

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



May 2026

Covering Thoughts

*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God.
But only he who sees takes off his shoes
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.*

My moment of experiencing Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem came a few weeks ago as I stood in the Botanical Gardens before the most magnificent magnolia I had ever seen. The sun shone, the sky was vibrant and the feeling came of enveloping joy.

On Easter Sunday it was great to sing a new hymn expressing the idea that our present inspiration and wisdom has links to the past and is waiting for us to pass on to future generations. The verse using the metaphor of trees expresses this idea perfectly:

*How many seeds give birth to spreading forests,
Carried by birds or borne upon the breeze;
So many years must pass before they flourish,
And tender shoots become majestic trees.
Scattered in faith, the seeds of God's own planting
Will bear the fruit of righteousness and peace.*

Colin Thompson 2026

Thank you Colin. We look forward to more new hymns.

Christine Bainbridge

Reflection

Extracts from my diary written during covid.

It is early in the day. The country is in the throes of the corona virus. The government is throwing money at the situation. The churches are closed and people are hiding away. I ask myself as a theological student what is my response? I have decided to put thoughts to paper. It would be nice to think that there is a connection between theology and the corona virus, but I am struggling to find one.

The obvious point to begin is prayer. There are subtle nuances to prayer, and I can hear people telling me that prayer is not like a machine in the station where you put your money in and get something out. Can I believe in an interventionist God who comes in from outside making everything well?

So where is my first port of call? Well, it is to the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who died at the hands of the Nazis in 1943 three years before I was born. He talked of a God beyond God. That is God is not an entity to be brought in when you fancy. God is at the centre of life and not on the boundary. He is not a God of the gaps to be brought in only for those things we have no control over.

We seem to have rejected an omnipotent God. After all, as Hume says, either he is omnipotent but unfair or he is loving and not omnipotent.

The Coronavirus continues. Received a message today from someone who said that Jesus was in control rather than the virus. Whatever will happen is a part of his doing even if some die. Is this a matter of hedging one's bets? – all will be

well? - the work by Racine in *Candide* seemed to put pay to that - it is not the best of all worlds, or is it?

My wife Christine pointed out that we had prepared all our life for this moment. All the study, reflection and living we had shared together was enough to guide us in this new and demanding situation. The religious person does not live in a different world to the non-religious person – they interpret it like a poet in a particular way. We celebrate human courage and kindness wherever it is found.

I heard a programme on philosophy where the Dalai Lama said that many people die having never lived. This is stark and I wondered if I had lived. Between the idea and the reality falls the shadow.

Religious people are migrants as much as settlers, and religions make sense of the nomads as well as the settlers in human life. We are all travellers and it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive.

As we watch Jesus in the last week of his life we see a man in a different context to the Galilean hillside. It was Jung who said that 'We cannot live the afternoon of life according to life's morning.' This is like the work of Vanstone who compares life to the pattern of St. John's gospel. At the start we are in control and do things. At the end we are controlled and things are done to us.

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Knowing where you are is a mystery. The real point is you do not need to grasp it. In letting go one discovers something important. It is an illusion and exploring the illusion is all there is.

So much has depended upon telling the story. This is OK but we need to live it through covid and to make it our story.

With memories of covid

Richard Bainbridge

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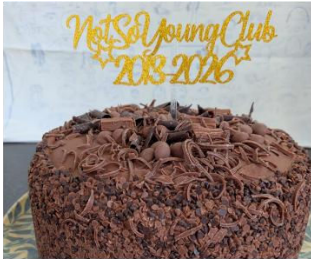


**Bluebells at Wytham Woods enjoyed by Bobbie Stormont and Ellen Webster.
See Christine's Cover Notes with the verse from Colin's new hymn.**

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Not So Young Club – Last Meeting

The last meeting held at the URC by the Not So Young Club on 23rd March was enjoyed by all. We, of course, had to have a few games of Bingo to start the meeting, followed by tea with a gorgeous chocolate cake donated by Laurence, who with Bobbie had arranged lots of music and singing helped along by Pat Jeffs on his guitar. We finally said farewell by giving out Easter eggs and cards to all the members. It was a sad but happy end to 13 years of continuing this long-established club in Wheatley. You will find the Bingo Club continuing at Wellford Gardens Care Home, once a fortnight on Mondays, excluding Bank Holidays.



Barbara Joiner



Dates for Your Diaries

Weekly

Sunday	Pulse Youth Group
6-8pm (term time)	Sophie Block youthworker@wheatleyurc.org.uk
Mon & Thurs 9.00am	Mindfulness Sitting Group
	Mark Williams - jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com
Friday 10am	Table Tennis
	Val Farmer – val_farmer40@hotmail.com

Monthly

First Sunday	Teas - 2.30-4pm
	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. 10.30am	Coffee Morning
	Barbara Joiner – albarjoiner2@gmail.com
Second Thursday 10am	Memory Café
	Laurence Devlin – laurencelalanne99@gmail.com
Second Tuesday	Lunch Club
	Val Farmer – val_farmer40@hotmail.com

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Prayers

Please remember in your prayers all members of Val Farmer's pastoral group:

Jean Boxall, Carlo Charlesworth, Ann Hardiman, Pat Howard, Bev Paton & family, Jen & Geoff Yeates, Ryley Ray and Mike Dyer.

Also remember members of the Finance Ministry Team: Keith Kidd, Tony Barry, Robert Harding and Mike Matejtschuk.

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Easter Flowers



Many thanks to everyone who made the church look so beautiful and springlike with the floral display on Easter Day.

Photographs taken by Bobbie Stormont

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Save the Date

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

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Thinking About Becoming an Elder?

Here's Why It's Worth It.

Ever wondered what it's like to be an Elder in the URC? Maybe you've been asked—or maybe you've just felt a little nudge. Here are a few reasons why saying “yes” could be one of the most rewarding steps in your faith journey.

You'll Grow in Faith

Being an Elder draws you closer to God. You pray more, think more deeply about what it means to follow Jesus, and learn alongside others. It's not about having all the answers - it's about growing together.

You Won't Be Alone

Elders work as a team. You'll share ideas, make decisions together, and support one another through whatever comes. It's a great way to build real friendships and feel connected to the heart of the church. Furthermore, we are entering a new phase in the life of Wheatley URC, alongside Robert Sheard as minister of Wheatley and the Bernwode Cluster.

You Make a Real Difference

Whether it's helping shape the future of the church, supporting the minister, or simply being there for someone in need, Elders help hold the church family together. Your presence, your prayer, and your voice all matter.

It's Not About Being Perfect

God doesn't call the perfect—He calls the willing. Elders come from all walks of life. If you care about the church and want to serve, that's more than enough to begin.

Curious? Feeling called?

Have a chat with your church secretary or one of the current Elders. They'd love to share what it's like—and help you explore whether it could be the right step for you.

Pauline Shelley



Alexa!

Just think how fortunate we are!

I was given a rather wonderful present a couple of years ago, a little technical machine which, when one spoke to it using a coded name, it answered out of the ether, "Can I help you?". When one speaks a question, such as "How far away is Milton Keynes?", the response immediately comes, "Milton Keynes is 66 km away by car".

I understand a lot of people have these machines and mainly have music played, whatever their taste might be. I use mine to remind me of my appointments, shopping list, birthdays, the present date, and when my watch stopped working, I found it very convenient to ask the time of day.

It is said that there is an answer to whatever question may be asked. Human beings are amazingly resilient and can so very quickly adapt to whatever is the latest invention which becomes useful or supposedly time saving.

In my childhood, I was brought up in rather basic surroundings with few of the things which are nowadays regarded as absolutely necessary, such as tap water, electricity, gas, telephone, car. I did not even have a bicycle until I was 16 years old. A radio was known as a 'wireless' and of course TV did not exist.

My father was an amateur radio fanatic, which in his day was the latest thing. He became extremely excited because he could talk to people in Poland or South Africa, and such distant places. Since then, the speed with which technology has escalated, is almost breathtaking.

Again, I say, how fortunate we are to have comfortable houses to live in, and be able to travel to anywhere we wish throughout the world, and we have news and pictures from absolutely anywhere brought to us in our homes.

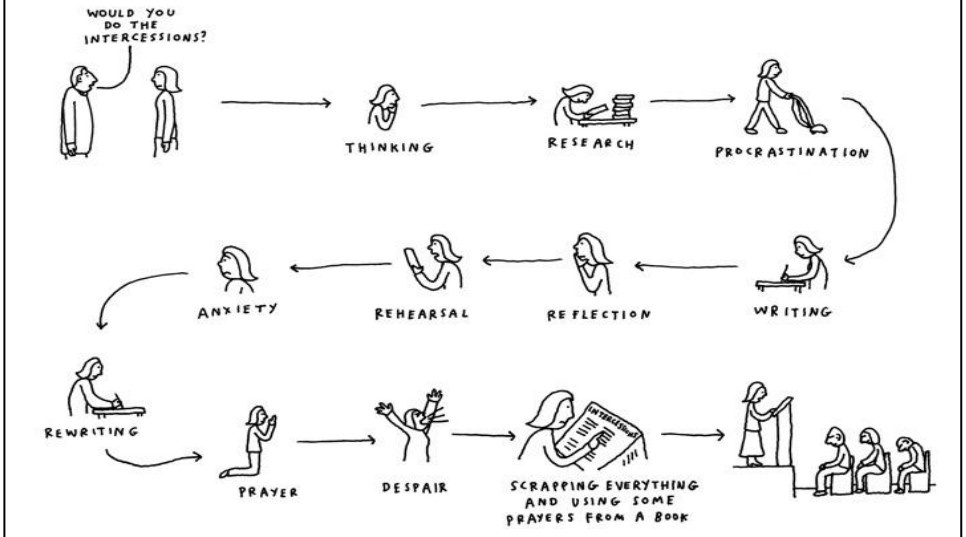
What more do we really need?

Just like everybody else, I am absolutely delighted to be able to afford and make use of some new gadget, but I really feel we should concentrate on making a better world for those who are not so fortunate.

Pat Simpson

THE INTERCESSIONS

HOW TO PREPARE THEM



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Deadline

14th May is the deadline for the June Newsletter. Please send copy to: newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk. Please type all contributions in Calibri font, size 11. Thank you.

Please see the important notice on page 10 about the deadline for Teams' Reports for our AGM on 12th July.

Disclaimer

The Editors welcome letters, articles and announcements from individuals and organisations, but reserve the right to publish or not.

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Old Friends



The congregation was very happy to welcome visitors we had not had the pleasure to see for 10 years: Steve and Emily Bell, who stayed with Laurence and Peter for 4 days at Easter. Ulrike could not come because as a minister in her church in Lemgo, she was a bit busy during Holy Week (!) and Mariella was in Taizé. Several members of the congregation asked Emily which one of the 2 girls she was as 10 years ago, Emily was 7 years old and Mariella 5... They will, no doubt, be back soon.

Laurence Devlin

Blended Service Rotas for May 2026

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	Intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
3 rd	Colin Thompson HC	Rob Holdaway	Ann Bettess	Debi Kidd	Keith Kidd/ Barbara Joiner
10 th	Robert Sheard	Ellen Webster	Tom Goss	Phyllis Williams	Val Farmer/ Moira Watson
17 th	Anne Bedford	Catherine Harding	Noemi Roy	Tom Goss	Pauline Shelley/ Ann Hardiman
24 th	Laurence Devlin	Liz Barry	Ann Hardiman	Marian Mole	Ann Gajda/ Charles Bennett
31 st	Robert Sheard	Tom Goss	Liz Barry	Rob Holdaway	Ann Bettess/ Tina Everett

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Attention all Teams

It is that time of year again when we need your Team's annual report for the AGM.

This year's AGM will take place on Sunday, 12th July after the morning service.

The newsletter editor will need your reports by Monday, June 15th for them to be included in the July newsletter and so in time for the AGM.

Please send all reports to newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk
Many thanks!

Common Lectionary Readings May 2026

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	3 rd	10 th	17 th	24 th	31 st
First Reading	Acts 7: 55-60	Acts 17: 22-31	Acts 1: 6-14	Acts 2: 1-21	Genesis 1: 2 & 4a
Psalm	Psalm 31: 1-5 & 15-16	Psalm 66: 8-20	Psalm 68: 1-10 & 32-35	Psalm: 104: 24-34 & 35b	Psalm 8
New Test.	1 Peter 2: 2-10	1 Peter 3: 13-22	1 Peter 4: 12-14 & 5:6-11	1 Corinthians 12: 3b-13	2 Corinthians 13: 11-13
Gospel	John 14: 1-14	John 14: 15-21	John 17: 1-11	John 20: 19-23	Matthew 28: 16-20

May 3rd - A person who collects rocks and stones from the natural environment is often called a fossicker. For such a person each stone or rock has its own beauty.

May 10th - This Sunday is Mother's Day in Australia where the largest percentage of homeless people are women over 50.

May 17th - In the close-knit communities of urban life or rural life, the counter-cultural step of following Jesus inevitably attracted attention and criticism.

May 24th - Each member of the church is important, and we are stronger when everyone plays their part.

May 31st - Often when we learn a new skill the best way to solidify that learning is to teach someone else- this is active learning.

Richard Bainbridge





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