

May – June 2026

Woosehill Church Magazine



Sharing God's love with the community

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Or follow our livestream services on YouTube

Dear Church family and all other readers,

I really should have more faith as the magazine deadline approaches. Last week I only had Cara's article – well worth reading – but by Sunday afternoon I had almost enough for a full issue. Thanks to all who make our magazine so much a part of the life of the church.

By the time you read this, Pentecost will be upon us, and I pray that we will all be blessed with the Holy Spirit giving us confidence to go out and spread the light of God's love into our local community.

"Holy Spirit, breathe through me. Guide my thoughts, calm my anxieties, and empower me to live out your calling. Enliven my faith and use me as an instrument of your love today. Amen."

With every blessing,

Val

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A Message from our Minister

“Do not let your hearts be troubled”

At the start of May we heard these words from Jesus to his disciples in our Sunday service, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” The sermon for that week is included below, as it was one that a lot of people mentioned that they’d found helpful. I’m so glad it was helpful, and even more glad that we have a God, church and community that allows us to talk about mental health or at least show that it is something we can talk about together.

As I write this (a few days before the deadline!) it happens to be Mental Health Awareness Week in the UK, which feels very timely and fits in with where we are in the church year. For Jesus’ disciples, the time after Easter was such a mixed time – the grief, confusion, and joy after Good Friday and at the Resurrection. Then the times when Jesus came back and appeared to them, times of reassurance and comfort but also times when they had to work out what they were meant to do next, how they were meant to live and work and minister. Then Jesus’ Ascension, which is about Christ’s departure, but also about hope and blessing and love. Next is Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit, when the disciples realised that they weren’t alone, and were filled with encouragement, just as they started to spread the Gospel amidst persecution and fear. Right from the very beginnings, Christianity and the Church have never shied away from the fact that anxiety, worry, fear, grief, and more are

part of everyday life and have instead shown us how we might live with these feelings and experiences.

A priest I knew as a young adult used to pray for those who were struggling and ask that, “they may know your healing, if not today Lord, then soon” and I love this as an acknowledgement that when we are feeling anxious, overwhelmed, depressed, whilst there is no quick fix, we can still trust that God will help us and that prayer is part of the answer. Sometimes, oftentimes, if we’re in the midst of feeling dreadful, it’s hard to know what might help us, or if there is a situation that is making us feel like this, it’s hard to know what the answer is. This is when reaching out and allowing others to share the burden, to give us space to be heard, to pray for us when we cannot, are all good and helpful things we can do for ourselves, or to offer someone else.

There are also practical things we can do to help ourselves when we’re struggling, prayer of course being one. We can get out in the fresh air, whether that’s a walk or just sitting in the garden or in front of a window, reach out to a friend, journal, listen to music, not check the news multiple times a day – and I will admit that I never read the news first thing in the morning, not because I don’t care about the world but because I care about myself. If there’s something that helps you, or a prayer that you particularly love, please share it as chances are, it will help someone else feel better too.

The blessing that I know off by heart and use pastorally is this: “May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ.”

The most powerful part of this for me is that God's peace passes all understanding, because it's one that allows us to know that if not now, then one day, things will be OK. And not just OK, but glorious, wonderful, heavenly, peaceful. Until this time, if you are struggling, please reach out, allow me to pray with you and for you for that peace which passes all understanding, and keep Jesus' words and truth close to you, that you are precious and beloved, and bring your troubled hearts to him.

Sermon John 14: 1-14, 3rd May

One of my favourite prayer-mantras is this:

"Calm me Lord, as you calmed the storm."

I pray it all the time, but especially in times when I feel anxious or overwhelmed, or in particular need of God's peace. According to the charity Mind, a charity which provides support and resources for people struggling with their mental health, 1 in 5 people in the UK suffer with anxiety, including 1 in 5 aged between 8 and 25. They do caution that the figure may well be higher as not everyone who struggles seeks support. 20% of the population is not a small statistic nor is it something that we as a congregation are immune to. 20% of us is about 7 or 8 of us here in church this morning.

And it's understandable, given all that we face, both individually and as people who live in this world. Anxiety isn't unusual, it's deeply human, which is why we get to hear Jesus talk about it to his disciples. The most obvious story that comes to mind is when he tells the disciples not to

worry about what to eat or what to wear, to consider the birds of the field and the lilies and how much God has blessed them and will do the same for us. But we also hear him recognise his disciples' anxiety and worry, and in our Gospel reading today he said to them, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Because he knows that they are worried, that they are troubled, and that this is understandable.

Sometimes, when we're anxious, and someone tells us not to be, it can feel dismissive, as if we haven't been heard or understood. But though that may well be a fair assessment of that particular conversation, it isn't what is happening between Jesus and his disciples. It is said genuinely, because Jesus knows that what is about to happen, his betrayal, arrest, beating, death and resurrection are distressing to those who love him. Jesus speaks these words on the brink of betrayal, violence, and loss. Nothing about their situation is calm. Nothing is resolved. He isn't speaking from a place of comfort, but from within the storm itself. From the place where we pray, "Calm me Lord, as you calmed the storm."

"Do not let your hearts be troubled" isn't dismissing very valid feelings of worry, but instead an invitation to come closer to the God who loves and cares for us. There's a verse in 1 Peter 5 which says, "Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." And it's this which Jesus is calling his disciples to do with him then. It's an acknowledgment that yes, there is something concerning happening, there is something dangerous that it's perfectly understandable for you to be anxious about, and there is room for that here, you don't have to pretend that's not how you feel.

Jesus goes on to explain how in God's house, there are many dwelling places, that there is space which has been especially prepared for you. We often hear this passage at funerals, as a reminder that those who have died are now safely with God, in the place that was made ready just for them, made from and out of love. But what if we also thought about God's house as somewhere where there is room for us now? Where there is a dwelling place for us to bring whatever feelings and cares and concerns and anxiety that we have now, and know that God will be there waiting, open armed, for all that we are and all that we feel? There is room for us in God's house. If we hear Jesus' words in this way, then we begin to see how spacious God is, how limitless God's care and hospitality is, how generous God is towards us. That we don't need to force ourselves to be more positive, because God has room for us and our anxiety, in a house that is abundantly big enough to carry our heavy loads for us. It's a house that echoes the words in the hymn we just sung and is our resting place:

***I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad.***

Sometimes, when anxiety is gnawing at our stomachs, making us afraid, we withdraw from others, not wanting to be a burden and not wanting others to know that we are afraid. It is understandable, but often not helpful, because connection with God and with our community is what helps us see clearly.

Jesus told his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled" not because he thought their fears were silly, but because he wanted and needed to encourage them to trust in something greater than those fears, to trust in him. When our whole bodies are churning with worry, Jesus' invitation is to come closer to him, to abide in him as he does in God, to know that there is room in our faith for any anxiety we may be feeling, that all of us belongs to Christ.

When we apply this to our church, it means that we need to think about how to reflect that same belonging and room. I think, generally, we're very good at praying for and caring for those who ask, whose needs are known to us. Some of us are even very good at letting others know when we're struggling...others, and I would include myself in this category, are a work in progress! It's hard sometimes to be vulnerable, to let ourselves be seen not just by God, but by those around us. But what I think we need to work on as a whole church is how to communicate these feelings of safety, belonging, welcome and room to come 'as you are' to those in our wider community. We need to think about how each of us personally can extend the invitation to those who need the peace and reassurance that comes from casting all our anxieties on God, knowing that in this comes healing and wholeness.

Being a Christian and having a faith doesn't exclude us from struggling with mental health and anxiety, but it does give us an anchor in the storm. And so I'm going to end with the Gaelic blessing words, if this morning you particularly need this blessing, may they be a balm to your soul, and may you know the deep peace of Christ on whom it is safe to bring your troubled hearts.

*Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the gentle night to you*

*Moon and stars pour their healing light on you
Deep peace of Christ, the light of the world to you
Deep peace of Christ to you.*

Rev'd Cara

Sunday 28th JUNE 3-5pm



*WOW invites you to join us for a **Strawberry Tea** at
Woosehill Church on Sunday 28th June. 3 - 5pm
Tea (or coffee), will be served together with scones, cake,
jam, cream and fresh strawberries.*

*Please let Ruth (ruth.a.smith@btinternet.com) know if you
are coming so we know how much to buy and bake but you
will be welcome if you just turn up on the afternoon.
Donations to Church funds.*



A Message from our Methodist Minister

Dear Friends,

**Sumer is icumen in
Lhude sing cuccu
Groweþ sed and bloweþ med
and springþ þe wde nu
Sing cuccu**



(Spring has come in/Loudly sing, cuckoo! /Seeds grow and meadows bloom/and the woods spring anew. /Sing cuckoo!)

These words are from a song sometimes known as the Reading Rota. It is probably the earliest English-language song to survive. With the varied weather that we have had this May, we might still wonder if spring is on its way. I am also told that cuckoos are becoming rarer.

This song is believed to date from the thirteenth century, by which time the French of the Normans had been the language of the nobility and of the law for over 150 years. It shows, however, that English was still being spoken, at least by the people of the fields. In this way a rustic song, sung as a round, is a small act of defiance, almost rebellion, against the overlords.

I am writing as we approach Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the beginning of the Church. The powers of Jewish and Roman authority had sought to end the life of Jesus, not knowing that his life would be seen through the many who came to follow him. The Church is like the cuckoo that heralds the Spring, and when it speaks aloud it makes its act of defiance against the powers that would have it silenced. **Lhude sing cuccu!** **Wes**

Jeanette's 70th birthday celebrations

"Thank you to everyone who came and helped me celebrate my 70th birthday celebrations with a games afternoon. It was such fun and it was so lovely to see so many of my friends and family there. I loved playing giant rummikub with you all even if I didn't win on this occasion.

A wonderful weekend was topped off when Cara taught the congregation to sign Happy Birthday in BSL to me in church on Sunday morning. I have such wonderful memories of a very special time."

Many thanks, **Jeanette**





News from Tadpoles

In our Tadpoles we continue to celebrate the seasons and special events. As part of the National Month of Prayer for toddler groups, we have been taking part in an initiative to 'send a sheep' to a co-ordinator who will ensure a large flock are delivered to 10 Downing Street on June 1st, stressing the importance of toddler groups to pre-school children and their families. All the children's first names are on the back.



Recently Cara told the miracle of the disciples catching a net full of fish with a story she had written especially for us and delivered with knitted disciples made for us by Rachel Lewis – the children were enthralled!

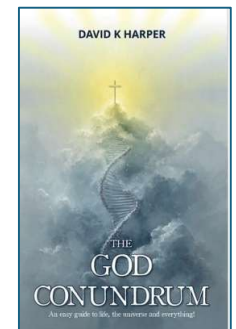


The God Conundrum

- An easy guide to life, the universe and everything!

by David Harper

I recently watched a YouTube video of Rev Canon J John interviewing David Harper. I knew David from watching Bargain Hunt and other Antiques and collectables programmes so was fascinated to hear him talk about his newfound Christianity. It all started when his daughter had a profound conversion experience which brought her healing and happiness after years of depression. David decided to sit down and research the Christian faith thinking one afternoon or so would be sufficient. Eleven months later after asking every question he could and researching everything from creation and the big bang theory to the existence of a man called Jesus, he concluded that God is real and Christianity must be true. He records his reasons along with all the evidence in this easy to read but stimulating book. I highly recommend this book which tackles all the big questions in life giving me much to think about, helping me become even more sure of my own faith. It would equally be a perfect read for anyone looking for answers in our often-confusing world. **Lyn Brown**



News from WOW

The WOW group of ladies from the church has been busy with a varied programme of activities.

Sue Falquero reports:

One evening in March three ladies from WOW decided to go to the cinema to see the film Mothers Pride , starring Martin Clunes and James Buckley. The film is about a failing pub which is owned by a grieving family, who have their lives changed by brewing real ale and they eventually decide to enter the Great British Beer Awards. Martin Clunes character has a heart attack during the competition which adds to the drama of the film.

The film throws light on the problems of the pub industry and how many are closing every week.

It was also advertised as a comedy, but there was not much evidence of that. However, it was still an enjoyable evening out.

..... and at the end of April a small group of us walked up the lane to the Walter Arms for a drink and chat on a very pleasant evening, walking back to the light of the moon. It was good to welcome Gail to the group



Christian Aid Coffee Morning

There was a good turn out of helpers for our bookstall at the coffee morning in St Paul's Parish Rooms as well as a good selection of books, and our stall made just over £100.

Lynne sends her thanks to all who helped make this a success.



Overall, the takings were around £1000, so a very successful contribution to Christian Aid week.



New projects and campaigns

We have news of a new **Stop Trade with Settlements campaign** to respond to the rapidly increasing illegal Israeli settlements, which are having a crippling impact on the West Bank and how you can stand with us to call on the UK government to introduce legislation banning trade with settlements.

We're also delighted to share news of a new partnership providing mobile medical clinics for rural Egypt and the latest from Iraq, where Embrace partner the Ankawa Humanitarian Committee, and the children they work with, are leading the way in driving initiatives to reduce the effects of climate change in their communities.

For all this and more, download your copy of our magazine today, or pick up at the back of the church.



Wokingham Foodbank needs



Mothers' Union at St Paul's

Offerings for the Royal Berks

Mothers' Union have delivered various items to Royal Berkshire Hospital Voluntary Services, including twiddle muffs and forget-me-not wrist bands for patients with dementia, baby cardigans and hat, and emergency bags of toiletries for patients who are rushed in without any.

Thank you to the members of our congregation who have helped to provide these.

The emergency toiletry bags that Mothers' Union provide for RHS Voluntary Services and for Ronald McDonald Children's Hospital in Oxford contain face cloth, comb, toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, eye masks and ear plugs. If anyone can provide any of these new unused items, please can they give them to Gill Wilkins at St Paul's or Jean Vaughan at St Nicholas



Women of Woosehill – WOW

Our programme for 2026

May	Drinks and nibbles in Jane's Garden	Jane Kraft (Help needed to set up and clear away)
June	Strawberry Tea (Fundraiser for Church)	Ruth Smith all to help
July	Pimm's and Nibbles in the garden	Lyn Brown's Garden
August	Dinton Pastures Walk	Linda Hoskins
September	Scrabble evening	Sue Peck
October	Wade's Skittle's Evening	Ruth Smith
November	Pudding Evening	Amy Truluck
December	Floral Decorations	Lynne Paine / Linda Hoskins

For general information about the group talk to Lynn Smith; for individual activities, to the organiser.

Some Light Relief

I think we can relate to this!

Pick of the Archives #154



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Developing faith and prayer

Parish Bible study on Tuesday evenings 7.15 - 8.30pm via Zoom

Together in Prayer on the Third Thursday of the month from 8-9pm via Zoom.

Contact Lyn Brown for details.

Church Contacts

Rev'd Cara Smart, 23 Sheridan Way RG41 3AP,
07812349857

woosehillminister@outlook.com

Rev'd Wes Hampton Methodist Minister
5 Chetwode Close, Wokingham RG40 2LL, 0118 9781756

wesley.hampton@methodist.org.uk

Planning a Wedding, Christening or need to organise a Funeral?

Then please do talk to us.

For more information about any of the above, please email either

Rev'd Cara Smart on woosehillminister@outlook.com

stewards@woosehillchurch.com

Or visit our website www.woosehillchurch.org

Deadline for next issue Sunday 12 July - as usual to
valerie.weedon@btinternet.com

What's on at Woosehill Church

Sunday services: 10.00am at the church or online via the Woosehill Church YouTube channel or click on the link on our Facebook page.

Quiet service at 6.15pm on every second Sunday.

Thursday Morning social groups: From 10 am – just turn up

1st, 3rd & 4th Thursday – Free to do any craft activity, jigsaws or puzzles, with refreshments and chat.

2nd Thursday – WoolWAM - a knitting and crochet group.

Saturday Group: Sip and Share

Have you lost someone or are you just wanting company? Then this group is for you. Chat over a cuppa. Every 2nd Saturday at 11.00am. No need to book.

Tadpoles

On Wednesday mornings from 9.00am. Playtime, craft, coffee and snacks for under-fives and their carers. To register for this group, see the website woosehillchurch.org

To: valerie.weedon@btinternet.com

Church hire Lynne Paine: treasurer.woosehillchurch@gmail.com

Other information: stewards@woosehillchurch.org

Deadline for next issue Sunday 17 May 2026

Be Still

A service of Quiet Reflection
Second Sunday of the month
6.30pm, Woosehill Church

A chance to be still in the presence of God and one another.

With candles, silence, Bible reading, and music.

All are very welcome.



For more information please contact Revd Cara Smart,
woosehillminister@outlook.com or look on our website, www.woosehillchurch.org