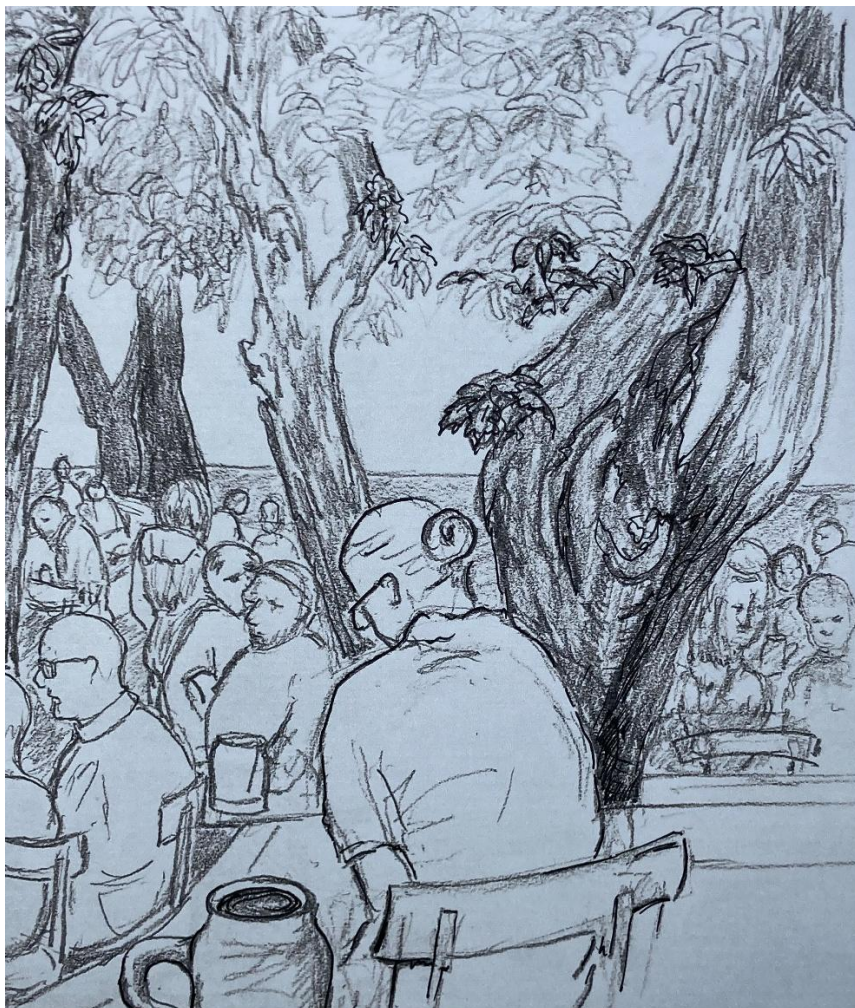


# WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



**July & August 2026**



# Covering Thoughts

## **A different understanding**

*The command to “go and make disciples of all nations” can sound daunting, even impossible.*

*But when I read Steve Garnaas-Holmes’s reflection, I began to see it differently. It is not primarily about preaching; it is about a way of being.*

## **By your example**

*By your example, you can make of anyone you meet a student of love, a practitioner of kindness, a follower of the way of deep trust in grace.*

*By your example you may so touch people that something in them heals; you can so intrigue people that they want to follow.*

*You will not convince anyone. But you may allure them. They will not drop everything, but something in them may be changed.*

*It’s not you, of course, it’s the Spirit you bear.*

*Be a vessel.*

*It also seems important to me to remain open to learning about the way of compassion from others, whatever their faith. Receiving kindness and hearing words of encouragement and wisdom are ways the Spirit nourishes us. What is exciting about this way of being is that we do not know who may be a vessel of the Spirit. As Paul said, “we have this treasure in broken vessels”.*

**Christine Bainbridge**

# Minister's Letter

Henry Francis Lyte, who wrote, "Abide with me" - is a hymn we know well and which is often used at funerals. Perhaps some of the words resonate more with us than others, especially the line "Change and decay in all around I see although who changes not abide with me"

Often we read these lines with a sense of sadness, viewing change as something to be feared or resisted. But when we look closer, we realize that change and decay are simply the natural rhythm of the beautiful world God created.

Seasons change, leaves fall to the ground to nourish the soil, and out of that decay, new life, vibrant flowers, and fresh harvests are born. Without change, there can be no growth.

As a church family, it could be said that we are entering a season of change. It can be tempting to hold tightly to the familiar ways of doing things, but God is inviting us to look forward with hope. One change is me coming as your new minister, even though perhaps at first things won't seem to be any different, just the fact that I'm different and you are different, things will just naturally change in some way. Also, at the end of this month Sophie our Time for God volunteer is leaving us after her year with us and we thank her for all that she's done while she's been with us and wish her well in her future studies, and all that she will do in the future, as she decides how she wants to move forward.

As a church, and a Church family we may look at doing the same thing again of having a volunteer or something different. It is always good to review what we do and have done from time to time, and perhaps do something slightly differently and also, and as we look to the future we look forward to ordaining new elders to the role, and just having different people, this will bring different ideas which is a good thing.

Over time things just naturally change, sometimes it may seem forced, sometimes it's just natural. From time to time, we may feel that it is. "Decay" of old methods or outdated structures isn't a sign of failure; it is simply the ground clearing to make room for the new things that the Holy Spirit wants to cultivate amongst us.

The true comfort of this hymn isn't that things stay the same, but that God stays the same. Because He is our unchanging foundation, but He does change us. We don't have to fear shifting tides. His love, His grace, and His mission for our community remain steadfast.

Let us embrace this season of transition with open hearts. Change gives us the wonderful opportunity to grow, to reach new people, and to watch God do something fresh in our midst. Trusting in the One who abides with us always, let us step boldly into the future together!

**Robert Sheard**

~\*~

## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers all members of Rob Holdaway's pastoral group:** Ellen Webster, Catherine & Robert Harding, Annie & Dave Crosby-Williams, Phyllis & Mark Williams, Lynnette Peterson & Richard Wood and Elaine & Mike Matejtschuk.

**Also remember members of the Maintenance Ministry Team:** Tony Barry, Malcolm Benson, Tom Goss, Keith Kidd and Chris Shelley.

~\*~

# Reflection

## The Game Is On

The game in question involves sitting around a table. Each person has a blank sheet of paper in front of them. In the middle of the table is a pencil. The only other equipment is a dice (yes, I know it should be "die", but it looks so odd written down).



The dice is thrown by everyone in turn, to see when a six or three comes up.

It's rather like the Christmas party game where, if somebody throws a six, they get a chance to put on a hat, scarf, and gloves, then use a knife and fork to eat chocolate. But in this game, if somebody throws a six, they seize the pencil and start to write numbers from 1 to 100 on the bit of paper in front of them.

And here's the catch: If anybody throws a 3, then *everyone* must pass their paper to the left. So, you may be the person who's busy writing numbers but if somebody throws 3, then the paper is passed left, and the piece you inherit may be blank. Sometimes you're on a roll with the second piece of paper. You feel lucky. But then somebody throws a six and you've got to pass the pencil to them. It can take half an hour for somebody to win - to be the one who eventually achieves 100.

The game is one of the favourites at the Sunday evening Pulse youth group. It's easy, and it's engaging. And it is collaborative, not only because the pen must be shared when a six is thrown, but also because nobody has ownership of a particular piece of paper. When 100 is reached, all have contributed some of those numbers on the winning paper.

Pulse has collaboration at its heart. It started at the URC in 2014, a joint venture between the youth and community charity, Fusion, and members of the URC who stepped in to help when they couldn't find leadership for Fusion's Youth Cafe. It meets in term time, with Trips Out each term too.



*Trip out to do 'tarpology' in the woods (can you spot Bobby and Myriam and Mary?)*

Why are such youth clubs so important?

The world can be a very hostile place to young people. There are not a lot of good things said about them in the media. To read some commentators, they seem to think that if young people disappeared, everybody would be better off. This is not only unkind, but utterly untrue.

In Pulse we have young people, some at the start of secondary school, others later on their journey through to adulthood, turning up regularly to be with each other. Some come because it's a chance to be in a "third place" that's not either home or school. Others because the other young people they meet there are friendly and funny and kind. And some may come because they haven't got as many friends as they would like. It's a joy to see their eyes light up when they spot someone they recognise. Suddenly, their world is not so dangerous, and life seems more workable. All come to have fun.

And at the end of each Sunday evening, I never feel tired, no matter how I felt at the start. To be with these young people is truly a privilege. Their energy is infectious and I never regret being part of this extraordinary group.

But there's another thing that maintains my enthusiasm: that over the past four years, the load has been shared with wonderful volunteers: Elisa, Wiebke, Cara and Sophie. Each have provided unique skills to the ministry to these young people.

This month, as we say goodbye to Sophie, it's a chance to thank her (her last service will be 26th July) but also an opportunity to remember all the volunteers with gratitude, and to pray for them as their life journeys continue, and to pray for the many lives they have touched.

### **Mark Williams**

~ ~ ~



**Photographs taken by Laurence Devlin when Joel and Tanya visited at Pentecost.**

~ ~ ~

# Blended Service Rotas for July 2026

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Worship Leaders</b>	<b>Readers</b>	<b>intercessors</b>	<b>Vestry Elder</b>	<b>Welcomer/ Door Steward</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	Colin Thompson HC	Ann Bettess	Tina Everett	Tom Goss	Phyllis Williams/ Elaine Matejtschuk
<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>	Robert Sheard	Christine Bainbridge	Marian Mole	Rob Holdaway	Pauline Shelley/ Angela Holdaway
<b>19<sup>th</sup></b>	Kate Harford	Ann Gajda	Ann Bettess	Marian Mole	Val Farmer/ Ellen Webster
<b>26<sup>th</sup></b>	Robert Sheard	Pauline Shelley	Noemi Roy	Ann Gajda	Ann Bettess/ Jen Yeates

~ ~ ~

## Photographic Exhibition

Carolyn Wheeler will be taking part in a photographic exhibition along with four other photographers. All are warmly invited to attend the opening on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June at 3pm. The exhibition will take place at the Churchill Hospital in the South Street Gallery (a corridor between the League of Friends Cafe and the restaurant). It will continue until 7<sup>th</sup> August and is open 24/7, so please do call in and have a look if you're visiting or passing near the hospital.

~ ~ ~

# Blended Service Rotas for August 2026

Dates	Worship Leaders	Readers	intercessors	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door Steward
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Robert Sheard HC	Bev Paton	Tom Goss	Phyllis Williams	Debi Kidd/ Barbara Joiner
9 <sup>th</sup>	Richard Bainbridge	Chris Shelley	Liz Barry	Pauline Shelley	Rob Holdaway/ Ann Hardiman
16 <sup>th</sup>	Cara Heafey	Barbara Joiner	Robert Harding	Keith Kidd	Ann Gajda/ Charles Bennett
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Mark Willimas (All Age)			Debi Kidd	Marian Mole/ Peter Devlin
30 <sup>th</sup>	Pauline Main	Andrew Thomson	Ann Hardiman	Ann Bettess	Keith Kidd/ Tina Everett

## Art Exhibition

A photograph of Jeff Clarke taken alongside some of his paintings at his recent exhibition at the North Wall Gallery, Summertown, Oxford.

**Photo submitted by Carolyn Wheeler**



~\*~

# Common Lectionary Readings July 2026

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>First Reading</b>	Genesis 24: 34-38 42-49 58-67	Genesis 25: 19-34	Genesis 28: 10- 19a	Genesis 29: 15-28
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 45: 10-17	Psalm 119: 105- 112	Psalm 139: 1-12 & 23 -24	Psalm 105: 1-11 & 45b
<b>New Test.</b>	Romans 7: 15-25a	Romans 8: 1-11	Romans 8: 12-25	Romans 8: 26-39
<b>Gospel</b>	Matthew 11: 16-19 & 25-30	Matthew 13: 1-9 & 18-23	Matthew 139: 24-30 & 36-43	Matthew 13: 31-33 & 44 - 52

July 5<sup>th</sup> - Thomas Aquinas famously said that 'Discernment is the application of right reason to action'.

July 12<sup>th</sup> -The stories of the patriarchs show that our choice, good and bad, sometimes have consequences far down the line.

July 19<sup>th</sup> - For some there are unexpected moments such as C.S.Lewis riding in a motorcycle (1931) or John Newton aboard his slave ship (1748).

July 26<sup>th</sup> - Corrie Ten Boom linked the human view of life to seeing the back of a tapestry - there is a picture below that may come in time - at the moment one can but live the moment and be content - I once made a large prayer mat and lived with the back - I still wonder that I made it and like to look at the back. Images can seem simple but are often open ended.

**Richard Bainbridge**



# Common Lectionary Readings August 2026

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

Date	2 <sup>nd</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	23 <sup>rd</sup>	30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>First Reading</b>	Genesis 32: 22-31	Genesis 37: 1-4 & 12-28	Genesis 45: 1-15	Exodus 1: 8-2:10	Exodus 3: 1-15
<b>Psalm</b>	Psalm 17: 1-7 & 15	Psalm 105: 1-6 16-22 45b	Psalm 133	Psalm 124	Psalm 105: 1-6 23-26 45b.
<b>New Test.</b>	Romans 9: 1-5	Romans 10: 5-15	Romans 11: 1-2a & 29-32	Romans 12: 1-8	Romans 12: 9-21
<b>Gospel</b>	Matthew 14: 13-21	Matthew 14: 22-33	Matthew 15: 21-28	Matthew 16: 13-20	Matthew 16: 21-28

August 2<sup>nd</sup> - How do you respond to something difficult? Do you avoid facing up to its reality, or face it head-on? We need time to process the difficulty.

August 9<sup>th</sup> - William Thomas always carried a bible with him in the war and it stopped a bullet - how do you place this theologically.

August 16<sup>th</sup> - The story of Les Misérables by Victor Hugo is famous for its themes of forgiveness and mercy.

August 23<sup>rd</sup> - Guerrilla gardening has become a global movement in recent years. Resistance and rebellion do not always have to be extreme.

August 30<sup>th</sup> - Today we come across the Hebrew 'ehyeh asher ehyeh' which could mean 'I am who I am' or 'I will be who I will be'. Some theologians see this as implying a self-defining nature. Many religions name deities. What are the implications of these apparent differences?

**Richard Bainbridge**

~ ~ ~

# Christian Aid Week 2026

## Final URC Figures

As I reported last month, Tina and John raised a total from their coffee, cake and bring & buy sale morning on 13<sup>th</sup> May of £214.20, plus about an additional £37 of Gift Aid.

There may have been some additional on-line giving, in the meantime, that will not be noted here, but I am now able to report that a further £280 plus gift aid of about £55 was donated with the Sunday collections, during **Christian Aid Week**.

Those able to gift aid their donations were able to add an additional 25p to every £1 that they donated.

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

St Mary’s Church also raised a similar figure in donations this year.

A more detailed breakdown of how the final total is made up can be made available, on request.

**Tony Barry.**

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

~\*~

## Aufwiedersehen

My time as a volunteer in Wheatley has been so special and rewarding. Throughout my involvement, I met and worked with people of all ages. From children and young people to older members of the congregation. Each interaction taught me something new and created many wonderful memories I will never forget!

One thing I appreciated most was the strong sense of community and the warm welcome I always received. It was inspiring to see people from different generations come together, support each other, and share their faith.

Working with children and young people was especially meaningful. It allowed me to gain valuable experience while building wonderful connections. I learned how to communicate with and support individuals with different personalities, needs, and backgrounds.

Looking back I am incredibly grateful for everything I've learned and experienced during my time in Wheatley. The friendships, conversations, and shared moments will stay with me for ever. These experiences challenged me in the best way and helped me grow personally and professionally. Over time I gained confidence and grew significantly through the responsibilities I was given.

As I move on to the next chapter of my life, I will study Education in Münster, specializing in Pedagogy, German, and Psychology. I am excited about the opportunities ahead and look forward to applying many of the lessons and experiences I gained in Wheatley.

I want to thank everyone who made this journey enjoyable and memorable. Being new can be a bit scary but everyone has been so lovely and kind from day one. This truly has been one of my most beautiful experiences! Thank you for your generosity and patience with me!



~ ~ ~

# 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. 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>

~\*~

## Deadline

August 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for the September 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.

~\*~



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

**CHURCH CONTACTS**

*Minister: Revd. Robert Sheard*

*Email: [minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:minister@wheatleyurc.org.uk)*

*Associate Minister: Revd. Cara Heafey*

*Email: [caraheafey@hotmail.com](mailto:caraheafey@hotmail.com)*

*Acting Church Secretary: Pauline Shelley*

*email: [secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wheatleyurc.org.uk)*

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