Goss, Sybil Beaton, Lynette & Richard Wood, Annie Hughes, Dave Crosby & Elliott

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Hospitality Team: Catherine Harding, Liz Barry, Ann Gajda, Angela Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Allison Towner and Ellen Webster

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.

Deadline: Wednesday 19th February is the deadline for the March Newsletter. Please always send copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk and not to individuals. But paper copy can be given to Jim Watson.

CHURCH CALENDAR for February 2020

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

Date	2 nd Feb	9 th Feb	16 th Feb	23 rd Feb
Service	Morning Service with H.C.	Morning Service	Morning Service with HC	Morning Service
Time	10 am	10 am	10.00am	10 am
Worship Leader	Rev. Pauline Main	Richard Bainbridge	Rev. Colin Thompson	Siobhan Grimes
Vestry Elder	Liz Barry	Moira Watson	Laurence Devlin	Peter Devlin
Welcomer	Tom Goss	Catherine Harding	Malcolm Benson	Liz Barry
Steward	Ann Gajda	Joel Rasmussen	Ann Hardiman	Barbara Joiner
Reader	Richard Wood	Christine Bainbridge	Liz Barry	Malcom Benson
Prayers	Malcolm Benson	Ellen Webster	Robert Harding	Joel Rasmussen
Flowers	Moira Watson	Zena Knight	Ellen Webster	Pauline Shelley

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

Simple evening worship in the style of Taize at Barns Close on Sundays 9th and 23rd February at 7.30 pm.

Wednesday the 26th February is Ash Wednesday – the beginning of Lent.

COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS for February 2020

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	2 nd Feb	9 th Feb	16 th Feb	23 rd Feb
First Reading	Micah 6: 1-8	Isaiah 58: 1 – 9a	Deuteronomy 30: 15-20	Exodus 24: 12-18
Psalm	Psalm 15		Psalm 119: 1-8	Psalm 2
New Testament	1 Corinthians 1: 18-31	1 Corinthians 2: 1-12	1 Corinthians 3: 1-9	2 Peter 1: 16-21
Gospel	Matthew 5: 1-12	Matthew 5: 13-20	Matthew 5: 21-37	Matthew 17: 1-9

OCCASIONAL EVENTS in February 2020

2 nd Feb	Sunday	2.30 to 4.30 pm 6.30pm	Food Bank Afternoon tea in Hall Pulse Discussion, Mulberry Room
3 rd Feb	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club
6 th Feb	Thursday	10 am to noon 7.20pm	Coffee Morning, Church open Elders' Meeting
9 th Feb	Sunday	6.30pm 7.30 pm	Pulse trip out, meet at URC Taize at 3 Barns Close, Holton
11 th Feb	Tuesday	1.00 pm	Lunch Club Two
16 th Feb	Sunday		Pulse No meeting (Break)
17 th Feb	Monday	2.00 to 4.00 pm	Not So Young Club
18 th Feb	Tuesday	1.00pm	Lunch Club
23 rd Feb	Sunday	6.30pm 7.30pm	Pulse No meeting (Break) Taize at 3 Barns Close Holton
25 th Feb	Tuesday	2.15pm	St Mary's Guild

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>



The Mulberry Room

The Cogwheel Official Opening Weekend

A massive thank you is due to everyone who contributed to making the weekend such a success:

- Phyllis and Mark Williams for overall coordination
- Mike and Elaine for the bookstall which raised money for Young Carers in Oxfordshire.
- Barbara and Coffee Morning team for providing an environment where people could sit and chat or wander around to see the new facilities.
- Liz and the Care for the World team for the Soup Lunch which raised money for Christian Aid and sold recipe books in aid of our catholic friends.
- Tanya Berman and friends for the Family Games in the afternoon which raised money for Compassion in World Farming
- Rob Holdaway, Tony and Malcolm for organising a concert that raised money for Asylum Welcome
- Richard, Bobbie and the dancers for Sunday morning worship which stretched us spiritually, conceptually and physically
- Mark and members of the Pulse group and others for the Dedication Service where we were able to remind ourselves of what this is all about and why we do this.
- Catherine and the hospitality team for a superb tea catering for all dietary requirements!

And the many more of you who helped by donating books, fixing things, tidying things, shifting furniture, washing up, emptying bins and doing small things that needed to be done and were done quietly and without fuss.

The Mulberry Room Opening Weekend

Charitable Donations

As a result of the generosity of our members, guests and friends at the open weekend, I am delighted to report the donations received and the charitable organisations who will benefit from the funds received.

£107.00 From the bookstall for 'Be Free Young Carers': Supporting young carers in Oxfordshire.

£240.00 From the Soup lunch for Christian Aid.

£150.00 From the Sustainable Wheatley's Board Games Café for Compassion in World Farming.

£235.00 from the Saturday Concert for Asylum Welcome.

Many thanks to all who helped in the support of the above charities.

Chris Shelley



Flautists: Elina and Karen performing at the Saturday evening concert



Elliot and Tim at the Dedication Service on Sunday afternoon.

Poem from the Mulberry Room Open Day

'Twas on a Monday morning
That the Elders all agreed
To raise a plan to raise the cash and help URC.
'It's going to be The Mulberry Room - we're going to make a splash'
But the bank account is empty and we haven't any cash
Well it all makes work for the Elders all to do!

'Twas on a Tuesday morning
Mr Williams came around –
Along with Roger Bettess with a plan to raise the pounds
They fill in applications for the charitable trusts
And then select an architect with bills to make them bust
Well it all makes work for the Elders all to do!

'Twas on a Wednesday morning that the architect appeared
With images and drawings that looked positively weird
He said it isn't easy putting piles into the ground
My consultant engineer is going to cost a pretty pound
Well it all makes work for the Elders all to do.

'Twas on a Thursday morning that the engineer arrived
To calculate the stresses and the angles he derived
He said you need a builder with experience and skill -
Construction isn't easy – and he handed them the bill
Well it all makes work for the Elders all to do!

'Twas on a Friday morning that the builder made a start
With JCBs and diggers he was digging every part
He said 'There's no foundations in the residence next door
But the cost for extra concrete will be twenty thousand more.'
Well it all makes work for the Elders all to do!

And so on Sunday morning – the Elders all agreed
To raise a plan to raise the cash and help URC.

(Well it all makes work for the Elders all to do!)



'Kindling the Flame', the movement prayer offered by the dance chapel group at the Meditation Service on Sunday morning.

Blessing

In the new year I do not wish for you
that God will bless you,
since God already intends
only the deepest blessings for you.
I don't wish that good things will happen to you,
since I don't know
what will most beautifully shape your soul—
in what losses you will receive grace,
in what challenges you will gain wisdom,
in what struggles you will become more truly yourself.

Instead I hope for you this blessing:
that your heart be at peace,
that your mind be open
and your will be lovingly present;
that you live each day this year with love, courage and beauty,
with gentleness, trust and gratitude.
That you speak and be the truth,
that you find joy and wonder in your life,
that you be deeply mindful
of God's indwelling presence,
God's deep delight in accompanying you
in every breath.

May your work be fruitful,
your hope vibrant,
your voice clear,
and your friends faithful.

Whether you feel it or not,
deep blessing will be yours this year.
May you know it, and rejoice,
and live in harmony with God's grace.

(Pastor, Steve Garnaas-Holmes)

Watercolour of Wheatley URC including the Mulberry Room by Vic Churchley

Blank Cards with envelopes – just £1 each – in aid of Church Funds



**The framed original painting is for sale by secret auction
in aid of Oxford Poverty Action Trust**

Set up in 1996 by concerned citizens, representatives from the City, University, police and churches, and run by volunteers, OxPAT has raised over £440,000 so far to alleviate visible and invisible poverty in Oxford. Every penny donated to OxPAT is distributed to organisations providing shelter, food, day centres, clothing, advice and medical care to people in need.

Sealed bids should be given to the Church Secretary before **5th February** and will be opened at the **Elders Meeting, on the 6th February**.

We are in the process of producing a limited number of larger prints. Cost to be decided. Please register an interest if you would like a print

Phyllis



High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE

CHURCH CONTACTS

Minister: Revd. Pauline Main 01865 513581

email: minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk

Associate Minister: Revd. Dr Colin Thompson

email: colin.thompson@stcatz.ox.ac.uk

Church Secretary: Phyllis Williams

email: secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk

Church website: www.wheatleyurc.org.uk