

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



April 2026

Covering Thoughts

*I am still working my way through *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes* by Belden Lane and amidst its rich research and reflection there are two things on which I am pondering.*

Firstly the pleasure obtained from climbing a mountain lies not in reaching the top but in the journey of uncertainty towards what could be an unattainable goal.

Secondly the deepest joys are not so much spectacular as commonplace. Lane quotes Teilhard de Chardin who writes: the value and interest of life is not so much to do conspicuous things.....as to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value.

*To think ahead to Easter in the midst of a world in turmoil seems an impossibility. How can one keep a feeling of peace, gratitude and compassion alive in such a situation? Yet as I read an extract from Charles Williams' *All Hallows Eve* in church this morning I was compelled by its image of the murky waters of the Thames masking the primordial water of life. The concluding summary hit me with a force that challenged me to look at the situation with new eyes. "We could also see the splendour of God's presence in the dark and opaque world. We could see grace active and everywhere in all things."*

That could also be a summary of the message of Easter. It has been said by some New Testament scholars that the resurrection stories express above all – whether they are seen as literal or symbolic - the life changing experience of the disciples. There was no way that Jesus's death could suppress the primordial water of creation demonstrated in his life. This luminous clarity, healing forgiveness, solace of fierce landscapes, is available and gifted through the trauma of suffering and death.

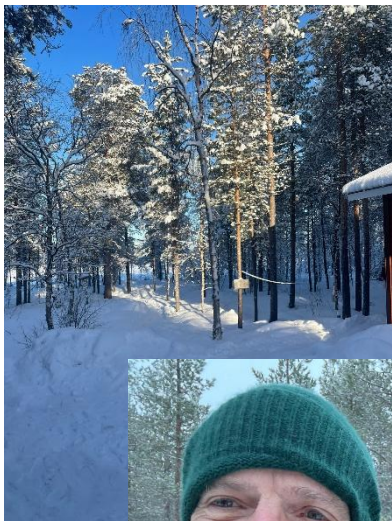
Christine Bainbridge

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Reflection

In the Frozen Cathedral of Lapland

1000 km north of Helsinki it was cold. At times, 25 below and the land all white. The sky often blue. It was my fifth winter trip to Aihkiniemi. The pines stood still, shouldering snow. Two small cabins stand at the edge of the frozen lake. One with radios and a bed, the other the sauna and a bed. Only two at a time, for a week.



Graham Bell with Finnish friend Martti Karimies

The DX (radio) room is plain. Chairs, tables, wires (lots of wires), and radios. Outside an occasional raven call or Siberian tit. Inside the soft hiss of the wavebands. Occasional comments from the two men, an antenna change, signals suddenly welling up from another point on the compass. Mainly, they listened. It was the reason to be there.

13 elevated aerials run out 1000 metres, thin lines against the white. They pointed to places we could not see. Chile. New Zealand. Pacific islands. Thailand. Everywhere. We were far from everything, but not the radios.

From nought the band suddenly comes alive. Signals duct through the ionosphere, up in heaven. A snatch of music. A voice. A call sign half-heard. We flit from one frequency to the next. We know the feel of distant stations, the way a fisherman knows the tug on the line.

Early one morning we caught Chile. Special, being on the far side of the Andes. *Cumbia chilena* music. Love songs and accordions. Regional songs for town and village people with dry streets, dust and heat. Farmers. Market women. Men in bars. Dancing. Here in a wooden cabin in the snow. We listened - it was like being let into someone else's life.



Lutheran Church in Ivalo

Another time it was New Zealand. Late summer weather forecast for South Island, rugby-talk, lonely callers in the small hours. The signals fade up and down, like breathing. They cross oceans and ice, traversing the cosmos and down to us. A simple thing. But it was like watching the world turn.

We heard Te Upoko o te Ika from Wellington. Words in te reo Māori, rounded and musical, for their people, their city, their bay. Yet here it was, under the pines of

Lapland. I thought of the man at the microphone, the small studio, the red ON AIR light. He would not know his voice had come to the snow.

Outside, cold pressed in. Each day we walked 7km up and down the Norway road. The icy snow took sound from our boots. The trees barely moved except for a chunk of melting ice sliding to the ground. A shy reindeer through the trees. There is a sort of holiness in that stillness. You feel it in the chest.

The whole planet connected. Voices riding on the day and night. Local stations playing for their own. A world of languages: Japanese, Mandarin, Thai, Spanish (that Buenos Aires lilt), English, Tagalog, Tongan. Every kind of music, news, chat, religion. All flowing into a cabin alone in the snow, nearest shop 65km away.

We celebrated a new Japanese station, only 100 Watts - a tot of Glenfiddich. We noted times, frequencies, call signs, a few words about the signals. Holding on to the ones we do not want to lose. A fish caught. A train spotted, a hill climbed.

On our last morning, we packed up - a 150 km drive to Ivalo. The sky a pale blue and the snow shone. The radios were quiet. The aerials lay waiting. I looked out at the white land and thought of the voices still passing over – silent harmony. Transcending. From all corners the sounds had come to us like prayers.

Graham Bell

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Prayers

Please remember in your prayers all members of Phyllis Williams' pastoral group: Catherine & David Hughes, Barbara & Albert Joiner, Pauline & Chris Shelley, Annette Wright, Ann Ojewande & family, The Lee Family, Jeff Clarke

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

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Lent Journalling

A group of us have journeyed our way through Lent every week, reflecting on Bible readings, poetry, discussion and creative journaling in a prayerful and meditative way.

We used gentle wet felting as a metaphor in Week 4, for Healing and Repair and we read *The Miracle* by Seamus Heaney which is inspired by the passage from Mark 2:1-12 where Jesus heals the paralysed man. Heaney focuses on the friends who carried the man to Jesus which highlights that healing happens through supporting one another and thus the miracle begins before the healing.

Pauline Shelley



Photos by Carolyn Wheeler



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Deadline

Thursday 16th April is the deadline for the May Newsletter. Please send copy to: 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.

Wheatley Not So Young Club

We doubt that there are many people in Wheatley who can remember a time when there wasn't a **NOT SO YOUNG CLUB**. At one time the many members filled the Merry Bells main hall, then with decreasing numbers moved to the coffee room and recently has functioned in the URC Hall. The committee of the NSYC comprised Frances Simpson, Jean Boxall, Ann Bettess, Barbara Joiner and Shirley Marquis.

The club has always met on alternate Monday afternoons from two until four with a break for tea and cake and chat. The content of the meetings has reflected the interest of the current members....bingo being one....but has always included some talks and outings. At this point we must thank ASDA and the Co-op for supporting us with an automatic bingo machine and food on special occasions.

In 2013 the club was in danger of closing because the leaders then were unable to continue because of their own increasing years and ill health. The same has now happened again with the current leadership being forced to retire. No one has been found available to replace them. **But all is not lost!**

In conversation with Sally, the entertainment officer at Wellford Gardens Care Home we understood that they have been contemplating setting up a bingo club and having heard of our plight, suggested that we join with them by moving to the Care Home where Sally will organise things. She has said how much they would welcome people from the village going up and joining them and talking with their residents. We asked the members if they were happy with the idea, and they agreed.

Our first new joint meeting will be **Monday April 13th**. If you are interested in joining us, give **Barbara Joiner a ring on 07732300201**. Do come to what is a very pleasant afternoon.

(Earlier information about the Not So Young Club can be found in the Wheatley Archives.)

Barbara Joiner



World Day of Prayer

The Christian women of Nigeria provided the service for this year's World Day of Prayer. We heard four of their stories which illustrated their struggles with injustice, persecution and poverty.

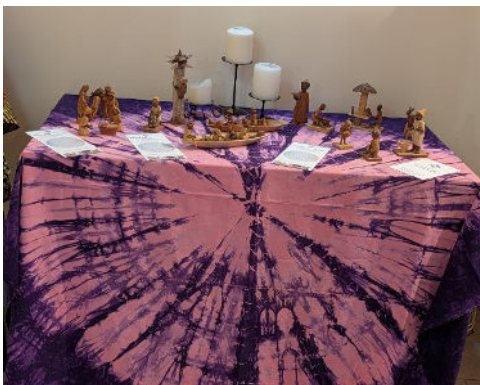


The theme was 'I will give you rest, come.'

(Matt 11v28) in which Jesus encourages us to lay down our burdens and find rest in Him. Following the service many people commented on how impressed they'd been by it and several said 'the best service ever!'

Next year will mark 100 years since the start of the World Day of Prayer and the theme will be 'United in Prayer for Justice and Peace'. The service writers are the WDP International Committee.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY: World Day of Prayer 2027 FRIDAY 5th MARCH at 2pm



Marian Mole

Blended Service Rotas for April 2026

Dates	Worship Leaders	Vestry Elder	Welcomer Door	Reader	Prayers
2nd Maundy Thurs		Pauline Shelley	Marian Mole Robert Harding	~	~
5th Easter Sunday	Colin Thompson HC	Debi Kidd	Tom Goss Bobbie Stormont	Andrew Thomson	Marian Mole
12th	Richard Bainbridge	Ann Gajda	Val Farmer Jen Yeates	Chris Shelley	Christine Bainbridge
19th	Cara Heafy	Ann Gadja	Rob Holdaway Angela Holdaway	Bev Paton	Tina Everett
26th	Mark Williams	Rob Holdaway	Ann Bettess	~	~

Common Lectionary Readings April 2026

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	5th	12 th	19 th	26th
First Reading	Jeremiah 31: 1-6	Acts 2: 14a & 22-32	Acts 2: 14a & 36-41	Acts 2: 42-47
Psalm	Psalm 118: 1-2 & 14-24	Psalm 16	Psalm 116: 1-4 & 12-19	Psalm 23
New Test.	Colossians 3: 1-4	1 Peter 1: 3-9	1 Peter 1: 17-23	1 Peter 2: 19-25
Gospel	Matthew 28: 1-10	John 20: 19-31	Luke 24: 13-35	John 10: 1-10

April 5th: Colossians was written to encourage a church under pressure from rival spiritualities. This may be seen as difficult but could be creative.

April 12th: How can we talk about indescribable joy. Perhaps by watching a herd of huskies at feeding time.

April 19th: A homeless man would collect bread at the end of the day and then share it with people. This included Inderjit Bhogal, a theologian, who was very moved. Who is sharing with you outside the church?

April 26th: Today the shepherd goes behind the sheep. In the Middle East the shepherd goes in front. What does this tell us theologically?

Richard Bainbridge

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Dates for Your Diaries

Weekly

Mon & Thurs 9.00am Mindfulness Sitting Group
Mark Williams - jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com
Friday 10am Table Tennis
Val Farmer – val_farmer40@hotmail.com

Monthly

New Venue Not So Young Club (NSYC)
Monday April 13th Barbara Joiner – albarjoiner2@gmail.com
First Sunday * No teas this Sunday – it is Easter Sunday
Ann Bettess – annsgoog@gmail.com
First Tuesday Dance Chapel - bobbiestormont@gmail.com
First Thurs. 10am Prayers for the world
Ann Hardiman - 01865873485
First & Third Thurs. Coffee Morning
10.30am Barbara Joiner – albarjoiner2@gmail.com
Second Thursday. Memory Café
10am Laurence Devlin – laurencelalanne99@gmail.com
Second Tuesday Lunch Club
Val Farmer – val_farmer40@hotmail.com

Save the Date

Save the date for Richard Bainbridge's retrospective - Saturday July 11th 2026.

Ramadan Mubarak!

While Muslims the world over, greet each other with the traditional sentence above (which means “May your Ramadan be blessed”), the guests of Memory Café at our March session, built little Ramadan lanterns from kits and painted them, enjoying it tremendously. It is a simplified version of the millions of beautiful and sophisticated metal lanterns that are lit at the end of the day of fasting and prayer in every country of the Middle East. These lanterns which originated in Egypt, have a religious and cultural significance as they symbolise hope and the light vanquishing the darkness, a lot like our candles!





Laurence Devlin



New Beginnings

The Rev'd Robert and Heather Sheard will arrive in Littleworth on the 13th of April. We look forward to welcoming them into our church community and also to sharing our future ministry along with our friends in the Bernwode group: Marsh Gibbon, Brill, Twyford Bucks and the Haven in Banbury.

Robert's induction service will be on **Saturday 18th of April at 2.30 pm** at

Wheatley and Zoom will be available, God willing. It is vital that we have accurate numbers of who would like to attend in person, because our church has limited space and we will also be welcoming a large number of people.

Robert will begin his ministry at the beginning of May, therefore work is underway within the churches and within Synod to set up the partnership, prepare the manse and organise the Induction service. Please pray for Robert and Heather, and all who are working hard to make this a smooth transition.



Pauline Shelley



Dance Chapel

“To Live is to Dance, To Dance is to Live” – *Snoopy*

Eight wonderful women have been dancing together for 7 years next month! How amazing is that? After a short break we will be dancing again, once a month, beginning on Tuesday April 7th in the URC hall from 9.30 to 10.30.

I am passionate about creating an allowing space where we can come together as we are; where there is no right or wrong way to pray or to dance and where we practise receiving all of ourselves - awkwardness, exuberance, fears, tiredness, aches, joys, laughter etc.

In our sessions, we sometimes use simple choreographed dances to reflect on spiritual themes or the lives of monks and mystics, past and present. At other times we dance more freely – as a way to pray, for connection, to express with our whole self the person we are. We dance because it's good for us, it's fun or just because. We simply allow our dance to be an expression of ourselves and a doorway to divine presence.

I am currently reading a book called 'Your Brain on Art – How the Arts Transform Us' by Susan Magsamen and Ivy Ross. My whole body comes alive when I read of the importance of storytelling, dance and music for human flourishing.

They talk about studies on the neurobiology of pleasure and happiness showing that music and dance increase the levels of all the four neural transmitters - dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin and endorphins.

David Byrne, the leader of the band 'Talking Heads' says “When you move with people, especially when you start to move in sync, or if you sing in sync with other people, you form this kind of bond that doesn't exist between you as individuals – there is immediate kinship and strong connection.” What better reasons to come together to dance and sing.

If you enjoy dancing, are curious about movement as a way of praying, or would simply like to 'come and see', you would be very welcome. Do get in touch. bobbiestormont@gmail.com

Bobbie Stormont

The Blackbird

In quiet gardens where I walked and prayed
and fought a lonely struggle with my God,
out of a rock the Spirit's water flowed
to meet my need for grace when life was hard.
I stood and watched the clear refreshing stream —
A blackbird came to drink and bathe, and shook
wet drops of scattered sunlight, like a dream,
as jewels of praise along the path I took.
Then from the rock arose inspiring love
on evening flight to worlds where I belong
and worshipped high upon the chapel roof
till God himself was breaking into song*
The joyful music-maker of the skies
ignored the selfish longings of my mind,
stole centre-stage, and took my heart by storm
with glorious concert of divinest kind.
All nations' song went on... and on... and on...
a peace remained in every quiet pause —
and when, at last, he silently had done
the air was charged with splendid applause.

* *

He came to me again today and sang
a promise of God's love and strength to cope,
reminding me once more how grace began —
and going to the rock, revived my hope.

Andrew Thomson

*Zephaniah 3:17

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