

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**April 2025**

# Covering Thoughts

*As trees are the focus of the Holy Week meditations this year, it seems good to be following this theme in the newsletter too. I am actually working on a series of trees at present and have chosen the cover painting, 'Under the Cloud', because of its strong contrasts. The original photo taken many years ago had a total absence of colour in the foreground but in the painting there are many dark shades because shadows are beautiful.*

*It interests me to reflect that the brighter the sunlight the more difficult it is to see clearly. It dazzles and blinds us. We stumble over obstacles in our path and fail to recognize the passing figure. It is the shadows that enhance colour and give form to shapes. In their shade we feel protected and can look out at the brilliance in safety.*

*My thoughts turn to the Easter experience as I paint. What a mixture of emotions in the story and I imagine them in colour. The shadows of Holy Week and Good Friday seem full of poignancy. Moments are lived at depth, become significant and treasured because of life's fragility. Yes, there are feelings of trauma, pain, disappointment, fear and loss, but they are coloured by empathy, forgiveness, courage and love. The colours and tones multiply as the story progresses. Even the bleakness, the greyness of death never lacks its colours. To suffer and to share in the suffering of others is part of being human, and to find a richness and a beauty in it is to be touched by the Divine.*

*So we come to the sky in the painting and the experience of Easter morning. The brilliance of sunlight is filtered through the water droplets of the clouds, and in the tree's shade we can bear it.*

*I remember reading the anonymous work called 'The Cloud of Unknowing' and found it reassuring that we can embrace the mystery of Easter resurrection as a living experience even if we have many unanswered questions.*

*"And so I urge you, go after experience rather than knowledge. On account of pride, knowledge may often deceive you, but this gentle loving affection will not deceive you.....Knowledge is full of labour but love full of rest." (The Cloud of Unknowing chapter 23)*

**Christine**

# Reflection

## Christianity and the Marginalization of Women

This verse from Genesis, included in one of our recent service readings, prompted a reaction in me which turned into the piece below. I think Christianity has been unfair to women, to the detriment of society, ancient and modern.

Genesis 2:18 – New International Version (NIV):

*The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'*

The rise of Christianity in medieval Europe brought profound transformations, influencing governance, law, social norms, and individual beliefs. True, it introduced concepts of charity, community, and a unified moral code but also reinforced patriarchal structures, relegating women to secondary status in many aspects of life. The stories of biblical figures such as Eve and Mary, societal restrictions on women and the limited opportunities available to even exceptional individuals like Hildegard of Bingen and Margery Kempe illustrate this pervasive inequality.

The foundation of Christian teachings, as interpreted during the Middle Ages, exacerbated marginalization of women. The story of Adam and Eve was particularly influential in shaping gender dynamics. Eve's creation as a "helper" for Adam, though potentially interpreted as a complementary role, was mostly understood as subordinate. Her act of eating the forbidden fruit and then tempting Adam was seized upon by patriarchal societies as evidence of women's inherent weakness, susceptibility to sin and lack of sound judgment. This interpretation cast woman as the temptress responsible for humanity's fall from grace, justifying her socio-political subjugation.

While feminist scholars have challenged this, emphasizing Eve's agency in the context of patriarchal society, its impact on medieval thought and

culture was undeniable. The notion of women as morally and intellectually inferior to men became deeply entrenched in religious teachings and societal norms, restricting their roles and opportunities for participation in public life.

### *Women's Exclusion from Religious and Intellectual Life*

The Church, which held immense power during the medieval period, played a crucial role in shaping gender roles. Women were barred from becoming priests or bishops and could not hold positions that involved preaching or administering sacraments. While some found places within religious orders as nuns, their opportunities were limited compared to their male counterparts in monasteries.

Education for women, even within religious settings, was not prioritized. Church leaders, like medieval society in general, viewed women's roles as primarily domestic and familial, rendering advanced education unnecessary, even potentially disruptive. Latin, the language of law, governance and theological discourse, was largely inaccessible to women, further limiting their ability to engage intellectually and politically. Without Latin, women were unable to access official documents, understand legal proceedings, or contribute to theological debates.

### *Women Who Defied the Norm*

Despite these constraints, some women managed to carve out roles of influence and intellectual engagement. Hildegard of Bingen, an abbess, writer, composer and visionary, corresponded with kings and popes, gaining recognition as a significant intellectual figure. However, her success was exceptional precisely because it was so rare. Her position as an abbess and her perceived divine inspiration provided an uncommon degree of legitimacy.

Christine de Pizan, one of the first professional female writers, challenged misogynistic attitudes through her works. Her advocacy for women's education was a bold and singular step in a society that discouraged it. Margery Kempe, a mystic from King's Lynn, and Julian of Norwich, an

anchoress, represent two facets of women's spiritual experiences in the late Middle Ages. Kempe, a married woman who is thought to have had 14 children, wrote one of the earliest surviving autobiographies in English. Both she and Julian recorded their mystical visions but while Julian lived a reclusive life, Kempe faced charges of heresy for speaking publicly about her religious experiences.

Ultimately, while the stories of these, and other, remarkable women demonstrate female agency, they cannot obscure the overarching reality of women's subordination in medieval Europe. Christianity, while not solely responsible, played a significant role in shaping and reinforcing patriarchal structures that limited women's opportunities and silenced their voices in the Church, government, and society at large.

### *Lingering Effects of Medieval Gender Stereotypes*

Centuries later, despite significant progress in gender equality, stereotypes about women originating from historical and religious contexts persist in Western societies. While these stereotypes may not be as overt or universally accepted as they once were, they still influence attitudes, expectations, and opportunities for women in subtle and sometimes insidious ways.

One of the most persistent stereotypes is that women are primarily suited for domestic roles and caregiving. This idea stems from historical interpretations of biblical figures like Eve, whose role as a "helper" was used to justify confining women to the home. While many women today choose to embrace these roles, the stereotype can limit their career aspirations and create societal pressure to prioritize family over professional ambitions. This is often reflected in wage gaps, where women are still paid less than men for the same work.

The stereotype of women as more emotional and less rational than men also continues to affect perceptions of their leadership abilities. This bias manifests in various ways, from being overlooked for promotion to facing harsher scrutiny for their decisions. Similarly, the notion that women are

less assertive or ambitious can lead to them being underestimated and excluded from important discussions and decision-making.

### Women in Religious Leadership Today

In the context of the Church, while many denominations have made progress in ordaining women as priests or ministers, resistance to women in leadership positions persists in some branches of Christianity. This is often rooted in traditional interpretations of biblical texts that limit women's roles. Even in denominations that ordain women, they may face implicit biases and challenges in gaining acceptance and recognition.

Furthermore, the stereotype of women as inherently more nurturing and compassionate can lead to their overrepresentation in professions such as nursing and teaching, while they remain underrepresented in STEM\* fields and executive leadership. This occupational segregation limits career choices for both men and women and reinforces the idea that certain jobs are more "naturally" suited to one gender over the other.

### The Influence of Media and Culture

The stereotype that women are overly concerned with their appearance and primarily valued for their physical attractiveness continues to be perpetuated through media portrayals. This stereotype contributes to unrealistic beauty standards and can lead to objectification and sexual harassment. It also undermines women's professional credibility, as they may be judged more on appearance than skills and qualifications.

The media plays a significant role in reinforcing gender stereotypes through portrayals of women in advertising, television, and film. While progress has been made toward more diverse and empowering representations, traditional stereotypes remain prevalent. These can have a cumulative effect on women's self-esteem, confidence, and opportunities.

### Conclusion

While Western societies have made significant strides toward gender equality, harmful stereotypes about women, rooted in historical and

religious contexts, persist. These continue to shape attitudes, expectations, and opportunities for women in the Church, government, and broader society. Challenging these stereotypes requires ongoing efforts to promote gender equality in education, the workplace, the media and all areas of public life. By acknowledging and addressing these historical legacies, we can work toward a more equitable and inclusive future.

\*Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

**Graham Bell**

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## Prayers

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

**Also remember members of the Hospitality Team:** Allison Towner, Ann Gajda, Catherine Harding, Barbara Joiner, Debi Kidd, Ann Wild, Jen Yeates.

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## Deadline

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April is the deadline for the May 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.

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# Wheatley Area Churches

## Passion & Holy Week Events 2025

**Palm Sunday - Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April – We all meet outside The Merry Bells at 10.00 am to listen to readings from scripture and sing in celebration of the Palm Sunday story**, before processing down tHigh Street towards the URC, where the congregations will split and continue to their own church services.

**Maundy Thursday – Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April – St Mary’s congregation and others will join us at 7.30 pm for a Service of Tenebrae.**

**Good Friday – Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April - We all meet for a procession of witness around the village, with a large wooden cross, from outside the URC in Crown Square at 10.00 am, but proceedings will start at 9.30 am, with a “Stations of the Cross” Service, (with the cross), at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Crown Road, to which all are welcome. The procession will conclude with the usual refreshments and “hot cross buns” at St. Mary’s.**

**Tony Barry**



## Christian Aid Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

Where there is apathy, let me provoke; Where there is compliance, let me bring questioning. Where there is silence, may I be a voice.

Where there is too much comfort and too little action, grant disruption. Where there are doors closed and hearts locked, Grant the willingness to listen.

When laws dictate and pain is overlooked... When tradition speaks louder than need... Grant that I may seek rather to do justice than to talk about it; Disturb us, O Lord. To be with, as well as for, the alienated; To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

**Tony Barry**



# Flower Making & World Day of Prayer

What an enjoyable day everyone had on Saturday March 1<sup>st</sup> crafting beautiful flowers for our World Day of Prayer service and decorating the cross for Easter. The World Day of Prayer service was brought to us this year from the Cook Islands.

## **Bobbie Stormont**



# Commitment for Life ‘Spring Zimbabwe Update’

We have just received the following update.

## **Open Secret.**

Childhood should be a sacred time filled with innocence and curiosity. However, for many young girls in Zimbabwe, this is far from reality.

Despite laws prohibiting child marriage, the practice remains widespread. Over 34% of girls are married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, 5% are married before they turn 15 years old.

For these young girls, early marriage brings immense responsibilities and severe health risks related to childbearing. Domestic violence is also prevalent in such marriages. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 40% of women aged 15-49 reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in 2019.

Yet, in the face of these challenges, the church is seeking to be a light in the darkness, bringing hope and change through advocacy and training.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), with support from Christian Aid, is taking a stand against these harmful norms. Recognising the vital role of the church in addressing these challenges, ZCC advocates for the dignity and rights of all people as bearers of God’s image. Through their work, they have trained over 70 faith leaders, both women and men, and 350 lay volunteers to champion women’s rights in their communities. These leaders and volunteers raise awareness about the illegality of child marriage and domestic abuse in places of worship, including Christian churches, Apostolic gatherings and mosques. They also support women facing abuse, helping them to report offences to the police. Chantelle Ganduri is one of the trained champions. She is passionate about bringing hope to women who have experienced abuse, she shares:

*‘Often, when a woman is beaten regularly by her husband, the community will know about it, it will be an **open secret**. Yet, the community blames the woman for failing at her marriage. Even if she is eventually killed, they still blame her’*

Despite this culture of victim-blaming, Chantelle remains unwavering in her commitment to see change. She says: *‘I am happy to be making a difference. I am happy to help women speak up for their rights’*

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches is part of that village and seeking to make sure that children can be children without taking on adult responsibilities of marriage.

Through your support you are also helping to form part of that village protecting children from potential harm. Together we can support champions like Chantelle as they work to bring change to their communities.

**Thank you for your support through Commitment for Life which is championing rights of women and children.**

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

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**Easter Day - April 20<sup>th</sup>**

**11.30 – 2pm**

**You are invited to**

**‘Open House’ at the Barrys**

**13 Beech Road**

**Liz & Tony**

# Blended Service Rotas for April 2025

Date	Worship Leader	Vestry Elder	Welcomer	Door Steward	Reader	Prayers
<b>6th</b>	HC Colin Thompson	Marian Mole	Ellen Webster	Ann Gadja	Ann Bettess	Barbara Joiner
<b>13th</b>	Richard Bainbridge <i>Palm</i>	Ellen Webster <i>Sunday</i>	Charles Bennett	Rob Holdaway	Angela Holdaway	Christine Bainbridge
<b>17th</b>	Colin Thompson <i>Maundy</i>	Chris Shelley <i>Thursday</i>	Debi Kidd <i>Evening</i>	Moira Watson	~~~~	~~~~
<b>20th</b>	Cara Heafey <i>Easter</i>	Marian Mole <i>Sunday</i>	Pauline Shelley	Allison Towner	Barbara Joiner	Ann Bettess
<b>27th</b>	HC Colin Thompson	Ann Bettess	Debi Kidd	Angela Holdaway	Moira Watson	Ellen Webster

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## HOLY WEEK PRAYER BREAKFASTS

8am MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> to THURSDAY 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL inclusive

On the theme of "TREES"

ALL ARE WELCOME



A bring-and-share breakfast will follow the half hour of prayer, led by different members of our congregation.

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# Common Lectionary Readings April 2025

Date	April 6 <sup>th</sup>	April 13 <sup>th</sup>	April 20 <sup>th</sup>	April 27 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Isaiah 43: 16-21	Isaiah 50: 4-9a	Acts 10: 34-43	Acts 5: 27-32
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 126	Psalm 118: 1-2 & 19-29	Psalm 118: 1-2 & 14-24	Psalm 150
<b>New Test.</b>	Philippians 3: 4b-14	Philippians 2: 5-1	1 Corinthians 15:19-26	Revelation 1: 4-8
<b>Gospel</b>	14 John 12: 1-8	Luke 19: 28-40	John 20: 1-8	John 20: 19-31

**April 6<sup>th</sup>:** Just as the fragrance of a good perfume spreads from the bedroom to the dining room, so does a good name spread from one end of the world to another.

**April 13<sup>th</sup>:** On the night of his breakdown a sociologist told his wife he could not go on and that nobody needed him. After a pause she said 'But I need you' and this brought the gift of purpose.

**April 20<sup>th</sup>:** A psychiatrist wrote 'The pain of grief is just as much a part of life as the joy of love; it is perhaps the price we pay for love, the cost of commitment'.

**April 27<sup>th</sup>:** We tend to be washers of our brains. We lock ourselves in echo chambers, hearing only voices we agree with.

**Richard Bainbridge**



# Global Justice Now



Global Justice Now (GJN) started in 1970 as World Development Movement (WDM), and although a secular organisation, it was supported by many churches. It is now incorporated nationally under URC's Commitment for Life (which also includes Christian Aid and Fair Trade).

To quote from their website "GJN is a democratic social justice organisation working as part of a global movement to challenge the powerful and create a more just and equal world. We mobilise people in the UK for change, and act in solidarity with those fighting injustice, particularly in the global south".

The national organisation has over 20 staff working on policy, campaigns, communication and fund raising. They are always happy to come and speak at local supportive meetings. The current national campaigns are Pharmaceuticals, Trade, Climate and Arms for Israel.

I invite you to browse the website [globaljustice.org.uk](http://globaljustice.org.uk) and add your name to the petitions around all these campaigns.

I first joined WDM in 1978 and helped set up a group in Milton Keynes. I have been a national member ever since, and coming to Oxford, a member of Global Justice Oxford. Our local group is now rather depleted but we meet on Zoom every month to update each other and work out how we can publicise our campaigns. Our most recent event was at the Green Fair in December in Oxford Town Hall.

**Tina Everett**

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# Time for God Volunteers - Update

What a joy it was to see Wiebke Keizers return to Wheatley for a week to reconnect with us and meet Cara, our current Time for God volunteer.

Wiebke was able to stay with Mark and Phyllis Williams whom she had stayed with during her year with the URC. Wiebke is studying Book Publishing at Mainz University in Germany and is clearly enjoying her first year. She is sharing a flat which is working well and has kept up with a friend she made whilst in Wheatley.

We do hope that Wiebke will return to Wheatley again and we look forward to hearing how she is getting on.

## Lucy Betts



Wiebke, Bev and Cara – a day out at Waterperry

**Are you caring for a relative with dementia?  
Do you know anybody who does?**

## **WHEATLEY MEMORY CAFÉ**

**Is a fun and safe place for people living with  
dementia and their carers.**

**2nd Thursday of the month, 10.00am to 12.00  
Wheatley URC hall, Crown Square**

**Supported by**



**Dementia  
Oxfordshire and**



### **What we offer:**

- **The opportunity to chat, socialize & make friends**
- **Games, quizzes, crafts, gentle movement, singing & more**
- **Great support from dedicated volunteers**
- **For carers, the possibility to exchange with others in similar circumstances and to speak to the local Dementia Adviser for advice**

**More information: Laurence Devlin  
0771 315 88 13**



# What's On – Dates for your Diaries

## Weekly

Mon & Thurs 9am

## Contact

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

14<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> April

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)

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## Step into Spring with a Smile

When Lord Nelson died he was 5 feet tall. His memorial statue is 15 feet tall. That's Horatio of three to one.

I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin awareness.

What do you call a pig with laryngitis? Disgruntled.

Why is it unwise to share your secrets with a clock? Well, time will tell.

~ ~ ~

# Chocolate Nut Seed Slice

Line a 25cm x 20cm tin with baking paper.

1 cup each pumpkin seeds, sunflowers seeds, sliced almonds, walnuts, salted cashew nuts and sultanas

2 teaspoons sea salt

3 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

900 grams dark chocolate, 50-70% cocoa solids, cut into chunks



Put the pumpkin and sunflower seeds in a large frying pan and toast for 4 minutes. Add the almonds and walnuts and toast for another 3-4 minutes until golden. Stir through the cashew nuts, sultanas, salt and sesame seeds and set aside.

Put the chocolate in a large heatproof bowl and heat in the microwave in 1-minute bursts at a medium heat until melted.

Tip in 90 per cent of the nut and seed mixture and stir to combine. Pour into the prepared tin and top with the remaining nuts and seeds. Chill in the fridge for 2 hours to set then cut into bars or break into pieces.

**Bobbie Stormont**

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## Flowers Forever - Crafty Creations



By Laurence Devlin, Memory Cafe guests & volunteers  
and Flower Making day participants



*Headington Singers  
& Orchestra*

**Conductor : Malcolm Pearce**

**Leader : Thomas Gregory-Smith**

**Haydn  
The Creation**

**Robyn Pullen : Soprano**

**Peter Willis : Tenor**

**Will Orr : Bass**

**Maureen Cooper : Continuo**

**Friday, 4 April 2025 at 7.30pm**

**All Saints Church, Lime Walk, OX3 7AL**

**Tickets on the door £15 / £12 / children free  
(interval drink included in the ticket price)**

*[www.headingtonsingers.org.uk](http://www.headingtonsingers.org.uk)*



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

**CHURCH CONTACTS**

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*Church Secretary: Pauline Shelley*

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