

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



September 2025

Covering Thoughts

In the field at the bottom of our garden is an old willow. It has always fascinated me as it is split in half yet still thrives and survives collapse. The cover painting continues the theme of trees and is an abstraction of this willow.

Its message to me is not new but a constant reminder of faithfulness and stability in the midst of trauma. It is an old tree so I identify with it. But it still provides shade and shelter for the bugs and insects, the occasional animal and for anyone who is interested enough to gaze at it with curiosity. I have no idea of the event that led to its damage, and if trees could talk would love to hear its story. Its narrow leaves and softly arching branches, give it a movement that is fluid and dance like. It stands in contrast to the woodenness of many other trees.

As an artist it is often helpful to not only study the objects in a painting, but to also explore the shapes made by the spaces between them. So having described the willow and all its beauty I have to confess that the thing which I always look at when I walk down the drive is not the tree itself but the shape of the gap between the halves of the split trunk.

The trauma the tree experienced in its past has for me become the focal point of its interest and fascination. This is a reassurance that as we age and are marked by traumas from our past we can still achieve a stability and have something to offer to others. We have just as many stories to share as the bright young saplings.

Christine

~~~

# Reflection

Dear Friends,

## **Something in the air?**

*‘Teach us to listen, with broadening mind*

*For in many voices, your wisdom we find’*

I was interested to read Malcolm’s pastoral letter in March when he was reflecting on what it was that had led each of us to become part of the Wheatley URC community.

So it got me wondering as to the fundamental ‘essence’, the real ‘core’ of our church community, which makes it so appealing and ‘comfortable’

I can only speak for myself but the word that sums it up for me personally is - **‘acceptance’**.

What do I mean by **‘acceptance’** in this context? Well, my observation, no, actually, my innate feeling, sitting comfortably in the midst of my church friends, is that there may well be a range of opinions (some very subtle, some just a little more distinct) in every one of our individual heads, as to what it means to be a Christian and how we choose to personally practice and live those ‘beliefs’.

We may actually be aware of some of these differences through casual discussion or even listening to the inspirational faith journeys of others, or we may have even been involved in forums, such as ‘Living the Questions’, where one can sense that one’s own views and opinions on faith in general, and certainly on specific aspects of our religious practice, may be similar but not precisely the same as those of other participants.

Very likely however, we may just sense any differences (as well as similarities) through the expressions, mannerisms, body language of others or even, just a feeling of there being - **‘something in the air’**.

One might wonder whether we need to talk about it very much anyway. Does too much discussion on our personal opinions, faith or doubts actually break the spell and wonderment of some of the mystery anyway?

Isn't the 'unsaid', or the acknowledged 'not knowing', a key part of our tolerance and acceptance which encourages us just to subtly 'listen' to one another?

There are no 'right' answers to those questions but what I'm sure of is, that as well as appreciating our broad areas of common ground, we also seem to intuitively accept and really respect the range and variety of differences in what we might believe, think and feel and that is truly an invaluable quality to share within our church community.

Moreover, as one of our Ministers responded when I suggested 'acceptance' as one of our community's key attributes: 'yes, and **acceptance with humility and grace**'. What an important distinction to add!

This type of acceptance must come from somewhere. Is it the 'Spirit', or 'God, the ground of our being' or simply both 'the innate sense of love and desire to belong, deep within us as human beings'? (or possibly all three, in mutual unison!).

Who knows? Let's just **accept** that it's a mystery, so we can continue subtly 'listening' to one another, keeping things open, light and free, in the same vein as the welcome board in front of a nearby church which never fails to 'connect' with me when passing by -

*'Everyone's Welcome; Nobody's Perfect; Anything is Possible'*

**Love and Light**

**Rob Holdaway**

~~~

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the members in Pauline Shelley's Pastoral group: Liz & Tony Barry, John Hall & Tina Everett, Frances Simpson, Catherine & David Hughes, Elaine & Mike Matejtschuk, Allison townner, Annette Wright, Jill Cansell.

Also remember members of the Pastoral Care Team: Ann Bettess, Jean Boxall, Peter Devlin, Angela Holdaway, Barbara Joiner, Marian Mole, Frances Simpson, Andrew Thomson.

~~~

## End of Life Care

The Assisted Dying Bill, currently being debated in parliament, will allow adults who are terminally ill to request and be given assistance to end their own lives. There are strongly held views on both sides of the debate, most of which have been well rehearsed. As a result there will be a discussion led by myself and Cara Heafey on Sunday October 5th at 4.00pm at the URC after the afternoon tea. All are welcome.

The discussion will be in two parts. Firstly the present situation which will include the role of palliative care as well as guidance regarding 'do not attempt resuscitation', 'living wills', withdrawal of active treatment and lasting power of attorney.

The second part will examine the main tenets of the advance directive including who might be 'eligible', how their wishes are assessed and the consequences for the individual and society. We will also try and address the question as to whether our faith should influence our decision. It is hoped that there is time for contributions and questions from those attending.

**Malcolm Benson**

~~~

Photography Exhibition – Sunday 7th Sept

Carolyn Wheeler will be exhibiting a series of photographs as part of a larger exhibition with her fellow photography students. All are warmly invited to attend the exhibition opening on Sunday 7th September from 3-5pm in South Street Gallery at the Churchill Hospital.

The photographs will remain on display there for 6 weeks; the exhibition is free-of-charge and open 24 hours a day. Please do come and take a look if you are nearby.

Cara Heafy

~ ~ ~

Thank you

Thank you for the invitation to share in your Church anniversary service which was an interesting and stimulating service. It was good to sit up in the gallery to gain a different perspective. I was pleased to be able to collect a copy of the July/August newsletter too which was superb.

Our pastorate profile was taken to the July meeting of the Synod Moderators, and the vacancy will have been notified to all serving Ministers with their pay slips. There is no Moderators' meeting in August and thus it will not be until after their September meeting that there will be any opportunity for possible introductions. However, there will no doubt be a number of pastorate vacancies at this time right across the denomination so patience will be required!

Thank you for supporting your Associate Minister Cara and your serving Elders so well.

With my thoughts and prayers for you all.

Anne Bedford

~ ~ ~

AN AUTUMN EVENING CONCERT

FRIDAY 31st OCTOBER, 7.30pm

featuring Harpist
Becki Luff of "*Moonrakers*"
and other musicians



Cheese and Wine/Soft Drinks
will be served in the interval
Donations on the door

**A fundraising event in aid of
Falcon School, Zimbabwe and
Oasis of Peace Village, Israel**

organised by Wheatley United Reformed Church
Care for the World Ministry Team
Contact: Rob Holdaway - robholdaway2@gmail.com



Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust

“Ride and Stride” - Saturday 13TH September

This annual fundraising event for the important work of helping to keep our ancient (and some not so ancient) churches open, against the ravages of time and decay, is almost upon us, again.

Welcomers - As usual, we need a team of folk to act as “welcomers” to riders and striders from other churches visiting our church during the day, between the hours of 10.00 am and 6.00 pm. Many thanks to those who have already signed up on the list on the Church Hall noticeboard, but we do need a few more names please to cover the time adequately. It involves being in the church hall for an hour to sign in the visitors and mark their sponsorship sheets, offer them a drink and a biscuit/cake, direct them to the loo and answer any questions they may have about our church or other churches nearby. Ideally, for company and personal safety two people are required for each hour of the day. Remember, you could also be sponsored for just sitting there! A signing up sheet will be available for use in the in The Hall, if you are prepared to help in this way.

Riders – Once again **Gordon and Jill Ewbank** (gordon.ewbank@gmail.com) from The Community Church will generously be riding on behalf of Wheatley URC, **so please give them lots of support by your sponsorship.** **Graham Bell** (klokbell@gmail.com) will also be riding separately on behalf of the URC, on or close to the day and also has **a sponsorship form for you to sign!**

Striders – Does anyone wish to organise a walk this year on which people joining may self-sponsor with a £10 joining fee and/or collect sponsorship (per church visited) from others, to complete the walk?

Sponsorship and Tax - Don't forget that your sponsorship can be increased by 25%, if you are a tax payer and you elect, at the time of sponsorship, for OHCT to reclaim the tax that you have already paid on your “donation”.

N.B. - Half of all money sponsored can be reclaimed by Wheatley URC from OHCT, for essential repairs to our own buildings.

For any queries or sponsorship forms, please contact me, as below.

Finally – I took over organising these events from Robert Bailey, when he had to give up his beloved cycling due to his seriously deteriorating eyesight, over ten years ago and I would now like to hand over to someone else, please. **Any takers?**





Gordon & Jill Ewbank – Ride & Stride 2022

Tony Barry (01865 872293 or ah.barry@btinternet.com)

~~~

# Blended Service Rotas for Sept 2025

| Date                   | Worship Leader                        | Vestry Elder                    | Welcome                            | Door Steward                     | Reader                                                                                         | Prayers                                                                                         |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>7th</b>             | Rev Colin Thompson HC                 | Pauline Shelley                 | Phyllis Williams                   | Peter Devlin                     | Barbara Joiner                                                                                 | Marian Mole                                                                                     |
| <b>14th</b>            | Laurence Devlin                       | Rob Holdaway                    | Ann Gadjia                         | Bobbie Stormont                  | Angela Holdaway                                                                                | Noemi Roy                                                                                       |
| <b>21st</b>            | Richard Bainbridge                    | Tom Goss                        | Val Farmer                         | Charles Bennett                  | Andrew Thomson                                                                                 | Christine Bainbridge                                                                            |
| <b>28<sup>th</sup></b> | Charles Bennett<br><br><b>Harvest</b> | Ann Bettess<br><br><i>Sandy</i> | Pauline Shelley<br><br><i>Lane</i> | Chris Shelley<br><br><i>Farm</i> | ~~~~~<br><br> | ~~~~~<br><br> |

## What's On – Dates for your Diaries

### Weekly

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

Monday

Not So Young Club

Sept 1<sup>st</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>

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 Sept 2025

| Date                 | Sept 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Sept 14 <sup>th</sup> | Sept 21 <sup>st</sup> | Sept 29 <sup>th</sup> |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>First Reading</b> | Deuteronomy 30: 15-20 | Exodus 32: 7-14       | Amos 8: 4-7           | Amos 6: 1a & 4-7      |
| <b>Psalm</b>         | Psalm 1               | Psalm 113             | Psalm 2:1-7           | Psalm 146             |
| <b>New Test.</b>     | Philemon 1: 1-21      | 1 Timothy 1: 12-17    | Timothy 2: 1-7        | 1 Timothy 6: 6-19     |
| <b>Gospel</b>        | Luke 14: 25-33        | Luke 15: 1-10         | Luke 16: 1-13         | Luke 16: 19-31        |

**Sept 7<sup>th</sup>:** Bonhoeffer felt compelled by his commitment to Christ to act against the Nazi regime in an assassination plot against Hitler.

**Sept 14<sup>th</sup>:** Some losses are irredeemable but there may be new beginnings.

**Sept 21<sup>st</sup>:** Many national churches today face issues around managing investment holdings.

**Sept 29<sup>th</sup>:** Contentment is not something our world strives for with its consumerist society.

**Richard Bainbridge**

~~~

Safeguarding

There is a scam doing the rounds encouraging people to apply for the Winter Fuel Allowance – suggesting that a claim should have been made but has not. Don't fall for it – it is a SCAM. It comes in the form of a text claiming to be from the DWP. If you click on the link, which at a glance may look like the genuine address, you will be asked to give personal and bank details!

Safeguarding Training Update

There are some short (two hour) Zoom courses available to anyone who would like to have safeguarding training on these topics:

9th September 7.30pm Refugees and Asylum Seekers

22nd September 1.00pm Adult Safeguarding

9th October 1.30pm Spiritual Abuse

17th November 1.00pm Online Safety

To book, please contact Emma Pearce (emma.pearce@urc.org.uk) stating your name/church/course.

Marian Mole

~ ~ ~

Deadline

Tuesday 17th September is the deadline for the October Newsletter. Please send copy to: 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.

~ ~ ~

FALCON SCHOOL - Update!

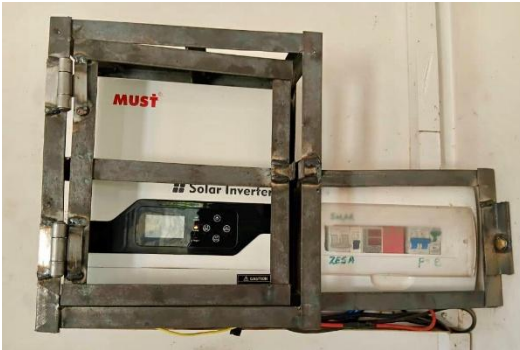
Most of you probably witnessed on video the moment the drilling of the new borehole struck water out there in the sand near Harare and the **heartfelt thanks** expressed by Falcon's teachers and pupils **'we pray that God will continue to bless Wheatley URC for the manner in which you have blessed and changed the life of Falcon community'**

Well, what you may not know is that they realised it would be too risky to make the borehole fully operational without first protecting the controls, so we donated extra money to help (£365) which was left over from all your generous project donations... and you will see below, for example, the new security 'cage' around the solar controls and (just about!) Wilbert inaugurating the first 'water-out-the-tap' moment after installation was complete!

So once again from all at the Falcon School



"NDATENDA ZVIKURU" - thank you so much to Wheatley URC!



Control's Security

Our next Falcon project?

Well the ADDED BONUS of our enabling the new borehole is that because the availability of water is now guaranteed, the school is able to plan an irrigation programme to start growing some food for themselves.

As a starting point, Wilbert and Regina have themselves kindly just given the school some money to plough a hector of land and next they hope to get the 'disking' done (i.e. breaking up the ploughed lumps of soil). This will be followed eventually by the installation of irrigation pipes prior to purchasing fertiliser and seeds and ... the beginning of a self-sustaining initiative .. which will be **our new Falcon support project between now and 2025 year-end!**

PS: .. speaking of which, in terms of future fund raising,

Don't forget to put the October 31st Autumn Evening Concert (Becki Luff of Moonrakers on harp etc!), in aid of the Falcon School and Oasis of Peace Village, firmly in your diaries. Falcon's founder Wilbert Sayimani will be attending, as will Tal Arrowsmith, Executive Director of Oasis of Peace, UK **best mention to friends and family right now !**

Care for the World Ministry Team

~*~

the birds have all the secrets

Birds are singing their hearts out this morning
without a single note of self-consciousness,
never once asking for permission,
or worrying they are too loud,
or too soft, too young, too old, too off-key.

They wouldn't think to ask if now
is the right time or if their song
is as pretty as the others.

I sit here with daffodils and sunshine,
and listen. Marveling at the gush of grace
when one is wildly, wonderfully,
wondrously who they are.

Julia Fehrenbacher - www.juliafehrenbacher.com

Permission given by Julia to use her poem



High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE

CHURCH CONTACTS

Associate Minister: Revd. Cara Heafey

Email: caraheafey@hotmail.com

Church Secretary: Pauline Shelley

Email: secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk

Church website: www.wheatleyurc.org.uk