

WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



October 2026

Covering Thoughts

Two Views of a Pathway

While choosing paintings for the Thame Art Crawl, I realised that Richard's preferences differed from mine. Many of the landscapes I selected—both real and imagined—featured a pathway. I knew he was not fond of pathways, but I had never asked why. When I finally did, he explained that a path seemed to lead him through and out of the picture into the unknown, whereas he wanted to remain within it.

Since our conversation, I have reflected on why I am drawn to pathways that lead into the unknown. Perhaps they suggest movement and mystery, freedom and escape—not only for me, but also for the viewer.

Faith Without a Fixed Path

The front cover may evoke movement, mystery, freedom, and escape, yet there is no pathway in sight. The painting is titled “By This Sea There Is No End and No Beginning”, a quotation from Sydney Carter, whose liberating approach to Christianity I have long found compelling.

*Try reading **Dance in the Dark** or **The Rock of Doubt** and see what you think. One line of Carter's stays with me: “I doubt, but I walk upon the water.” It reassures me that, even without all the answers, we can experience the buoyancy of living by faith.*

Christine Bainbridge

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Reflection

As we are often reminded, the Bible is not an easy book to read or to understand. There are many perplexing stories that don't seem to sit easily with what we now know about our world and how life works. For me one of those stories is that of the resurrection. I doubt if I am alone. When I read the following story in the newspaper, I wondered straightaway whether it has something to say about resurrection as well as the importance of having dreams and trying to hang onto them:

'Each morning, Ibrahim Naji al-Dabba climbs to the roof of a damaged residential tower in Gaza city's Tel al -Hawa neighbourhood, where rows of beehives sit surrounded by shattered concrete and the scars of war. (The Guardian 29/7/26) In classic understatement he declares that this is not an ideal place for a father of seven to carry on beekeeping and so continue the work that has sustained his family for decades.

This story sits next to a double spread picture in a recent edition of The Guardian which not only grabbed my attention, but almost took my breath away. (I have mentioned before how some of these photos, which appear almost daily, are a wonderful bonus to reading the paper and are frequently inspirational). The picture shows three men on a roof top attending to beehives whilst all around and in the background are scenes with which we are all too familiar, the total destruction of all buildings in that part of the city.

Ibrahim Naji al-Dabba refused to be cowed or beaten, especially after being displaced and then searching for other work, and finding none. He had lost his home, beehives, honey-processing equipment, storage facilities and nearly all his tools. He estimated that his financial losses were around £263,000. He says the hardest moment was when he realised that everything he had spent years building up was gone.

So where was he to turn? I suppose he might just have given up, many of us probably would have done so. He, however, had other ideas. Beekeeping was his profession and what he knew best. In an act of great faith and hope he managed to buy three new hives for around \$3,000, a significant investment. He realised that moving between agricultural areas was very dangerous in view of the indiscriminate nature of the violence being perpetrated on the area. So what did he do? He placed his new hives on the roof of a residential block.

Gradually he and his sons managed to increase the number of hives to 35! Apparently honey production remains limited, but every successful harvest represents something much greater than income. Ibrahim Naji al-Dabba says, *I don't feel that I am only taking care of bees. I am trying to preserve a part of life that I lost because of the war. The bees are like people, they continue working despite the hardship....As long as there is even one beehive, and one beekeeper holding on to this profession, there is hope that life can begin again.*

Dreams. A poem by Langston Hughes

**Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.**

**Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.**

Robert Harding

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Prayer Chain

For some time now it has been felt that the formation of a Prayer Chain would be a useful form of communication for sharing the need for prayer of church members, adherents and the wider community who are going through a difficult time.

For many years I have been, and still am, a member of the Prayer Chain for my previous church in High Wycombe and can thoroughly recommend it for those who wish to pray for others. Often we 'pray-ers' receive a message of gratitude saying how the prayed for person felt supported and helped by our prayers whilst they'd been suffering.

The Prayer Chain requires someone to receive the requests and send them out to the members of the Prayer Chain. This is usually by email but can be by phone

especially if the request is urgent. It is all treated as confidential and the permission of the person being prayed for needs to be given. Anyone can volunteer to be a 'pray-er'.

Please speak to me if you'd like to know more or you might be interested in being a member.

Marian Mole

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## Prayers

**Please remember in your prayers all members of Tom Goss' pastoral group:**

Pat Simpson, Brenda & Graham Bell, John Hall & Tina Everett, Frances Simpson, and Janet & Andrew Thomson.

**Also remember members of the Community Outreach Team:** Marian Mole, Ann Bettess, Jean Boxall, Barbara Joiner and Frances Simpson.

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Mycology – All Age Service June 28th

A great passion of mine, and my future career plan, is the study of fungi.

Fungi are an incredible kingdom of life, entirely separate from plants or animals. They are everywhere, and are essential for life on earth. All fungi, bar single celled types such as yeast, are made of these tube-like structures called hyphae, which branch, fuse, and tangle to form various structures, including the underground mycelium and above ground mushrooms.

However, when I say 'fungi' the first thing most people's minds jump to is mushrooms, and whilst all mushrooms are fungi, not all fungi are mushrooms. 'Mushroom' is the name given to only the hyphae that form the above ground fruiting body of the fungus, in fact, 90-99% of a typical fungus' mass is entirely underground!

One common tendency of these underground hyphae is to link up with plants to form symbiotic mycorrhizal connections. This mycorrhizal relationship stems from

a fungus' need for the sugars and lipids produced from a plant's photosynthesis, and the plant's need for water and minerals found in the soil. Fungal hyphae are immensely more apt to traverse the underground wilderness than a plant's roots, using far less energy to find and deliver water and minerals. In return, the fungi are given the energy-rich carbon compounds they need to survive.

Around 90% of the world's plants rely on these mycorrhizal relationships. In fact, mycorrhizal fungi are so prolific that their hyphae make up between a third and a half of the living mass in our soil. Globally, the total length of these hyphae in the top 10cm of soil is around half the width of our galaxy! If they were ironed flat into one thin sheet, their surface area would cover every inch of dry land on earth, two and a half times over! And this is only in the top 10cm of soil, so the real numbers are surely astronomically higher.

This immensity is what reminds me of God; the sheer amount of love all around, in everything we see and do. An essential part of life we tend not to notice. And for me, when I see it, the pure awe I feel at the fascinating discovery of its invisible prominence.

The first verse of the reading from Isaiah 55: 1: "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on Him while He is near", reminds me, as long as I remember, of the abundance of his gifts. He is near me. As long as I recognise the subtle ways in which He works, He is near me. As long as I allow His words to grow in the soil of my soul, a beautiful plant will spring anew, constantly sustained by a connection to the network of life around me.



Mary Robar

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Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

To most of us when we think about October 31st, we think of Halloween with some children going trick or treating. Those with perhaps higher church tendencies, think of All Hallow Eve and then All Saints Day, the next day, but did you know that October 31st is also Reformation Day, when we could say the foundations of what we now know as our United Reformed Church - along with other churches - could be said to have started. In 1517, a young monk named Martin Luther walked up to the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, and nailed a document containing 95 Theses to the door. He didn't intend to start a global movement or split the church; he simply wanted to invite his colleagues to an academic debate about grace, faith, and the true heart of the Gospel. Yet that single act sparked what we now know as the Protestant Reformation—a spiritual awakening that reshaped history and continues to impact our lives today.

Every October, Lutheran and Reformed Churches celebrate Reformation Day, (though it is something I do not see happening within our own United Reformed church). It can be easy to view these events as distant history—pages in a dusty textbook about centuries-old debates but to remember our history is to recognize the foundation we stand upon. The Reformers fought tirelessly to restore a central, liberating truth: that salvation is a free gift of God's grace, received through faith alone, as revealed in Scripture. They translated the Bible into the language of everyday people so that anyone—farmers, factory workers, shop workers, teachers, parents, and children the list goes on—could read the Word of God for themselves and know the depth of Christ's love directly.

Here in Wheatley, we perhaps do not realise that what really happened back in 1517 still influences us today, we perhaps don't realise that we are standing on the shoulders of those who came before us which can give us a perspective on our own calling today. We inherit not just their doctrines, but their courage, their passion for truth, and their commitment to standard-setting, hospitality and community.

They reminded the church that faith is not a static museum piece to be preserved, but a living, dynamic relationship with God that transforms how we live every day. The Reformers coined a phrase: "The church reformed, always reforming." It serves as a reminder that our journey of faith is never complete. God is still at work today,

shaping our hearts, opening our doors wider to our neighbours, and calling us to reflect His light in a changing world.

As we look back this October, we give thanks for the heritage of grace we have received. And as we look forward, we ask ourselves: How is God calling us to grow, reform, and carry the torch of His Gospel to the generations yet to come?

Your Friend and Minister.

Robert

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Bobby's Award Presentation!

'Didn't we have a lovely time' at our monthly Sunday Teas on September 6th Bobby Robar was presented with this year's Emma Wilson Memorial Foundation award for his dedicated voluntary work amongst the Wheatley community?

Just **to briefly explain**: Emma Wilson, who died tragically in 1989, was a much-loved and admired member of our village community. Although only twenty years of age, she had already made a remarkable impact on school, village, and university life.

So the Emma Wilson Awards were set up in Emma's memory in order to recognise both young members of the Wheatley & Littleworth community and Wheatley Park School students, for their outstanding voluntary contribution to school or community life.

In presenting the award to Bobby, Gareth Wilson a trustee of the E.W.M.F. read out the award 'citation' which can be summarised as follows:

"Since coming to the village with his family from the USA in 2023, Bobby has helped regularly with the Wheatley URC monthly Sunday afternoon teas. On one occasion whilst undertaking an errand at the URC, he found a member of the church on the floor after a fall and unable to get up. Bobby gave the alert and, with help, the emergency services were contacted and the injured person was

transferred to hospital. Bobby is a regular member of the inter-denominational Wheatley Pulse Youth Group where he has been particularly noted for encouraging and befriending newcomers.

Bobby was also a steward for the Good Friday 'walk of witness' which involved shared responsibility for 60+ people walking safely between various stopping points in the village.

Having never played rugby union previously, Bobby has become a talented player who turns-out regularly for the Chinnor under-14's rugby team.

If that was not enough, Bobby has helped with the Wheatley Swap Shop events, as well as being a keenly involved supporter of Sustainable Wheatley, including helping them with the apple harvest over the past three years".

Gareth was supported in the presentation to Bobby by Chantal Brierley, another EWMF trustee, who handed over the much deserved award certificate to our winner.

Well done Bobby we are very proud of you at Wheatley URC (and, thanks to everyone involved, the teas were delicious as well!)

Rob Holdaway & all the URC Sunday Teas organisers

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## Deadline

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October is the deadline for the November 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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Blended Service Rotas for October 2026

Date	Worship Leaders	Vestry Elder	Welcome/ Door	Reader	Prayers
4th	Robert Sheard HC	Marian Mole	Noémi Roy Elaine Matejtschuk	Robert Harding	Tina Everett
11th	Robert Sheard	Ellen Webster	Ann Gajda Jen Yeates	Marian Mole	Noémi Roy
18th	Mark Williams	Tom Goss	Chris Shelley Angela Holdaway	Liz Barry	Marian Mole
25th	Cara Heafey (all age)	Keith Kidd	Debi Kidd Barbara Joiner	Catherine Harding	Ann Bettess

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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

First Sunday Teas - 2.30-4pm
Ann Bettess – annsgoog@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

Common Lectionary Readings Oct 2026

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	4 th	11 th	18 th	25 th
First Reading	Exodus 20: 1-4; 7-9 & 12-20	Exodus 32: 1-14	Exodus 33: 12-23	Deuteronomy 34: 1-12
Psalm	Psalm 19	Psalm 106: 1-6 & 19-23	Psalm 99	Psalm 90: 1-6 & 13-17
New Test.	Philippians 3: 4b-14	Philippians 4: 1-9	1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10	1 Thessalonians 2: 1-8
Gospel	Matthew 21: 33-46	Matthew 22: 1-14	Matthew 22: 15-22	Matthew 22: 34-46

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October 4th: The characters in the parable did not have respect. Do we lack respect because we are too selfish?

October 11th : Ladybower Reservoir was created by flooding a village in the Peak District. In the dry weather it is possible to see the remains. Do we have difficult choices to make? Or are they taken for us?

October 18th : Albert Einstein is supposed to have said "The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know " Does this apply to theology?

October 25th : Emily Dickinson was moved by Moses' death, writing about it in her poem, 'it always felt to me - a wrong'.

Richard Bainbridge

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Giving Made Easier

Digital donation machine -TAP and GO

Feedback on the machine trial period Phase One:

Over the last month, you will have noticed our new electronic bank card donation machine! We introduced the machine as a trial to see if it would make your **spontaneous giving and donations** more convenient in this increasingly cashless world.

The usual online banking method remains the preferred way of receiving funds from regular members (the card machine is not intended to replace this practice). Thanks to your incredible response and enthusiasm, **the trial went well.** People have shared how much easier it makes giving, especially when you do not have cash or a cheque book on hand (although difficulties were experienced – see below: (“what we learned”).

The Falcon School fund campaign:

Over three Sundays in August and September we set the machine up to take donations specifically targeted to refurbish classrooms in the school - desperately in need of attention. Well, it was successful due to your generosity, and we received a total of £522.08 over that period which is already 80% of the total £650 target for that mini project! (Gift Aid has yet to be calculated).

What's next? Moving into Phase Two:

Now that the testing phase is complete, we are officially making the card machine a permanent part of our church life. Starting this week, we are entering the next phase of roll-out:

- **Station:** We will be keeping the machine as a permanent, dedicated spontaneous, giving station in the main foyer.
- **Elders:** Over the next few weeks, elders will be standing by before and after services to aid anyone who wants a quick walk-through of how it works.
- **Special Events:** The machine will also become available over time at community events for quick, secure payments.

The machine will now be used for the general functioning of Wheatley URC. At certain times throughout the church calendar however, we will be sponsoring a charity of the Church's choice, and we will enable a donation screen on the

machine to take donations specifically for it, as well as giving you clear advance notice of the event.

As always, traditional direct debit, standing orders and bank transfers, cash and cheque offerings stay completely unchanged. This digital choice is simply here to ensure that supporting our church's ministries is as easy as possible for everyone and we thank you for your continued generosity.

What we have learned during the trial:

We will continue listening to the comments concerning the use of the machine. The most common concern so far seemed to relate to easily enabling Gift Aid on the machine particularly when there is a queue. So, below you can read a reminder of how to donate as well as how to register for Gift Aid - when you use your card **for the first time, which we hope will help.**

How to Use the digital machine:

There are step by step instructions beside the machine. Donating is safe and secure and it takes less than 30 seconds to a donation. **Keith, Rob, Chris or Tom are there to help you. Do ask. We will update you as we continue to develop the use of the machine.**

Wheatley URC Elders

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Wendell Berry - (1934 -2026)

Wendell Berry on his farm in Henry County, Kentucky, 2011. Photograph by Guy Mendel, CC BY-SA 3.0.



I was saddened to hear about the death of Wendell Berry at the end of August. Wendell was an American poet, novelist, essayist, farmer and environmental thinker, best known for his writing about land, community, farming, faith, human relationships and our responsibility to the natural world.

Berry challenged the idea that progress necessarily meant growth, consumption and mobility. He was an advocate for sustainable farming, care of the soil, local communities and a more attentive way of living. In his latter years he was an influential voice in discussions about ecology, agriculture, community and Christian stewardship of creation. His poetry reflects his deep emotions about his relationship with the planet and his deep sense of belonging.

*"...I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest
in the grace of the world, and I am free"*

From 'The Peace of Wild Things' by Wendell Berry (1934 - 2026)

Pauline Shelley

Congratulations!

On 5th September, in a happy and moving ceremony, Peter Devlin was awarded an Honorary Degree of “Doctor of Law Honoris Causa” by Brookes University in recognition of the mentoring work of law students he has been doing during the past 4 years and will continue to do in retirement.



Laurence Devlin

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