

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**March 2025**

# Covering Thoughts

*Painting mountains reminds me of wonderful times exploring the French Alps and the Lake District. We began in the early morning before it was too hot for the strenuous climbs, allowing time to sketch and enjoy the views. But it was not all easy or enjoyable. There were amazing views but coupled with these were moments of vertigo. Our walks were mainly linear so faced with a ridge like the one in the painting there was no avoiding it. I remember one time crawling on hands and knees slowly and fearfully, aware of Richard's much greater terror, wondering how I would cope if he froze altogether. We soon learned to check each walk before attempting it, and we left those ridges to the mountain goats.*

*We might question why anyone would want to climb mountains such as Everest considering the challenges and dangers, and yet it seems part of the human spirit to reach to the extent of physical and mental capacities. Success and achievement is always applauded, but is it necessarily compatible with gospel values? How can we affirm those who do not reach academic heights, who take the essential, but humbler occupations that keep society running smoothly, and those who are tireless in showing patience and kindness in their unpaid roles in families and communities?*

*In a society governed by achievement and ambition, I find reflecting on Jesus' ministry sheds light on a humbler way of living. He was a failure in the eyes of many of his contemporaries. He mixed with the wrong type of people, asked questions rather than giving answers, did not have many possessions, depended on the hospitality of others, had no official status and was unpopular with the powerful. His mission failed, ending in an ignominious death.*

*In wanting to follow his example today I found these quotations helpful:*

*To be humble is to leave space for the ideas of others, to allow questions to be asked and to ask for help. Anon*

*We are all stumblers and the beauty and meaning of life are in the stumbling. David Brooks*

*Blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places where other people see nothing. Camille Pissarro*

*Christine*

# Pastoral Letter

Dear friends,

Listening to recent faith journeys caused me to reflect on the diversity of faith journeys within our church and gave me food for thought on what it was that has lead each of us from a wide range of starting points to become part of the community which is Wheatley URC. Although as far as I know, none are from other faiths, most were brought up in a variety of Christian denominations, while for some their faith journey only started as adults. My own journey includes Baptist, Methodist, and Anglican and ranges from evangelical, through traditional to the present. So how did I end up at Wheatley URC and why is it I have remained a member for the past 46 years? The following are reasons, some of which may have resulted from initial contact and some which have evolved over the years and I offer them in no particular order.

- 1) As Christians we try to live the life that Christ would have us lead, albeit imperfectly. As a Christian community we are the body of Christ and His teaching, actions and sacrifice are integral to our lives. We are led by His Spirit.
- 2) Our teaching is based on the Bible but it is the narrative that is crucially important. So often individual texts are used out of context and without an understanding of the history. When I was studying in San Francisco one of the teaching modules involved dealing with the media. By selective editing, diametrically opposing opinions could be presented from the same interview. The same can be applied to text, including the bible.
- 3) We accept all of us may have doubts and uncertainties regarding the doctrines which have evolved within Christian traditions. When I was a youngster I attended a Billy Graham revival meeting at Haringey. At the end of a rousing and passionate address, we were all invited to leave our seats and sign up as 'believers'. I stayed firmly in my seat feeling that my faith was insufficient since there were things that I could not blindly accept. I have come to realise that we all, including ministers, have uncertainties and there are mysteries which we do not fully understand. That is OK.
- 4) The spiritual leadership of our worship leaders is one of the strengths of the church and we are fortunate in having a diversity of ordained and lay leaders who explore with us their understanding or what it is to follow Christ.

- 5) We had a warm welcome when we first arrived. That and the worship services were both important and the fact that we now have an opportunity to meet over coffee after the service is a bonus.
- 6) Being part of the church community is essential and the friendship and support that we receive and I hope offer is integral to our witness and our outreach into the community. Each of us has an opportunity to be actively involved in the life of the church. We are all parts of one body each with talents we can offer, although sometimes they are hidden under a bushel. What we can give to the church is as important as what we receive.

To what extent these factors have played a part in your membership is something only you can answer. Indeed there may be other reasons but it comes with a challenge to reflect on what is important to you and what you might have to offer to our worshipping and witnessing community.

Every blessing, **Malcom Benson**

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## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers the members in Debi Kidd's pastoral group:** Charles & Sue Bennett, Colin Thompson & Herthe THompson, Angela & Rob Holdaway, Ellen Webster, Cara Heafey & Carolyn Wheeler, Jeff Clarke, Ann & Norbert Gajda.

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

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## Deadline

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March is the deadline for the April Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk) . Please type in Calibri font size 11 & no capitalized headings. Thank you.

## Disclaimer

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

# In Praise of ordinary things

by Charles Bennett

Please spare a thought for the match  
Yes, spare a thought if you will  
It's taken for granted, almost supplanted, until  
Darkness falls. It was considered as naught  
But now that it's needed, it's urgently sought  
You fumble around and happen to find,  
The box with one match, the last of it's kind  
It's struck - amazing what you could do in the dark  
And you nurture the flame that came from the spark  
Now moving the match has to be learnt  
The angle, the speed, to avoid getting burnt  
Then, not too slow, but not too quick  
Nuzzle the flame 'gainst the candle's wick  
And then, in its own time, the candle is lit  
But are we to suppose that really is it?  
The candle is a symbol of hope, is it not?  
So what is the match? Or have we forgot  
It's crucial role, a moment before?  
Now it lies discarded, spent, on the floor,  
What a waste! And I ask myself Why?  
That same match could be you or I  
Just as someone, somewhere lit your flame  
And you, of course, will have done the same.  
So if ever you feel like your life is in vain  
Take heart from hearing this celestial refrain  
You're a match made in heaven, thou art  
A match made in heaven thou art.



# Lenten Faith Journalling

## Every Thursday in Lent 7 - 9pm

'An opportunity to explore Lent through discussion, cosy chat and creative Journalling'.

A reminder that our weekly Lent Faith Journalling groups will be running in the Mulberry room throughout Lent on the 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th of March, and 3rd and 10th of April.

**Cost: £5 for the journal, (any profit and donations to the Falcon School bore hole fund.)**

**To book:** email [pauline.shelley@googlemail.com](mailto:pauline.shelley@googlemail.com) or speak to me after Church.

**Pauline Shelley**

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## World Day of Prayer 2025

**2pm FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup> MARCH at WHEATLEY URC**



Kia Orana!

Our sisters in The Cook Islands welcome us and lead us for the Day of Prayer 2025. This group of 15 islands in the South Pacific Ocean has a rich and colourful Māori heritage and a deep connection to nature. Join with us as we pray together and reflect on the theme 'I made you wonderful'.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world — through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later. A worldwide wave of prayer

The service will be followed by refreshments in the church hall. All are very welcome. *Further information can be found at* <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

**Care for the World Team**

# Oasis of Peace – a vital need in the current world



Our Care for the World ministry team has long supported Oasis of Peace and felt it was a perfect moment to remind other church members of why we support it.

**Oasis of Peace** (or Neve Shalom or Wahat-al-Salam, as others of God’s children call it) **exists to enable equity and social justice, peace and shared citizenship between Palestinian and Jewish people in the Middle East and in this country, and acts as a bulwark against extremism.**

Set up by Father Bruno Hussar, in the Latrun Hills, ten miles from the mixed city of Ramla in Israel, it is the site of a multifaith experiment in peaceful living, a village and a vibrant school, which since the pandemic has survived a serious arson attack, a major hacking of its computer system and of course the abhorrent events of the last eighteen months.

Thanks to the commitment of the staff and the resilience of the children, the principal of the school says ‘It has been a really hard year, but it is a wonderful and powerful feeling to see the children smiling and walking through the gate’.

There are now six schools in Israel that follow this courageous model in the face of extremist hostility on either side, and we would ask you to pray that from these small beginnings, a generation may grow up, who recognise the essential need for equality, peace and shared citizenship in an area of the

world in which Jesus himself preached a gospel of peace, justice and righteousness for all peoples.

We would urge you to pray particularly for the blessing of love and wisdom for the recently-elected heads of the Student Council, 6<sup>th</sup>-graders Sally Othemala and Peleg Goldenberg, one Arab, one Jew, one girl, one boy, and that the work of the people there and the lives of the children educated within this bubble of love and peace will inspire those in the world at large to bring a settlement to Palestine, Israel and the whole area that recognises the right of all God's people, whatever their faith, ethnicity or viewpoint, to live, work, love and prosper.

We have raised funds in the past to support Oasis of Peace, and while it is on a sound financial footing, with Rachel Riley, Rob Rinder and 'East-West Street' author Philippe Sands recent speakers at the annual conference, do please have a look at <https://www.oasisofpeace.org.uk/> where there is a lot more detail of the organisation's work and a chance to donate if you wish to this very worthy cause.

**Mike Matejtschuk - on behalf of the Care for the World Ministry Team**

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**Falcon School – read the latest on page 14!**





# Christian Aid Local Gathering

Our local Christian Aid group had their quarterly Zoom meet with Philip Evans (co-ordinator), aimed at local organisers within the Thames Valley eg: Banbury to Berkhamsted and - 16 of us attended.

The main purpose of these events is to give feedback from the recent appeals, and to begin planning towards the focus of this year's theme - Guatemala.

Why Guatemala? It suffers from extremes of hunger and poverty, drought and gender violence, but also it is amongst the world's top ten most vulnerable countries to be affected by the climate crisis.

This year is the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Christian Aid, which was founded in the week after VE Day, and (significantly) supporting enemies as well as allies.

## **Update on Fundraising:**

The 'Send a Child to School' project was well supported. With support from the DEC appeal, £438 million was raised for Ukraine and Christian Aid supporters raised £45 million for the Indian Ocean Tsunami appeal.

**Sudan:** Christian Aid are working in conjunction with Cafod in the Civil war. There is widespread gender violence, and Sudanese are often attacked, and their market stalls burnt down. It is a long walk south to the refugee camp where 17,000 people are living.

**Gaza:** Christian Aid supporters have raised £2.2 million to help their partners in Gaza. Christian Aid are organising humanitarian relief, and fun for children in the camps.

**Lebanon:** Christian Aid are working in conjunction with Médecin Sans Frontières to install showers and put on fun workshops for the children who would find 'lessons' impossible.

**Christian Aid Week: 11-18<sup>th</sup> May** with a focus on Tools & Training for farmers in Guatemala.

**\*\*JOIN US – Monday March 12<sup>th</sup>, 12 -1.30pm** in the Mulberry room to meet our MP Freddie van Mierlo to share concerns for people & the planet.

**Liz Barry**



# INVITATION

from Your Elders

to a Party for the congregation

at the URC on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March 6pm to 9pm

Including Hot Supper

*Please let your Pastoral Elder know if you would like to attend or sign the poster on the noticeboard*



There is no perfect life, no perfect job, no perfect childhood, no perfect marriage and no perfect set of people who will always do what we expect them to do.

What we have is a perfect God who is able to lead us through this imperfect life with unflinching strength, incomparable wisdom and infinite love.

From the Facebook page of 'Mindful Christianity'

Phyllis Williams

# Blended Service Rotas for March 2025

| Date | Worship Leader     | Vestry Elder    | Welcomer        | Door Steward       | Reader           | Prayers        |
|------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 2nd  | HC Colin Thompson  | Charles Bennett | Bev Paton       | Liz Barry          | Phyllis Williams | Robert Harding |
| 9th  | Richard Bainbridge | Pauline Shelley | Bobbie Stormont | Elaine Matejtschuk | Chris Shelley    | Tom Goss       |
| 16th | Laurence Devlin    | Ellen Webster   | Val Farmer      | Peter Devlin       | Marian Mole      | Liz Barry      |
| 23rd | Mark Williams      | Ann Bettess     | Chris Shelley   | Ann Hardiman       | ~~~~             | ~~~~           |
| 30th | Victoria Turner    | Debi Kidd       | Marian Mole     | Bobbie Stormont    | Andrew Thomson   | Marian Mole    |

## What's On – Dates for your Diaries

### Weekly

### Contact

Mon & Thurs 9am

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

Not So Young Club

3<sup>rd</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Feb

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 Thursday 10am

Prayers for the World

Ann Hardiman - 01865 873485

First & Third Thurs

Coffee Morning

10.30am

Barbara Joiner - [albarjoiner2@gmail.com](mailto:albarjoiner2@gmail.com)

Second Thursday

Memory Cafe

10am

Laurence Devlin - [laurencelalanne99@gmail.com](mailto:laurencelalanne99@gmail.com)

Second Tuesday

Picnic Cub - Val Farmer - [val\\_farmer40@hotmail.com](mailto:val_farmer40@hotmail.com)

# Common Lectionary Readings March 2025

| Date                 | March 2nd                | March 9th            | March 16th              | March 23rd            | March 30th             |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>First Reading</b> | Exodus 34: 29-35         | Deut. 26: 1-11       | Genesis 15:1-12 & 17-18 | Isaiah 55: 1-9        | Joshua 5: 9-12         |
| <b>Psalm</b>         | Psalm 99                 | Psalm 91: 1-2 & 9-16 | Psalm 27                | Psalm 63: 1-8         | Psalm 32               |
| <b>New Test.</b>     | 2 Corinthians 3: 12- 4:2 | Romans 10: 8b-13     | Philippians 3: 17- 4:1  | 1 Corinthians 10: -13 | 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21 |
| <b>Gospel</b>        | Luke 9: 28-36            | Luke 4: 1-13         | Luke 3: 3-35            | Luke 13: 1-9          | Luke 15: 1-3 & 11b-32  |

**March 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Do we have mountain top experiences?

**March 9<sup>th</sup>:** What do we mean by wilderness or desert?

**March 16<sup>th</sup>:** Will one day all the pieces of the jigsaw fall into place?

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Sometimes a second chance simply consists of the right ingredients to lead to success.

**March 30<sup>th</sup>:** Forgiveness is not an emotion..it is an act of will [Corrie ten Boom].

**Richard Bainbridge**

~\*~

What I really need is to drink a glass of water slowly, because there is enough – there is enough fast in this world. And every real thing is found inside the soft arms of a moment.

And because, in the midst of so much trauma and terror, it is vital to bow to such holy, ordinary things.

from ***Staying in Love*** by Julia Fehrenbacher (permission given)

<https://www.juliafehrenbacher.com/> **Write Yourself Free**

**Bobbie Stormont**

# Pulse

As many of you know there is a Youth group on Sunday evenings in the URC called Pulse. But who knows what we are doing there and who is involved?

Pulse is a Youth group who meet at the URC Church from 6pm to 8pm every Sunday for everyone in secondary school. For the first hour we gather in the Mulberry Room for Pizza and conversations about the big questions about life and faith. Afterwards we have games, table tennis, crafts and snacks in the church hall. The games include board games and group games which the leaders organise such as Dingbats, charades or Zip Bong. Not only do the young people had fun but the leaders have fun as well.



Our current theme is the Beatitudes where we discuss some of the verses each week. For that we use the Bible project as it has useful animations and good questions for discussions. At this time of year we are also looking into the theme of Lent.

Pulse was originally a youth group from the URC, where members of the church community helped out every week. Now Pulse is a shared project together with the Community Church and the Anglican Church. It's a lovely project for young people to share good conversation, fun and laughter.

During half terms we do fun social outings. Last half term we went indoor bowling. Before Christmas we had a big Christmas dinner together. The leaders prepared the dinner and together we ate with the young people. Afterwards we had a little fun session decorating cakes blindfolded with interesting art pieces afterwards! But we also played the classic game, pass the parcel.

Looking into the future, with the new Vicar arriving at St Marys, we hope to build more connections with the young people there.

**Cara Schulte**

# Falcon School

## A NEW BOREHOLE - "WHY SO CRITICAL?" - EXPLAINED!

As we enjoy our uninterrupted supply of hygienic water, for those in rural communities and schools in disadvantaged countries like Zimbabwe the role of water in their lives is crucial.

**Falcon School's need for a new borehole is now a priority but it is also challenging for the following reasons**

***No 1: Zimbabwe has very distinct rainy and dry seasons. During the dry season the rivers dry up and most people have to get their water from boreholes. Zimbabwe does have a number of reservoirs around the country which supply the major urban populations like Harare and Bulawayo but in the rural areas there is no piped water and everyone has to rely on borehole.***



***No 2: The rainwater that falls during the rainy season seeps down through the soil to the water table. It is this water that the bore holes tap into. Recently Zimbabwe has been suffering increasingly from droughts, the more recent El Nino driven, as the rain in the rainy season is less than in the past or even completely absent. This means that the groundwater is not being replenished as much as before so groundwater levels are dropping. Therefore bore holes are sometimes having to be made deeper to provide this vital resource.***



**No 3: Constructing a borehole is neither easy nor inexpensive.** Drilling rigs are used to drill the hole itself. This is then lined with a metal cylinder which is perforated near the bottom to let the water in but keep the sediment out while the upper sections do not have perforations to stop anything falling into the borehole. A submersible pump is then lowered down the borehole to pump the water up to the ground. One then needs a tank or some structure to store and distribute the water.



**ADD TO THIS the fact that it is even more challenging for a stand-alone, non-state school like Falcon.** Following the severe droughts, there has recently been a massive push by the Zimbabwean government to help state schools sink new or refurbished boreholes - 40 borehole drilling rigs have

been procured to benefit over 10,000 schools.

**BUT** of course, the Falcon school gets none of this, nothing, absolutely zilch!

**So every little ‘drop’ of our SUPPORT HELPS**, no matter how small, as it will get the school closer to being able to sink a new water borehole for safer, hygienic, life-supporting water and will be greatly appreciated by Falcon staff and pupils alike.

**The estimated cost for the new Falcon borehole**, essential for the school, is just over £3000 ... and we’re making amazing progress. By the **end of February we will have just passed the half-way mark of £1500!** ... so **drop by drop**, in our own small but effective ‘Wheatley URC Way’, we really can help Falcon get there!

**Thank you, thank you, thank you** for all your continued support over the past 4+ years and now, going forward.

**Your Care for the World Ministry team (with special thanks to Roger Bettess for his knowledgeable contribution to this article).**

~\*~\*~





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

### **CHURCH CONTACTS**

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