

St Columba's

United Reformed Church, Oxford

Newsletter



September 2012

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Lord of all being,
May you so live within us
and among us,
That in our relationships
you become our love,
In our decision making
you become our wisdom,
In our words you become
our integrity,

In our actions you become our
justice,
In our darkness you become our
light,
In our suffering you become our
hope,
In our dying you become our life.
Amen, let it be so.

Sandra Pickard, Vision4Life



MINISTER'S LETTER

I read these words recently from an excerpt of a book by Dave Tomlinson (How to be a bad Christian...and a better human being) reviewed in the Church Times (24th August 2012):

'Faith is a way of interpreting the world, of making sense of the God-moments, as well as finding hope in the dark times. But increasingly religious explanations seem hollow or outdated or irrelevant. Most of us never think to go to church, because we have no confidence that it will offer any sort of vision of God or the universe that is compelling, or inspiring, or useful. But the questions persist – albeit frequently shoved to the back of our minds.'

Tomlinson, I think, has hit the nail on the head as to why so many people shy away from church. Indeed, some people who participate in church life struggle through periods of gut-wrenching doubt as they try to make sense of life and faith.

The world has changed around us. My favourite theologian Edward Farley writes compellingly about 'the crumbling of the house of authority': advances in human knowledge have brought us to the point where old notions of exclusive revelation and the authority of the Church have collapsed. Churchgoing is not the norm, and British culture has become more pluralistic and secularised. While I welcome the breath of fresh air and

stimulating interchange that can come with pluralism, I grieve the loss of respect for what faith can add to the public discourse.

So here we are in Oxford in 2012, continuing to awaken to a different reality than the one many of us grew up in, a reality that requires us to think again about how we live and express our faith. We who do not find God, Jesus or even Church 'hollow', 'outdated' or 'irrelevant' need to learn to communicate – if only to ourselves – the value and meaning that we have found in faith, and to do so in a way that others who have written off the idea might understand. The words of 1 Peter 3:15-16 come to mind: 'Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence'.

“We who do not find God, Jesus or even Church 'hollow', 'outdated' or 'irrelevant' need to learn to communicate...”

This reality was in my mind when, with the Elders, I set out the agenda for adult nurture this autumn. We'll tackle sex and science, two areas in which people have struggled to make sense of life and faith and in which some have written off the church as having anything good or interesting to say. Believe me, we'll find some interesting things to think and to say! Let your neighbours know.

In the meantime and always, Sunday by Sunday and every other day as well, I pray that 'the vision of God and the universe' that underpins our welcome, worship and witness will be 'compelling', 'inspiring', and 'useful' – promoting the flourishing of life for all. God prosper the work of our hearts and our hands.

Carla

NEWS OF ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Finance & Property Committee

The summer months – normally a quieter period – have been quite eventful as a consequence of the unusually high rainfall. Water damage has occurred in various parts of the church building, particularly – and substantially - in the organ vestry. This has prompted the Committee to reconsider its project plan and is to recommend significant roof-related repairs to the Church Meeting. It is also to recommend that a fire door be replaced. In total, the expected value is approximately £35,000. This is not an insignificant value but it is believed that the proposed work will prevent greater problems in the future and, therefore, this should not be delayed. It is also believed that our current state of accounts and budget performance will allow the church to cover both pieces of work and still leave a reasonable financial reserve. More details will follow.

Tim Llewelyn

Cumnor URC

There is something counter-intuitive about our decision to join with you to celebrate Harvest Festival in the heart of the City of Oxford, rather than out at Cumnor, where we are at least in touch with the countryside. It feels like the decision around which side of the family will host any celebration and who will travel to it; these things are the consequence of wishing to celebrate the bonds that hold us in relationship. After all, you came to us last year and there is an implicit expectation that you might join us here in Cumnor next year. Harvest in the city has a rather different feel to it: perhaps less emphasis on the bounty of the Harvest and rather more on social justice, and the ways in which that bounty is shared, that can only be good!

Directly connected to that we shall, on 14th October, be welcoming back Linda Mead to lead our service and to speak

about Commitment for Life. Our own area of interest and commitment in Cumnor is for Israel / Palestine. Linda Mead is the Programme Coordinator for Commitment for Life. Her role is to educate and inspire churches to put their faith into action. She has travelled to see the work of Christian Aid partners in Zimbabwe, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, the four areas supported by the Commitment for Life programme.



October also sees the start of a new season of Fourth Friday when we join for supper, a speaker and discussion. Our theme for this season is 'Pilgrimage', interpreted in a varied programme between this autumn and early next summer. On 26th October our speaker will be Revd Dr Margaret Whipp speaking on Pilgrimage and healing. Supper is at 7:15pm and we aim to finish around 9:00pm. There is no charge but a donation toward the cost of supper is welcome. If you would like to join us for supper please ring Carla on 01865 554 358. Our session on 23rd November will be led by Revd David Pickering on the theme: 'In the wake of the saints: a pilgrimage to the Hebrides'. On that occasion reservation for a place at supper reverts to Glenda on 01865 883 515.

An advance notice that in November we shall again be serving Winter Lunches: homemade soup, bread, cheese and pickle, followed by apple pie and cream and with tea or coffee. This year we shall be serving lunches on three Saturdays: 3rd, 10th and 17th, between 12:00pm and 2:00pm. Do come and join us if you are able.

Nigel Appleton

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sex and the Spirit: Uncovering the Past and Re-imagining the Future

On five Sunday evenings during the autumn term, our minister Carla will lead a version of her short course on the theology of sexuality (taught at the Cambridge Theological Federation, Cuddesdon-Ripon College and the Oxford Ministry Course). We will meet in the Church Hall on the dates specified below from 6:00pm – 8:00pm; pizza will be provided.

Sun 21st Oct	Bounding Sacred Space; Sources of Theology
Sun 28th Oct	Sex in the Bible
Sun 11th Nov	Sex in Christian Tradition and Other Voices
Sun 18th Nov	The link between Sex and Spirit
Sun 25th Nov	Imagining a 21 st Century Christian Sexual Ethic

Bring your Bible to the first session, and a notebook or journal to write in for all sessions.

For more information or to reserve a space, email Carla at minister@saintcolumbas.org.

Third Thursdays: Einstein's God

Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind.
Albert Einstein

From October, you are invited to join in conversations about science and faith on the third Thursday evening of the month, 7:30 – 9:00pm, in the Bill Thomson Room. We'll be discussing diverse topics from evolution to the impact of stress on the body to quarks and depression, using the book '*Einstein's God: Conversations about science and the human spirit*'. '*Einstein's God*' features an edited collection of Krista Tippett's interviews

with diverse scientists from her American Public Media radio show 'On Being' (www.onbeing.org; podcasts available).

Here is the line-up:

18th Oct 2012	Introduction and Ch. 1: <i>Einstein's God</i>
15th Nov 2012	Ch. 8: <i>Stress and the balance within</i>
17th Jan 2013	Ch. 2: <i>The biology of the Spirit</i>
21st Feb 2013	Ch. 4: <i>Evolution and wonder</i>
21st Mar 2013	Ch. 9: <i>The soul in depression</i>
18th Apr 2013	Ch. 7: <i>Revenge and forgiveness</i>
16th May 2013	Ch. 10: <i>Quarks and creation</i>
20th Jun 2013	Ch. 3: <i>Heart and soul (in medicine)</i>

Please purchase the book, which can be found on Amazon and through other internet booksellers, and read the relevant chapter in advance of our conversation. (There will be a few copies available for purchase at the October meeting for newcomers-come-lately.) And please read the relevant chapter in advance of each conversation if possible. These questions may help your engagement with the text: *What surprised, challenged or inspired you? What in your life experience confirms or conflicts with anything you read?*

For more information or to register your intended attendance, email Carla at minister@saintcolumbas.org.

Student Events

We're pleased to welcome university students new and old back to St Columba's this month. Dates for student diaries:

Friday 9th Nov, 6:00pm: Dinner at the Manse. Good enough food; great conversation. 7 Hawkswell Gardens, Summertown. RSVP: 01865 554 358; minister@saintcolumbas.org.

Sunday 18th Nov, 10:45am: Young adults lead worship.

Check out our autumn adult nurture series: *Sex and the Spirit* and *Einstein's God*. Social events will also take place throughout the academic term so please keep an eye out for further information.

Note: There is a page for student & young adults on our website (www.saintcolumbas.org) and also a mailing list that you can join.

Ethical Investment Debate

Saturday 6th October

9:30am – 2:00pm

Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford, OX1 2DH.

This National Ethical Investment Week, Shared Interest (www.shared-interest.com) is hosting an event that explores the concept of ethical investment and its impact on fair trade. The varied programme includes a live debate on ethical investment with a panel of individuals experienced in this area, as well as an introduction to fair trade and the work of Shared Interest. The session closes with lunch and an opportunity to sample some fair trade products courtesy of Zaytoun and Plush.

Shared Interest is an ethical investment co-operative and the world's only 100% fair trade lender. The organisation forms the vital link between UK social investors and fair trade businesses across the globe. Thanks to an investor base totalling almost 9,000, this year Shared Interest made payments of over £33m to 460 fair trade producers in 66 countries.

Shared Interest aims to provide lending facilities to businesses that may struggle to find finance elsewhere. Regional staff in three international offices help the organisation reach even the most marginalised of communities.

Book your free space at Shared Interest's Oxford event to find out more about ethical investment and how Shared Interest investors help transform entire communities in the developing world

To book:

Tel: 01912 339 102

www.shared-interest.com/ethical-investment-debate-booking-form/

Places are limited, so please reserve your place as soon as possible, especially if you are planning to bring a guest.

Wessex Synod Event

Matthew and the Peaceable Kingdom: a Quiet Day for the whole Synod on 13th October 2012 10:30am – 4:00pm at Parkstone United Reformed Church, led by Revd Jackie Lowe.

In a world which seems to be increasingly beguiled by non-stop noise and an incessant drive to activity, come and share a day of rest. We will take time to remind ourselves, in quiet and in fellowship, of the things that lead to peace.

Contact: To book a place contact the Synod Office 02380 678 570 / office@urcwessex.org.uk (more information is available from Terry Hinks 01794 512 163 tehinks@dsl.pipex.com).

Putting Your House In Order

27th October

10:00am – 1:00pm

Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, OX1 3LW.

Workshop. Maybe you have been meaning to make a will but couldn't get round to it. Perhaps you are wondering about Power of Attorney or Advance Decisions to Refuse Treatment. Or you have no idea about any of this but want to know. This is the workshop for you. In a warmly supportive and professional atmosphere Josefine Speyer (psychotherapist and co-founder of the Natural Death Centre www.naturaldeath.org.uk and The Befriending Network) and Susan Morris (palliative care clinical

nurse specialist) will help participants feel ready to start a conversation about preparing for dying and understanding what choices we all have.

To book:

Tel: 01865 305 305

www.oxfordplayhouse.com/ticketsoxford

Tickets cost £25/£15 (limited concessions)

Need a little help to overcome the reluctance and discuss what is needed in preparation for dying? This workshop will provide you with information and inspiration. It is an opportunity to explore your ideas and wishes in group discussion and work in pairs and includes presentations of information. 'Now I can start a conversation with my mother about putting her affairs in order.' The Natural Death Centre charity www.naturaldeath.org.uk aims to improve the quality of dying and gives advice on a wide variety of topics including family-organised, environmental-friendly funerals and natural burials. It acts as a kind of consumer watchdog on any issue to do with dying, death and bereavement. It formed the Association of Natural Burial Grounds in 1994.

INFORMATION

Ecumenical Partnerships: CTCO and FIAG

St Columba's is part of two ecumenical groups in central Oxford.

Churches Together in Central Oxford (CTCO) is a quarterly meeting of city centre churches: most major denominations are represented. Our concerns are both spiritual and practical. On the former front, we hold an annual evening service for the week of prayer for Christian Unity, and an open-air carol service in Bonn Square on a Saturday afternoon before Christmas. For the last two years we have also collaborated in hiring an 'ecumenical' donkey to process round several city centre churches, including

St Columba's, on Palm Sunday: she has proved to be a great hit, especially with the children. 'Quiet days' held in the cathedral have also been successful. In terms of the practical living-out of our faith, we provide a Chaplain for the homeless and supervise a drop-in centre, the Gatehouse, we have set up a 'Street Pastor' scheme, we give support to asylum seekers and those on low incomes and we have taken part in 'Oxclean', the council's annual drive to remove litter from some of the less well-cared for parts of the city. This last was as an interfaith team with Oxford Muslims; there is also an annual Interfaith Friendship Walk in June, when local people from a variety of religious backgrounds walk together from the Synagogue to the Mosque, via one of the city centre churches. Our activities are regularly publicised: at the moment our two needs are for people to befriend prisoners on their release, and for a co-ordinator for the annual 'sponsored sleepout' to raise money for the Gatehouse.

The Faith in Action Group (FIAG) is a smaller group consisting of four churches: St Columba's, St Michael at the North Gate (Anglican), Wesley Memorial (Methodist), and New Road (Baptist). We are primarily a social action group, meeting (again usually quarterly) to consider action on five fronts: environment, peacemaking, politics, poverty and 'other'. We have held a number of public events in Bonn Square: the last, last November, invited members of the public to share their opinions on the recession and the various responses to it from the government and others. We also hold short vigils at the Peace Plaque in Bonn Square, on appropriate days (Holocaust Memorial Day, Conscientious Objectors' Day, Hiroshima Day and so on). We work with Christian Aid - at the moment on their campaign to combat tax dodging. We also organise pulpit swaps of our four ministers, and are planning a Fair Trade event for the spring, probably in Lent. This is a very worthwhile group and membership is open - if there is anything that you think we should be doing under any of the above heads, please do get in touch with me, and get involved!

Shelagh Sneddon

Special Collections

Sheila Furlong, director of the Archway Foundation, has sent me a letter of thanks for the recent donation from St Columba's to the charity. The money was raised at the special collection held in July. Of course thanks are due to the congregation as a whole. The letter can be found on the notice board in the hall.

The next special collection is planned for 21st October. The appeal is to be for the Westminster College fund. I think we should have this collection while Nigel Appleton's presentation is reasonably fresh in peoples' minds.

The Christmas special collection is to be held on 16th December. The object of the appeal is to be St Luke's Big Project. Possibly St Luke's Church in Canning Crescent is not well known to many members of the congregation. However there is a leaflet on the notice board in the hall which explains the aims of the project. Suffice it is to say at this point that St Luke's building is rundown and the church does very good work in a relatively deprived area of Oxford. If anyone would like a copy of the leaflet I will try and obtain one for them after Christmas the next special collection will be the now traditional Commitment for Life appeal in February. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the inauguration of the appeal a DVD has been issued. If any member of the congregation is interested in borrowing the DVD please contact me.

Ian Kennedy

National Ethical Investment Week

The fifth National Ethical Investment Week (NEIW) takes place this year from 14th – 20th October. NEIW encourages us all to consider the impact of our finances on the world around us and on future generations. Consider how your money could be invested to help combat environmental degradation, fight global poverty, or address human rights abuses.

NEIW is a coordinated campaign that includes faith and community groups, NGOs, charities, and financial organisations working together to spread the word about green and ethical investing. Read more about green and ethical investing, getting involved in NEIW, and how your money can make a difference at www.neiw.org.

Ian Kennedy

NEWS ABOUT PEOPLE

Birthday Celebrations

Birthday wishes go to Betty Baxter and Margaret Slaven, who are celebrating their 80th birthdays.

Diamond Anniversaries

We wish to congratulate and express our appreciation in the accomplishment of a number of diamond anniversaries:

The ordination of Donald Schofield	-	18 th October 1952
The marriage of Paul and Betty Green	-	25 th October 1952

In Remembrance: Margaret Pooler

Extracts from Margaret Pooler's funeral address by Revd James Richards (nephew):

Margaret has a slightly exotic background, which you might not have expected. She was born in July 1930, in Dar es Salaam, in what was then Tanganyika, where her father was working at the time for the Ordnance Survey, in East Africa. (This unexpectedly exotic touch to her background was to cause problems some years later with passport authorities, because her mother had also been born abroad in, what we as a family knew as Swatow, in

China.) When Margaret was only six months old, the family moved back to England. Her mother had had blackwater fever shortly before Margaret was born. The waters had broken early and they'd had to travel in to Dar es Salaam from up-country.

At the end of 1947, Margaret began her training at the Radcliffe Infirmary Preliminary Training School. A year later, Margaret and Norman were engaged, on her 18th birthday, and she began nursing as a probationer. They were married in 1951, and received Norman's crucial Law Society final exam results on honeymoon.

As if a family of four was not quite enough to keep her busy, Margaret was also one of the first volunteers on the opening of the Croydon branch of the Samaritans (volunteer number 15) Again, it is typical of Margaret, that this role of care and compassion was one that doesn't go with great publicity, and it wasn't one she ever talked about. But I can imagine that there will have been many people who found a quiet, sympathetic and friendly voice at the end of the phone, in an hour of great need.

And Margaret's list of activities looks like what you might get if you asked 20 people what they might do when they retired. They included faithful and diligent service as an elder at St Columba's Church in Worthing, where she took her pastoral duties very seriously.

I know as someone coming in and seeing almost from 'outside', how vital and how important to Margaret was all of family life, all the doings of everybody. She kept up with everyone and wrote to them, and knew about what was going on and spoke with pride about what they were doing - and sometimes with concern, but always, always wanting to see the best in everyone.

So to Oxford and Pegasus Grange, and in particular her role on the social committee, visiting and welcoming new residents, and many little behind-the-scenes chores here at St Columba's.

So there is a huge amount to celebrate about her life. And, saving the best till last, there is the rock-solid partnership with Norman, which has been the main-spring of the life of both of them and of the family life for so long. A lovely mother and a great friend.

PROFILES

New Members

On 16th September, we were pleased to welcome five people into church membership. Here is a brief sketch of our new members; do have a chat and get to know them...

Auriol Burrows came to us by way transfer from St Andrew's URC in Walton-on-Thames, where she worshipped and served for many years after living in Geneva and working for the World Council of Churches. Auriol is Veronica Taylor's sister.

Paul Green is a retired URC minister and educator who has been attending St Columba's since retiring to Bicester. A staunch ecumenist, he also attended Bicester Methodist, the Quakers and assorted other churches. He was a faithful member of the Manse Discussion Group, and is no longer able to attend church as he is now significantly disabled by motor neuron disease. He came to us by transfer of membership from Denewell Ave URC in Low Fell, Gateshead.

Kirsten Johnson and Jonathan Herring are the parents of three daughters: Laurel, Joanna and Darcy. All five of them are very special people who you will enjoy getting to know if you haven't already. Kirsten, a musician and recording pianist, grew up in the Assemblies of God. Jonathan lectures in law and grew up in the Church of England. They have been faithful members and contributors to various churches throughout their lives and have already begun to help us in our children's work.

Mary Thewlis comes to us from an evangelical, non-denominational church which originated in Norway and is colloquially known as 'Smith's Friends'. She works in IT and has been worshipping here since January 2011.

Note: If you are interested in exploring church membership, speak to your Elder or Carla (minister@saintcolumbas.org).

REPORTS

The Elders' Meeting

The Elders discussed recently whether the wider congregation had much idea of what goes on at the regular Elders' meetings. We decided that we would take turns to write a column in the newsletter to share more of what goes on in those meetings. I was ordained as an Elder only last December, so I have the least experience of these but it somehow seems appropriate that I should get to write the first column as I reflect on my first nine months of eldership.

We meet approximately every two months on Thursday evenings in the Bill Thomson room. One of the Elders starts off by leading us in prayer and leading a reflection for fifteen minutes or so. This always helps to put the day's events behind us and to focus our thoughts on the reasons we are gathered. Most recently David Townsend has led reflections based on passages from Simon Small's book entitled 'From the Bottom of the Pond - the forgotten art of experiencing God in the depths of the present moment'. The passage we read at the last meeting concerned a woman



who found it hard to pray, but realised that she felt close to God when she was feeling peaceful watching the sunset while doing the washing up. We shared in pairs what those moments

are for each of us when we feel closest to God - mine is cycling in the countryside surrounded by the beauties of creation.

The remaining two hours or so of the meeting are taken up with business. Carla presents her report and each of the four smaller Elders' groups do the same (they are: Children & Young People, Mission, Worship & Nurture, and Finance & Property). We discussed how we will continue the work we began at the May elders' retreat on the renewing elements of church life: spirituality, quality of relationship and missional outlook. We agreed to organise a welcome dinner for new members of the church and are exploring ways to build stronger links between adults, young people and children in our church. The 'worship & nurture' Elders are planning an advent prayer calendar and have been looking at trying to improve the accessibility of the second hymn for the children. The 'Children & Young People' Elders are looking into ecumenical activities for the older group of children including the possibility of a Youth Club and also making sure that our Sunday School provision is catering to all the ages of children we have. The 'Mission' Elders brought some news and ideas from FirstSunday. Many other things were also covered; too many to report on in detail! The meeting ends with prayer and saying the grace together.

Finally, continuing on the 'social relationships' theme some of us have revived a tradition of having a sociable drink in the Bear after the meeting!

Mike Healey

A Week in the Life... 9th – 15th September 2012

For the September Elders' meeting I provided a rough diary of sorts of how I spend my time. The Elders found it interesting and thought a newsletter article detailing a week in the life might be of interest to the wider congregation. Here are my notes from this week...

Sunday

Brilliant morning at Augustine United Church in Edinburgh, an all-age congregation about the size of St Columba's with a good number of children. We brought greetings from our Jr Church and David Townsend spoke well about the origins and experience of FirstSunday. I tried out my first sermon on moral creativity, the core concept from my research, and preached an heretical theological anthropology (I'm getting bolder about this). I'm bringing back a drawing of their children's faces made in Jr Church. It will be a delight to host Revd Fiona Bennett and her colleague Revd Maxwell Reay at St C's in Oct. I'm hoping our churches will find other ways to share and encourage each other. On the train back, after enjoying watching the sea go by between Berwick upon Tweed and Newcastle, I finished reading 'Einstein's God' and planned the autumn series.



Monday

Monday is our day off – usually the only day I can be sure that I'll see David. In Monday's daily prayer, I usually write a psalm redux....today it is Psalm 141. Then it's a day of chores and going through our 2013 diaries so that I can give the church secretaries a preaching diary at tomorrow's meeting. The process of diary checking is always depressing as both of our diaries are too full and conflict too often, plus I made an error in recording last year and now I'll miss a few days in Cardiff with friends in November that David recorded correctly in his diary. Sigh....

Tuesday

Tuesday prayer is always longer as it includes prayers for each individual in St Columba's, Cumnor, FirstSunday and Wednesday Welcome. Spent the morning responding to email, doing the followup from Thursday's elders meeting and preparing for this week's meetings. The afternoon was for worship preparation: reading the lectionary, doing supplementary reading and beginning to think about the theme, hymns, etc. In the evening, I met with Adrian Moore and Nigel Appleton, church secretaries, in

order to sketch out the 2103 diary for the two churches and my preaching diary.

Wednesday

Morning again for prayer, email responses and worship preparation. In the afternoon, I attended the Cumnor Worship Group then dropped by St Columba's to meet someone for a pastoral visit. A premarital counselling session with a couple whose civil partnership will be blessed in December, then a meeting of the Faith in Action Group (FIAG) at New Road Baptist in the evening. FIAG is an ecumenical group with representatives from Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, New Road Baptist Church, St Michaels at the North Gate and St Columba's (Shelagh Sneddon and me) that works on witness and social justice in the city centre.

Thursday

Thursday morning after prayer I got down to creating a service sheet for Sunday. At noon, I peddled down to Wesley Mem for the quarterly meeting of CTCO – Churches Together in Central Oxford. I completed the service sheet in the early afternoon and got a better idea about the sermon. In the late afternoon and early evening, I used my motorbike (I do love that bike) to do home visits to people who have had recent hospital procedures. I treasure these visits and wish I had more time for visiting and less time in meetings.

Friday

After prayer, I quickly caught up with email and then turned my attention to the sermon. It has to be very short this week as the service is wonderfully full with new member reception and communion, followed by a church meeting. The afternoon is for finishing the sermon, writing newsletter articles, and doing hospital and hospice visits. It will be tight but David's in Taunton so I can work well into the evening.

Saturday

Morning prayer. Afternoon: Meet South African vicar who wants to talk about progressive Christianity. Night: I always read the

sermon on Saturday night and conclude that it is rubbish (really, who can speak for God?). Sunday mornings I usually awake with an idea about how to change it slightly, or rarely, substantially to improve it.

Sunday

And it starts all over again, although each week is delightfully different.

Carla Grosch-Miller

Treasurers' Report

Overview

July- August 2012	
Income	£17,133
Expenditure	£11,657
Current Balance	£67,612

Income

Income continues to solidly exceed our expectations, with generous giving from our members and friends deserving a particular mention. Hirings income has been down, but steady, over the summer, and we are anticipating a good performance this autumn thanks to student groups.

Top 5 areas of income:

1.	Direct Giving by Standing Order	£6,375
2.	Unrestricted Donations	£2,508
3.	Gift Aid (Reclaimed)	£1,800
4.	Hirings Income	£1,391
5.	Cash Collection	£825

Expenditure

Top 5 areas of expenditure:

1.	URC Ministry and Mission	£5,794
2.	Church Administrator and Expenses	£1,918
3.	Cleaning	£750
4.	Office Expenses	£470
5.	Building Maintenance	£376

Current Balance & Trend

The current state of our finances remains healthy. General funds have increased by some £4,000 from January to the end of August, and this is substantially better than predicted in our budget – thanks to both better than anticipated income, and tightly controlled expenditure.

Substantial Anticipated Expenditure

As you will be hearing at a Church Meeting soon, we are planning to tackle a number of outstanding issues on the roof, plus a replacement of one of the fire doors at the front of the building. This will involve spending a substantial chunk of our reserves; however, we believe this is the correct decision financially, since delaying these repairs is either not an option for health and safety reasons, or could lead to bigger bills later on. We have worked hard to maintain a solid reserve for exactly this sort of situation, and are confident we can afford what is needed.

Andrew Baker & David North

A reminder of how YOU can help...

- Donating money;
- UK taxpayers claiming Gift Aid on donations;
- Donating your time;
- Fundraising.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

As I write this, it is clear that the British summer is well and truly over. Torrential rains and gales have returned, with even the heating being required on occasion to take the edge off the chill in the house. The end of this period also brings with it the end of the successful Olympic and Paralympic Games that made so many Britons very proud of the achievements of the athletes, the organisers and the volunteers... and, in fact, proud to be British.

So with the change of the seasons, is it a time to be sad? Not at all. With change comes opportunity: opportunity to learn and grow from what has been, and opportunity for more success. This was highlighted throughout the Games, where the focus was about creating a legacy and trying to inspire a generation. As I heard this repeated time and time again, it made me realise that this is exactly what the Church should be attempting to achieve today and in every generation. It is not just about our individual faith and turning up to church on a Sunday to worship God. Rather, it is about expressing our faith in a way that relates to the society of the day so that – as we have the good fortune of being handed the baton from two thousand years worth of generations – we continue the mission that Jesus started, passing it on to the generations that follow.

We must not dwell on past successes but we must look at the here and now, and also looking towards the future. And we must do this without fearing to wave our flags and banners high in the air, proclaiming the Good News as proud people of faith.

Tim

Newsletter Deadline...

All contributions for the next issue of the newsletter should be sent to Tim Llewelyn (Editor) by Sunday 18th November 2012 to the following Email address: llewelyn_tg@hotmail.com.

The next issue will cover from mid-July to September.

News items: 400 words (maximum); discussion articles: 600 (maximum).

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Events

October

- 6th *Ethical Investment Debate.* Wesley Memorial Church. 9:30am.
- 7th *FirstSunday.* Church. 7:15pm.
- 13th *Matthew and the Peaceable Kingdom.* Parkstone URC. 10:30am.
- 18th *Third Thursdays: Einstein's God.* Church. 7:30pm.
- 21st *Sex and the Spirit.* Church. 6:00pm.
- 26th *Fourth Friday.* Cumnor URC. 7:15pm.
- 27th *Ethical Investment Debate.* Friends' Meeting House. 10:00am.
- 28th *Sex and the Spirit.* Church. 6:00pm.
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November

- 3rd *Winter Lunches.* Cumnor URC. 12:00pm.
- 4th *FirstSunday.* Church. 7:15pm.
- 9th *Student & Young Adults' Dinner.* The Manse. 6:00pm.
- 10th *Winter Lunches.* Cumnor URC. 12:00pm.
- 11th *Sex and the Spirit.* Church. 6:00pm.
- 15th *Third Thursdays: Einstein's God.* Church. 7:30pm.
- 17th *Winter Lunches.* Cumnor URC. 12:00pm.
- 18th *Sex and the Spirit.* Church. 6:00pm.
- 23rd *Fourth Friday.* Cumnor URC. 7:15pm.

25th *Sex and the Spirit.* Church. 6:00pm.

December

2nd *Gift Service.* Church. 10:45am.
First Sunday. Church. 7:15pm.

Meetings

October

9th *First Sunday Planning. Time & place TBC.*
11th *Finance & Property Committee.* Church. 7:30pm.
21st *Church Meeting.* Church. After Sunday worship.

November

1st *Elders' Roll Meeting.* Church. 7:30pm.
6th *First Sunday Planning. Time & place TBC.*
8th *Finance & Property Committee.* Church. 7:30pm.
29th *Elders' Meeting.* Church. 7:30pm.

December

2nd *Church Meeting.* Church. After Sunday worship.



LECTIONARY

October

7th Job 1:1, 2:1-10; Psalm 26; Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Mark 10:2-16.

14th Job 23:1-9, 16-17; Psalm 22:1-15; Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31.

21st Job 38:1-7, (34-41); Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45.

28th Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34:1-8, (19-22); Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52.

November

4th Ruth 1:1-18; Psalm 146; Hebrews 9:11-14; Mark 12:28-34.

11th Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17; Psalm 127; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44.

18th 1 Samuel 1:4-20; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Hebrews 10:11-14, (15-18), 19-25; Mark 13:1-8.

25th 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalm 132:1-12, (13-18); Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37.

December

2nd Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

Minister

Revd Carla A. Grosch-Miller 7 Hawkswell Gardens, Oxford, OX2 7EX.
Tel: 01865 554 358. Email: minister@saintcolumbas.org

Church Administrator

Sue Pearce Tel: 07880 601 109 Email: administrator@saintcolumbas.org

Treasurers

Andrew Baker & David North Email: treasurer@saintcolumbas.org



St Columba's URC, Oxford

Sunday Worship: 10:45am

ALL are welcome.

*Be thou a bright flame before me,
be thou a guiding star above me,
be thou a smooth path below me,
be thou a kindly shepherd behind me,
today, tonight and forever.*

St Columba's Prayer

ALFRED STREET,
OXFORD,
OX1 4EH

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