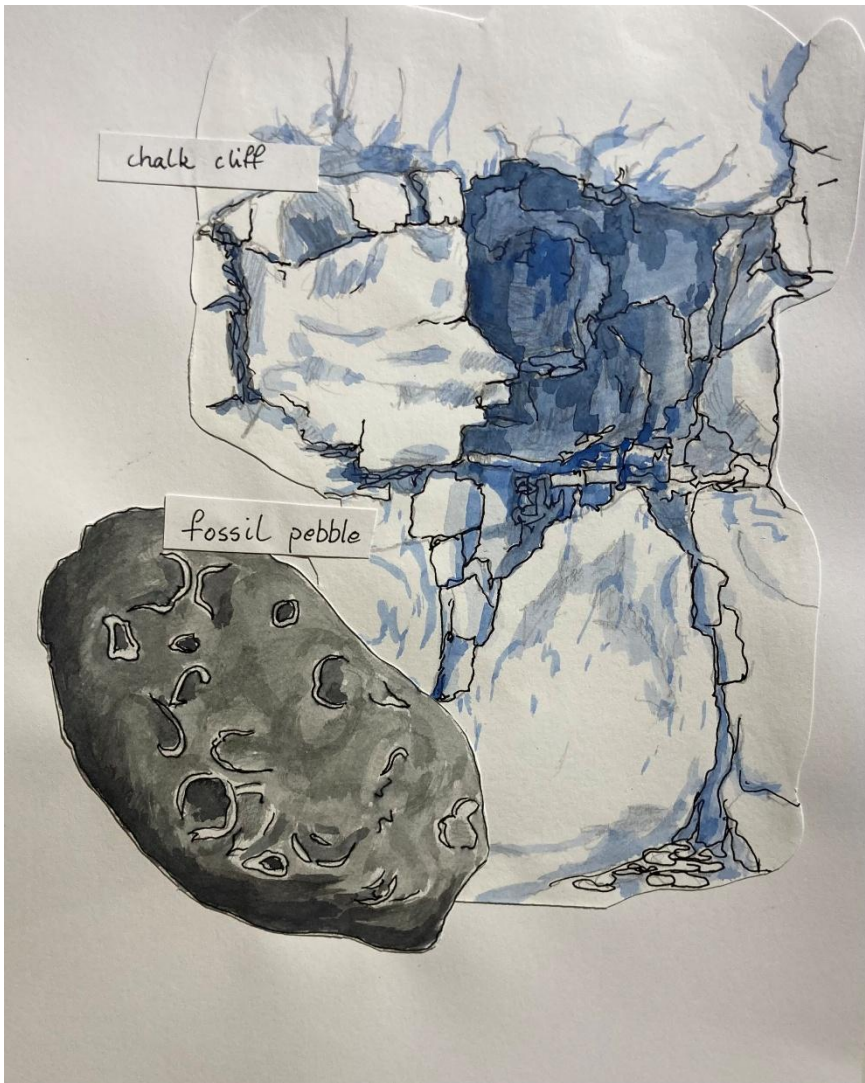


WHEATLEY URC NEWSLETTER



November 2026

Covering Thoughts

One of the attractions of an artistic retreat on the coast is the chance to enjoy the sunrise. In October, however, it was not to be. The first morning brought dense mist, the second heavy rain, and the third such cold, fierce winds that I retreated to a café for coffee.

Yet the first morning was no disappointment. Although warmish and damp, the mist created a sense of isolation, while the gentle rhythm of waves breaking on the pebble beach felt calming and restorative. Even now, weeks later, I could return and find the metre-square of chalk cliff and the fossil-encrusted black stone that I sketched. For me, sketching sharpens attention and commits what I see to memory.

I came to accept that, when everything is obscured and the distant view is lost in mystery, it is worthwhile to pay close attention to what lies nearby—and to treasure it. That evening brought a dramatic change: an awe-inspiring sunset. High in the turquoise sky, broad white brushstrokes of mare’s-tail clouds swept above sienna-tinged cumulus, which deepened into navy and purple. As the colours faded, a small blue fishing boat slipped across the glass-smooth water, leaving a trail of speckled light behind it, while a single orange buoy glowed like a flame.

My first impulse was to capture the sunset in a photograph or painting, but I resisted. Instead, I allowed myself to relax into the experience—and then to let it go. I was reminded of T. S. Eliot’s lines from Ash Wednesday “Teach us to care and not to care. Teach us to sit still.”

Christine Bainbridge

~*~*~

Reflection

Love in Action - Beyond the Headlines

We live in a world where news is never more than a few taps away. Our phones bring us a constant stream of wars, disasters, crime, political arguments and apocalyptic weather forecasts. Media feeds off exaggerated, clickbait headlines, designed to shock us into clicking, commenting and sharing.

Of course we shouldn't turn away from the troubles of our world and we need to care and act in our capacity as humans and Christians, but I sometimes wonder, whether surrounded by so much shocking news, we begin to believe that this is the *whole* story.

Is there a different way that we can look at this? We cannot pretend that terrible things are not happening around the world, but allowing ourselves to believe that the doom and gloom picture is all there is, can become overwhelming and unhealthy. Good news doesn't sell.

When I walk into my local nature reserve, at first, it appears that nothing much is happening. I slow my pace, pausing frequently, and allow my senses to be immersed and engaged in the environment. After a short time I can feel a deep sense of peace and stillness, then I begin to see more clearly. A squirrel makes a gigantic leap across from one tree to another. I can hear water running in the stream lower down, despite the summer drought. The birds are singing and flitting about as they search for food. Where are the swallows? Have they left for Africa yet? I breathe deeply to take in the rich autumnal, musky, perfume of the woodland. There is nothing quite like that sweet aroma to calm my mind.

Advent invites us to wait, to watch and to notice.

Our advent theme this year is **Love at Work**. The Christmas story reminds us that God's work is not always obvious at first. Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men could not see the whole picture. The circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth were hardly straightforward. Yet quietly and unexpectedly, **God's love was already at work**.

Where is love at work today?

Where are we caring for one another?

Where are we being healed or restored?
Where can we see creation being protected?
Where are we choosing co-operation rather than conflict?
Where is kindness making a difference?
Where is hope growing, even in difficult circumstances?

Like the nature reserve, perhaps our world is full of things we don't see because we are moving too quickly or looking in the wrong places. As we enter into the busy Christmas season, full of feasts and festivities,

We may need to stop.
To listen.
To look more closely.
To wait.

And perhaps, when we do, a different world will begin to reveal itself in the small things that will never become clickbait headlines.
But they are still Good News.

The world is not without darkness. But neither is it without light.
Perhaps Love has been at work all along.

Pauline Shelley

~ ~ ~

God help us to live slowly:
To move simply:
To look softly:
To allow emptiness:
To let the heart create for us:

Amen



Prayer & image courtesy of Michael Leunig

Bobbie Stormont

International Bible Reading Association

It's time to order your copy of 'Fresh from the Word', a daily Bible reading companion for 2027.

It is truly international with readers and contributors from around the globe. Each day's reflection is followed by a prayer and an idea for action to carry into your daily routine.

Contributors have included Nathan Eddy who took our Anniversary service this year, John Birch, Carla Grosch-Miller and Helen-Ann Hartley, now the Bishop of Newcastle, who used to be a curate here in Wheatley.

Copies for next year cost £17 and can be ordered by signing the list on the Hall noticeboard.

Ann Hardiman



Community Emergency Foodbank

The Community Emergency Foodbank CEF provides food parcels to those in Oxford who are experiencing food poverty. Those suffering from financial hardship and finding it difficult to provide for themselves, their family or dependants are referred by a recognised agency.

There are donation boxes in Wheatley Co-op and Asda and the URC. Donations can be left at any time in the marked box in the church vestibule.

Required most urgently are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Fruit Juice | Toilet Rolls |
| Sugar | Tinned vegetables (not tomatoes or pulses) |
| Tinned/Packet Puddings | Jams/other spreads |
| Tinned fruit | Long life Milk |
| Cereals | Biscuits |
| Tea/Coffee/Hot Chocolate | Soup |
| Practical toiletries | |

Important: all donations should have a sell by date of at least three months clearly marked.

Our thanks to Ann and Roger Bettess for delivering the donations each month to the CEF warehouse

Marian on behalf of the Community Care Ministry team

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Ride and Stride

Striders – 6 walkers, 5 churches & 6 miles

On September 12th, Ruth, Rob, Noémi, Michel and Tina set off from the URC and visited the other two Wheatley churches. We then walked to Holton church where we met Christine waiting for us in the churchyard.

From there we walked across the fields to Waterperry Church and cafe. Duly replenished we then walked to Waterstock church past the beautiful Waterstock house and garden on the Thame river. With Rob's guidance we then dodged the golfers and reached the busy A road where we crossed to catch the 400 bus back to Wheatley.



Thanks to everyone who sponsored us. Tina was able to send £233 to Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. In due course half of that will come back to Wheatley URC.

Tina Everett

Rider

This was my 4th R+S so I know the surrounding churches quite well now. I covered 76km in all, taking in all corners of Oxford (including the many churches in the central area), Stanton-St John and Wheatley itself.

In all I visited 44 churches for which the many kind members of our congregation eventually contributed £752 - a record for my efforts. The money goes to the Oxford Historic Churches Trust, of which Wheatley URC will receive half.

Graham Bell



~ ~ ~

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers all members of Rob Holdaway's pastoral group: Catherine & Robert Harding, Elaine & Mike Matejtschuk, Lynette Peterson & Richard Wood, Ellen Webster, Phyllis & Mark Williams, Pauline & Chris Shelley, Bev Paton & family.

Also remember members of the Worship Team: Robert Sheard, Cara Heafey, Christine Bainbridge, Laurence Devlin, Robert Harding, Pauline Shelley, Colin Thompson and Allison Towner

~ ~ ~

Deadline

Monday 16th November is the deadline for the December 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.

All Age Service June 28th

On June 28th, Noémi led a beautiful all-age service on the topic of seeds, in which Myriam, Ben, Maya, Mary and Bobby Robar took part. At the end of the service, Ben offered some of the melon plants grown as part of the preparation for the service and Colin later exchanged some sweet pepper plants for them.

One of the highlights of the service was this song, totally unavailable online after many searches, of which Noémi says, 'My sisters and I learned the song at our church junior choir in the USA, back in the 1980s and we used to sing it together (the 4 of us) when we walked to school and back.' Mike and Elaine felt it encapsulated perfectly what a nine-year-old needs to know about our faith.

Give the world a Little Love

*Give the world a little love.
Warm it with some sunshine.
Pass along a smile
To all you see today.....la,la,la
Take time to listen,
Take time to care,
Take time to give of yourself.
Take time to share..... and shout out:
"Hey Lord, I'm glad I'm alive!
Thank you for another day.
Send help – I'll need it
All day long"*



Myriam



Ben

Mike Matejtschuk

Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

"Remember, remember the fifth of November, Gunpowder Treason and Plot.
I see no reason why Gunpowder Treason Should ever be forgot."

The opening lines of this classic verse are familiar to almost all of us from childhood, and it could be said that the first two words define the entire month of November: remember, remember.

In the Christian tradition—particularly within Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism—the month opens on November 1st with All Saints' Day, a universal feast honouring every saint, both known and unknown. This is followed immediately on November 2nd by All Souls' Day, a solemn commemoration dedicated to all the faithful departed.

Then comes Bonfire Night on November 5th. While not a religious festival, its origins lie deep in the struggle between Catholics and Protestants in 1605. Following the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, English Catholics—who had faced heavy persecution under her reign—hoped her successor, King James I, would prove more tolerant. After all, James was the son of a Catholic mother, Mary, Queen of Scots. However, when his policies proved no more lenient, a group of 13 young men turned to violent action, plotting to destroy the Houses of Parliament.

To execute their plan, the conspirators smuggled 36 barrels of gunpowder into a cellar directly beneath the House of Lords. As the date drew near, however, doubts began to emerge among the plotters, who realized the explosion would kill innocent people, including peers who championed Catholic rights. One conspirator sent an anonymous letter warning his friend, Lord Monteagle, to stay clear of Parliament on November 5th. The letter was intercepted and brought to the King, prompting royal authorities to search the premises.

In the early hours of November 5th, officers stormed the cellar and discovered Guy Fawkes guarding the explosives. He was arrested, tortured, and subsequently executed alongside his fellow conspirators. On that very night, bonfires were lit across the land to celebrate the King's survival and the safe disruption of the treasonous plot. November 5th has been marked as Bonfire Night ever since, traditionally commemorated with fireworks and the burning of effigies.

The theme of memory continues as the month progresses toward Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the nation falls silent to honour the moment the guns fell quiet at the end of the First World War—remembering all those who served and were sacrificed in that conflict and every war since, right up to the present day. Whatever our views on conflict itself, the power of remembrance endures.

As November draws to a close, our journey of memory brings us to a final, grand crescendo. On the last Sunday before Advent, the Christian church celebrates the Feast of Christ the King.

This feast day serves as a powerful bridge. Throughout November, we have remembered earthly events, historical conflicts, and loved ones who have passed away. The Feast of Christ the King lifts our eyes from the memories of the past toward an enduring hope for the future. It reminds us that above all human monarchies, historical politics, and earthly struggles, Christ reigns as the ultimate ruler of peace, justice, and love

It is a fitting end to a month defined by reflection. In looking back at all we have remembered—from saints and loved ones, to the casualties of war—we are reassured that our history rests in higher hands. With this triumphant celebration, November reaches its conclusion, and we prepare to enter the quiet expectation of Advent, looking forward with hope as a new church year begins.

Your friend and minister, Robert Sheard

~ ~ ~

Prayer – The Absent Samaritan *by Eddie Askew*

The following prayer, *The Absent Samaritan*, was used at a recent Prayers for the World meeting.

It's hard to relate, Lord.

People in need. Millions of people.

Whether they're refugees, or leprosy sufferers, or people without food.

Living in countries I don't know.

Names I can't pronounce in languages I don't understand.

They're a log way away, just pictures.

Cardboard cutouts, with no more reality

than the picture on the back of a Kellogg's packet.

Even those nearer home are distant from my experience.

Statistics.

There's safety in numbers:

I can forget the humanity behind them.

Men, women, children, who feel, and laugh, and cry.

Not much laughter though, more crying.

Tears watering the parched ground, irrigating seeds of pain.

The only crop that grows in the desert.

I could hide behind the questions.

Why does it happen? Why so much suffering?

I could blame others. Politicians. Exploiters. Arms salesman.

Multinational corporations. Currency manipulators.

That's fashionable – and true.

Why, Lord

I hide behind the questions, and do nothing,

waiting for an answer, because I'm scared.

Overwhelmed. Frightened to get involved,

like turning away from a drunk in the gutter.

And who is my neighbour? I can't argue, Lord, I know.

And the Absent Samaritan? Yes, Lord, I know that too,

I know the answer has to begin with me.

Maybe I can't do a lot (more than I know, did you say?)

but I can do something.

Together with others, together with you I can spread your love around.

Show me how. So that through me, today,

someone may catch a glimpse of your love.

May find new life and hope.

May find the open door into your Kingdom.

And, Lord, as I pray for people in need, as I hear the crying far away,

let me not be deaf to the cry next door.

A licence has been granted to use Eddie Askew's prayer by the publisher, Leprosy Mission International.

Mike Matejtschuk

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Blended Service Rotas for November 2026

Date	Worship Leaders	Vestry Elder	Welcomer/ Door	Reader	Prayers
1 st	Colin Thompson HC	Keith Kidd	Tom Goss Ann Bettess	Hannah Buss	Liz Barry
8 th	Laurence Devlin	Chris Shelley	Ellen Webster Moirá Watson	Charles Bennett	Hannah Buss
15 th	Rev Robert Sheard	Tom Goss	Rob Holdaway Peter Devlin	Rob Holdaway	Ellen Webster
22 nd	Rev Wayne Hawkins	Rob Holdaway	Marian Mole Tina Everett	Mike Matejtschuk	Tom Goss
29 th	Laurence Devlin	Debi Kidd	Noémi Roy Pauline Shelley	Ellen Webster	Ann Hardiman

Dates for Your Diaries

Weekly

Mon & Thurs 9.00am Mindfulness Sitting Group
 Mark Williams - jmarkgwilliams@gmail.com
 Fridays Friday is Robert Sheard's day off

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. 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

Common Lectionary Readings Nov 2026

Note: leaders may choose to use other readings

Date	1 st	8 th	15 th	22 nd	29 th
First Reading	Rev. 7: 9-17	Joshua 24: 1-3a & 14-25	Judges 4: 1-7	Ezekiel 34: 11-16 & 20-24	Mark 13: 24-37
Psalm	Psalm 34: 1-10 & 22	Psalm 78: 1-7	Psalm 123	Psalm 100	Psalm 80: 1-7 & 17-19
New Test.	John 3: 1-3	Psalm 78: 1-7	1 Thess. 5: 1-11	Ephesians 1: 15-23	1Corinthians 1: 3-9
Gospel	Matthew 5: 1-12	Matthew 25: 1-13	Matthew 25: 14-30	Matthew 25: 31-46	Mark 13: 24 37

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November 1st: The Japanese art of Kintsugi takes broken pottery and repairs it while showing the fault line.

November 8th: Some runners use a mindfulness technique - half way through the run they think back about where they have come from and are encouraged.

November 15th: Perhaps the image of a chaplain sitting at a table in a staff canteen is a modern-day equivalent of Deborah under the palm tree.

November 22nd: Elvis Presley came from a poor background but managed to be transformed - what can we learn from the 'king'?

November 29th: A new term in the Oxford English Dictionary is 'woke' which means aware of, alert or actively attentive to important social issues.

Richard Bainbridge

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