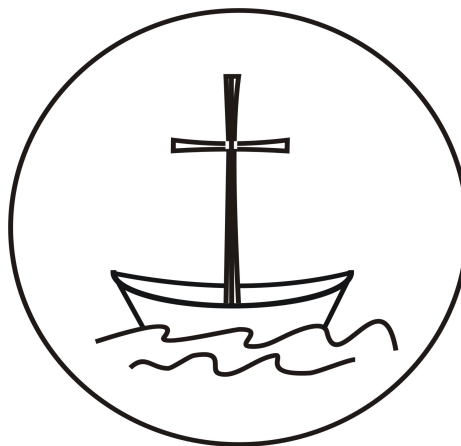


September 2018  
Vol XVII No 3

*The*  
**Quarterly**



*From the Summertown-Wolvercote Church  
Partnership*

**St Michael and All Angels, Summertown**

**St Peter's, Wolvercote**

**Summertown United Reformed Church**

**Wolvercote Baptist Church**

Contributions for the next issue of *The Quarterly*,  
preferably not exceeding 600 words,  
should be sent to one of the editors  
not later than Sunday 4 November 2018

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# A pastoral letter

*From the Revd Pauline Main, Pastor of the Summertown URC.*

As I write, Summertown URC is eagerly awaiting the start of its building works, at the front of the church, hopefully now around the beginning of September. The original plan was that these should start in May, so the Saturday Coffee Café was this year moved to St Michael's. We have been grateful to them for their hospitality, even though it has proved in the event to be rather unnecessary! But it has been good to "christen" St Michael's Threshold as a Partnership, by meeting there each Saturday morning for coffee, chat and cake sales (though I'm sure Bishop Stephen did an excellent "christening" job when he blessed the Threshold at the opening service!)

The URC has waited a long time to begin its refurbishment works: they were already a twinkle in people's eyes when I began my ministry here, eleven years ago. The wait at times has been very frustrating, battling with planners, adapting our ideas in the light of available funding and what the planning authorities would accept, and so on and so on. We've been grateful throughout for the support of our local councillors, our Synod officers, and our friends in the Partnership.

All this reminds us of the need to be patient. God's timetable does not always coincide with ours: we remember for instance that the Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness, when after leaving Egypt they must have felt that a better life was only just around the corner.

We may also notice that the Israelites were not afraid to complain to God about the situation he had led them into. My father used to tell me about the British Israelites, a movement which held the view that the British were the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. There is a certain Britishness about the Israelites in the desert ...you know, we have a summer which is cold and wet and we say "*where is*

*the sun*", whereas this year, with lots of sunshine, we grumble about the lack of rain. The Israelites are rather like this – God has delivered them from their hard lives in Egypt, but they are soon looking back longingly and complaining.

I'm being rather tongue in cheek. The Israelites in the desert are not the only ones in the scriptures who berate God (they moan to Moses, but the underlying complaint is to God). The Psalms are full of laments, with complaints to God and even about God; Abraham argues with God; Job eventually complains about all that has gone wrong in his life. In the Hebrew scriptures, people are not afraid to tell God what is going wrong, and I'm sure that many of us in the URC have also put our views to God in no uncertain terms in our prayers, as delays have continued.

We can feel guilty about this, but I read recently a helpful comment that, at its core, complaint is a turning not away from God, but towards God, trusting that God is listening, that he does not ignore, dismiss or punish those who call out to him in this way. From this we can take it that it is fine to air our grievances to God – about our own "wilderness" times and about the problems of the world.

For the Israelites, the wilderness is a place of danger, but also becomes a place of learning, as the people begin their long sojourn in the desert, and learn to trust and depend on the God who has delivered them, that his care will continue. God is there, in the wilderness with them. It was a long and a rocky road! Perhaps it is for us too, during our own hard times. But the message is that God does not abandon us, God knows and cares, and is there in the midst.

So at the URC – and in our Partnership – may we look forward to the future, knowing that God is with us as we try to serve him.

Every blessing,

*Pauline*

# What do we mean by 'Faith'?

Recently I have been reading a book by Richard Holloway, *Waiting for the Last Bus, Reflections on Life and Death*, published earlier this year. The book was drawn to my attention by Gretchen Sieffert, a member of the URC. While this article is only a discussion arising from my reading of the book, we hope Gretchen will offer a full review for our next issue.

Holloway, a former incumbent of St Mary Magdalen, Oxford, later became Bishop of Edinburgh and head of the Episcopal Church in Scotland. Since then, however, he has begun to question his faith. An earlier book by Holloway, published in 2004, was reviewed by Eileen Davies in the March 2005 issue of the (then) Parish Quarterly. At that time Eileen writes of him that 'rather than a neutral agnosticism he prefers to call his state of mind "*committed unknowing*".'

This is rather strange as a statement of faith. Almost by definition 'faith' is not about what we 'know', (about what we can 'prove' in the usual sense of the word, about what with our human limitations we can 'understand') – rather it is about what, by the Grace of God, we can 'believe'. However in his book *Waiting for the Last Bus* we do get some hints as to what Holloway means by a '*committed unknowing*'. He is clearly very unhappy with the tendency we have to simplify our discussion in moral and theological debate to being either right or wrong, in or out. This he illustrates by considering our understanding of human sexuality, for some literally a stark choice between right and wrong and for others a spectrum of natural behaviour. He extends this to our experience of religion more widely – 'there are those who are firmly in and those who are firmly out'. These are the ones who define the territory and there is no acceptable position in between. Does Holloway's commitment to 'not knowing' reflect his reluctance to take sides and to rule out certainty about things we cannot know?

The theme of Holloway's book, of course, is death and what, if anything, lies beyond. In line with his commitment to not knowing, Holloway is unable to state YES or NO to whether he believes the universe has an ultimate meaning and whether there is life beyond the grave. Clearly he desperately wants to believe but finds some aspects, religious faith and of the church, of which he has been so distinguished a servant, to be unacceptable. In particular he questions our belief in a loving God who 'has ended up making us traverse a universe so steeped in pain and loss and so packed with grief' even if things do 'come right in the long run'.

There is, however, perhaps an even deeper reason to question our belief in a loving creator. Religions have seemed, almost universally, to preach that not all will reach the promised paradise to come, that life beyond death is limited to those who attain the required status. There are those, Holloway says, 'for whom religious observance in this life is a way of guaranteeing their status in the next'. For Christians this goes back to the New Testament, to such parables as that of the 'Sheep and the Goats' where the 'goats' are normally seen as those consigned to oblivion. But it is also possible that the 'goats' represent those aspects of all of our lives which have no place in paradise and from which we have to be purged? Can we believe in a loving God who would consign any of His children to oblivion unless they positively choose it and only then if they were fully aware of the incredible depth of the divine love they are rejecting. There is a myth that the devil is a fallen angel who did know what he was rejecting.

It was a problem for Holloway, and may well also be for all serving clergy, that in trying to comfort those grieving from the death of a loved one he was asked questions of too detailed a nature for him to be able to answer honestly. Perhaps all we can say, and indeed it is enough, is that we believe in a loving God whose love will never let us go and for everything else we have to trust Him. Caroline and I

have a work colleague who died far too young of a brain tumour. Speaking to him shortly before he died he said he was looking forward to life's greatest adventure.

*John Harding*



**CLIMATE JUSTICE CAMPAIGN**

[www.climatejusticenorthoxford.org.uk](http://www.climatejusticenorthoxford.org.uk)



As anticipated in our June issue the Climate Justice Campaign, promoted by the Partnership Churches through the FairPlay Social Justice Group, was launched at a meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June at Cherwell School where Paul Valentin, International Director of Christian Aid, was the main speaker followed by Michael Taylor, ex-Director of Christian Aid, who chaired a panel discussion with Paul and three other experts in the field. The meeting attracted a good audience and there was much discussion.

A second meeting to highlight issues associated with Climate Justice is planned, to be held before this issue is published, at which Sarah Rowe, from the Christian Aid Campaigns Office, is expected to give an illustrated talk entitled: "Fossil Fuel and Climate Justice. What part do the Banks Play?". The talk will review their work in the Big Shift Campaign with four major banks during the last year and their follow-on work with HSBC.

A whole range of further events in support of the campaign has been arranged. These will be advertised in Partnership Link at the appropriate time. Meanwhile brief details are noted on the Partnership Calendar included with this issue. The campaign culminates in a meeting with our MP, Layla Moran, scheduled for 7.30 pm on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at the North Oxford Association. She will talk about the International Climate Conference in Poland during December 2018 and summarise the proposed actions.

*The Partnership FairPlay Social Justice Group*



# The Lord's Prayer: in, on and lead us not into temptation

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us the Lord's Prayer in answer to the apostles asking him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'. His reply is largely an asking prayer: hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done; we ask that all these things will happen 'on earth as it is in heaven' where God rules completely.

In earlier translations of the Bible into English, the phrase 'in earth as it is in heaven' is used. 'In' is also used in the early Books of Common Prayer in England. However, in the many 20<sup>th</sup> Century translations of the Bible, and in the Church of England's Common Worship, 'on' is used. I asked someone much wiser than me why this was changed and he assured me that it was because it is closer to what we now know of the original Greek text.

Another thing is the translation of the line later on in the Lord's Prayer: 'lead us not into temptation'.

You probably have heard about the schoolboy who didn't like going back to his boarding school near Thame. He prayed, 'lead us not into Thame Station'.

According to Marvin R. Vincent in *Word Studies in the New Testament*, writing about the Greek word *peirasmon*, translated into English as *temptation*, he says, 'It is a mistake to define this word as only *solicitation to evil*. It means *trial* of any kind, without reference to its moral quality'. So when God *tempted* Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, as John in his gospel comments, God said this to Abraham to *prove* him. The same word is used in Acts when Paul and Timothy *assayed* to go to Bythnia and in 2 Corinthians when Paul admonishes them to *examine* themselves. Marvin Vincent continues, 'We cannot pray God not to tempt us to sin', 'for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man' (James 1.13).

I was interested to see that in the Jerusalem Bible, the work of scholars under the direction of the Dominican Biblical School in Jerusalem, produced in French in 1956 and published in an English translation in 1966, they have, 'and do not put us to the test, but save us from the evil one' in Matthew and just 'and do not put us to the test' in Luke. I have looked at various translations, in French and Afrikaans as well as in English, where they have also modified this line in the light of what we now know of the original text and, thus far, I think 'and do not put us to the test, but save us from the evil one' is the best English translation, though I somehow doubt whether St Peter's, Wolvercote, All Saints, Wytham, and the Partnership churches will lead the change in the rest of the English speaking world.

Jesus teaches us to ask for food for today. He teaches us to ask for forgiveness. He teaches us to ask not to be put to the test. In Matthew there is further teaching about asking, in the following chapter: 'ask and it shall be given to you...' In Luke, teaching about asking follows immediately after the Lord's Prayer: he gives the example of the person asking his neighbour to lend him three loaves, because he has unexpected guests, and follows this with the same as Matthew, 'ask, and it will be given to you'.

So, when we pray, we are taught to ask, but not only for *ourselves*: give *us* this day our daily bread; not only because **we** want something but also asking for others. What we ask for needs to be the will of God – thy will be done.

We do need to be specific in our asking. We do need to ask. We do need to recognise that it is God himself who is in charge and makes the final decision.

Lord, teach us to pray.

*Tim Bravington*

# The Christian Aid Community Partnership Project

*An update on the Project first announced in a flyer to members of all the Partnership churches and distributed with Partnership Link in early July.*

The aim is to raise £5000 over 2 years to fund a Christian Aid Community Project which will attract matched funding of about 6:1 from 'Bread for the World', an agency of the German Protestant churches. This is an amazing opportunity to make our giving very effective. The project is for work in *'Lebanon and Iraq: towards inclusive development for young refugees, internally displaced people and host communities affected by the regional displacement crisis.'*

The Syrian conflict has triggered the biggest displacement crisis of this century, placing neighbouring countries sheltering refugees under significant economic stress. While there are 6.5 million people displaced inside Syria, more than 5 million have fled across country borders as refugees. The vast majority now live in neighbouring Lebanon and Iraq. This has placed significant pressure on the resources and capacity of these two countries, already strained from previous conflicts and a history of hosting those fleeing. Neither have what they need to manage the crisis with which they are faced.

Employment restrictions on refugees also force many children to give up their studies and find work to support their families' income. In 2015, 1,500 children were reportedly working in the streets of Lebanon, begging and selling gum, flowers and tissues. Women and girls often find themselves turning to sex work as the only way to survive. Young men are vulnerable to joining armed groups or partaking in inter-group violence as a result of the escalating tensions they face. To help overcome these obstacles, this project will promote education and integration with host communities, as well as providing young people affected by

displacement with opportunities for economic empowerment. Fuller details are available - please let us know if you would like to hear more.

Fundraising is under the aegis of the Partnership Enabling Group, a joint committee of our four churches. It is hoped to raise this sum by personal donations from members of our four churches, gift-aided where possible. If about 40 of us were able to offer, on average, £50 (with gift aid) in each of two years, the sum of £5000 would be achieved. The funding deadline is 31 December 2020, giving us over two years to raise the funds.

As a first step a flyer was circulated with Partnership Link in early July giving the above information and asking people to let us know if they were interested in supporting this project. At the time of writing, 18 people have responded (including one from All Saints, Wytham). Encouraged by this initial response we have signed up with Christian Aid and are now committed to the Lebanon and Iraq Project. We hope others will join in as the project proceeds.

Forms are now being prepared on which people who have signed up can let the Christian Aid office know the level of financial commitment they are able to offer, how they would prefer to make their payment and in how many instalments over the next two years. These may well have been sent out by the time you read this. (Individual levels of financial commitment will only be known to the Christian Aid Office). They will keep us up-to-date with the running total of the sum offered so that we can assess how much more is needed. Meanwhile the Christian Aid Office has confirmed that a visitor from Lebanon is expected either late November or early December and they are hoping to arrange an event at which we will be able to meet her. The present suggestion is that this will be at St. Michael's but this cannot be confirmed until possible dates are known.

Please let us know if you have not as yet signed up but are interested in joining in. Please reply either to: john.harding22@gmail.com or to: 14 Hobson Road, Oxford OX2 7JX

*John and Caroline Harding*

## Paul Rimmer 1925-2018

### *A life of thanksgiving*

The Reverend Paul Rimmer passed away peacefully on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July. His funeral at St Peter's Church on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July was a celebration of his long life and many achievements; a thanksgiving for a special person who lived and preached humility and gratitude.

I only got to know Paul in the latter years of his retirement, especially during the past three years when his health was failing and his mobility was gradually diminished. His obituary in the Oxford Times of the 19<sup>th</sup> of July lists the many landmarks and achievements of his life and work: his upbringing in the Lake District, his Theology study at Oxford and his World War II exploits as a trainee pilot in the US. He was a curate in Windermere and on the Isle of Man, served as a parish priest in Ootacamund in South India and was the vicar of St Nicholas Church in Old Marston for 30 years. He and his wife Joan first met as teenagers in Ulverston 78 years ago. They were married for 69 years and were blessed with two children; Julian and Clare. Clare passed away in 2008; her untimely death must have weighed heavily on Paul and Joan, but they never lost their positive outlook in life.

Paul and Joan have been at the heart of St Peter's congregation ever since Paul's retirement from Old Marston in 1990. 'Retirement' was always a relative concept for Paul;

he remained active in the life of the church until his illness prevented him from attending Sunday worship.

Everyone whose life was touched by Paul will remember his great sense of humour and the warmth and openness he exhibited in every encounter. Meeting Paul was enough to turn an ordinary or gloomy day into a day of warmth and served as a reminder that all God's children are deeply loved. In the days around his death and at the funeral, the quote by the former Bishop of Oxford, Lord Harries, was frequently cited: *"Happiness? If you want to know what happiness is, go and visit Paul Rimmer"*.

At his passing it is probably apt to probe deeper into the source of Paul's inimitable gift of bringing light and life into situations. I believe this came from a deep faith and the knowledge that we are all God's children and that simple fact should fill us with awe and gratitude; for every encounter with "those made in God's image" has the potential to unveil the divine; God's love at work through us.

I remember the first time I did the intercessions at St Peter's and, as it was a beautiful spring day; I started the prayers with thanksgiving for the day, for nature's rebirth and for all the goodness surrounding us. After the service Paul leapt to his feet and came to me exclaiming: "intercessions starting with thanksgiving!" As if I had just discovered an essential law of nature! I think our friendship must date from around that time.

At his funeral service, several speakers referred to Paul as a "saint who lived among us". He certainly had saintly characteristics, but Joan's experience and stories will probably relieve us of any notion of instant sainthood. His boundless enthusiasm must have been hard to put up with at times. He could show great indignation at pomposity and at form without substance in ecclesiastical, political or inter-personal settings. Our fundraising for a new organ was similarly met with disdain; "Why spend so much on ourselves when it could have gone to charity?"

Still the lasting image is that of warmth and thanksgiving. At his sickbed he still enquired after the well-being of others; he was still deeply engaged with the well-being of the wider world and above all, he showed gratitude for every gesture of support. Every day and every encounter were experienced as gifts.

Our thoughts are with Joan, who was not only Paul's companion for over 70 years; for the past three years she was his principal carer often expressing her frustration that "one cares for someone so that they will get better" and it was very difficult to come to terms with the realisation that in Paul's case a return to health was unlikely, even though, he himself kept believing that "tomorrow I might walk again". We know that in the end, he was right!

*Paul Valentin*

## **OPEN FELLOWSHIP GROUP AUTUMN, 2018**

The meetings will be held in **St Peter's Old School Room** on the following  
**Monday afternoons at 2.30pm** (except December 3),  
with a talk and discussion, followed by tea.

### **SEPTEMBER**

24 PAUL RIMMER: memories of Paul by Joan and others

### **OCTOBER**

8 BECCS: can this acronym save us from global warming? Mark Gregory

22 EXPERIENCES OF CARING: a discussion led by Deirdre Jalie

### **NOVEMBER**

5 THE OXFORD MOVEMENT: revolution in the Church? Barbara Dennis

19 HOW CAN WE LIVE A JOY-FILLED LIFE? Beth Knowles  
[Letter from Taizé, 2018]

### **DECEMBER**

3 BRING AND SHARE LUNCH at 1 pm

# Autumn Lectures 2018

Friday afternoons in the URC rear hall  
3 pm – 4.30 pm (to include tea)

## 1. September 21<sup>st</sup>, *'Infinity and Immortality'*

Professor Adrian Moore is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford and Vice Principal of St. Hugh's College, Oxford. His books include 'The Infinite and The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics: Making Sense of Things'.

## 2. October 12<sup>th</sup>, *'How is Fair Trade faring in a changing world?'*

(In association with the FairPlay Climate Justice Campaign)

Carol Wills is an honorary member of the World Fair Trade Organisation. Her recent work has been on gender inequality in the workplace and women's economic and social empowerment through Fair Trade. Dr Michael Taylor (former Director of Christian Aid and Chair of FairPlay) will respond to the lecture on behalf of the FairPlay Social Justice Network.

## 3. November 16<sup>th</sup>, *'Still enjoying Oxford'*

John Ashdown will present an illustrated anthology. He was formerly Conservation Officer for Oxford City Council and this is another in a series of his popular lectures.

£5 per lecture, or £13 for the series,  
payable in advance, or on the door, to Beryl Knotts (510055)  
in aid of our Church Building Fund.



# Partnership News

## Revd Shei Crowther

By the time *The Quarterly* is published the Revd Shei Crowther will have been licensed as an Associate Priest at St Peter's Wolvercote and All Saints Wytham. Shei was brought up in the Forest of Dean. She trained to teach at Homerton College, Cambridge, and then moved to Oxford where she taught and raised a family. She was an ordinand at Ripon College, Cuddesdon from 2012 to 2015 and then served her curacy in the Osney Benefice. Shei will be combining ministry in Wolvercote and Wytham with being a chaplain for the residential community at Cuddesdon.

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## **Partnership Enabling Group: July meeting report**

The most recent meeting of the Partnership Enabling Group was hosted by St Peter's on 4 July 2018. Issues discussed at this meeting included an agreement that we should go ahead with the annual Partnership Christmas Card as in previous years and that the cost should be reviewed before 2019. A report was given of the recent launch of the Climate Justice Campaign promoted by the Partnership FairPlay/Social Justice Group and it was proposed that the Lent study course in 2019 should focus on climate justice. Positive progress was reported in plans for joint work with St Andrew's in the Cutteslowe area and the idea of a 'Bishop's Mission Order' that might include Kidlington in view of the extent of new housing developments now in the offing was discussed. The proposal for a Christian Aid Community Partnership Project, as described elsewhere in this issue, was discussed and approved. A Partnership service of Confirmation in 2019 was considered subject to the Bishop's diary. (Since then Sunday 24 March at St Peter's has been suggested.)

The next meeting of PEG is planned for 10 October 10 2018. Please let Caroline know by e-mail if there are issues you would like discussed or suggestions you would like to make. ([caroline.harding18@gmail.com](mailto:caroline.harding18@gmail.com)).

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## **Silent prayer and meditation at St Peter's**

Do you love the prayer of silence?

If you do, please join us any Tuesday in St. Peter's Church, alternating between mornings at 11.45 am and evenings at 7pm.

We are offering two different approaches to this prayer of silence, taking place on alternate weeks:

1st Tuesday: 11.45am. "Be Still and Know", (Carol)

2nd Tuesday: 7pm. Julian Meeting, (Sandie)

3rd Tuesday: 7pm. "Be Still and Know", (Carol)

4th Tuesday: 11am. Julian Meeting, (Sandie)

5th Tuesday: 7pm Julian Meeting, (Sandie)

"Be Still and Know" is a time of silence interspersed with a Biblical sentence, followed by a time of praying for others and ending with the Grace.

Total time 45 minutes. Led by Carol Binnie, (contact tel: 513677)

A "Julian Meeting" begins with a brief Bible Reading or piece of music and leads into half an hour of silent prayer, ending with the Grace. It suits those who are seeking a time to simply "be with God in silence".

Total time 45 minutes. Led by Sandie Capel, (contact tel: 556982)

Many people of course meditate in this way on their own, but there is an extra dimension of depth and focus when the silence is shared with others. If you feel you would like to explore these forms of prayer, either on a regular basis, or just on the odd occasion, please join us.

*Carol Binnie and Sandie Capel*

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The following baptisms have taken place:

Elizabeth Davies (*St Peter's*)

Harper Harris (*St Peter's*)

We congratulate the following on their wedding:

Sighvatur Kristinsson and Sigridur Heimisdottir

(*St Michael's*)

Elisha Layden and Damien Querino-Dunn (*St Peter's*)

Michelle Newbold and Kieran Meads (*St Peter's*)

Sally Hunter and Andrew Wilson (*All Saints'*)

We are sad to report the deaths of the following:

Terry Willis (*St Michael's*)

Nancie Villiers (*St Michael's*)

David Maher (*St Peter's*)

Brian Lane (*St Peter's*)

Paul Rimmer (*St Peter's*)

Linda Tippett (*St Peter's*)

## **The Summertown-Wolvercote Church Partnership**

unites in covenanted relationship:  
St Michael and All Angels, Summertown;  
St Peter's, Wolvercote;  
Summertown United Reformed Church;  
and Wolvercote Baptist Church

Clergy:   Revd Gavin Knight *St Michael's*  
          Tel 556079  
          Revd Charles Draper *St Peter's*  
          Tel 553992  
          Revd Pauline Main *URC*  
          Tel 513581  
          Revd Vivien Edwards *Wolvercote Baptist Church*  
          Tel 790755

St Michael's Churchwardens:  
          Doreen Barrett  
          Irim Sarwar

St Peter's Churchwardens:  
          Michael Daniell  
          Wendy Sobey

URC Church Secretary:  
          Vacant – contact Pauline Main

Wolvercote Baptist Church Secretary:  
          John Harper

### **Church Partnership office**

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