**WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER**



**MAY 2015**

***Covering Thoughts***

*When the sun shines I have a yearning to be by the sea. It is there that all my senses are satisfied: a symphony of sound with its chorus of gulls, salt on my lips and sand between my toes, seaweed smells and eyes squinting against the brilliant sunlight.*

*Deeper than the physical senses is that sea song that searches the soul, looking for eternal truths in the flotsam and jetsam of the shoreline.*

*Christina Rossetti wrote this haunting little verse:*

*What are heavy? Sea-sand and sorrow:*

*What are brief? Today and tomorrow:*

*What are frail? Spring blossom and youth:*

*What are deep? The ocean and truth.*

*The sea has its rhythms influenced by the seasons and the moon, but despite its ebb and flow it remains the sea. It has no end and no beginning, only endless possibilities.*

*I am reminded of one of Anthony de Mello’s stories about a little fish who wanted to find the ocean. He swam and swam searching everywhere until he was exhausted. Then he met a wise old turtle and asked him to show him the way. ‘Stop searching little fish’ the turtle said. ‘The ocean’s touch is as close as your scales. It moves round and through you, supports you and feeds you, gave you birth and will remain with you when you die’.*

*So too is our search for God a question of opening our eyes and each one of our senses to recognize him everywhere.*

*Christine.*

***Hymn of Promise*, verse 3**

*“In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity; in our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity. In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.”*

**Natalie Sleeth** Words © 1986 Hope Publishing Company

Dear Friends,

On Easter Sunday, I delivered what some have characterised as a ‘bombshell’: the news that I have been called to serve as the Senior Pastor of the Congregational Church of Hollis, New Hampshire.

As those of you who were there know, it was a difficult announcement for me to make (too difficult!); the call simultaneously breaks my heart and exhilarates me: it offers new opportunities for each and every one of us to live more deeply into our conviction that God is always at work with us, ahead of us, behind us, and within us. It’s a reminder that we ought not to become complacent or start thinking there’s nothing more that we can offer or enjoy in faith—because the One who has given us this precious gift of life wants us to know it ever more abundantly! The hard thing is, often in order to know that abundant life, we’re drawn or dragged or booted right out of our comfort zones…

Some of you may have questions that you don’t dare ask about this decision or the process that resulted in it. But I do hope that if they are burning within you, you *will* ask me; I’ll do my best to answer. Naturally, there are questions that our family also have that can’t possibly be answered yet. But that’s why this is a movement made in faith and not necessarily full understanding!

A few people have characterised the feeling of this news as similar to a bereavement—and that feels about right to me. There is a sort of death represented in the ending of our mutual ministry; great loss in what is nonetheless a new beginning. And herein lies the mystery of faith, and the opportunity for hope: as Easter people, we believe that there is life beyond death—new realities with grace and potential that we can’t see on this side of things! Without endings, we cannot witness new beginnings.

Our remaining two and a half months here will go quickly, but I am looking forward to how rich and life-giving they can be. One of the gifts I’ve delighted in sharing with this congregation is the simple gift of *encouragement*—an enthusiasm for noticing, supporting, and inspiring confidence in others to share their own gifts in all sorts of ways. And, whilst some may fear a shrinking back of some ministries in the future, I hope that every member and friend of this congregation will make an effort to encourage others frequently in faith, hope, and love so that the spirit of Christ might flourish all the more!

Yours truly with faith, hope, and love,

Tanya

**Wheatley United Reformed Church**

**Discernment Process for choosing Elders**

**Introduction**

The fundamental body by which we in the URC govern ourselves is the Church Meeting. All members of the church are entitled to attend and vote at Church Meeting.

As was the case in the earliest days of the church, we choose some of our number to work on our behalf, ensuring worship is held regularly and properly, providing pastoral care to members of the church meeting and friends of the church, and taking care of the resources of the church (money, building etc).

These people we call Elders and we believe their role is sufficiently important in the life of the church, to hold them in that esteem which we recognise by using a process of 'ordination'.

**How we choose our Elders is important.**

Some years ago various members of Wheatley URC were concerned about the process then used to choose Elders. The main concern was that there were good people who might be excellent Elders who were not even considering it or being considered. Although an open nominations process was in place, few names came forward. This led to the Secretary of the time and some Elders, mainly asking previous Elders to serve again until the required number had been found. Once this point had been reached, no more nominations were sought thus avoiding having an election which was thought might be hurtful to some. Over time this led to few new faces amongst the Elders.

The process will be the same as last year and focuses on discernment and a sense of call.

The whole Church community has been challenged to consider whether they have the gifts, talents and skills to enable them to fulfil the role of Elder and all are encouraged and given time to take part in the discernment process.

**The process for 2015 is as follows:**

**MAY**

During the month of May, the congregation will be invited to consider prayerfully who they think God may be calling to the role of Elder for the next three years. Any who worship with us are part of this process, and they may convey their suggestions by speaking to the Minister or a current serving Elder, or by completing a nomination slip. This slip does not need the signature of the person being nominated; they are anonymous, and individuals may put forward their own names if they wish. The only criterion is that the person named must be a member of Wheatley URC.

**JUNE**

The deadline for nominations will be the beginning of June. At the June Elders’ Meeting, the names will be shared and time will be spent reflecting on individual gifts and talents and where these might fit with the needs and mission of the Eldership. For the time being, the names will not be publicised. Elders will hold these names in prayer during this month whilst all church members and friends will be asked to pray for the process of discernment.

The Church Secretaries will contact all those nominated early in the month and ask them to prayerfully consider their call. When approached, they will be told of their discerned gifts, talents and experiences. It is recognised that many of us share our gifts and talents in a number of ways through our home and work life, and through voluntary work outside the church. Some may feel they cannot take on the role of Elder at this time. However, it is important that anyone who has been identified by this discernment process has time to reflect on whether they are indeed being called to the role of Elder. In time for the July Elders’ Meeting, they will be asked whether they are willing for their names to go forward.

**JULY**

At their July meeting, Elders will then prayerfully consider the names brought forward, and will, with God’s help, discern a number of people who they feel are being called at this time.

The list of names of those discerned to have a call, and who are willing to stand, will be brought to the July Church Meeting. During the months of July and August, each Elder will contact those in their pastoral group to ask them for any thoughts they may have. In this way the whole church will share in the prayerful discernment of our Elders over the summer.

**SEPTEMBER**

At their September meeting, Elders will once again prayerfully reflect on the list of names. Using a simple ranking system, Elders will then indicate who they believe are being called. In our experience, it will be clear at this time that a number of names will rise to the top of the list. The Minister or Church Secretaries will then speak to those who are discerned not to be called at this time.

At the Annual Church Meeting in September members will be invited to consider the names of those whose call to Eldership has been discerned, and, after an opportunity for prayerful reflection, to approve them.

The only serving Elder due to complete his current three-year-term in September 2015, is Joel Rasmussen. We are very grateful for all that he has contributed during his time as an elder.

*Robert Harding*

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**From the Elders:** Two new dates for your diaries. We want to respond to the booklet we have been sent titled 'What is the Spirit saying to the Churches?' which has been sent out by the URC. We would like to invite everyone to join us in our discussions, which we plan to hold on Sunday 17th May after morning worship and on Tuesday 19th May at 7.30 pm.

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W**HEATLEY AREA CHURCHES**

**CHAIRMAN’S BLOG FOR MAY 2015**

## Our Lent, Holy Week and Easter joint events - Saturday Lenten Soup Lunches and Holy Week Morning Breakfast Meditations at the URC, Stations of the Cross with Our Lady’s, The Good Friday Procession of Witness around the village with the Cross and hot cross buns at St Mary’s, Waterperry’s Dramatic Good Friday Insights and St Mary’s The Last Hour at the Cross were all well attended and provided a poignant backdrop of events to lead us into the joy of our Easter morning services. As a result of your generosity at the Lenten Soup Lunches, we were able to send a magnificent £600 to the Oxford Emergency Food Bank as well as a welcome boost to the normal collection of food items. One dampener on the joy of Easter Day was the announcement at the URC that their Minister, The Reverend Tanya Stormo Rasmussen, would be returning to America in July to take up an appointment with a church in the New Hampshire town of Hollis. Her enthusiasm and encouragement will be greatly missed by all involved with the ecumenical mission of Wheatley Area Churches. We wish her and her family well for the future.

## Wheatley Area Churches Committee Meeting is being held at Our Lady of Lourdes RC Church at 4.30 pm on Sunday 19th April 2015, at which plans for the summer period (including the production of Godspell at the end of the month) will be discussed, as will the possible inclusion, within Wheatley Area Churches, of the new Wheatley Community Church and also The Calvary Apostolic Assembly Oxford, at Holton Village Hall. I will give a full report of this meeting next month.

## May After Godspell – 30th April, 1st & 2nd May- (and the forthcoming General and Local Elections, of course!), the most important ecumenical activity taking place will be Christian Aid Week (10th to 16th May), when members of all the village churches in Wheatley, Holton, Waterperry and Waterstock will be out on the streets encouraging villagers to fill little envelopes with money for the excellent work, both at home and abroad of Christian Aid. Please be generous with both your time and your money. MORE COLLECTORS ARE STILL URGENTLY NEEDED.

May the fine Spring start to become a good omen for the rest of the Summer season, so that we can look forward to some fun filled outdoor activities, together.

**Tony Barry**

**Wheatley U.R.C.**

**Annual Village Fete**

on

Monday 25th May

(Spring Bank Holiday Monday)

at 2pm

116 Church Rd, (Dr.Flury’s Garden)

New ideas and offers of help always welcomed.

For more information please contact Malcolm Benson

**Gifts For The Tombola**

The Fete in Dr. Flury's garden is rapidly approaching. Though we provide some of the items for the Tombola, we cannot provide them all.  
Please could you help by giving us small gifts of any kind which children or adults would be pleased to win, eg sweets, drinks, toys.  
Thank you. Jean, Joan and Frances

**Church Calendar May 2015**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **3rd May** | **10th May** | **17th May** | **24th May** | **31st May** |
| **Service** | **Morning Service +H.C.** | Morning Service | **Morning Service +HC** | LEP Service at St. Mary’s | Morning Service with Godly Play |
| **Time** | 10 am | 10 am | 10 am | 10 am | 10.am |
| **Worship Leader** | Rev. Tanya Rasmussen | Richard Bainbridge | Rev. Colin Thompson |  | Rev. Tanya Rasmussen |
| **Vestry Elder** | **Joan Kidd** | John Kidd | **Joel Rasmussen** |  | Liz Barry |
| **Welcomer** | **Liz Barry** | Chris Shelley | **Phyllis Williams** |  | Joel Rasmussen |
| **Steward** | Ellen Webster | Tom Goss | Barbara Joiner |  | Pauline Shelley |
| **Reader** | Malcolm Benson | Joel Rasmussen | Moira Watson | Ann Hardiman | Robert Harding |
| **Prayers** | Barbara Joiner | Kit Rasmussen | Joel Rasmussen |  | Tom Goss |
| **Flowers** | Ann Hardiman | Catherine Harding | Zena Knight |  | Phyllis Williams |

**Traidcraft stall on occasional Sundays.**

***Elders on Communion Duty are shown in bold letters***

***There is a crèche on the first four Sundays of the month.***

**The deadline for the May Newsletter is 6pm, Sunday 24th May,**

**Please send email copy to** [**newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk**](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) **or paper copy to**

**Andy Walkey, 5 Littleworth Road, Wheatley, OX33 1NW**

**Common Lectionary Readings May 2015**

**Note: leaders may choose to use other readings.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **3rd May** | **10th May** | **17th May** | **24th May** | **31st May** |
| **Old Testament** |  |  |  |  | **Isaiah 6;1-8** |
| **New**  **Testament** | Acts 8;26-40 | Acts 10; 44-48 | Acts 1; 15-17 & 21-26 | Acts 2; 1-21 | Romans 8;12-17 |
| **Psalm** | Psalm 22; 25-31 | Psalm 98 | Psalm 1 | Psalm 104; 24-34 & 35b | Psalm 29 |
| **New**  **Testament** | 1 John 4; 7-21 | 1 John 5; 1-6 | 1 John 5; 9-13 | Romans 8;22-27 |  |
| **Gospel** | John 15; 1-8 | John 15; 9-17 | John 17;6-19 | John 15;26-27 & 16;4b-15 | John 3; 1-7 |

**Simple Sunday evening worship at Barns Close will take place on 3rd & 10th May**

**NEWS FROM THE CHURCH FAMILY:**

Hazel is now enjoying being at home after her long stay in hospital. Please pop round to see her if you can.

**Please remember in your prayers the members of Liz Barry’s Pastoral Care List:** Christine & Richard Bainbridge, John & Joan Kidd, Pauline & Chris Shelley, Ann & Roger Bettess.

**We also ask you to pray for the Hospitality Ministry Team:** Ellen Webster, Catherine Harding, Allison Towner, Moira Watson, Barbara Joiner, Joan Kidd and Liz Barry.

**BIBLICAL BLOG by Laurence Devlin**

As Tanya announced in the previous newsletter, this is the first in a series of monthly columns where I will share some reflections on familiar passages of the Bible. In the Reformed tradition especially, congregations are usually very familiar with many biblical stories. It is a journey we have done before many times and we know the destination! But familiarity can dull our faculty of attention and sometimes we don’t hear what the text actually says or … does not say. Also as we generally know these stories in isolation from their context, we may miss the full complexity of the characters.

Let’s take the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) for example. What most people recall is that Cain is the first murderer. What the text presents however, if we choose to read it anew, is a young man who is the first to take the initiative in making an offering to Yahweh and is then deeply troubled by what appears to be Yahweh’s arbitrary and unexplained rejection of his gift while accepting his brother’s. We then see him striking down his brother in an act which may not have been premeditated (we don’t know what Cain said to Abel before they went to the field and whether or not the murder happened during a quarrel). Cain is clearly a murderer but once banished by Yahweh, laments being hidden from God’s face and expects to die too.

Now what is particularly interesting here is Yahweh’s amazingly lenient response to Cain’s action which is not what you would expect from a just God who does not hesitate to judge and to rightly punish the guilty as we see many times in the Hebrew Bible. So although Cain sets out as a fugitive and a wanderer, he literally “gets away with murder,” receives God’s protection, has a family and builds the first city, becoming therefore the father of society and culture. So, far from being simply “the first murderer” Cain becomes the incarnation of someone who, thinking he is rejected by God, makes the terrible mistake of taking out his frustration on a fellow human being but who despite his alienation, makes a new start with considerable success. What we see in that story therefore is not simply murder but rather redemption beyond what human justice can conceive and accept. A difficult lesson!

In the New Testament, “doubting Thomas” is another character who may not be the simple “one trait” person that we remember him for. In Thomas’ conversations with Jesus in John 11 and 14 we don’t really see a person who doubts. In chapter 11, Jesus gets word that Lazarus is very ill and his sisters want Jesus to come and do something but their home in Judea is a dangerous place for Jesus and his disciples fear they will be killed. Thomas shows no doubt or unfaithfulness—he is ready to go and die beside Jesus. He is simply the one who puts it into words. Similarly in chapter 14, Jesus speaks of going to prepare a place for his followers, a passage which is often read at funerals but what is left out is the part where Thomas asks the question that no one else dares ask: “Lord, I don’t know where you are going. How

am I supposed to find the way?” His problem is not a lack of desire to follow Jesus but more a lack of comprehension. Can we condemn Thomas when his chief characteristic is actually loyalty? He is ready to die with Jesus but he admits he does not understand where Jesus is going precisely because he wants to go there. I for one perfectly understand that reaction!

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**OXFORDSHIRE ARTWEEKS 2015**

INVITATION

May 16th – 25th

11am – 5pm every day ( 11am – 7pm Thursday)

Please drop in for tea or coffee at Richard and Christine’s home, 3 Barns Close, Holton. Bring your family and friends, enjoy the paintings and the garden where there will be crafty things for families to do. See demonstrations of Jackie Birchall’s stained glass work at nearby Ambrose Cottage and take this opportunity to meet Jackie who will be coming with us to Buckland Hall in Wales in the autumn.

**Afraid, alone, in pain**

**Be the answer to Loko’s prayer this Christian Aid Week.**

This Christian Aid Week, you can help transform the lives of women like Loko.



From 10-16 May, churches the length and breadth of Britain and Ireland will come together to pray, campaign and raise money to improve the lives of people like Loko.

Every year, 100,000 volunteers demonstrate God’s love for the poor by taking part in house-to-house collections for Christian Aid.

This fantastic witness is a chance to take the mission of the church into your community.

**Loko’s choice in life is simple: ‘If I can’t collect firewood, my children will die.’**

Four times a week, in a remote corner of Ethiopia, Loko makes a back-breaking eight-hour trip to gather wood. It’s a task she dreads, but she steels herself to do it because if she doesn’t her children will starve.

She prays to God as she walks. ‘I ask him to change my life and lead us out of this,’ she says.

Just £5 could give Loko a loan to start her own business buying and selling tea and coffee, freeing her from her desperate task and allowing her to spend more time caring for her family.

**Find out how you can play your part at** [**www.caweek.org**](http://www.caweek.org/)

Local contacts are Chris & Pauline Shelley;

Tony & Liz Barry;



**AFTERNOON TEA**



**Wednesday 20th May**

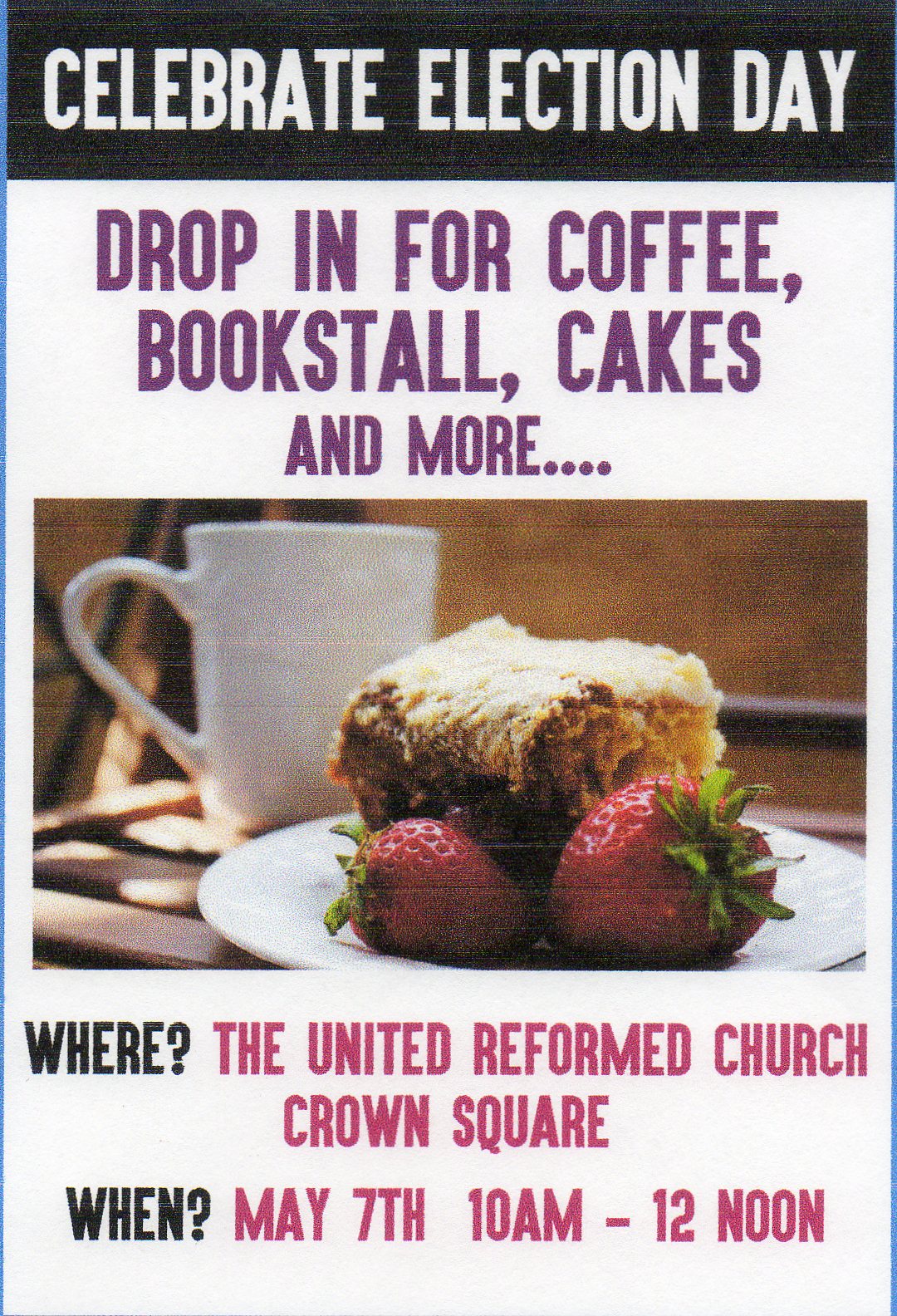
**from 2.30 – 4.30pm**

**£2.50 Tea + cakes, free tea refills. At Worminghall Village Hall**

**Meet a friend for a chat and visit the available stalls**

**Bring the children after School!**

**Free squash for the children**



**OASIS OF PEACE SYMPOSIUM**

**The McKenna Room, Christ Church**

**Sunday May 10th, 3-5 pm**

**“I DESTROY MY ENEMY WHEN I MAKE HIM MY FRIEND: LAW AND ETHICS IN THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE DEBATE”**

**SPEAKERS**

**Ghanem Nuseibeh** is a Palestinian born in Jerusalem. He is the Founder of Cornerstone Global Associates, Senior Visiting Fellow at King’s College London and Edmond J Safra Visiting Fellow at Harvard.

**John Bowers QC** specialises in Human Rights Law and Conflict Resolution in Industrial Disputes. He is the Principal Elect of Brasenose College.

**Janina Dill** is Associate Director of the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC) and Departmental Lecturer in International Relations. She is the winner of two prestigious prizes and author of *Legitimate Targets? International Law, Social Construction and US Bombing* (CUP 2014).

**CHAIRMAN**

**Peter Jay** is former Economics Editor at the BBC, UK Ambassador in Washington (1977-79) and Non-Executive Director of the Bank of England. He is the author of *The Road to Riches or the Wealth of Man* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2000) which became the basis for a television series.

This symposium is presented by the Oxford Branch of the British Friends of the Oasis of Peace Village in Israel, where Arabs and Jews live in equal numbers and on equal terms and where their children are educated together in the bilingual village school (see [www.oasisofpeace.org.uk/](http://www.oasisofpeace.org.uk/) ‘About Us’ and video).

Places are limited and will be allocated in order of registration. To register, please send an email to [britfriends@btconnect.com](mailto:britfriends@btconnect.com)

Further information from Andy Walkey;



**OCCASIONAL EVENTS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3rd May | Sunday | 2.30-4.30pm | Food Bank Sunday  Tea, cake & a chat |
| 7th May | Thursday | 10.00-12.00pm  7.20pm | Election Day Coffee Morning at URC.  Elders Meeting |
| 10th May | Sunday | 11.30am | Church Meeting |
| 12th May | Tuesday | 1 pm | Lunch Club Two |
| 14th May | Thursday | 10.00-12.00pm | Coffee Morning with Church open. |
| 17th May | Sunday | 11.30am | Discussion; What is the spirit saying to the churches? |
| 19th May | Tuesday | 1pm | Lunch Club 01844 215513 |
| 19th May | Tuesday | 7.30pm | Discussion; What is the spirit saying to the churches? |
| 20th May | Wednesday | 2.30-4.30pm | Christian Aid Coffee & Cakes, Worminghall Village Hall. |
| 25th May | Monday | 2pm | U.R.C. Annual Fete |

**WEEKLY EVENTS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Brownies & Rainbows (Term time) | Monday 5.30 pm to 7 pm |
| Citizens’ Advice Bureau (CAB) | Monday 10 am -1pm |
| Choir Around the Piano (Term Time) | Monday 7.30 pm to 9 pm |
| Carers and Toddlers (Term Time) | Monday 9.30 to 11.30 am |
| Pre-School Music Group (Term time) | Wednesday 9.30 and 10.30 am |
| Guides (Term time) | Wednesday 7 pm to 8.30 pm |
| Prayers and Breakfast | Thursday 7.30 am |
| Brownies & Rainbows (Term Time) | Thursday 5 pm to 6.30pm |
| Table Tennis | Friday 10.30am to 12.noon |
| Hymn Practice  Pulse Youth Club | Sunday 9.30 -9.45am  Sunday 7.00-900pm |

***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*.



***High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE***

**CHURCH CONTACTS**

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The Manse: 54 Littleworth

email: [minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk)

(Day off Friday)

*Associate Minister*: Revd. Dr Colin Thompson

*Church Secretary*: Robert Harding

email: [secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk)

*Church website:*  [www.wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://www.wheatleyurc.org.uk/)