

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



December 2025

# Covering Thoughts

*Sometimes at this busy time of the year it helps to stand back from the pressures of commercialism and socializing. To take a solitary walk, or to spend an hour in a gallery or a garden can refresh us and give us renewed strength to face the challenges ahead. I feel fortunate that painting helps me to unwind. I may not be able to walk along a beach or across a moor, but as I paint my imagination takes me on a journey. I am currently working on a view of hills and moorland. You see a section of it on the cover. R.S.Thomas's poem *The Moor* is an inspiration as I work.*

*It was like a church to me.  
I entered it on soft foot,  
Breath held like a cap in the hand.  
It was quiet.  
What God was there made himself felt,  
Not listened to, in clean colours  
That brought a moistening of the eye,  
In the movement of wind over grass.*

*There were no prayers said. But stillness  
Of the heart's passions - that was praise  
Enough; and the mind's cession  
Of its kingdom. I walked on  
Simple and poor, while the air crumbled  
And broke on me generously as bread.*

***Christine Bainbridge***

# Reflection

## Welcoming in the Stranger – God in the unexpected encounter

Graham Bell and I had just been to a very enjoyable concert in London. Graham had generously offered me a spare ticket. The performer was a veteran of the American folk/rock/blues world – Chris Smither great voice, and amazing acoustic guitarist.

During our crowded tube journey back to Graham's car – parked in Kilburn, I found myself sitting next to a large man with greying hair who could have easily taken up two seats on his own. He was spilling over into my space, legs fully extended and moving constantly, almost touching Graham who was sitting directly opposite me. I felt a little intimidated. He was looking around the carriage and sighing. I avoided eye contact so as not to cause any reason for potential conflict. I became aware that he was looking at me. He was clearly determined to speak to me.

Then, he lightly touched my right shoulder. "My name is Tori" he said. I responded by introducing myself. He held out his hand, and we softly shook hands. Moments later he got up to leave the tube. On his way past he paused, saying "God bless you." I responded likewise "God bless you". We smiled at each other and he exited the tube. Something special had happened. I felt that I had connected with another being, momentarily, outside of time and space.

There is an eternal theme found across cultures, religions, and philosophies which encompasses *hospitality, compassion, and community*. When Jesus says, "*I was a stranger and you welcomed me,*" (Matthew 25:35) this reflects the call to see Christ in others, especially in those who are marginalized by society, displaced, or lonely.

Since this extraordinary encounter, I have been thinking about what it really means to me to *welcome the stranger*. It is easy to show warmth to people I already understand — those who think, speak, or believe like me. But the stranger challenges me. They remind me that love, if it is to mean anything, must stretch beyond my comfort zone. To welcome the stranger is to recognize the face of God in someone we do not yet know and may never know fully: unexpectedly experienced in moments of delicate brevity or in a growing understanding of another person over time. This is an act of profound love which is not rooted in

fear or duty, but in the deep conviction that each one of us carries the divine within us.

Jesus' call to hospitality invites us to imagine a world of inclusion rather than exclusion— one where difference is not a threat but a gift. The stranger, the refugee, the newcomer, the neighbour who lives differently than we do — each becomes a mirror in which we can see our own humanity more clearly. Welcoming, then, can become a spiritual practice — an offering, a softening. It is a way of trusting that God meets us in unexpected people and unfamiliar places. And, in welcoming the stranger, so too God invites us to live in a wider, kinder vision of the world. Let us then prepare to welcome, again, the infant Jesus into a wider, kinder, world. Namaste – (may we see the divinity in each other).

God bless you all

**Tom Goss**



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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 (8<sup>th</sup> & 15<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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# Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers all members of Debi Kidd's pastoral group:** Laurence & Peter Devlin, Charles & Sue Bennett, Colin Thompson, Hertha Thompson, Angela & Rob Holdaway, Cara Heafey & Carolyn Wheeler, Ann & Norbert Gajda and Alice, Roger, Mary & Bobby Robar.

**Also remember members of the Care for the World Ministry Team:** Rob Holdaway, Ann Bettess, Tina Everett, Robert Harding, Elaine Matejtschuk, Mike Matejtschuk and Ellen Webster.

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# Antwerp Trip – October 2025

As you can tell by these photographs a very good time was had by all who went on the trip. It was sad that, after all his work along with Ellen to make it a success, Mark, and Phyllis, were unable to go. Ellen was a brilliant 'leader' and kept us all on time and incredibly, together! If you haven't been then a trip to Antwerp is highly recommended.



The whole gang enjoying a vegan meal, recommended by Cara and Carolyn, which was very tasty.



Enjoying Belgian waffles and hot chocolate!



A boat trip around the port. We found out loads of interesting information about the port including that all Kiwi fruits bound for Europe come in through Antwerp port!

Cara and Carolyn on the Antwerp 'Eye'!



**Debi Kidd**

# A Walk for New Year's Day 2026

As a prequel to Laurance and Peter's kind invitation to a **Shared New Year's Day Lunch Party**, at their home, I am proposing a walk around the village, making a doorstep call to offer our good wishes for the New Year, to those of our congregation, in our village and others known to us, who live alone and due to illness or incapacity have been unable to easily leave their homes to visit others.

Should you wish to participate in such a walk, I suggest that we gather outside the URC in Crown Square at 10.00 am to meander through the village streets for a couple of hours of meeting and greeting and working up our appetite for the shared lunch!

If we conclude our walk back at the URC, it is possible that a glass or two of mulled wine might be available for cold and/or weary walkers prior to them joining others at Laurence and Peter's for the shared lunch.

A list will appear on our noticeboard for those wishing to sign up for the walk, to be followed by a route plan for the proposed walk, so that folk can join the walk at any point nearer to their homes, if they prefer to have a shorter walk.

In the meantime, wishing you all the joys of Christmas

**Tony Barry**

(01865 872293 or [ah.barry@btinternet.com](mailto:ah.barry@btinternet.com))

# 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 Ministry Team**

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## Deadline

10<sup>th</sup> December is the deadline for the January Newsletter. Please send copy to: [newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk). 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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# O God of creation, we see all around us

By Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Tune: The Ash Grove (215 in Church Hymnary 4 Supplement God welcomes all)

1. O God of creation, we see all around us:  
how richly diverse are the people you've made!  
In all of our neighbours who daily surround us,  
your love for your children is ever displayed.  
We're made in your image, we're equal before you;  
yet often injustice and hatred abound.  
Forgive us the ways that we sin and ignore you,  
accepting the structures that push others down.

2. Christ Jesus, you lived in the same way you taught us;  
you welcomed the people that others despised.  
You talked and you ate with the poor and the outcast;  
you saw every person through welcoming eyes.  
Forgive our re-building the walls you have broken -  
our making of barriers you came to tear down.  
The gift of your cross is the world's reconciling  
with God and with all of God's people around.

3. O God, by your Spirit, now give us a vision  
of life in your kingdom through Jesus your Son -  
where background and culture won't lead to division,  
and all will feel welcomed and all will be one.  
God, now may we work with a new dedication  
for justice, equality, freedom and peace,  
until we are called to your great celebration  
and share at your table in your banquet feast.

**Submitted by Malcolm Benson after it was chosen by Mark Williams as part of his service in October.**

# Common Lectionary Readings December 2025

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

Date	7 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Isaiah 11: 1-10	Isaiah 35: 1-10	Isaiah 7: 10-16	Isaiah 9: 2-7	Isaiah 63: 7-9
<b>Psalms</b>	Psalms 12: 1-7 and 18-19	Psalms 146: 5-10	Psalms 80: 1-7 and 17-19	Psalms 96	Psalms 148
<b>New Test.</b>	Romans 15: 4-13	James 5: 7-10	Romans 1: 1-7	Titus: 11-14	Hebrews 2: 10-18
<b>Gospel</b>	Matthew 3: 12	Matthew 11: 2-11	Matthew 1: 18-25	Luke 2: 1-14	Matthew 2: 13-23

7<sup>th</sup> Dec - John tells it is the fruit that is most important not the branch it hangs on.

14<sup>th</sup> Dec - Someone once said that Christmas could only begin when they heard Chris Rea's 'Driving home for Christmas'.

21<sup>st</sup> Dec - A Persian king asked for something that is true. Everything passes was the reply.

25<sup>th</sup> Dec - This Christmas who do you need God to be to you?

27<sup>th</sup> Dec - There is no record of this slaying of children other than in the Gospels but it is not out of character for Herod.

**Richard Bainbridge**

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# The 'Autumn Concert!'

A massive 'thank you' to everyone (and your friends!) for your support and very generous donations at our Autumn Concert on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

We raised an incredible £1432, to be shared equally by the Falcon School in Zimbabwe and the Oasis of Peace village in Israel. It was a great turn-out (62 people!), especially graced by our lovely guests and performers, namely:

Becki Luff amazing harpist; the Rev Wilbert Sayimani and his wife Regina from Uxbridge URC and Harare; Tal Arrowsmith and Samah Salaima, the latter from the O of P village itself between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

We are extremely grateful to them all and their contributions, including Becki's range of exquisite playing, Wilbert's joyful odes (and 'actions'!) to our support for Falcon School and Samah's enlightening insights into what lies at the heart of the Oasis of Peace village and school.

In addition to the £716 donations to each of these causes .... ..... the Falcon School will soon be sent a further £1149 (making a total of £1865) raised during, and since, the borehole initiative, towards their new priority project which we have already highlighted ...



i.e. the irrigation and cultivation of some of their own foodstuffs, especially vegetables!

Thank you all so much again ... and, as Wilbert encouraged us to sing .... 'We have a miracle working God'!



Becki Luff playing the harp.



Wilbert and Regina teaching us a song!



Samah Salaime telling the audience about the work of the Oasis of Peace village in Israel.



Tal Arrowsmith and Samah Salaime with Robert during the interval.



Everyone enjoying the cheese and wine buffet during the interval.



**Care for the World Team**

# Blended Service Rotas for December 2025

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Worship Leaders</b>	<b>Readers</b>	<b>Intercessors</b>	<b>Vestry Elder</b>	<b>Welcomer/ Door Steward</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	Colin Thompson HC	Tom Goss	Marian Mole	Keith Kidd	Pauline Shelley/ Robert Harding
<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>	Richard Bainbridge	Bev Paton	Christine Bainbridge	Phyllis Williams	Val Farmer/ Bobbie Stormont
<b>21<sup>st</sup></b>	Robert Harding			Ann Bettess	Tom Goss/ Liz Barry
<b>24<sup>th</sup></b>	Colin Thompson Carols by candlelight			Debi Kidd	Ann Gajda/ Peter Devlin
<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	Mark Williams			Marian Mole	Keith Kidd/ Charles Bennett
<b>28<sup>th</sup></b>	Ministry Group			Ann Gajda	Val Farmer/Tina Everett





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**CHURCH CONTACTS**

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