Welwyn Garden City, Harpenden and Wheathampstead United Reformed Churches Magazine







June, July & August 2025

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you.

Count your blessings, name them one by one, Count your blessings, see what God has done; Count your blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

How many of us ever take the time to count our blessings? How often do we spend time thinking about, and giving thanks for, the things that God has done in our lives?

I would hazard a guess that, while there are probably some people who regularly recognise the blessings that come from God and thank Him for them, there are many more people who don't think about such things on a regular basis. And yet, when we do actually stop and consider the blessings that come from God, we are, like the writer of the above hymn, Johnson Oatman Jr, genuinely surprised by what we see.

We all need to get into the habit of recognising the blessings of God and thanking Him for them, and we need to do so all through the times and seasons of our lives when things are going well. We need to do this so that the habit becomes part of our lives. Then, when difficult times come upon us, we will not find it such a struggle to see the blessings of God shining through the darkness of the cloud that is enveloping us.

The quote at the start of this letter is the chorus to a hymn and each of the verses encourages us to focus on the blessings of God amidst the struggles of life. For we cannot escape hardship or difficulty, and it is a reality that we will all find ourselves in a hard and dark place at some point in our lives. But we can begin to cope better with such difficulties when we are able to recognise God's presence in our lives. For the wonderful truth is that He will never leave

us nor forsake us, He will continue to walk beside us, and He will even carry us when we are unable to take another step.

As Oatman says in the first verse of the hymn:

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

It is easy, particularly when life is difficult and circumstances are challenging, to take a negative view of life. But we should always strive to see where God is in our lives. For even in the darkest of days, we do still have blessings to be thankful for. It's just that sometimes we need to look a little harder to see them and be reminded of them. But as Oatman reminds us in his final verse,

So, amid the conflict, whether great or small, Do not be discouraged, God is over all; Count your many blessings, angels will attend, Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

May each one of us rejoice in the goodness of God and continually count the blessings that He pours out upon us. As Paul says in writing to the church in Ephesus,

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

In His name,

Narty

A Farewell Note

It is said that to everything there is a season—a time to love, a time to keep silence, and a time to speak (Ecclesiastes 3:1). After eight transformative months as minister in training among your wonderful congregations, I now stand at the threshold of a new adventure with the Norwich Area Mission Partnership.

Each church family has welcomed me with warmth, prayer, and genuine fellowship. Every greeting at the door, every shared hymn, and every word of encouragement have woven memories that I will always treasure, nurturing my growth both spiritually and personally.

Throughout this journey, I found comfort in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I



know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." This promise has been a guiding light during moments of doubt and renewal, reminding me that every season—whether one of celebration or challenge—serves a divine purpose. In leaving, I trust that every goodbye is simply the prelude to new blessings.

As I step into this fresh season, I ask for your continued prayers and support. Our shared faith endures far beyond any farewell. I leave with a heart full of gratitude, love, and hope—and I look forward to seeing you on the 6th of September.

"To everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under heaven..." — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Blessings, Tina

What a coincidence!

I'll be honest that this is not going to turn out to be the article that I originally intended to write.

When first thinking about the subject on which to pen something this month, I stumbled upon an article that related to a religious radio programme on the BBC Sounds app. It had seemed interesting and something that some people in Church, but probably not all, might have liked to have read. And in fact, I might save it for another time as long as the programme doesn't disappear from the BBC website.

But it set me thinking that finding the article was a huge Godsend; and then I remembered that a previous Minister at WGC URC always maintained that there were no such things as coincidences and instead what we think of as coincidences are simply 'God Moments'. I partly agree, and we have all heard stories over the pulpit of someone who felt compelled to make a telephone call or visit someone without invitation, only to find themselves in a truly life-saving situation. Yes, I agree that those are certainly God Moments.

But on the other hand, I think that sometimes there are pure coincidences with no hidden purpose or outcome.

When younger, I worked with a senior colleague who had three grown up children, and one year he and his wife were going to Australia for a holiday, and at the same time meeting up with their middle child who was travelling during her GAP year. Standing at the water's edge on Bondi Beach, near Sydney he realised the next person along was his neighbour from Harpenden. They got separated by the waves and next saw each other back home. Neither knew the other was away. I call that just a coincidence as it seems to have no other purpose in what might be called God's plan. Other descriptions might be twist of fate, stroke of luck, fluke, chance, or fortuity, but not much more than that in my opinion.

However, it did set me wondering what the Holy Bible says about coincidences, if anything, because it might not actually be a biblical concept. But with the help of Dr. Google, my good assistant, I see that the Bible presents the idea that what we perceive as coincidences are actually part of God's divine plan. Coincidences are often seen as random occurrences, but the Bible suggests that nothing happens outside of God's control.

Many scriptures emphasise divine providence, showing that events unfold according to His will rather than mere chance.

The Bible repeatedly affirms that God is in control of all things. Proverbs 16: 33, 'We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall', this verse suggests that even seemingly random events are guided by divine will.

Romans 8: 28 reinforces this idea, this verse implies that what may appear as coincidences are actually part of God's greater plan. 'And we know that God causes everything to work together'.

When you stop and think about it, throughout scripture there are numerous instances where events that seem coincidental reveal God's intervention.

Read about Paul's missionary journeys in Acts 16: 6 - 10. His travels were directed by divine intervention, showing that even unexpected changes in plans serve a higher purpose.Look up all these verses if you get a quiet moment and read them in context.

Rather than relying on coincidences, the Bible encourages believers to trust in God's wisdom, again in Proverbs 3: 5 - 6 'Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding'. This verse highlights the importance of faith in God's guidance.

Fine, but does that mean we are all robots with no control over our own lives or actions? God is in full control over us, is that what we are being told? No saints or sinners, it is all pre-determined and seemingly nothing we can do about that.

In Mission Praise, hymn number 269, 'I do not know the way ahead, the way I cannot see', a line in the chorus reads, 'with God things don't just happen, everything by Him is planned'.

Really? Does that mean God is responsible for war, famine, climate change, disease, and all the other terrible events? I am not so sure, and it would be brilliant to hear what views other people may have on this complex topic.

Philip Read

He leadeth me! O blessed thought! O words with heav'nly comfort fraught! Whate'er I do, where're I be , Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!!

He leadeth me, He leadeth me, By His own hand He leadeth me: His faithful follower I would be, By His own hand He leadeth me.

Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine, Nor ever murmur nor repine, Content, whatever lot I see, Since 'tis Thy hand that leadeth me! He leadeth me, He leadeth me, By His own hand He leadeth me: His faithful follower I would be, By His own hand He leadeth me.

And when my task on earth is done, When, by Thy grace, the vict'ry's won, E'en death's cold wave I will not flee, Since God through Jordan leadeth me!

He leadeth me, He leadeth me, By His own hand He leadeth me: His faithful follower I would be, By His own hand He leadeth me.

If I was to ask you what Psalm comes into your mind as you read these words, what would you say? Well, I'm almost certain the vast majority of people - church goers or not - would say the 23rd Psalm! Though, in today's world, with little religious instruction at schools the number of non-church goers would be a lot less. However, a number of well-known singers - Christian and non-Christian - have used it as part of their repertoire.

As the shepherd cares for his sheep, so the Lord, says the writer, cares for us. And reading through the Psalm we see that this care is wide ranging. The sheep are protected. The sheep are fed. The sheep are taken to refreshing waters to rest. The sheep have no need to fear, for the shepherd stays with them.

Jesus is our shepherd: He leads, guides, protects, and blesses us. We have no need to fear for he will never leave us -he gave his life for us.

Graham Neads - Harpenden

Hello. I am Tracy (as if you don't know me!), and I am the new Mission Developer who has taken over from Liz Laing. Right now, I am working on some exciting new things including Forest Church and Street Prayer. They are at the feasibility stage, and we are gathering information, possibly for launch in 2026. I attended the Churches in Welwyn Garden City meeting on Monday 20th of May, where we talked about the feasibility of these proposals, what the interest level is and who has done anything like this before. We are in discussions with Connor at the Dementia Support Group that meet on a Monday, to take over running the group in the near future. It supports those with dementia, and their carers. We are looking at launching a new idea for a mid-week zoom meeting. (Please ask me if you would like details, on any of the above). You can email me on <u>mission.devwgcurc@gmail.com</u> or phone me on 01707 333326 at the office Monday – Thursday.

So, it's a very exciting time. I have been in position for just over a month, and I'm just beginning to find my feet. I co-lead Community Café, but have been taking the lead as Robert has been unwell. I have taken over the lead role from Joyce at Thursday Club. It's been a busy time getting to grips with the roles and responsibilities, and copious amounts of report writing and meetings! I work with most of the groups that use the church building, and try to make the experience a good one, often joining in with them for a session. I am loving my job, and everyone has been so supportive and kind.

I would just like to say a huge thank you to those of you who have spoken words of encouragement to me, have helped me cope in the groups, and have done all sorts of practical things, and the volunteers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty. You know who you are! A special mention to Allison in the office who has put up with the silly questions, and has supported me no end. You're a star! Ooh and the coffee!

If you want a chat, or have questions or are just curious about the things I'm involved in, please feel free to drop by the office. I work most days from roughly 8 am to around 1 pm.

Blessings

Tracy



Wheathampstead United Church

Invite you to join them for their Songs of Praise service

Sunday 15th June

At 3pm

Led by Rev Martyn Neads



Tina's Induction Saturday 6th September 2pm

I will be making enquiries about hiring a coach to take us to Tina's Induction Service at St Peter's Church, Jessop Rd, Norwich.

I need definite numbers by Monday 16th June to enable me to decide on the size of coach needed, get quotes and calculate a cost per person. It would be useful if you could send me the number of seats you would like by email and I will respond to you personally with the cost to speed up the process.

If you are still interested, once you know the price, I will go ahead and confirm the booking.

I will require payment, which won't be refundable when you book.

a) Bank Transfer to

Sort Code - 404608

Account No - 91680595

HSBC UK

REF : Use your name please and Coach

b) By cheque to WGC URC with coach written on the back.

I will be booking the coach to leave from WGC and Harpenden and Wheathampstead are welcome to leave their cars in our Car Park.

Joyce Email joycen2@hotmail.com

Mob 07886392602

Any queries please get in touch.

Flower Rota 2025

Thank you to everyone who responded to my Flower Rota Appeal in our November 2024 magazine your generosity enables the team to provide Sunday and special occasion flowers. The dates you requested are on the 2025 Flower Rota in the Rotas Folder located in the top drawer of the Tea Point. Sunday Flowers are distributed after the service to elderly who are housebound, those in Care Homes, the sick or bereaved, and those coping with difficult situations or celebrating special events.

In this our first Quarterly Joint Magazine I would like to remind anyone who hasn't donated so far this year and would like to contribute to the fund to please contact me. We have 18 Blank Sundays left in 2025 with seven during this magazine quarter which are:-

June 1st, 15th , 22nd. July 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th.

I trust with your help we will be able to continue providing and distributing Sunday Flowers.

Thank You Joyce N

On the 20th April, we were very happy to be joined by Jean's family, Carolyn, Brett, Oliver and Lucas, who had very kindly donated a bench in Jean's memory.

Martyn gave a blessing and we all chatted and reminisced about Jean and how much love and energy she brought to our community. Jean used to like to sit and enjoy the world go by on a bench and would have chats with people, often lonely, that brought them to Church or one of our groups.

So if you have a minute to spare, take a seat and see what happens!



God - Creator of the Life-force

Now that Spring has definitely sprung, we are excited to see the green shoots as we wait for the various plants to sprout. It's amazing that such tiny seeds can germinate and grow to reveal their beauty.

King David wrote the following words recorded in Psalm 139:13-14 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you...'. Also in Jeremiah chapter 1 we read that God said to him: 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.'



Research into the Human Genome Project (begun in 2001) has greatly enhanced

the understanding of DNA and its meaning in the world of medicine among other things. The genetic code of humans contains three billion 'letters' common to all racial diversities which are responsible for giving an organism specific

characteristics and it underlies the basic 'unity' of mankind (and other organisms).

Thinking about this and the words quoted from the Old Testament, I am led to consider that '*je ne sais qua*' we call the 'Life force' with specific reference to God, the Creator of all things. Life force can mean: Spirit or Essence - the vital principle or animating force within all living things; Vitality - ability to live or exist Energy – driving force.

When an organism produces a seed, within that seed is already present the basis of new life. This is evident if you open a seed, you can see the tiny element within that will be the new plant. This applies to all organisms' seeds including female mammals. Human females are born with between one and two million eggs in their ovaries but they do not become mature eggs until puberty yet the potential for a new life exists within that new-born even before the actual birth. Whether you are a creationist or an evolutionist you must give an acknowledgement to the thinking of the ancient writers who penned the words quoted above. They did not have the knowledge of a scientific world. Their world order was determined by the evidence they saw around them – the seasons, the crops and the birth of animals and humans. Yet their thinking must arouse some admiration for their ability to make some steps towards understanding the 'lifeforce' around them and their belief in a creator God.

Vivienne Kendall (Wheathampstead)

Martyn, Lynn & Family

Invite you all to Open House at the Manse

Saturday, 5th July

Feel free to drop in any time between 2pm and 4pm; refreshments will be available.



18 Ambrose Close

Harpenden

AL5 4AX



CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Lots of birthdays to mention in June, starting with Catherine H. on 5th, Joanna D. on 19th, Ryan C. who will be 16 also on 19th, Liz L. On 20th, and Richard R. on 22nd.

Moving on to birthdays in July, Michael C. on 1st, Tracey N. on 2nd, Norma C. on 8th, Jessica A. who will be 17 on 10th, Brian R. on 11th, Jenny R. on 22nd, and Matt R. on 24th.

We send our birthday congratulations and best wishes to all these friends and hope they each enjoy a happy day.

Please help me to add to my birthday list by giving me your date of birth or anniversary dates by finding me on Sunday mornings or by contacting Allison in the church office on 01707 333326 or email: <u>officewgcurc@gmail.com</u>.

We have 2 Wedding Anniversaries to celebrate in this edition:-

- * Melvyn & Joyce D's 61st Anniversary on 27th June
- * Arthur & Rosemary T's 53rd Anniversary on1st July

We send congratulations to these two couples and hope they enjoy their special day when it comes round.

Please continue to include Robert & Catherine in your prayers as Robert continues to recover following a stay in hospital.

Please remember to pass on any other concerns to our minister, Martyn, an Elder or Pastoral Friend so that no one gets forgotten.

We thank God for all the Blessings we receive as members of our Church Family here in Welwyn Garden City.

Thank you, Ann Meers



Time to Remember Tea

Sunday 22nd June at 3pm

We have all lost loved ones whom we like to remember with love and gratitude.

Our "Time to Remember" Tea is an opportunity to do this with friends over tea and cake. It is followed by a short and very moving act of remembrance. Last year's tea was greatly appreciated by all who came. It is NOT just for those who have been recently bereaved.

It is for us ALL

Do come this year!

Please contact Allison if you wish to come

allisongiles@hotmail.com

01707 333326



Thames North Synod Eco Day 2025 Indoor and Outdoor Speaker: David Britton Operation Noah

> Using our Buildings and Land for Climate Justice

7th June 10:30am—4pm

St Albans United Reformed Church Watford Road, St Albans, AL2 3HG

For more information and to book, email Colleenmodpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk Fellowship on Zoom

Hello, some thoughts I'd like to share with you.

During the covid lockdown and then the precautionary times that followed, our tech teams organized Zoom Church. I am not 'computer literate', but can press a few buttons when instructed and so was able to join in at home with worship.

One Christmas time WGC held a playreading via zoom, (The man born to be King by Dorothy L Sayers) which Philip had researched for us, and he also allocated the character parts. It was a special time, and dare I say fun, to share in this with other members of the Church. With a little time to spare at the end of weekly readings, we shared comments on what we had read.

We again zoomed for a lent course recently, for which Helen C took the lead. The script from the bible passages was both enlightening and interesting. Leading us to discussion and reflection. The course was from a book presented by Embrace the Middle East entitled 'Hope in Hard Places'.

So when you read or hear about a presentation on zoom, join in and share the experience.

Maragret R WGC



24th June 5pm for 6pm start

Wheathampstead Community Kitchen Meal

Please confirm to Jackie your

intention to come

by 21st June

Poets Corner

Following on from Philip's plea for people to write for the magazine, I am pleased to introduce two new poets.

The first is Hazel and she has written this poem for us

The Lord's Prayer

The Lords Prayer holds the key to life Of how to be happy without the strife.

It is very clever and oh so right. Cure's most ills if you feel it's might.

You say the words. But do you do-The many things it tells you to? When guilt attacks you from your past sins.

Forgiveness brings so many wins It clears the mind and lifts the cloud. Of your self hatred. So shout out loud.

"I forgive my trespasses, as God does to me."

"I forgive my enemies to allow my love to be." I trust the Lord my bread to feed. And to provide me all I need. And I know his help is hallowed. His words are waiting, just decode And temptation to avoid I'll strive! To be happy just being alive.

So when you pray, feel what you say. To make life's pathways go best way Believe and act, and don't despair -Make troubled days become more rare.

Control your thoughts by cutting out; All memories that bring you doubt! Don't let the bad thoughts enter in. Chuck your negatives in the bin. Say stop! I refuse to think -All things that make my spirits sink. Our second poem is from Christopher, and he has added a few words of explanation.

Lone Ranger- Christopher remembers himself as an inexperienced, naïve 15year-old, taking his would-be girlfriend on a first date to the Odeon Cinema, Lincoln, in 1953. 18 years before the decimalization of our currency.

Lone Ranger at High Noon

Tremble, fumble. "Two in the one 'n' nines, please. And then I dropped the change. She smiled consoling. The usherette shone her torch three quarters up the slope; Not yet the doubles at the back

A western – perfect for movement under covering fire; To edge and creep, finger upon finger, Inch by inch along the tacky fabric; Advance faster in the punch-ups; Take risks in tune with blazing guns. Wow ! I catch her scent – was that a smile?-A flickering glimpse of slender wrist.

One grand explosion and I land On the warm impression of her departed hand.

Christopher Alderson 1999

Christian Aid Concert with the Male Voice Choir

On the 17th May the Church was filled with beautiful singing, and lovely music. Not only were the audience treated to the usual outstanding voices of the WGC Male voice choir, but they enjoyed that of the Stevenage Ladies Choir.

The MVC has always held the tradition of encouraging young performers, and this time it was a wonderful 14 year old harpist called Anya. Her performance was amazing, and I'm sure she has a very bright future.

The evening has raised at least £902 so far, but we do still have some money to come from ticket sales, and some expenses to pay, but hope to reach around the £1000. I personally, would like to help all those who baked, donated raffle prizes, sold raffle tickets, collected money and made copious amounts of tea, coffee and squash. I am very grateful for all the help you gave me, as I stood in for Robert while he was not well.

Wishing you a speedy recovery Robert, and I hope we did you proud!!



Allison

Have you spotted the new addition to the garden? We now have a lovely bird table in the garden, which is being enjoyed by all manner of birds, and the odd squirrel. The local cats think we have put in a new multiplex cinema just for them and will spend ages just watching from the hedge line.

In fact, this bird table was made by Allen K and John, supported by John's wife Wendy in the tea department. Allen first met John when he volunteered to make memory boxes with the Dementia Group that meets here. John and his wife had moved to WGC to be nearer family, but were unable to bring all of John's woodworking tools etc, so consequently John was missing working with his hands. Allen, being a wonderfully kind man, has been working with John on small projects, that John and the Church set up can manage. Wendy has often said to me that Allen is a god send to John, who looks forward to the sessions so much.

I can attest that Allen has the patience of a saint, he has worked with the children from Saturday Church, and, gulp, our TEENAGERS!!! All of whom were thrilled to make boxes, bird boxes and do some wonderful 'computery' stuff that I have no clue about. But I did have a lesson from Allen in pyrography which meant that none of the teenagers needed the burn salve that I had bought in copious quantities!!

Many thanks, Allen, for all that you do.

Allison







You are warmly invited to St Albans URC, Homewood Rd, AL1 4BH Sunday 29th June 2025, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

"Light"

A film showing the work of Community



Peacemaker Teams in Hebron, West Bank Palestine.

"Where all other elements are controlled and rationed, perhaps our light is the one thing that cannot be taken."

All are welcome. Free admission with donations to CPT invited.

Watch the trailer at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vk0W3nqFZjl

1815 Doors open, tea/coffee
1830 Introduction by Rev Maggie Hindley who has
spent time with CPT in previous years
1835 the film (60 mins)
1935 – tea/coffee again and opportunity to share comments
and reactions with the film director, Ahmad Abu Monshar,
by Zoom from the West Bank.



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WATERPARK

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Please can I have any articles for the next magazine by the 18th August 2025. Please send by email or contact me by phone for WGC URC, Wheathampstead and Harpenden articles.

Many thanks, Allison Giles

I hope you have enjoyed reading this magazine. If you have, please consider sending us an article, I'm sure we would enjoy what you have to say. If you would like to contribute and are not really sure what, please contact one of the people above, who I'm sure could give you some suggestions.

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