

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



April 2020

Covering Thoughts

For about half of my working life I taught RE. It was something I loved more and more as the years went by as the whole attitude to religion in schools changed. As a student teacher I was taught to instruct my pupils and impart what was considered essential knowledge, almost exclusively Christian and biblical. However, in no time it seemed there was a recognition of the value of a world view and every vacation there was training in the major religions practiced in Britain, with visits to places of worship and meeting with practitioners. The classroom became a place of colour and activities, food and festivals, exploration and debate. We were able to touch the heart of human experiences, culturally varied but sharing in key values of self-giving love and the highs and lows of life and death. It was more than an academic study of the phenomenon of religion rather an education embracing a healthy enquiring approach which for me entailed using all the skills of empathy, experience, artistic expression, reflection and open-ended debate.

Well, why on earth am I telling you all this? It is because my inspiration for the newsletter this month comes from that little pre-fix RE. You may have noticed in the church during Lent the use of brown paper. I am into re-cycling and trying to make something interesting out of paper and cardboard. It is a challenge as brown is my least favourite colour, but then I can add a little colour as a contrast.

We will soon be listening to the retelling of the Easter story, but how to keep it from over familiarity is another challenge. We have to look for the hidden contrasts, colours and textures we have overlooked before, and see how all can be recreated and renewed in our time.

I am learning that re-cycling is more than bringing out the old and reusing it. Instead it involves re-examining its qualities and being creative in a new and engaging way. If life has anything to do with resurrection it means going beyond repetition to a lively engagement with new approaches and ways of thinking and acting. Can we help each other to do just that?

Christine

Pastoral Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends

As I write, the coronavirus situation is worsening, with the likelihood of many of our personal and church activities being heavily curtailed in the weeks to come, as well as the threat of serious illness for some. As we look at the world around us, things can therefore seem pretty bleak at the moment: flood, pestilence and plague, as it were - what next?

It is like something medieval. But we do give thanks that we live in times when television, internet, email and phone help us keep in touch with the latest advice, and with each other. We have the NHS, despite its flaws, we have scientists to research a cure, comfortable homes in which to “self-isolate” - and there were even loo rolls in Tesco this morning, after a period of empty shelves.

Julian of Norwich, in the 14th century, lived in troubled times – sickness and plague ravaged communities, human life was cheap, and, as in most eras, the country was involved in war in Europe which cost many lives. In her own life Julian suffered serious illness and was near to death, and it was during that time that she experienced visions, centered on the crucified Christ. After becoming an anchoress, she spent the rest of her life meditating on the meaning of these “shewings”.

For Julian and the people of her time, there were no modern communications, or science to bring hope. Yet we have her words –

And thus our good Lord answered all the questions and doubts I could put forward, saying most comfortingly, “I may make all things well, I can make all things well and I will make all things well and I shall make all things well; and you shall see for yourself that all manner of things shall be well.”

(from the Long Text of Julian’s *Revelations of Divine Love*, Ch 31)

Julian was not naïve, she knew what the world was like, and like all of us she struggled with the suffering and pain she saw all around. It is probably fair to say that like us, she didn’t come to any final conclusions about why such things are present in the world, but through her many years of prayer and meditations, she had tested her visions, and had learnt to trust in God and his goodness.

In the suffering Christ, Julian, like Paul, sees that "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell ..." (Col 1:19-20), that somehow in the pain and the suffering of the world, God, through the suffering Christ is present.

Julian wanted to look away from the cross, she says, but she dared not, because "I knew that while I gazed on the cross I was safe and sound." God did not say, "You shall not be troubled, ... but he did say .. "you shall not be overcome". (from the Long Text of Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*, Ch 68)

God says, "You shall not be overcome". During these difficult times, and during this season of Lent and Easter, perhaps that is not a bad message for us all to have in our hearts.

With love and prayers

Pauline

Covid-19 Update

20 March 2020

It is with great sadness that Wheatley URC has closed for all events and activities in compliance with government advice.

Prayers are still offered in this place each afternoon between 2pm and 3pm.

If you would like us to pray for you or for a loved one please feel free to drop a card in our post-box (just by the door) or email to Phyllis or Pauline (addresses on back page).



Letter from Malcolm

Following the Reflection on Fair Trade, 'Just a Moment' printed in last months newsletter, I have been thinking of ways in which apparently small acts may have major consequences for individuals. Purely by chance I came across the news story of Malachi. He is a youngster from Ilford in East London and when he was 5 he wrote the following letter.

"Dear Salvation Army,

I pray that you get money to buy houses for everybody. I have £5 from the tooth fairy, please use it to buy a home. Many people, they see homeless people on the street and they don't care about them, they just walk past them"

As a result of that letter, 5 years later, with donations and grants in excess of £5 million, the Salvation Army has built a homeless centre in Ilford with 42 flats and apartments for people who have no home, and called it Malachi Place.

We are daily confronted with a plethora of issues which beset humanity. It may be stirring up of hatred and division against certain minority groups. It may be injustice where the rich and powerful exploit those individuals and societies which are more vulnerable. It may be how the worlds' resources are exploited with no thought for future generations. The magnitude of the problems seems so great that we feel anything we can do as individuals will have so little impact that we are numbed into inaction.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate with joy Christ's Resurrection, but it is perhaps the events of Good Friday which are the most powerful reminder of God's care for humankind. The fact that Christ chose to subject himself to persecution, torture and death on the Cross reflects the magnitude of His self-sacrificial love for us. As a result, world history changed and we are the beneficiaries.

We are asked to follow in his footsteps and to witness to His saving grace. Fortunately we are unlikely to face persecution and death for our faith but we need to reflect on what we might do in our daily lives to express love for our neighbours and for the world in which we live. Justice, or fairness, peace and the integrity of creation may challenge us as to how we spend our money, how we travel, how we build bridges or how we might help those whose needs are greater than ours. Small acts may seem insignificant but they may have knock on consequences both for individuals and society as a whole.

So my challenge to us all this Easter is to consider and act upon what we might do together or as individuals to follow in our Master's footsteps and give witness to His loving presence.

With every blessing, Malcolm

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT – Another thought!

During morning worship on Sunday 1st March we were reminded about the impact we can each have when buying ‘fairly traded’ products from shops and supermarkets. We were also reminded about the premiums that are paid out to farmers and producers who are registered with the ‘Fairtrade Foundation’.

Did you know however that we can all make an impact by the way we invest some of our money? There are at least two banks that we can all invest in, which may not give the greatest return, but will use our money ethically and in one case only lend to producers and farmers who are fully registered with the ‘Fairtrade Foundation’. You can google both: ‘**Triodos Bank**’ and ‘**Shared Interest**’ to find out more. I urge you to do so.

Robert Harding.

SCIENCE IN THE BIBLE

Mathew 16, Verses 2 – 3 (NRSV version) “Red Sky at Night”

Many pieces of weather folklore are not accurate but there is a grain of truth in the “red sky at night” proverb. Because the UK is close to the Atlantic Ocean the prevailing weather tends to be westerlies which bring bad weather. High pressure usually means fair weather and there is then a tendency for dust and other small particles to be trapped in the atmosphere. These particles increase the scattering of blue light, leaving more red light for us to see and a red sky results.

A red sky in the evening at sunset indicates high pressure to the west which means a good chance of fair weather moving in. Conversely a red sky in the morning indicates that the high pressure lies to the east which will allow low pressure to move in from the west, with poorer weather. Thus the phrases “red sky at night shepherds delight” and “red sky in the morning: shepherds warning” do have a grain of scientific truth in them which Jesus seems to have known in Matthew 16: when the Pharisees had asked Jesus to show them a sign from heaven: he answered: ***When it is evening you say: “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red” and in the morning “it will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.”***

Jim Watson

Smiling is infectious

Spike Milligan

You catch it like the flu,
When someone smiled at me today,
I started smiling too.
I passed around the corner
and someone saw my grin.
When he smiled I realized
I'd passed it on to him.
I thought about that smile,
then I realized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine
could travel round the earth.
So, if you feel a smile begin,
don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick,
and get the world infected!

Prayers:

Please remember in your prayers the members on Liz Barry's pastoral list: Edna Ackroyd, Pauline & Chris Shelley, Catherine & David Hughes, Elaine & Mike Matejtschuk, Keith & Debbie Kidd, Annette Wright.

We also ask you to pray for the members of the Maintenance Team: Tony Barry, Malcolm Benson, Chris Shelley & Bob Webster.

Disclaimer:

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

Deadline:

Wednesday the 15th April is the deadline for the May edition. Send copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk and not to individuals. But paper copy can be given to Jim Watson.

State of Grace

For the love you will give and receive tomorrow,
You can endure the loneliness of today.

For the joy you will feel tomorrow,
You can endure the tears of today.

For the healthy person you will be tomorrow,
You can endure the physical pain of today.

For the whole person you will be tomorrow,
You can endure the mental distress of today.

For the peace and music of tomorrow,
You can endure the noise of today.

For the success of tomorrow,
You can endure the mistakes of today.

For the beauty of tomorrow,
You can accept the plainness of today.

For the confidence of tomorrow,
You can face the fears of today.

David Herring

COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS FOR APRIL 2020

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.

Date	5 TH April	12 th April	19 th April	26 th April
First Reading	Isaiah 50: 4-9a	Jeremiah 31: 1-6	Acts 2: 14a, 22-32	Acts 2: 14a & 36-41
Psalm	Psalm 118: 1-2 & 19-29	Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24	Psalm 16	Psalm 16: 1-4 & 12-19
New Testament	Philippians 2: 5-11	Acts 10: 34-43	1 Peter 1: 3-9	1 Peter 1: 17-23
Gospel	Matthew 21: 1-11	Matthew 28: 1-10	John 20: 19-31	Luke 24: 13-35

Some thoughts from Richard about the April Readings

Matthew 21 verses 1-11 [Palm Sunday] The atmosphere of deadly conspiracy in the palace of the High Priest contrasts sharply with the perfumed devotion in the house of Simon.

Matthew 28 verses 1-10 [Easter Day] Matthew is very reticent when it comes to details which has an appeal.

John 20 verses 19-31 [Easter 2] Of particular interest is the way Jesus breathes on the disciples. The 'insufflation' (as it is often called) is reminiscent of the breathe of life in Genesis.

Luke 24 versus 13-35 [Easter 3] Jesus joins two disappointed and heartsick disciples during the 10-12 kilometre walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Perhaps this comment by Oscar Romero sums up the readings: I want to repeat to you what I said once before: the shepherd does not want security while they give no security to the flock. Oscar died in the cause of others as did Jesus.

DEAF AWARENESS WEEK: Communication tips

Do's	Don'ts
Get the deaf person's attention before starting	Start speaking if the deaf person is not looking at you
Face the deaf person	Turn around or move away
Make eye contact	Talk too quickly or too slowly
Speak clearly, at a natural pace	Over-exaggerate your lip pattern
Use an expressive face	<i>Shout (this distorts your face and mouth and can be painful for hearing aid wearers)</i>
Use natural gestures	Stand with a window or bright light behind you
Ensure your face is in good light	Cover your mouth
Keep your mouth visible	Switch to a new topic without warning
Make sure the deaf person knows the topic of conversation	Switch to a new speaker without warning
Check the deaf person has understood you before continuing	All speak at the same time
Speak one at a time	Feel embarrassed Give up
Smile and relax!	
Use pencil and paper if you get stuck	

A QUIET GARDEN

Our garden is at its most beautiful at this time of the year and now that the days are more mellow and filled with birdsong it is a delight to walk and sit there. We feel so grateful for living in this quiet, fairly isolated place when we are all being restricted in our movements and contact with others.

Richard and I would like to share our garden with you during this difficult time, as long as we are virus free. If you are taking exercise make a visit to our garden part of your walk. There are many places to sit at a discreet distance from others and we will make sure that there are very few people at any one time. If you would like to visit may we suggest the following:

1. Phone us to arrange a time. (872868).
2. Phone just before you come in case the situation has changed.
3. If you come by car do not offer a lift to anyone else.

Christine

Covid-19 Newsletter

An update from Wessex Synod

19th March 2020

Dear Friends,

We are trying to keep everyone as up to date as possible about how we are working whilst the situation with the coronavirus in the UK continues to develop daily. Whilst the information included here is as accurate as it can be, please keep on checking for new advice on the Synod or URC websites. If there are more significant changes in the way in which we are dealing with our work, then we will send further newsletters.

The Synod Office

At this moment, the Synod office is remaining open. Some Synod and Trust staff are, with adequate precautions, working from the office, others are working from home, and the core hours for telephone contact remain as normal. We have plans in place so that if we need to shut the office completely the phones will be diverted. All staff can access emails remotely and all voicemail messages left on the office phones are already automatically emailed to the applicable member of staff.

Events

We have cancelled all Synod run events until the end of May. This includes training, youth events etc. We will review the situation at the beginning of May, and will, if needed, cancel events further into the summer. Ruth Heine is dealing with this and will ensure that both venues and participants are informed as soon as possible. However, this is a significant job, and will take some time, so please be patient. Any applicable refunds will also be processed by the Trust office.

Committee Meetings

We are intending to hold meetings that are scheduled for the next few weeks using video conferencing, via 'Lifesize' which can be used on a desktop, laptop and mobile phone and is already being used in various parts of the URC. Whilst we recognise that some people involved in these meetings will have access to other platforms for video conferencing, we are keen to use a single set up, so that those who are members of more than one group get used to the way in which it works. Members of committees will be contacted in good time before meetings to be given information about how to join such virtual meetings. Whilst Lifesize works most easily with a computer with microphone and camera, the mobile phone application is also good, so hopefully no-one will be excluded.

Meetings conducted in this way are clearly different from when groups meet face to face. Agendas will need to be handled carefully, meeting times and decision making carefully controlled, and some matters will have to be held over for the

time being. There may be points at which decisions normally taken at meetings will be dealt with by email, but this is already part of our normal practice where appropriate and needful.

Staff

Staff who are not office based continue to work from home. Obviously their pattern of work is changing, but they are available through email and telephone contact as usual. Clearly most of the meetings which have been planned are being cancelled or postponed, since meetings of any size are not wise. However, if appropriate they may conduct visits to individuals/buildings where matters are urgent and cannot be dealt with adequately by telephone/video/email. Staff will need to recognise their own needs (how vulnerable they, or other members of their household are) before making any visits. They will use their own professional judgement about the situation where a visit is asked for, and are at liberty to decline invitations. We expect both staff and those who they visit to ensure that guidelines around hygiene are followed carefully.

Their line managers will be available for them to discuss difficult decisions with, but also to look for creative ways in which to continue and develop their work whilst not able to perform their duties in the normal way.

Moderator

Many of you will be aware that I was due to be on sabbatical for three months from the end of March. Travel restrictions put in place over the last couple of days mean that I am unable to visit our partners in Zambia as originally planned, and I have decided that it is better for me to postpone my sabbatical for the time being. I will therefore be available as normal. If your church has had an offering for the Zambia appeal in the last few weeks, your contributions, along with the match funding from the Synod Trust will be sent to our friends in the United Church of Zambia from the office, rather than me taking them to Lusaka. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank churches for their generosity in this appeal. I am sure that our brothers and sisters will recognise the depth of our friendship when they receive our gifts.

Church Buildings

As per the previous advice, church buildings should be closed for all activities, including hirings. Where you have other churches holding services on your premises, their activities should also be stopped. The only exceptions would be where there is a strong social need, e.g. foodbanks and essential support groups such as AA and NA. Such hirings will be at the church's discretion and all concerned should be reminded that stringent hygiene measures are essential.

Do please check the relevant websites for up to date information from government, health authorities and the church:

<https://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus/>

<https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3365-urc-issues-coronavirus-advice-to-its-churches.html>

Synod and Trust staff and officers are also available to provide advice and support. In these difficult times, I pray that we will be aware of God's loving presence with us, that we will continue to care for each other, and that we will find ways of sharing the gospel and growing in faith despite what is happening around and to us.

Clare Downing

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