

# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**January 2026**



# Covering Thoughts

*In midwinter when the festivities of Christmas are over, we come to the threshold of a new year. It can be a time of misgivings as an uncertain future disturbs and concerns us, or it may offer the hope of a new beginning, a turning of the page, the writing of a new chapter in our life's story. So, the cover this month is a threshold painting.*

*The turning of the year can be a liminal point, a pause in time where the unseen reality invites us to linger in the now and be transformed. This is not about making new year resolutions. It does not concern our resolve or our actions, but it is like a request to pause, and to accept the gift of the moment, whatever that may be.*

*There are places which have been described as thin places where the veil between the earthly and the heavenly becomes translucent. These may be linked to the saints, places of pilgrimage, or be in remote locations demanding of sacrifice and hardship on the journey. But I think these thin places can be close at hand if we are awake to discover them and become still and attentive when we are touched by them.*

*They may not be so much thin places as fragile moments: a shiver of silver sunlight, a beggar's smile, the radio playing our favorite melody, a task completed with less stress than we anticipated, or something that takes us by surprise. The thin moments are precious gifts, but easily missed, forgotten or taken for granted. They turn life experiences into metaphors and parables full of meaning.*

*Much poetry expresses the wonder of such moments. I am rediscovering Edward Thomas whose poem *Adlestrop* describes an experience he has on a train journey. I recommend it to you. As one who travels much by train, I wait in anticipation for such a moment.*

**Christine Bainbridge**

# Reflection

Dear Friends

The years speed by, and here we are in the next one. It's sometimes said that Christians live in two times – time as measured by the clock, and time according to the shape of the Christian year. We may have reached January 2026 but we are also in Epiphany, from a Greek word meaning 'to manifest' or 'to show forth'. The Feast of the Epiphany, commemorating the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, is more important than Christmas in many Christian traditions, and that is because it marks the moment when it becomes clear that this birth is not just some local event confined to a particular time and place, but one which reaches out beyond boundaries of cultures, creeds and races to touch everyone and everywhere. In popular understanding the Magi represent the outsiders, coming as they do from a non-Jewish background, and drawn to the stable by an astronomical phenomenon they have been studying. Christianity begins to move out of the comfort zone of fixed boundaries and identities and becomes universal in scope.

The visit of the Magi does not happen in a void. It fulfils a prophecy found in Isaiah 60, about kings coming to the brightness of 'your dawn' (a restored Israel), bringing with them gold and frankincense (but not myrrh). There is a strong sense in the prophetic literature that the role of Israel is not to shut the door on outsiders but to be a beacon in the darkness, drawing all peoples to the light of God (see, for example, Micah 4). The first Christians struggled with how to reconcile their Jewish heritage with this broader understanding, and that struggle occupies many pages of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. But they came to an important conclusion, that those born outside the Jewish covenant (usually referred to as Gentiles, which simply means 'peoples', from Latin 'gens') who had found faith in Christ were as much a part of this new community as those who came from within it. This was one of those moments in human history when nothing would be the same again. The Christian Church became universal. That's just one of the reasons why when it allies itself to nationalistic politics it is betraying its very essence.

You may well know all that. But I find it fascinating that long before the story of the Magi was written down Jewish writers were pondering on the implications of a God who was universal, and the first Christians had to work out for themselves how to deal with people they might once have regarded as beyond God's love. Jesus himself, of course, would have memorable encounters with non-Jewish people and tell stories about outsiders who did the right thing and insiders who

didn't. As we pass once again through Epiphany, we might look for the challenges it poses to the way we think and behave. Do we make it clear enough in our church life that people who find themselves drawn to Christian faith are truly welcome, regardless of their backgrounds? Do we make enough space for them to tell us their stories and contribute to our own discipleship? How do we engage with honest seekers after the truth who worry that Christianity asks them to believe irrational things (it doesn't, of course) or that it constantly fails to live up to its claims (all too true, alas)? I worry sometimes that we are good at attracting like-minded people, and less good at attracting those who come from different places, even though that is not our intention. In my mind's eye I see a congregation of people from a great variety of races and ages, classes and cultures, each contributing to the Church's mission, to making the love of God incarnate once in the babe of Bethlehem incarnate again and again in our own world through their witness and service. Am I being impossibly idealistic? Or do we have a way to go yet before we truly become a church of the Epiphany?

Whatever the New Year brings, I wish you the peace of Christ in your hearts and the hope of Christ as your light.

**Colin Thompson**

# FALCON SCHOOL

'THANK YOU' LETTER: REV WILBERT SAYIMANI - NOVEMBER '25 DONATION

Green shoots already show in Falcon's fields ... they are so appreciative



**Dear Rob,**

I am writing with profound joy and deep gratitude for the wonderful news you shared with me. Words truly fail to express how thankful my wife and I are for your generosity and the unwavering support you continue to give.

Over the years, I have watched you transform Falcon School—not only by providing buildings, but by giving the school purpose, dignity, and a standard that aligns with any well-resourced institution. You have given more than support; you have given hope.



Your recent gift comes at a time when the school is moving steadily toward empowerment and long-term sustainability, even in seasons when donor fatigue may creep in. The clean water system you helped establish has already inspired new ideas and opened doors for meaningful projects. One of these is the farming initiative, created to provide both financial support for the school and meals for children who often arrive hungry.

When I left in July, the land had already been prepared. All that remained was the input needed to begin the project. Your donation will make that possible. It will go directly toward purchasing seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and covering labor costs for community members who will work the fields while teachers remain in class.

Additionally, with the funds you have provided, the school will now embark on an irrigation scheme that will allow year-round farming. This means they can raise consistent income for the school and ensure food security for the children. The amount you have given is sufficient to support the hectareage already ploughed, and with what they will generate from this first phase, they will be able to cultivate the remaining land and further maximize their income.

For my wife and me, this brings immense relief, as we have had to supplement teachers' salaries many times over. This project promises long-term stability—not only for us, but also for the broader donor community.

Once the funds have been put to use, I will update you with the full progress of the project, including receipts, videos, and photographs. You—and the entire Wheatley community—deserve to see the impact of the seeds you are sowing in these children's lives.



Please convey my heartfelt thanks, and on behalf of Falcon School, our sincere appreciation to the Wheatley community. May the good Lord bless you and keep you. I truly have no words to measure the magnitude of what you have done; all I can offer is my prayer that the Lord will reward you abundantly.

**Yours in His service,**  
*The Revd Wilbert Runyararo Sayimani*

# 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 Not So Young Club  
(12<sup>th</sup> & 26<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 Thurs. 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 10am Memory Café  
Laurence Devlin – [laurencelalanne99@gmail.com](mailto:laurencelalanne99@gmail.com)  
Second Tuesday Lunch 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 Ann Gajda's pastoral group:** Wendy & Malcolm Benson, Alison Broadbent, Cynthia Mancey, Bobbie Stormont & Tom Goss, Allison Towner and Debi & Keith Kidd.

**Also remember members of the Communications Ministry Team:** Phyllis Williams, Debi Kidd, Bobbie Stormont, Christine Bainbridge, Pauline Shelley, Rogar Robar and Mike Matejtschuk.

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# Blended Service Rotas for January 2026

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Worship Leaders</b>	<b>Readers</b>	<b>Intercessors</b>	<b>Vestry Elder</b>	<b>Welcomer/ Door Steward</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	Colin Thompson HC	Charles Bennett	Tine Everett	Phyllis Williams	Pauline Shelley/ Chris Shelley
<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	Richard Bainbridge	Mike Matejtschuk	Ann Hardiman	Tom Goss	Ann Gajda/ Angela Holdaway
<b>18<sup>th</sup></b>	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity At Wheatley Community Church				
<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	Mark Williams			Keith Kidd	Marian Mole/ Ellen Webster

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## Deadline

14<sup>th</sup> January is the deadline for the February 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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# Common Lectionary Readings January 2026

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

Date	4 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Isaiah 60: 1-6	Isaiah 42: 1-9	Isaiah 49: 1-7	Isaiah 9: 1-4
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 72	Psalm 29	Psalm 40	Psalm 27
<b>New Test.</b>	Ephesians 3: 1- 12	Acts 10: 34- 43	Corinthians 1: 1-9	Corinthians 1: 10-18
<b>Gospel</b>	Matthew 2: 1-12	Matthew 3: 13- 17	1 John 1: 29-42	Matthew 4: 12-23

Jan 4<sup>th</sup> - When was the last time you gazed up at the stars? In ancient times it was common practice.

Jan 11<sup>th</sup> - In the late 1880s a young American girl, Helen Keller was left blind and deaf. She never gave up hope.

Jan 18<sup>th</sup> - There is something about hidden identity in the Isaiah passage.

Jan 25<sup>th</sup> - Jesus chose to base himself in a border town [Capernaum] of around 1,500 people, a place where he got to know his neighbours.

**Richard Bainbridge**



Edward Burne-Jones, "The Adoration of the Magi," 1890



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**CHURCH CONTACTS**

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