

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



OCTOBER 2020

COVERING THOUGHTS

Red Forest is an appropriate image for this month of the year. It was to have been a poster picture for Oxford station promoting Artweeks, but it went no further than my garden shed. The trees are full of autumn warmth, but just imagine that below and unseen are a carpet of fallen leaves, curling and browning their way towards the end of the year.

As I crunched my way through Holton wood today I thought back to two autumn experiences in unfamiliar places. The first was in Savernake Forest where I was organizing orienteering groups. Route finding became a real challenge as the paths were totally obliterated by fallen leaves. The second was a holiday in a remote cottage in Wales where driving in the dark was stressful and hazardous. Drifts of leaves covered the lanes and their verges, and even stuck to the wet windscreen.

It is unwise to generalise, but of the seasons autumn seems to me to be the messiest. The paths of summer vanish under the plough or become hazardous by wet leaves. All about is change and endings, fruitfulness and over abundance, rotting and rubbish. Reflecting on all this brings me to the familiar comparison to the autumn of our lives. This too can be a messy time when changes make the way ahead unclear and we may regret the choices we made. In the past I thought clarity and security to be desirable but now have come to value the complex and obscure, the challenging and paradoxical through my way of working.

I usually begin with a straightforward aim in mind. Something has attracted or moved me and I have a clear image of how it can be pictured. But it seldom works as I planned, and the route to completion is circuitous, with mistakes and happy discoveries. In trying alternatives often my paintings go through a very messy stage where I get to the point of giving up. However, it is in my nature to be a finisher and I keep going. Often something begins to change and a problem is solved to my satisfaction, but other times I have to accept that in my eyes the painting is a failure. Interestingly, and to my delight these failures may be loved and cherished by others.

Christine

PASTORAL LETTER

At a recent elders meeting, Catherine, leading our devotions, read some thoughts by Eddie Askew. The quote was about Martin Luther King and related to the very pertinent issue of racism, but tangentially, it reminded me that I'd not looked at any of Eddie Askew's devotional material for a long time.

Eddie's little devotional books were very popular amongst colleagues of mine for our weekly prayers when I worked at Churches Together in England. Each has a similar format, with a bible reading, a thoughtful reflection and a prayer, sometimes illustrated by one of Eddie's sketches or watercolours. Google his name and you will find them to buy online.

Eddie worked for the Leprosy Mission in Purulia in India. He and his wife Barbara set out there in 1950, a month after their wedding. They went to teach at the leprosy centre, but Eddie was soon asked to take over as Superintendent of the whole project – building new premises, coping after devastation by cyclone, and making huge improvements. Years later, he was appointed International Director of the Leprosy Mission.

I was fortunate enough to meet Eddie and Barbara when we were all part of a holiday group on a trip to Egypt. They were a gentle and unassuming couple.

Remembering them made me think of others who have spent some or all of their lives moving away from their comfort zone to serve overseas. Win Cornish from Cumnor is another who comes to mind. Win died in her 90's some months ago. I knew her as a fellow local preacher in Abingdon, but she had been a head teacher in Zambia, influencing many, including Rosemary Mumby, who founded the Hope and Faith School in a Lusaka township, which is doing sterling work there with young people, including many orphaned by AIDS. Win is not the only one – I can think of other names, of people currently in our churches, whom I won't mention because of the public (online) nature of our newsletter. And we remember too those working today for the Leprosy Mission, for Christian Aid and other aid agencies in so many parts of the world, working with local people to help them build up their communities.

We give thanks to God for such as these, willing to go into the unknown, to serve. But the current pandemic has reminded us of the selfless service given by people

all around us, people of all faiths and none: workers in the NHS and in care homes, risking their own health and often willing to spend time living apart from their families to care for the sick and the frail; people willing to be guinea pigs in the vaccination trials; shopworkers, delivery drivers and binmen – unsung heroes keeping things going when the rest of us were staying at home; neighbours shopping for strangers and keeping in touch; the emergency services, picking up the pieces, often at great cost to themselves. We give thanks for these also, and for all the acts of kindness, the phone calls, the friendship, the humour, which have kept each of us going during these times – we give thanks for one another! Perhaps Jesus’ words come to mind: “‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ (Matthew 25:40).

A prayer by Eddie Askew, from *Breaking the Rules*:

*Lord, there are times
when I'm tempted to give up.
When all the pressures of my world
darken my vision,
wear down my will.
And footweary and head low,
I find it all a burden, hard to bear...
And yet, within the dark,
the candles glow.
Frail flames of flickering light.
Will-o'-the-wisps of faith,
now here, now there,
but leading to fulfilment.
As one seems quenched
another glows,
sparks into light.
Darkness is distance,
and, in light's small flame,
hope warms its hands.
And I am strengthened to renew my trust ...*

Love and prayers,

Pauline (Rev Pauline Main, Minister)

For Gillian

You were my teacher: wisdom's lessons shared
From your sweet store, gleaned from the fields of truth;
You were my soul-mate, bound by words which dared
To vow your life till death, as once did Ruth.
You were my joy, as one turns from earth's sadness
To fill his cup, with finest wine o'erflowing;
And, too, my song, as bird pours out its gladness,
With wide wings soaring, on heaven's spirit blowing.
You were my light, in dark bright'ning my path,
As star gives hope to guide a pilgrim home;
Your presence warmed, like cheerful, glowing hearth,
To focus my mind's eye, once bound to roam;
And all these gracious blessings from above,
In this still speak their truth: 'You are my love'.

David Herring

To Gillian, called to R.I.P., 7th March 2019

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE READING ASSOCIATION

Bible Sunday 25th October. Celebrate Bible Sunday by ordering a copy of Bible reading notes for 2021! This booklet brings together 50 international writers who give fresh insights every day to the books of the Bible. They offer notes, prayers and action points. The cost of the booklet is just over £10 for the year.

For those of you who remember Mrs Hinton, she bequeathed to me this ordering of the notes decades ago and I may be looking to do the same one day. Please let me know if you would like to order a copy. They become cheaper the more we order!

Ann Hardiman

August 2020

From: Ian Hardie, Treasurer of the United Reformed Church
and John Piper, Deputy Treasurer

To: The members and friends of all our 1,400 URC congregations

‘THANK YOU’ for your unique and vital contribution to the life of the United Reformed Church, and for the work of the kingdom which we are able to do together in God’s name

We are living through an extraordinary and challenging time – a very anxious time for everyone; a difficult time for many; and a time of suffering and loss for some. Yet, the main purpose of this letter is to say **‘thank you’** to each of you for all that you have done for the Church in the past; for all that you continue to do even in these difficult times; and for what you will do in the future.

As we are treasurers, you will not be surprised that the focus of this letter is on finance. But we recognise that finance is only a means to the end which is our doing of God’s work together.

‘Thank you’ for your giving to your local church. Financially, this giving is the lifeblood of your own church and of the whole United Reformed Church across England, Scotland and Wales. It is this personal giving that enables your local church treasurer to pay your church’s bills. Typically, the largest of those ‘bills’ is the contribution your local church pays to the URC Ministry and Mission Fund. This Fund meets the central costs of the United Reformed Church. The total budget is around £20 million and is approved each year by Mission Council. Over 80% of this money is spent on ministers and church related community workers – their training, stipends and pensions. But the other 20% also achieves an enormous amount on behalf of us all. General Assembly 2020 was severely constrained because of the Covid-19 lockdown, but the reports written for General Assembly are available on the URC website, and they paint pictures of all the work that

has been done in our name over the last two years and much of that work is ongoing.

‘Thank you’ for your giving and the giving of your local church last year. In 2019, over **£19.4 million was given by local churches and synods to the Ministry and Mission Fund.** The total contributions from local churches reduced very slightly but the average giving per member has, once again and remarkably, gone up by more than inflation.

‘Thank you’ for your continued giving this year. We fully understand that circumstances this year are difficult. Most local churches have been unable to meet for over five months. We have not had the usual opportunities to make our offerings for the work of the Church. But most of the costs of the local church and of the denomination have not reduced and some have increased as a consequence of the pandemic. We are also aware that some have lost income or work this year and are therefore in great financial difficulty. But there are others on fixed incomes who are actually better off than they might otherwise have been. **So, please continue to give what you can in whatever way you can – or save it up until you can hand it over.**

Any giving of ours is a response to the amazing generosity and love of God which we see in Jesus. Nevertheless, **it is important for us to say ‘thank you’ to each and all of you.**

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter then 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 and John

COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS for October 2020

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	4 th October	11 th October	18 th October	25 th October
First Reading	Isaiah 5: 1-7	Isaiah 25: 1-9	Isiah 45: 1-7	Leviticus 19: 1-2, 15-18
Psalm	Psalm 80: 7-15	Psalm 23	Psalm 96: 1-9	Psalm 1
New Testament	Philippians: 3: 4b – 14	Philippians 4: 1-9	1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10	None
Gospel	Matthew 21: 33-46	Matthew 22: 1-4	Matthew 22: 15-22	Matthew 22: 34-46

4th Oct The desire to live freely, to live meaningfully, robs death of its power [Mary Jo Leddy]

11th Oct The way [of discipleship] is unutterably hard, and at every moment we are in danger of straying from it [Dietrich Bonhoeffer]

18th Oct Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying [Ralph Waldo Emerson]

25th Oct St Francis de Sales wrote that nothing is so strong as gentleness and nothing so gentle as real strength.

Richard B

ZOOM SERVICES ROTA FOR OCTOBER

Dates	Worship Leader	Reader	Intercessor
4 HARVEST	Pauline	Marston and Summertown folks	Marston and Summertown folks
11	Laurence	Liz Barry	Malcolm Benson
18	Colin	Ann Bettess	Barbara Joiner
25	Cara	Marston and Summertown folks	Marston and Summertown folks

Harvest Festival & Invitation

Harvest Service: Sunday 4th October at 10am by Zoom.

Invitation: You are invited to take a photo or short video of the harvest from your garden or allotment and send to Phyllis - phyllwill@gmail.com – by Monday 28th September. These will form part of a short presentation for our Harvest service.

Church Opening

“Quiet Time”: The church is also open for “Quiet Time” from 4pm-5pm each Wednesday and Sunday. “Quiet Time” is a time for individual prayer in the church. Hopefully, if the situation with regard to public health improves, we will soon be moving toward being able to offer times for ‘shared prayer’ in the church.

Remember to consider your personal risk and comply with the guidance to protect yourself and others.

In particular:

- Bring a face-covering to wear inside the building.
- If you would like to read a bible or other book, bring it with you and take it home, we will provide printed reflection sheets for you to use and take home.
- You will be asked to register your presence and follow a one-way system through the building.
- There will be a steward to advise and guide you in the new procedures.
- Be prepared for a different “experience” to what you are used to: the church may look quite “empty” and the “feel” will be different.



Wayside Pulpit

This is another version of the Church Noticeboard from Christine Bainbridge. The Notices are changed occasionally to encourage passers-by to read them and thus get an idea of the activities of the Church.

Autumn Bible Studies by Zoom

Come and find out more about the book of Job! Pauline (Main), Cara and Laurence are organising three studies on Job:

1. Job as trauma
2. Job's comforters and pastoral care
3. God's speech in Job Ch 38

Dates: Wednesdays 21st October, 28th October, 4th November by Zoom. Each starting at 7.30pm. Do put the dates in your diary.

If you would like a "taster" on Job, St Mary's (under the banner of Wheatley Area Churches) are putting on a 30-minute dramatisation of the Book of Job in Zoom on Friday 9th October at 7.30 pm. See the poster on page 12 and for bookings go to: <https://forms.gle/mNM4BiKuJ3uWTmf18> or contact Phyllis Williams on 01865 876288 if you have any difficulty.

Pauline

NEWS FROM SYNOD

Young Christians

On 18th August 2020, 25 young Christians from all over the UK launched their campaign for climate justice. The young adults, who range from 18-30 years old started the campaign through Christian Aid's Prophetic Activists scheme. The campaign, which is called 'Stop Fuelling the Fire', focuses on encouraging the government to end the use of UK Export Finance in funding fossil fuel extraction overseas. UK Government funding for fossil fuel projects has increased in recent years - something the activists believe to be a hypocritical move for a government which prides itself on being a champion of sustainability. The campaigners plan to engage and raise awareness amongst the wider public and various political stakeholders. They will be doing this through various methods including launching a petition (see below for the link) and reaching out to MPs, with their key target being Boris Johnson. Activist Hannah Abban, a member of the campaign's Press and Parliamentary team, says, "Our motivation behind the campaign is the firm belief that our faith calls us to action. Truly loving one another as commanded by Christ means tackling the complicated effects of climate change and the inequalities it is creating head on. Several countries are contributing to global warming; however, we want to make sure the UK is setting an example by doing all within its power to decrease its carbon footprint." Christian Aid's Prophetic Activist scheme, which launched at the start of the year, allows young people to learn about activism and create a campaign to tackle societal injustice. This year's theme is climate justice, a phrase which describes the desire to redress the inequalities caused by global warming. The launch of the campaign marks a growth in activism amongst young people regarding climate change and its negative impact on human communities and animal species. Most noticeable were the school strikes which took place last year, with over 300,000 people and 1,000 companies in the UK participating. The campaign will be unfolding over the course of 2020, so if you would like to track its progress and offer support, do sign their petition which can be found from 18th August at: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/p/SFTF>

Christians on Ageing

Christians on Ageing is once again offering space and time for discussion on some important issues highlighted by the experience of the Churches over the last six months. These discussions are open to all and follow a successful series held in the summer months.

20 October - Care Home Update

17 November - Supporting family carers and friends of people with dementia

Further details about the Christians on Ageing Conference can be obtained from the Synod Office.

Election of Elders

Many church secretaries have been getting in touch with the Synod Office asking about Elders . So we have put together the advice below. We realise that each church has their own constitution, and unique make up of people/resources. We cannot give advice that fits all situations.

If your church is happy to conduct its church meeting business virtually over 'Zoom' or a similar platform, Mission Council passed a resolution to make sure that the conduct of these meetings is governed by the same standing orders as physical meetings. This can be found at:

https://urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/July2020/Resolutions_32_and_33.pdf

As you read this you may need to read 'chair of Church Meeting' rather than 'moderator'.

This needs to be well managed and any voting still done confidentially if your constitution requires this.

If your church can, it is now possible to meet physically. This may be the case if you have a large enough space to social distance and be able to hear one another. Some churches have held meetings in outside spaces.

Your elders may decide to postpone the elections, and inform the church members of this, giving an estimated date of when it may be possible to hold them, or that you are working on an alternative.

In all your decisions it is necessary to weigh up – how can you best serve your church and its constitution; and, who is going to be excluded from any decision-making by the way we proceed? (Virtual platforms have been found to be more inclusive currently than our physical meetings often were before Covid-19.)

Please do not hesitate to discuss this matter with your Development and Support Officer who will be pleased to help you think through the issues – they cannot make decisions that concern your church, but can be a sounding board.



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CHURCH CONTACTS

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