

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**November 2024**

# Covering Thoughts

*One of the values we try to uphold in our community is inclusivity, and it is surprisingly difficult. Mostly we are unaware when we exclude others and may need a gentle reminder.*

*As Christians we used to think we were inclusive if we widened our respect to the three Abrahamic faiths, but in our multicultural society it is important to also value the beliefs of other parts of the world, some of whose religious traditions are more ancient yet still influential today. I personally find it hard to believe that one small nation is chosen by a universal God. If Christians claim to a monopoly, they miss out on a treasure house of inspiration and insight. It is tempting to dismiss what we do not know or understand and easy to say that we have the complete truth. Yes, Christ's revelation is a light to us, and may we look for the light shining in other faiths too.*

*Some years ago, I based an art exhibition on Sidney Carter. His book 'The Rock of Doubt' explores questions such as these. One of his songs called 'The Bird of Heaven' describes keeping Christ in a gilded cage and discovering one day that he has flown and the cage is empty. The song calls the listener to follow wherever the bird goes, from history and dogma to the Christ within. He says:*

*The living truth is what I long to see:*

*I cannot lean upon what used to be.*

*What I find so encouraging in Carter is that he emphasises experience. He expresses this simply:*

*I doubt yet I walk on water.*

*There is a depth to life which sustains and enriches every day. For some this may be described as having God looking after them, for others it may be described as being aware of the living mystery in the depth and heart of things.*

*If we are a community that upholds inclusivity, may we accept and affirm differing ways of articulating beliefs while celebrating the shared experience.*

*So shut the Bible up and show me how  
the Christ you talk about is living now.*

***Christine Bainbridge***

# Pastoral Letter

It has been a real privilege to attend the Thursday morning 'prayers for the world' session whenever possible over the last few months, learning of others' concerns, sharing my own (not all about Ukraine) and putting the situations and their resolution in God's hands, knowing that a number of equally complex problems have unravelled relatively successfully, over the years. In the opposite of a JFK Dallas memory, I still remember exactly where I was when Radio 5 broadcast the changing of the flags and the first playing of the post-apartheid anthem from South Africa.

One rainy Thursday morning recently, however, I also picked up on the fact that I'm not the only one there who sometimes has nights when sleep in the early hours is difficult and this made me think about why, during bouts of insomnia, it's quite difficult to focus on what would seem to be an ideal opportunity for prayer or meditation. Having gone to sleep thankful for all the things God has helped us resolve and confident that we shall receive help with those still unravelling, I wake thinking about the impossibility of some of our world's, community's and family's problems being resolved, with no ability to rationalise anything, and with God seemingly a million miles away, if there at all.

The whole question of the purpose, effectiveness and recipient of prayer is a complex and frustrating one to grapple with. We all know what prayer isn't. It isn't the fourth emergency service, used in moments of crisis by many, including those, just as precious to God, who tick 'No religion' in the census. It isn't the formula(e) that we learnt as children and can say without engaging very much with the words or their meanings, nor, though some might disagree to an extent, do I think it's what the feeble and irresolute do to support the active and driven people who are actually changing the world and making God's kingdom come in practice.

Prayer doesn't seem to be dependent on our effort or, thankfully, our eloquence. So what positives are there to be said of it? That it needs to be scheduled. When Saint Paul says 'Pray all the time,' I think of our hamster, who eats all the time, but never seems satisfied, and I feel particularly short of the mark, but it does need to

be regular and it is true that I've prayed effectively while showering, shaving and walking. James tells us in his beautifully succinct epistle, that, despite what I say about its not being a last resort in an emergency, it can be the response to urgent needs; 'Is anyone among you in trouble? He should turn to prayer.'

Someone once pointed out that adult prayers often begin 'Please' and children's prayers 'Thank you.' Here again, James has a point, 'Is anyone in good heart? He should sing praises.' Another important truth is that when we are going through periods of difficulty, despair and doubt, we know that through Jesus, God has been there too. I also find it helpful to think that prayer is about a relationship and, just as with human relationships, if we feel things are going wrong, we need to talk about them, and perhaps say sorry. As we heard on a recent Sunday morning, many of us rarely, if ever, hear the direct voice of God in response to what we ask, but that doesn't mean God (or indeed we) are lacking.

In all honesty, none of this came to me as a help after a difficult Wednesday night's sleep some weeks ago, but before I got to the meeting on the Thursday morning, I happened to see the following poem by RS Thomas had been put on Facebook by Selina, the deacon of our previous church. I hadn't seen it before but shared it with the group, another of whom had coincidentally also come across it that week. It made me realise that while God doesn't always answer prayer in the way we wish, at the time we appoint, or in a way that is clear to us, the God of our faith, an infinite spirit of creation and positivity, is able to work out a purpose or plan for each and all of our individual lives, hard to see it though it may seem at times.

### **The Other by R. S Thomas:**

There are nights that are so still  
that I can hear the small owl  
calling  
far off and a fox barking  
miles away. It is then that I lie  
in the lean hours awake listening  
to the swell born somewhere in  
the Atlantic  
rising and falling, rising and  
falling  
wave on wave on the long shore  
by the village that is without  
light  
and companionless. And the  
thought comes  
of that other being who is  
awake, too,  
letting our prayers break on him,  
not like this for a few hours,  
but for days, years, for eternity.

I hope this short, simple poem is as helpful to you as it was to me.

‘Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me, if you seek me with all your heart.’ Jeremiah 29: 12-13)

**Mike Matejtschuk**

# Wheatley Flood

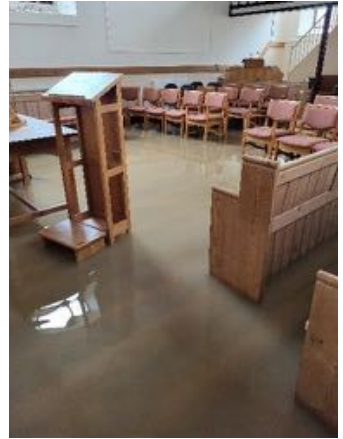
On Monday morning, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, our church was flooded when a flash flood swept down the High Street into Crown Square and under the front door. The entire church, except the Mulberry Room and its adjacent corridor was under 3 inches of water. Fortunately, the water level stayed below the step up to the Mulberry Room extension.

This was probably the worst flood that Wheatley has ever experienced in living history. More than 50 houses were severely affected, many were those along the High Street and Farm Close Road.

Wheatley URC is very grateful to all the people who turned up to help sweep out the water. We are hoping the damage will be minimal; however, we are awaiting the assessor's report.

**Pauline Shelley**

**Photos submitted by Roger Bettess & Phyllis Williams**



# Blended Service Rotas for November 2024

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	Intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Colin Thompson HC	Alice Halliday	Ann Bettess	Pauline Shelley	Charles Bennett/ Allison Towner
10 <sup>th</sup>	Cara Heafey	Christine Bainbridge	Liz Barry	Marian Mole	Val Farmer/ Jen Yeates
17 <sup>th</sup>	Richard Bainbridge	Sybil Beaton	Barbara Joiner	Bev Paton	Ann Bettess/ Robert Harding
24 <sup>th</sup>	Mark Williams			Debi Kidd	Chris Shelley/ Barbara Joiner

Dates	Organist
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Jeff Clarke
10 <sup>th</sup>	Frances Simpson
17 <sup>th</sup>	Jeff Clarke
24 <sup>th</sup>	Frances Simpson

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## Deadline

14<sup>th</sup> November is the deadline for the December Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) Paper copy can be given to Debi Kidd. Please type all contributions in Calibri font, size 11. Thank you.

## Disclaimer

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

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# Dates for Your Diaries

## Weekly

Mon & Thurs 9.00am Mindfulness Sitting Group  
Mark Williams - [jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com](mailto:jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com)  
Friday 10am Table Tennis  
Val Farmer – [val\\_farmer40@hotmail.com](mailto:val_farmer40@hotmail.com)

## Monthly

Alternate Mondays (11<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>) Not So Young Club  
Frances Simpson – [frances\\_simpson@icloud.com](mailto:frances_simpson@icloud.com)  
First Sunday Teas - 2.30-4pm  
Ann Bettess – [annsgoog@gmail.com](mailto:annsgoog@gmail.com)  
First Thurs. 10am Prayers for the World  
Ann Hardiman – 01865 873485  
First Thurs. 10.30am Coffee Morning  
Barbara Joiner – [albarjoiner2@gmail.com](mailto:albarjoiner2@gmail.com)  
Third Thurs. 10.30am Coffee Morning  
Barbara Joiner – [albarjoiner2@gmail.com](mailto:albarjoiner2@gmail.com)  
Second Thursday 10am Memory Café  
Laurence Devlin – [laurencelalanne99@gmail.com](mailto:laurencelalanne99@gmail.com)  
Second Tuesday Picnic Club  
Val Farmer – [val\\_farmer40@hotmail.com](mailto:val_farmer40@hotmail.com)  
Third Tuesday Lunch Club  
Catherine Harding – [hardings64@btinternet.com](mailto:hardings64@btinternet.com)



# ★ Fun and Fellowship, While Making Stars - 30th November from 10.30am to 4pm ★

To follow along with our Advent theme, 'Star of Wonder, Star of Light', we will be holding a Workshop to create star decorations, so that, this year, we can cover our Christmas tree with stars.

You are ALL invited to come and join in with this activity, which will be held in the Church hall and the Mulberry room. 🎄

The stars can be made in any way you wish; paper, fabric, cardboard, knitting, crochet, straw, etc. There will be patterns available, but we ask you to collect and bring any waste materials such as; toilet and kitchen rolls, fabric, plain cardboard from packaging, unwanted wrapping paper, and whatever else you think you could make a star from. I will put out a more comprehensive wish list nearer the time.

Bring a packed lunch, and a friend. Tea, coffee, cake and biscuits will be provided.



**Pauline Shelley**

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## Advent Display

During Advent it has been the practice to have a simple display in place of flowers at the front of the church. Usually this changes subtly each week to mark the progression towards Christmas. Once the first display is completed very little needs doing on the subsequent weeks. We are looking for someone who would like to provide a focus for us this year. Two people might like to work together, or perhaps you would enjoy the opportunity to be quietly creative on your own.

If you would like to do this, please would you speak to **Allison Towner or Christine Bainbridge.**

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# Commitment for Life

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 three areas covered by the programme. At Wheatley we support the work going on in Zimbabwe as well as having our own Zimbabwean project with our connection and support for the **Falcon School**.

**Please keep up to date** by reading the information booklet enclosed with your newsletter. If you can, over the next few weeks, would you please donate towards this crucial work, to which we are committed, using the usual on-line banking channels into our church bank account, making sure you mark it up, '**C4L**'. **If your donation is in the form of a cheque, please make it payable to Wheatley URC, with C4L on the back.**

***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.***

**Robert Harding on behalf of Care for the World Team**

# Common Lectionary Readings

## November 2024

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

Date	3 <sup>rd</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Ruth 1: 1-18	Ruth 3: 1-5 & 4: 13-17	1 Samuel 1: 4-20 & 2: 1-10	Daniel 7: 9-10 & 13-14
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 146	Psalm 127	No Psalm	Psalm 93
<b>New Test.</b>	Hebrews 9: 11-14	Hebrews 9: 24-28	Hebrews 10: 11-14 & 19-25	Revelation 1: 4b-8
<b>Gospel</b>	Mark 12: 28-34	Mark 12: 38-44	Mark 13: 1-8	John 18: 33-37

Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> - Paula Gooder suggests that the book of Ruth is the ultimate love story.

Nov 10<sup>th</sup> - Ruth is presented as a model of obedience but also as one with the strength of mind to choose what she believed was the right way.

Nov 17<sup>th</sup> - Mark's Gospel may have been written against the backdrop of the Jewish revolt against Rome in AD 66-70.

Nov 24<sup>th</sup> - The book of Daniel is set during Israel's exile in Babylon 597-538 BC but was probably written for a later crisis around 160 BC that raised essentially the same issue.

**Richard Bainbridge**



# FALCON SCHOOL NEWS ...

Just **three items of 'news' or updates this month relating to our Falcon school partnership:**

**'Regina's Visit':** at the end of September Wilbert's wife had to pay an unplanned visit to Zimbabwe. The resulting benefit for the school was that (a) Regina could witness the start of the completion project for the extra teacher's accommodation (see right below, 'Thanks Wheatley') ... ..and (b) she could take out several of the lap tops which we had purchased and a few extra 'used' laptops for which URC's Kevin Snyman had issued an appeal (see hand-over, left below).....Unfortunately, the notorious Zimbabwe custom officials enforced a 'duty' charge of \$200 despite Chris writing a letter for Wilbert stating that the laptops were for a charitable cause.



**Wilbert's Induction in Uxbridge:** on behalf of Wheatley URC, Rob attended Wilbert's induction into his new church (Christchurch Uxbridge & Ickenham URC) on 21st September. Great singing and prayers were shared by all plus an amazing testimonial video for Wilbert from Kevin Snyman who could not attend in person ....



**Publicity Slip for Christmas Cards:** last Christmas Jean (Boxall) had the great idea of inserting a folded slip ([see below!](#)) into some of her Christmas cards, telling her friends and acquaintances about our support for the school and making light reference to donation enquiries.

Jean plans to do this again this year and if you also would like to insert some of these slips (selectively?) into your cards please just let Rob know in person or by e mail ([robholdaway2@gmail.com](mailto:robholdaway2@gmail.com))

-----**The Falcon Junior School, Zimbabwe**-----

**Wheatley URC** has been supporting the development of this school for nearly 4 years. It was set up to provide teaching to children whose parents cannot afford the expense of state schools (books, uniforms, teaching) and would otherwise be without education.

**We have helped** build and provide classrooms, teachers accommodation, running water supply, uniforms and have recently raised money for essential computer equipment to aid learning.



**We have direct feed back** from the school on a regular basis and are kept closely informed as to how our donations are being used.

**For Donation Enquiries:** please contact Rob Holdaway on 01844 202027 or e mail our Church treasurer at: [treasurer@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@wheatleyurc.org.uk)

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**Rob Holdaway on behalf of the Care for the World Team**

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# Harvest Festival



We again celebrated our Harvest Festival at Sandy Lane Farm. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day. Thanks go to all who attended, took part in the service, provided food and drink, with special thanks to Charles, Sue and all at the farm.

**Debi Kidd**

# Third Tuesday 'Lunch Club'

We have decided, after about 17 years, that the time has come to withdraw from running the lunch club. We will make this year's Christmas dinner our last one. We have found it increasingly tiring and stressful and feel it is best to finish in a planned and orderly fashion, rather than having to stop suddenly because of ill health or some other emergency, (by May next year we will both be in our eighties). We spoke to everyone at the October lunch, and suggested they might like to continue in the way the other lunch club has. However, if there is anyone who feels they could pick up where we have left off, we would of course offer as much help and guidance as possible with the handover.

We would like to express our thanks to all who have helped us, in one way or another, to keep going this long, helping to prepare food, offering lifts and washing up; Ellen Webster (with Bob as long as he was able), Tony Barry, Malcolm Benson, Debi Kidd, Ann Newman, Roger Bettess, Chris Shelley, Ann Hardiman and Frances Simpson, (a club member who also helped out on the day).

It has been a pleasure and a joy to meet and become friends with so many folk and serve them as best we could. There is always a time however, and we feel it has come.

**Catherine and Robert Harding**

## ★ Star of Wonder, Star of Light... ★

Many years ago, I had the pleasure of accompanying a party of school children to Yenworthy outdoor centre near Lynton. It is situated close to Exmoor and on the north coast of Devon. I had been on many residential trips during my time working in education, but this one stands out in my mind because of one experience.

I was always nervously excited, but slightly daunted at the prospect of spending a week away with thirty or so hyperactive 10 year olds and I had resigned myself to the possibility, or more likelihood, of there being very little sleep. The first night was always tough as we tried our best to calm the excitement by avoiding lively games before bedtime. Ten year olds don't wear themselves out as you would expect, instead they become louder, sillier and boisterous, the more tired they are. So imagine my horror when one of the instructors announced that we would be going for a midnight hike!

The children were kitted out with waterproofs, stout boots and given torches. As we left the centre, each one was allocated a number and told to remember it for when we did the head count to make sure no one was missing. Out of the centre we trooped, into the darkness, a trail of lively, bouncing, giggling pre-teens, chattering and filling the night air with their squeaks of excitement. I followed on behind as we were led up onto the moor. Periodically our instructor stopped and asked the children to recite their numbers in sequence; 1 ...2....3....4...until every child was accounted for. I wondered what the legal implications were if any child went missing. At least the usual wild suspects were noisy, and therefore more easy to locate.

After we had been walking for, what felt like a mile or so, we stopped and our instructor, who looked far too young to be in charge of making the tea, let alone this crew, asked everyone to find a space and lie down. You can imagine the reaction to that! The ground was covered with heather and creepy crawlies. Thoughts of removing sheep ticks came to mind, as we had to do once on a previous trip. One by one the children did as they were told, still giggling, some protesting. "Miss, he sat on me! My boot has come off! I need the toilet! Aaaarrgrh!" Finally, after what seemed like an age, everyone did as they were asked, but they were not quiet at all. I thought, now what was our leader going to do? HE had got us into this ridiculous activity, and HE would have to get us out of



it! The children were shining their torches all over the place, and in each other's eyes, making scary faces while they fought and rolled around in the heather.

Our instructor then asked us to turn off our torches... One by one, sniggering and snorting with laughter, the torches were switched off until we lay in complete darkness...

... suddenly a wonderful thing happened! As our eyes slowly adjusted, the inky black sky exploded with stars! And even more surprising, for the first time that evening, there was complete silence! I don't know how long we lay there in the heather, as our eyes took in this celestial wonder. Calm had descended over the children at last and there were whispers of 'Wow!' and 'Cool!'

***Isaiah 40:26***

*"Lift up your eyes and look into the heavens: who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing."*

Later, we gathered ourselves and made our way back to the lodge in silence, yawning and ready for bed.

**Pauline Shelley**

# OHCT - “Ride and Stride” Day Update

This year, in September, Wheatley URC fielded **three** Ride and Stride initiatives in support of **OHCT** raising a total of **£1,055**, (before adding in gift aid for some donations). **Tina Everett** organised a walk between 9 local churches, to which four of us joined. **Graham Bell** did his usual solo cycle ride, visiting as many churches as he could find (circa 43) in the Oxford area (over two days) and **Gordon & Jill Ewbank** (Wheatley Community Church), riding together under the banner of Wheatley URC, visited 41 churches in the day.

**Tina** led a sunny country walk accompanied by four worthy walkers, Ann & Roger and Mark, for the morning section from Wheatley to Little Milton via Cuddesden, Great Milton and Great Haseley, before taking a lunch break in Little Milton churchyard. Tony joined for the afternoon section of the walk from Little Milton to Garsington via Stadhampton (a church hidden by trees, also used as the village hall) and Chiselhampton (a rare 18<sup>th</sup> century gem, not often open to public view). Another gem, John Hall ran an efficient and very welcome taxi service between Wheatley, Little Milton and Garsington, for weary walkers. Tina, alone, completed the whole walk and raised **£160** in sponsorship from the walkers and others.

**Graham** raised **£435** in sponsorship from members of the congregation for his massive solo ride around Oxford, visiting a total of 43 churches.

**Gordon writes** – “What a beautiful day we had for Ride & Stride, this year. Perfect weather whatever your means of transport! Jill and I decided this year to come full circle and repeat our very first OHCT sponsored ride from 15 years ago and revisit many of the Oxford city churches and immediate surrounds. We visited 41 churches in total, covering 48 kilometres, finishing off with some friendly faces at Wheatley URC and then home. It was a great day with several highlights, including a visit to our old family church at St Clements on Marston Road. We and our children were members there for 23 years. Another notable stop off was at the Holy Family church in Blackbird Leys – please pray for them. We had a wonderful warm welcome, but they face many challenges – not least a (1960’s) church building which has been both listed and condemned, so it can’t be used and a community which is in much need of their love and service. We raised **£460** in sponsorship, half of which will go to Wheatley URC. Thanks to those who supported us!” Gordon and Jill.

My thanks on behalf of **OHCT**, to all who took part again this year, as riders, striders or sponsors and not to forget the valiant **welcomers** who kept our church open and welcoming, between 10.00 am and 6.00 pm, for the handful of riders and striders visiting us from other churches.

**Tony Barry**

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## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers all members of Ann Bettess's pastoral group:** Debi & Keith Kidd, Marian & Mike Mole, Moira & Jim Watson, Ann Wild, Siobhan Fraser & Alyn Shipton, Cara Schulte and Val Farmer.

**Also remember members of the Finance Ministry Team:** Chris Shelley, Tony Barry, Robert Harding & Mike Matejtschuk.

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

***CHURCH CONTACTS***

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