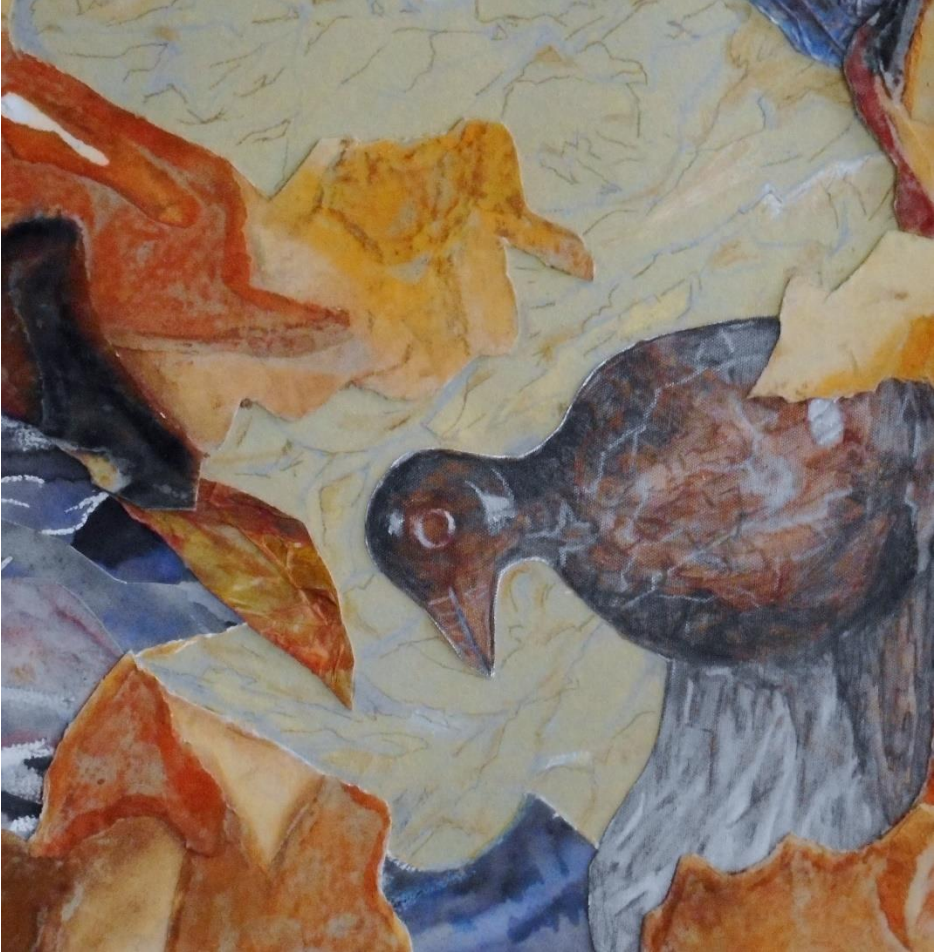


WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2020

Covering Thoughts

Since hosting a Zimbabwean youth worker from Taize some years ago, that country in southern Africa has been in my thoughts. Max was full of energy and enthusiasm but his was a sad story as later he and then his family died of Aids. Suddenly we became aware that the lush, beautiful country he had described to us was fraught with problems. We still have one of the gifts he sent us, and years later we purchased Listening Bird from a sculptor who is part of a co-operative called Art Peace. You may remember that it was one of the charities we supported a few years ago. It is a pleasure to learn that the Care for the World team has recommended that we take a Zimbabwean project to support on a longer term basis and that we will be forging links with the Falcon Junior School which is south of Harare. I am sure that we will be hearing more about this from the Care for the World team in the future.

Over the last few weeks I have been working on still life and chose Listening Bird as my focus. In the studio I had ample opportunity to observe the beautiful angle of the head, poised in the attitude of listening, and pictured him in a cool setting here in Holton while the rain was streaming down the windows. At the same time I worked on a collage from rough torn cardboard and soft pastels to place the bird in an African setting in the quarry from which he emerged. It is this warm picture which is on the cover this month.

Listening with attention and acceptance is a precious gift. We can never fully understand another person but listening attentively brings people and communities closer together. I hope that our link with Zimbabwe will be enriched by mutual listening. They have so much to teach us and hopefully they will be enriched by what we have to offer.

Christine

PASTORAL LETTER

Remember, remember the fifth of November...

November seems to be a month for remembering. All Saints and All Souls days on 1st and 2nd November are, for some, opportunities to remember those who have died. In parts of Europe, these days are celebrated by visiting the graves of ancestors and loved ones and decorating them with lights and flowers. Some years ago Carolyn and I visited the Mission Dolores Basilica in San Francisco, a few days after the *Dia de los Muertos* festival, and were enchanted by the little shrines decorated with paper garlands, fresh flowers, decorative sugar skulls and photos and mementoes of loved ones. It seemed odd and beautiful to depict death with such joyous, carnival colours. One shrine made by local school children had a carefully handwritten card commemorating “Toby – he was a good dog.”

This is the time of year when the red poppies of Remembrance Day begin to be seen everywhere. Whatever our feelings about the patriotism and pageantry of this occasion, we can probably agree on the value of pausing to remember and grieve lives lost in war. 20th November marks Transgender Remembrance, a day to lament all those who have been murdered worldwide because of transphobia (the numbers, every year, are horrifying).

And this year, of course, we have another rising death toll on our minds, and other losses to name and grieve. As possibilities close down, plans have to be revised or abandoned and the future seems uncertain, perhaps we can identify with Soren Kierkegaard’s words, “The most painful state of being is remembering the future, particularly the one you’ll never have.”

Remembering is a recurring theme in scripture, in ways that might equip us for these darkening days. We tell and re-tell the stories of our faith to remember God’s faithfulness. We share bread and wine “in remembrance”. And, even if our own memories are diminished by dementia or trauma, we’re reassured that God remembers us. We’re held and loved by a maker who knows our frame, who remembers how we are made (Psalm 139). Isaiah 49 has God telling Israel “I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.” The symbol that has become a universal emblem of hope in these times, the rainbow, is (in Genesis 9) a sign that God won’t forget the promises made to us. Psalm 103 speaks of a God who remembers that we are dust, remembers our frailty, and is steadfast in love “from everlasting to everlasting.”

In these strange times, may we remember and look out for one another. May we remember God’s faithfulness. I will be remembering you all in my prayers. Peace and love,

Cara x

COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS for November 2020

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	1 st Nov	8 th Nov	15 th Nov	22 nd Nov	29 th Nov
First Reading	Micah 3: 5-12	Amos 5:18-24	Zephaniah 1: 7 &12-18	Ezekiel 34: 11-16 & 20-24	Isaiah 64: 1-9
Psalm	Psalm 43	Psalm 70	Psalm 90: 1-8 & 12	Psalm 95:1-7a	Psalm 80: 1-7 & 17-19
New Testament	1Thessalonians 2:9-13	1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18	1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11	Ephesians 1:15-23	1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Gospel	Matthew 23: 1-12	Matthew 25: 1-13	Matthew 25: 14-30	Matthew 25: 31-46	Mark 13: 24-37

Nov 1st What we can do with life is to share it, pass it along, get it as a gift and give it on [Dorothee Soelle]

Nov 8th We too need to hear Amos. The world's inequalities are still with us. The poor are still trampled in the dust; the afflicted are still bundled out of the way.

Nov 15th During a chapter meeting of Durham Cathedral to discuss the ministry for people who turn to the church in need, a young woman barged into the room unannounced and in very colourful language, expressed her anger at having nothing in life.....there was not a lot the chapter could do....the irony was not lost on those there.

Nov 22nd Jesus flees from those who use his memory as a means of power and domination. To adapt the Jewish legend, he is perhaps to be found among the beggars at the gates of Rome. [Rosemary Radford Ruether]

Nov 29th We struggle to make sense of it all. Teilhard de Chardin says that our quest for meaning is , at its deepest level, a quest for meeting. Our needs to find out reflects a still more basic need, our need to be found.

ZOOM SERVICES ROTA FOR NOVEMBER

Dates	Worship Leader	Reader	Intercessor
1 All Saints and Ordination & rededication of elders	Pauline	Marston and Summertown folks	Marston and Summertown folks
8 Remembrance	Richard	Christine Bainbridge	Ann Bettess
15	Colin	Tom Goss	Ellen Webster
22	Pauline	Marston and Summertown folks	Marston and Summertown folks
29	Laurence	Catherine Harding	Liz Barry

Prayers

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

Deadline for the December Edition

Wednesday 18th November 2020 is the deadline for the December Newsletter. Please send copy to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk. Paper copy can be delivered to Jim Watson at One Roman Road, Wheatley.

Disclaimer

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

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE – Moving Stories from Zimbabwe

The situation in Zimbabwe is extremely difficult right now. In August the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) in a pastoral letter described the situation as, "a multi-layered crisis of the convergence of economic collapse, deepening poverty, food insecurity, corruption and human rights abuses among other crises."

Government corruption, and ongoing restrictions and suffering led to protests from the Zimbabwean people. The government has responded with lamentable disregard for alternative voices. Their heavy-handed response has been characterised by arbitrary arrests and violence against activists or those related or connected to them. Journalists have been abducted and tortured as ransom for those in hiding.

The statement from the ZCBC and other faith leaders and groups in Zimbabwe caused recriminations from the government. Zimbabwe's context remains complex and precarious. The recent attacks on all who have voiced concern over injustices, corruption and violence, including the church, has simply reinforced the reality that coexistence, tolerance and accountability remain contentious issues in the country.

Christian Aid Zimbabwe works with several faith-based organisations including the Catholic Church through a partnership with Silveira House, a Catholic Jesuit institution and stands in solidarity with the Bishops. Christian Aid Zimbabwe is supportive of statements issued by a fellow church umbrella organisation that is the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) (EFZ), who are its partners. Christian Aid's CEO, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi sent a letter of solidarity.

The Christian Aid Zimbabwe team are continuing to speak out for justice and support our partners while treading a careful line as an international NGO, mindful that our partners rely on our ability to operate within the country.

COVID-19 Response. In Zimbabwe, we continue to ensure that 15,000 people have enough water to wash their hands regularly. We are also supporting communities in Mudzi and Mutoko whose livelihoods have been impacted by Covid-19.

Thanks to the support from lovely **Commitment for Life** congregations just like yours, we are able to provide food hampers for around 5,400 people. Thank you.

Global Justice Now In Zimbabwe and many other countries Debt is too often a mechanism of control imposed on the poor by the rich. COVID-19 has torn away the claims that the system works for the more vulnerable in the world. The Global Justice Programme of the URC in the UK is calling for the immediate cancellation of huge amounts of debt in the global south, along with a wealth tax to stabilise and improve health services. Add your voice to the call!

Commitment for Life is the Global Justice Programme for UK URC. Contacts are kevin.snyman@urc.org.uk and suzanne.person@urc.org.uk or 020 7916 8638

Ben Masora: Unsplash

Commitment for Life - Wheatley.

As many of you know, Wheatley URC is registered as a 'Commitment for Life' church. Just in case you are unsure, 'Commitment for Life' is the United Reformed Church's global justice programme. It enables and encourages congregations to pray, advocate and take action for the most vulnerable people. Each church chooses one of the four areas covered by the programme. At Wheatley we have recently changed from supporting 'Palestine and the Occupied Territories, to supporting the work in Zimbabwe. You will find further information about that in this newsletter.

Please keep up to date by reading the information booklets enclosed with your newsletter. If you can, would you please donate towards this crucial work, to which we are committed, using the envelope provided and sending it to Chris Shelley over the next few weeks. **If your donation is in the form of a cheque, please make it payable to Wheatley URC.**

In addition, Robert can supply you with a small collecting box to keep at home, into which you could put any small change you have. In the last few of years this has amounted to around £250.

Liz Barry and Robert Harding.



VIRTUAL CHRISTIAN AID

In the past, each year, a small group of us from the churches in Wheatley, who love children and singing, have given an evening at the end of November to steward for the combined primary schools carol concert, in Oxford Town Hall.

Wearing Christian Aid tabards, we give out programmes and collect donations during the interval. We sell raffle tickets to excited parents, carefully monitoring the bucket as it makes its way along the rows.

This source of Christmas giving will not be happening this year, nor will donations in the pews, so lets go to caid.org.uk/Christmas and give our gifts via this route in order that the people who rely on the support of charitable giving will not miss out this Christmas. Beat the virus ! !

Edna Ackroyd & Liz Barry

Cogwheel II – Our Youth and Families Project - Fundraising

We have agreed to develop our mission by ***employing a half-time Youth & Families Leader*** to work with us in reaching out to the young people and their families with whom we come into contact.

The total cost of the three-year project is £59,000. Wessex Synod has agreed to fund 45% of this (£26,500). Reallocation of some of our Ministry and Mission contribution will fund a further £12,500 over the three years. Roger Bettess and Mark Williams are writing to Trusts that may be willing to help and hope to raise around £6000 from these sources.

To raise the remaining £14k, or £11,200 before gift aid, would take gifts of £224 per member or £75 per year over three years. We realise that many members and friends will not be able to make such a contribution, especially given the huge generosity of everyone during Cogwheel I, but all contributions would be a great help. You can give it all at once or over the three years. *Whatever you can give or pledge, please would you let Chris Shelley know now in confidence.*

Mark Williams

OXFORDSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES FUND

RIDE AND STRIDE 2020

This year, **almost £630** (even better than last year!) was raised by one rider and seven striders, which sum will be divided equally between OHCT and Wheatley URC.

Frances Simpson set out on foot, alone, to visit the churches of Wheatley, Horspath, Garsington and Cuddesdon,(raising £123), whilst I led a party of five (Ann Bettess, Chris Shelley, Rob Holdaway, Sybil Beaton & Liz) in the opposite direction, on a longer route, embracing the churches of Wheatley, Great Milton, Little Milton and Cuddesdon. We started near Waterstock Golf Course, incorporating two little used motorway foot bridges behind Chilworth School, giving outstanding views of the surrounding countryside, (raising £80). Meanwhile, Jill Ewbank was cycling on our behalf with Gordon, somewhere out beyond Witney, visiting 34 churches, (raising a staggering £425 towards our total). On behalf of OHCT, my thanks to all those who took part and to those who generously supported them.

Twenty-four people visited Wheatley URC during the day from as far afield as Bledlow, Oxford and Great Milton. Due to the Covid 19 situation, we, as with many other churches, were unable to offer our usual level of hospitality, this year.

Tony Barry.





Wayside Pulpit

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

Nursing Hope

Yes, lady, it is true that you are old,
And in a while must come the silent grave,
But then awaits a crown of purest gold,
For He Who formed you shall your spirit save.
Yes, lady, day by day your body dies,
Which once your youth's sweet beauty did adorn,
But your true loveliness within you lies,
And you shall dance again, one Heavenly morn!
Yes, lady, I know well the fear and pain,
But 'tis a vanquished foe, and shall depart;
For you shall fly, set free of earthly chain,
And meet again those treasured in your heart.
For, lady, this old world's your fading scene;
Soon, clothed in Light, a Star, you'll find your Dream!

David Herring

*This sonnet was written as a response to the poem,
'What do you see nurse...' (anon.) which can be found
at corinejansen.com/2013/08/30what-do-you-see-nurse/*

REFORM MAGAZINE

Group Subscription

It is time to renew subscriptions to REFORM, which is published 10 times per year and the annual subscription for 2021 is £29.50. The December/January issue is combined, likewise July/August.

The group subscription is organised by Moira Watson, who receives the magazines and then delivers them to the group members. If you would like to join the group, get in touch with Moira, for more details by email moirawatson@tiscali.co.uk or phone 01865 873689.



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