

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



June 2026

Covering Thoughts

A friend arrived with a large bunch of red tulips. They were in tight bud and placing them on the kitchen table I watched for their growth each morning until they stood bold, red and upright. They just demanded that I paint them.

It is years since I have worked with pastels, but I decided that was the medium to choose. Working with pure dry pigments has an immediacy, no waiting for layers to dry. I could capture them just as they were, in one afternoon.

Those who offer their skills with flower arrangement for church will know that tulips are unpredictable. You may leave them upright one day and return the next to find them hanging their heads. I love tulips however they are and have a particular soft spot for that period when they become bent and crazy.

It's a cliché but tulips are a bit like people. They remind me that there is beauty in every phase of life, and perhaps the most interesting, unpredictable and indeed lovely is the final stage. Many of us are reaching that time of life now. We have more leisure to reflect and to appreciate what life has brought us. Time to share memories, enjoy friendships, encourage each other through challenges and difficulties.

Iras Simon is a Hungarian graphic artist whose simple tulip design is full of hidden meaning. Why do you think he has made this image? Has he successfully conveyed a Christian message?



Christine Bainbridge

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Reflection

On Gratitude

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever.
(Psalm 107:1)

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God...
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)

Giving thanks in all circumstances sounds like a tall order, doesn't it? I know that I don't always *feel* thankful. Not infrequently I feel grumpy, or anxious, or distracted. The suffering I witness as a chaplain and am aware of in the wider world can feel overwhelming. And I recognise that my perspective on this comes from a position of significant privilege. I am safe, well-fed, in good health, with all my basic needs provided for. How would the instruction to "give thanks in all circumstances" land with me if I were living amidst the danger and wreckage of war? Or in receipt of a devastating diagnosis? Or struggling to provide for my family?

And yet... there is, I think, a deep wisdom in this instruction to cultivate gratitude in all circumstances and seasons of life.

Our brains have evolved to be vigilant, alert to signs of threat. It's a useful survival strategy but one of the downsides is something neuroscientists call "negative attention bias", a tendency to notice all that is worrying and wrong. Making a conscious effort to notice and celebrate what is beautiful, what is good, what is hopeful, isn't about denying or dismissing the bad stuff. It's a corrective to our inherent bias. It's about rebalancing our perspective and appreciating the fullness and complexity of this broken, beautiful, beloved world.

The Catholic priest and writer Henri Nouwen writes about gratitude being not just a spontaneous response but a spiritual discipline. It's one I've been trying to develop over the past few years by keeping gratitude lists in my journal – not an onerous task at all, and one I recommend. It really has helped to shift my perspective, attuning my senses to the gifts each day brings, if I am open. It's a list of small things, nothing grand. To give you a flavour, here are a few of the items on my list of 'May Gratitudes':

- Marmite on toast
- plumes of cow parsley
- roadside oxeye daisies
- a walk in Wytham Wood
- Nitty Gritty Dirt Band in my playlist
- evening garden smell of honeysuckle and jasmine
- first cuckoo of summer
- horse chestnut ‘candles’
- squirrels running along the fence-top
- beetroot gratin
- trip to Brill windmill
- fancy Salcombe Gin
- Diane Keaton films
- geese and goslings on the river

If gratitude seems like a luxury afforded only to the privileged and fortunate, many of the people I spend time within the hospital and hospice teach me otherwise. Even amid the suffering, uncertainty and loss that illness brings, gratitude can be both possible and life-affirming. Towards the end of life, “glimmers” – moments of joy, kindness, connection or comfort – take on a deeper significance. The small things turn out not to be small at all, but weighty and precious. I remember a woman in the hospice who described to me with enthusiasm the pleasure of eating ice chips (small pieces of ice to refresh and moisten the mouth when eating and drinking become difficult). “Ice chips are amazing! I love them, I can’t get enough of them! If you offered me a cup of ice-chips or a cup of diamonds, I’d take the ice-chips.” And another woman, also nearing the end of a life foreshortened by cancer, who was able to perceive even the disease itself as a gift of sorts, reflecting, “If we didn’t go through things like this, how would we learn compassion?”

In the church’s calendar we have moved through the celebrations of Easter and Pentecost to the long liturgical season known as “ordinary time.” May we be awake to the beauty in the ordinary, the holiness hidden in plain sight, the many, many gifts within and around us.

With love and thankfulness,

Cara x

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# Minister's Letter

Sydney Carter's Hymn starts.

One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go.  
From the old things to the new  
Keep me travelling along with you.  
*And it's from the old I travel to the new.  
Keep me travelling along with you.*

Over the past few months these words have been very relevant, with moving pastorate to come and be your Minister, I do see the Christian life as being a journey, with both its ups and its downs, with endings and beginnings, new starts, new hopes and new adventures.

This is also a journey that we do not take alone, we journey together as companions. As time goes by, and we get to know each other better, we will carry on our adventure together, to discern ways that God is calling us to be companions together, I'm sure we'll have our ups and downs, but with grace, communication and companionship we will be part of the kingdom of God, and I'm looking forward to journeying with all of you.

Heather and I would like to thank everybody, in whatever capacity, who has helped us, from interviews, preaching, food and drink, getting the Manse ready, measuring things, helping us find where we need to be. Also, Heather and Catherine say a huge thank you for the beautiful flowers they received at my induction service, and my new cross has pride of place on my shelf. Thank you for our beautiful cards and kind words, we have sent back over 100 flattened boxes to the removal company, and one or two trips to the charity shop, where does all the stuff come from!!

Once again very many thank you.

**Robert**

# Induction Service – Photos



Photos taken by Laurence Devlin

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## Deadline

June 15th is the deadline for the June 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.

Please see the important notice on page 7 about the deadline for Teams' Reports for our AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> 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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# Blended Service Rotas for June 2026

| <b>Dates</b>           | <b>Worship Leaders</b>     | <b>Readers</b>   | <b>Intercessors</b> | <b>Vestry Elder</b> | <b>Welcomer/<br/>Door Steward</b> |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>7<sup>th</sup></b>  | Richard Bainbridge         | Charles Bennett  | Robert Harding      | Ann Gajda           | Phyllis Williams/<br>Peter Devlin |
| <b>14<sup>th</sup></b> | Robert Sheard<br>HC        | Robert Harding   | Ellen Webster       | Pauline Shelley     | Tom Goss/<br>Liz Barry            |
| <b>21<sup>st</sup></b> | Nathan Eddy<br>Anniversary | Mike Matejtschuk | Barbara Joiner      | Rob Holdaway        | Marian Mole/<br>Bobbie Stormont   |
| <b>28<sup>th</sup></b> | Noemi Roy<br>Romahi        |                  |                     | Ann Gajda           | Val Farmer/<br>Robert Harding     |

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## Online Sermons

Did you know that we make a recording of a selection of sermons and make these available on our website?

<https://wheatleyurc.org.uk/worship/sermons/>

so, if you missed one and friends are talking about it you can 'catch-up' or share with friends and relatives.

**Phyllis Williams**

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# Dates for Your Diaries

## Weekly

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

## Monthly

|                                 |                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First Sunday                    | Teas - 2.30-4pm                                                                                |
|                                 | Ann Bettess – <a href="mailto:annsgoog@gmail.com">annsgoog@gmail.com</a>                       |
| First Tuesday                   | Dance Chapel – <a href="mailto:bobbiestormont@gmail.com">bobbiestormont@gmail.com</a>          |
| First Thurs. 10am               | Prayers for the World                                                                          |
|                                 | Ann Hardiman - 01865873485                                                                     |
| First & Third Thurs.<br>10.30am | Coffee Morning                                                                                 |
|                                 | Barbara Joiner – <a href="mailto:albarjoiner2@gmail.com">albarjoiner2@gmail.com</a>            |
| Second Thursday 10am            | Memory Café                                                                                    |
|                                 | Laurence Devlin – <a href="mailto:laurencelalanne99@gmail.com">laurencelalanne99@gmail.com</a> |
| Second Tuesday                  | Lunch Club                                                                                     |
|                                 | Val Farmer – <a href="mailto:val_farmer40@hotmail.com">val_farmer40@hotmail.com</a>            |

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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, 12<sup>th</sup> July after the morning service.

The newsletter editor will need your reports by Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:newsletter@wheatleyurc.org.uk)  
Many thanks!

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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 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**

# Global Justice Now

**Global Justice Now** is a democratic social justice organisation working as part of a global movement to challenge the powerful and create a more just and equal world. The United Reformed Church is involved with Global Justice Now through 'Commitment for Life'.

You may be interested in the following news from them.

## **New Podcast**

A fortnightly podcast called COUNTER.POWER. Expect analysis of global politics and news about the movement for a better world. Watch and listen via: ***counterpower.uk***

## **AGM –June 13<sup>th</sup> 6.30 pm online**

This is your chance to hear about progress in the last year and ask questions of the director Nick Deardon. You need to register to attend at: ***globaljustice.org.uk/agm-26***

## **Impact report**

Read about the highlights GJN achieved in 2025 at: ***globaljustice.org.uk/impact2025***

**Tina Everett**

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# Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers all members of Tom Goss's pastoral group:** Pat Simpson, Brenda & Graham Bell, Liz & Tony Barry, John Hall & Tina Everett, Frances Simpson and Janet & Andrew Thomson.

**Also remember members of the Hospitality Ministry Team:** Alice Robar. Allison Towner, Ann Gajda, Barbara Joiner, Debi Kidd & Jen Yeates.

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# TWO FALCON NEWS STORIES

## Completing the Extra Staff Accommodation .....

So now we're actually on the way to help the school complete this project! The £2250 (about 40% of the 'project') we just donated to get this going was received by the school mid-April and within 10 days the bricks arrived (to support the septic tank installation) and dumped in front of our nearly-finished staff block .....



... to be followed shortly by all the materials for the installation of all electric facilities which our recent donation is supporting ... more news later!

## Remember the 'fowl run'?...

Nearly 2 years ago we helped Falcon school set up a 'fowl run' with the objective of modestly raising their own funds through the sale of chickens ... well. It was only a moderate success but provided lots of learning!

At that time, they started with 'Broilers' to produce meat for sale but there were incidences of infection and, following slaughter, it was a challenge for the solar unit to consistently power the freezer.



So, the breed of fowl was changed to ... Road Runners! ... that will first produce eggs (see above!) for sale over a number of 'cycles', followed by the sale of the chickens themselves.

Moreover ... since we helped fund the harvesting of their fields (aided by more water from the new borehole!) they are able to produce their own stock feeds which will increase their profit margin.

**THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR SUPPORT ... from CARE FOR THE WORLD TEAM**

**And here's another moving Zimbabwe story (& see hall notice board!) >>>>**

NEWSLETTER  
SPRING EDITION '26

Commitment  
for **Life**

# MOVING STORIES

WORLD JUSTICE PROGRAMME  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



**Feature Story - Supporting women entrepreneurs**

## Baskets in Binga

Our very good friends over at All We Can have been brilliant in their support of the Zubo Trust located in Zimbabwe since as far back as 2019. The Zubo Trust operates in the Binga District of Matabeleland North. The amazing organisation promotes and supports the needs of rural women in the Zambezi Valley to realise their full socio-economic potential. They encourage women to make the most of naturally available resources.

This commitment to social enterprise also benefits children, men, and the wider local community. Pictured are women making and selling their beautifully designed and crafted Tonga palm baskets.

Commitment for Life and All We Can share a common, unshakable drive in addressing poverty, especially in some of the most exploited regions in the world.

Pray as we work towards sharing best practice in our common work for justice.

**Team Spotlight**

## Jamaica hurricane appeal

We want to share the excellent news that the URC has collected over £30,000 to assist our partners CRAF to clean up after Hurricane Melissa. PLEASE NOTE: that we have attempted to thank each person / congregation individually, but at times we just could not work out who made the donation. Apologies if you've not been thanked personally, but please know we are grateful!



Jamaica Hurricane Appeal: make this your Easter egg gift...



**He is risen indeed!**

'God of Easter: Jezu! is risen from the dead! Hallelujah! Send love; send wisdom; send courage. May your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, for the sake of your Son, Jezu Christ, our one, true Life. Amen.'



# Common Lectionary Readings June 2026

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

| Date                 | 7th                        | 14th                                 | 21st                      | 28th                 |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>First Reading</b> | Genesis 12:<br>1-9         | Genesis 18:<br>1-15                  | Genesis 21:<br>8-21       | Genesis 22:<br>1-14  |
| <b>Psalm</b>         | Psalm 33:<br>1-12          | Psalm 116:<br>1-2 & 11-19            | Psalm 86:<br>1-10 & 16-17 | Psalm 13             |
| <b>New Test.</b>     | Romans 4:<br>13-25         | Romans 5:<br>1-8                     | Romans 6:<br>1b-11        | Romans 6:<br>12-23   |
| <b>Gospel</b>        | Matthew 9:<br>9-13 & 18-26 | Matthew 9:<br>35<br>Matthew 10:<br>8 | Matthew 10:<br>24-39      | Matthew 10:<br>40-42 |

June 7<sup>th</sup> - On average Australians move house 13 times in their lives (Brits move 6-8 times). There are lots of moves in the Biblical Age.

June 14<sup>th</sup> - Lindsay Hamon has made it his life's work to carry a twelve-foot cross around the streets of Britain. He has done it for 40 years.

June 21<sup>st</sup> - On 4th June 1940 Churchill said 'we shall not flag nor fail .... we shall go on to the end ... whatever the cost may be ...' Jesus rallies us' ...

June 28<sup>th</sup> - Sin can be seen as individual but it is also possible to see a community sin such as apathy and injustice.

**Richard Bainbridge**

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# PLUS CA CHANGE.....

An extract from TEDDINGTON (Middlesex) OLD PEOPLE'S WELFARE COMMITTEE  
CIRCULAR

Dated December 1987/January 1988

We pray at this time for the more unfortunate ones where wars still rage and famine is widespread, and trust that before very long these troubles will be at an end. Our own troubles lie closer to our pockets – inflation still makes inroads into our finances, and we need all the help we can get from every member and all friends to support us in all that we do.

The following was copied from a Christmas card by “Florrie”:

*The more you give, the more you get, the more you laugh, the less you fret;  
The more you do unselfishly, the more you live abundantly,  
The more of everything you share, the more you'll always have to spare;  
The more you love, the more you'll find that life is good and friends are kind,  
For only what we give away enriches us from day to day.  
So let's live Christmas through the year and fill the world with love and cheer!*

**Ellen Webster**

# Final Figures for Christian Aid Week 2026

This year, only Tina and John from Wheatley URC took up the challenge put out by **Christian Aid**, to make a difference – “*Seven Days. So Many Ways to Make a Difference*”. However, it is hoped that church folk will be donating generously, individually, in support of **Christian Aid Week**. (More results next month).

The total raised from Tina and John’s coffee, cake and bring & buy sale event on 13<sup>th</sup> May amounted to **£214.20, plus about an additional £37 of Gift Aid**.

There may be some additional on-line giving that will not be noted in our final figures, next month. Those able to gift aid their donations will have added an additional 25p to every £1 that they donate. A more detailed breakdown of how the final total looks, will be available, on request.

So, finally, a big “thankyou”, on behalf of **Christian Aid** and its partners, to those who have contributed their time and talents and have/will give generously, once again.

**Tony Barry**  
(Hon. Treasurer, Wheatley **Christian Aid** Group)

# Static digital payment machine

(update from the elders)

We are pleased to inform you that we will soon be trialling a new payment device to make it easier for our congregation and visitors to support the church.

This modern, static payment unit allows for secure, contactless donations using a debit card, smartphone, or smartwatch. It features a large, clear touchscreen where you can choose a set amount to give (or enter your own amount), helping us move towards a simpler and more secure way of collecting funds in today's digital world.

During this trial period, the device will be situated on the table in the vestibule. It is designed to be very user-friendly—just select your amount and tap your card or phone on the reader. You will need to include your Gift Aid details the first time you use it, when you use the same account details (card/smartphone watch)) again it will automatically associate you with that card for Gift Aid purposes.

The purpose of the machine is to allow donations to be made electronically, as cash has become redundant. Please bear with us while we begin this voyage of discovery together. We would love to hear your feedback on using it. We will be monitoring the machine closely over the trial period – and beyond, to make sure that it works successfully for all! A picture of the machine we will be using is below:



**Tom Goss**

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# Wheatley Area churches

Annual Report – June 2026

WAC continues to provide a forum for communication and planning amongst the churches, and we can be grateful that amongst the congregations in and around Wheatley, there is a common respect for different forms of worship, and intention to share the love of God, active in the local community.

This year we have valued the coming together at the service for Christian Unity, in January, the shared Lent events in house groups, soup lunches, and Tenebrae. Good Friday procession of witness with over 60 people, joining us many of whom had no direct affiliation to a specific church. It has been a joy to share Christmas services and concerts

We do continue the work of designing and producing cards at Easter and Christmas to almost all homes in Wheatley. Many thanks to all in this and other churches, who take great and small bundles for distribution in the village; these act as a greeting, a blessing, and information about these Christian festivals. The links between WAC and Wellford continue to mean that residents at Wellford can join with some church members there, for a half hour service of hymns, readings address and prayer. This is always the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month. All are welcome.

Like many organisations, we have found it necessary to close the bank account, and we're grateful to the community church for agreeing to oversee the small amount we collect annually from each church and spend on e.g.: the cards.

Finally, thanks to Noemi Roy and Alice Robar for their support on the committee, and to Val Farmer for liaising between committee and Elders.

**Liz Barry**

**Wheatley Area Churches - AGM**  
**Thursday, June 18th at 7.30pm in URC**

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***High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1UE***

**CHURCH CONTACTS**

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*Church website: [www.wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://www.wheatleyurc.org.uk)*