

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**January 2025**

# Covering Thoughts

*This painting has been on the easel for several weeks. It was begun when we had the sudden fall of snow in November, but the first layer of paint took an age to dry, and the snow was long gone before it was finished. The inspiration came from a picture of a hill farm in Gwynedd, Wales, but in my imagination, I saw it transformed by a starry night with the greatest light of all coming from the snow itself.*

*What is the painting about? Is it really about the hill farm, which like the filling in a sandwich holds most of the detail and the colour? Is it the dark, clouded sky with the moon hidden from view and just a few stars? Or is it the snow itself?*

*Emily Bronte's poem paints a wilder, more dramatic landscape than mine. There is a fearsome wonder in her description of the threatening storm and her reluctance to hide or protect herself from it.*

## The Night is Darkening Round Me

The night is darkening round me,  
The wild winds coldly blow;  
But a tyrant spell has bound me  
And I cannot, cannot go.  
The giant trees are bending  
Their bare boughs weighed with snow.  
And the storm is fast descending,  
And yet I cannot go.  
Clouds beyond clouds above me,  
Wasted beyond wasted below;  
But nothing drear can move me;  
I will not, cannot go.

*On the threshold of a new year may we rediscover the awesome beauty of life. May we stand steadfast in the face of difficulties seeking light in all situations and being the light of encouragement for others.*

***Christine Bainbridge***

# Pastoral Letter

Dear friends

I write as the news is dominated by the rapid fall of the brutal Assad regime in Syria. By the time you read this some things may have become clearer. Is it a new beginning for a land troubled so long by civil wars? Will freedom flourish and the rights of minorities be respected? At the moment it's impossible to know.

You might think this is an odd way to begin a letter at the start of a new year. Shouldn't I be wishing everyone happiness, good health and peace? Of course I do. But we know in our heart of hearts that new beginnings don't always sweep away old hurts, and that things wished for and prayed for, however sincerely, do not always come to pass. I mention Syria because I can't help thinking of the wise words of Jesus in Luke 11. He tells his hearers that when an unclean spirit leaves a person it wanders through deserts, finding no resting-place, so decides to go back, but this time with seven spirits more evil than itself. Together they set up residence in the house swept clean and in order. It's a curious passage, but it tells us one important thing. It's no good simply getting rid of something evil, like the Assad regime, which is said to have tortured and murdered hundreds of thousands of people. You need a well-thought-out plan, ready to be put into operation as soon as the evil is expelled, so that more evil doesn't come in to occupy the vacuum and make things even worse. Such foresight didn't happen after the US-led invasion of Iraq or after the fall of Gaddafi in Libya, and western powers must bear much responsibility for the mess they left behind.

Preparing the way is something we associate with Advent. But once Christmas is over we can lose sight of how important it remains. The Christmas season doesn't end once the tree is taken down and the decorations are put away. It moves on to Epiphany and lasts until Candlemas at the beginning of February. In other words, it's not the end point of our celebrations, but the beginning. As the weeks pass, we are shown more and more of what the Christmas story means: what this child will become, what he will say and do, how he brings hope to people who had none and healing to those who were hurt and could find no relief for their inner pain. We need to be open to this unfolding of the story, because this is where it begins to touch the questions with which we and the world itself wrestle. How can we build justice and peace? What kind of world do we want to live in? How can we find a meaning and a purpose for our own lives which can nourish those deeper needs and longings which go beyond the mere satisfaction of appetite? As

the story continues, those questions begin to be answered, but only when we allow ourselves to be open to its shifting movements.

When you listen to the news you could be forgiven for thinking that there's nothing but cruelty, corruption and murder all around us. But these things are the exceptions, not the rule, for those of us privileged enough to live in a democracy. For every evil act there are thousands of acts of kindness, compassion and love which go unreported, but which tell the other side of the story: what humanity is capable of when their seemingly fragile light shines in our hearts and the apparently powerful darkness cannot put them out.

May the light of Christ shine in whatever darkness may overshadow this New Year, and may you know its blessings with you wherever you go.

**Colin Thompson**

~\*~

## An Intermediate level safeguarding course

This course is open to all members and friends of Wheatley URC

It will be held at Wheatley United Reformed Church

On Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> February

From 10.00am until 4.00pm

Coffee and tea will be provided but please bring your own packed lunch

Please contact [secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk) to reserve a place or for further information. Or see Pauline Shelley.

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# Star Making Workshop - 30th November



How many ways can you make a star? ★



We enjoyed a cosy, chatty day making stars using recycled materials, where possible. Origami using paper and fabric, beads and wire, straw and felt, were among some of the materials we used. A total of 30 people joined us throughout the day. For those who preferred a bit of mindful, quiet reflection, a poetry table was set up in the vestibule.

What will happen to the stars that we made? ★  
They will adorn the Christmas tree, then you are welcome to take them home after Christmas.





Here is the tree adorned with the beautiful ornaments.



There has been a request to hold another similar event, therefore that is being planned for February to make flowers for the World Day of Prayer and Easter. Date to be arranged.

**Pauline Shelley**

~\*~

# FALCON MOTTO? ..... THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!

.... we only just discovered this from Wilbert which explains why the Falcon bird of prey was chosen as the school's name!

And, despite all their challenges, how well it encapsulates the spirit of this go-it-alone school in rural Zimbabwe!

But they're not alone are they? ... amongst others, we as a church have continued to march arm-in-arm with them during **2024**, by (e.g.):

Helping to start their computer resource facilities;



Getting the roofing started for their essential extra staff accommodation;



... and finishing it off, with JIT (Just-in-Time!) support 'before the rains':

Which 'carried' Falcon pupils into their end-of-year joyful graduation parties.



AND **EARLY 2025 PRIORITY?** ...

.... absolutely no question it is the **NEW WATER BOREHOLE ... SO, SO ESSENTIAL** to tapping into new, hygienic water without which the school will be under threat from lack of healthy hydration and infection.





The work involves a site survey (geophysical investigation, pinpoint location); initial drilling (40m) + casing installation; plus further deepening of borehole to 50m+.

**Big, big thank you** for all your continued support and help into 2025!

**Your Care For The World Team!**

# Blended Service Rotas for January 2025

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	Intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
5 <sup>th</sup>	Colin Thompson HC	Bev Paton	Ann Bettess	Marian Mole	Chris Shelley/ Tom Goss
12 <sup>th</sup>	Richard Bainbridge	Ellen Webster	Christine Bainbridge	Ellen Webster	Pauline Shelley/ Ann Hardiman
19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>At St. Mary's 10am</b>	Liz Barry	<b>Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity</b>		
26 <sup>th</sup>	Mark Williams			Ann Bettess	Charles Bennett/ Moira Watson

Dates	Organist
5 <sup>th</sup>	Jeff Clarke
12 <sup>th</sup>	Frances Simpson
19 <sup>th</sup>	Jeff Clarke
26 <sup>th</sup>	Frances Simpson

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## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers all members of Val Farmer's pastoral group:** Jean Boxall, Ann Hardiman, Pat Howard, Bev Paton & family, Pat Simpson, Glen & John Fox and Jen & Geoff Yeates.

**Also remember members of the Maintenance Ministry Team:** Tony Barry, Malcolm Benson, Tom Goss, Keith Kidd and Chris Shelley.

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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 (6<sup>th</sup>, 20<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 & 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)

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## Deadline

15<sup>th</sup> January is the deadline for the February Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) Paper copy can be given to Bobbie Stormont. 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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# Time For God Volunteer

Update regarding Elisa Pizzo

Over the past 2 years I have had the pleasure of getting to know our Time for God volunteers as they have joined us in Wheatley and have been part of the team supervising their work in the Youth and Families Project. Each volunteer has brought their unique skills and gifts to Wheatley, and I have been amazed at the range of areas of the community they have touched and expanded the horizons of our URC connections.

Many of you will remember our first volunteer Elisa Pizzo, who was over from her studies at the University of Cologne in December and it was a delight to catch up with her. Her mother was over visiting Cambridge for work and encouraged Elisa to come over to England as well and they visited with Mark and Phyllis Williams. Elisa hit a very busy weekend in the village, and it was great that Elisa was able to meet friends at the Wheatley Christmas Market on Friday evening and take part in the Christmas crafts at the URC on Saturday. She joined the congregation with her mother on Sunday morning and in the evening went the Wheatley Community Church Christmas carols on the rec. Elisa even found time to come and visit my allotment on the Howe!



Elisa is enjoying her second year of studies in Chemistry and English and is hoping to do a teaching placement at the beginning of the year. She said her fellow students are very impressed with her English and she is able to tell them about her year with us in Wheatley! I'm looking forward to future updates from Elisa as she continues her adventures at university.

**Lucy Betts**

# Common Lectionary Readings

## January 2025

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

Date	5 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Jeremiah 31: 7-14	Isaiah 43: 1-7	Isaiah 62: 1-5	Nehemiah 8: 1-3 & 5-6 & 8-10
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 147: 12-20	Psalm 29	Psalm 36: 5-10	Psalm 19
<b>New Test.</b>	Ephesians 1: 3-14	Acts 8: 14-17	1 Corinthians 12: 1-11	1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a
<b>Gospel</b>	John 1: 10-18	Luke 3: 15-17 & 21-22	John 2: 1-11	Luke 4: 14-21

Jan 5<sup>th</sup> - The time when you feel least a stranger is when you return to yourself [Thich Nhat Hanh].

Jan 12<sup>th</sup> - I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death but also an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness [George Fox].

Jan 19<sup>th</sup> - When the wine of natural joy is spent and there is nothing left but the water of affliction, then doth Christ turn this water into wine [Francis Rous].

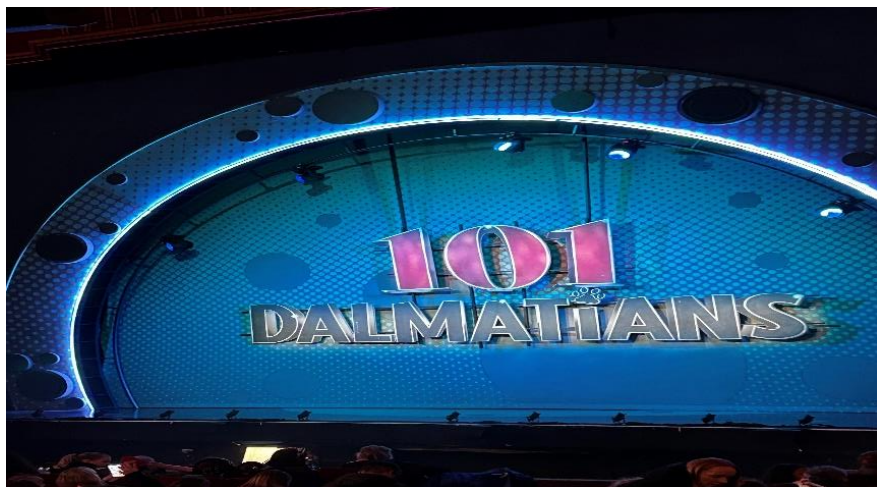
Jan 26<sup>th</sup> - As long as we are strangers to ourselves, then we will be deeply strangers to others [Kathy Galloway].

**Richard Bainbridge**



# Thank you to the URC from Wheatley Park School!

As a church community we have been building a successful relationship with our local secondary school, Wheatley Park, which has over 1100 pupils aged 11 - 18. In the September edition of the newsletter, I put out an appeal for donations sharing the dream of Louise Yendole (Emotional Health Lead), who works in the Space 2 Be, which is the support hub for the school. Louise had a dream to take a group of students, who attend Project Paramount, which supports young people with family members in prison, to go to the theatre before Christmas. She wanted to take them to Oxford to see 101 Dalmatians, a Disney classic tale. This is something that these students would not be able to fund themselves and would certainly be a special event for them. The target was to raise £315 and we amazingly, with the kind generosity of the church, managed to raise over £400, which meant that we were able to get an increased number of tickets, including one for Cara, our Time for God volunteer! We were also able to give £70 towards the cost of transport and snacks for the show. Louise said they were also able to meet the need of a student, who needed school shoes, with some of this donation.



So, on Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> December a very excited group of young people and staff started off into Oxford. They had a meal before the show, and I hear greatly enjoyed the chocolate fountain at the restaurant. The show was at the New Theatre and Louise said, “it was a huge success, and we all had a fantastic time”. There were animal puppets in the show and of course the villain Cruella De Ville and at the end a real puppy came onto the stage – which of course made a wonderful finale!

Thank you so much to everyone who supported this trip – it truly was a wonderful gift to this school group. It was a great way for the students to continue to build relationships within the group and help staff to support these young people too. I can imagine this time of year is very hard for many of them and having a fun event outside of school was something they had very much been looking forward to.

Cara has also been going along to support this group regularly on a Tuesday morning and helping with a range of craft activities and helping the staff. Her skills are greatly appreciated, and the staff have commented on how great it is to have Cara as an extra adult getting alongside the students.

We are hoping in the Youth and Families Project to continue to find ways to link with Wheatley Park School. This past year we have not only helped with this theatre trip and Cara’s support of Project Paramount but also with art packs for this group in the Summer Term. We have also given water bottles for staff to give to students who need them.

Overall, Peter Devlin, Bev Paton, Brenda Bell and myself have had some very informative meetings with the staff at Space 2 Be and hope to continue to be part of a link with the URC supporting our local school.

**Lucy Betts**



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

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