



# Abbey Lane & Newport United Reformed Church incorporating Saffron Walden Methodist Church

Proclaiming the Gospel – Growing in Faith – Reaching out in Service

21 February

## Welcome to our weekly newsletter

### Sunday Service – 21<sup>st</sup> February

Worship Online at 10:30 a.m.

Led by Rev. Caroline Vodden  
Reflection by Rev. Roy Fowler

Zoom meeting details from our church contact  
telephone 01799 528325

If you prefer to watch live on the website please go to

<http://saffronwaldenurc.org.uk/services-recordings>

where you will also find a recording of the service to  
YouTube each week available from Sunday afternoon.

*Reminder: our Church Meeting will follow the service after a short break, using the same meeting details, at 12 noon. The agenda will be sent out separately.*



## Time to take a break? Our local schools are enjoying half term.

The break has coincided with the start of Lent, when often as Christians we think about taking a different kind of break, such as giving up particular habits, or certain foods. Recent years have seen many people choose to take up something positive for Lent rather than giving something up. If you are looking for a Lenten resource for your young people then Tina Wilson recommends "Walking towards Easter together" still available to order for £4.50

from [https://urcshop.co.uk/index.php?route=product/product&product\\_id=390](https://urcshop.co.uk/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=390) Each day helps you take a step towards Easter – mark your way on the map, use the creative diary/journal and dip into the activity suggestions such as to cook, make,

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give, pray, connect, discover or share and from the Diary activities to read a real life story of someone walking the way of Jesus, reflect on a Bible verse, and use the space provided to record something of your day. On Sunday there is a story about Jesus with space to record responses.

## For Your Diary



*Petals fallen from tulip by Mary Duxbury*

This Newsletter is full of notable dates but remember -

### Proverbs 16:9

"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps"

**Next year the URC celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. In keeping with this the 2022 Prayer Handbook will have the theme "Jubilee: Free to Live."** The editors are inviting us all to consider the ways in which we experience Jubilee in our everyday lives through our knowledge of God and the relationships we share with God. All are invited to submit a maximum of four prayers for inclusion in the handbook. The prayers must be your own to a maximum of 25 lines each of maximum 60 characters. The deadline for submission is 28<sup>th</sup> February. More details at <https://urc.org.uk/news/3715-write-a-prayer-for-the-urc-s-prayer-handbook-2022>

**Val Bowtle reminds us that the World Day of Prayer Service scheduled for March 5<sup>th</sup>** cannot take place in person due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, if you phone Val she can deliver to your home the service book – prepared by the ladies of Vanuatu – and you can share worship via YouTube or Zoom. Go to <https://wwdp.org.uk> then type in "Cambridge" where you will find a list of services. Should you wish to donate, please do so via the envelope provided with the service book; again, phone Val to collect & it will be sent to WWDP as gifts from Saffron Walden churches (or gift via the WWDP site).



Elders	
Val Bowtle	01799 526271
John Ford	07969 850109
Stephen Rapkin	07730 393 603
Karen Start	01799 522 096
Elfreda Tealby-Watson	01799 530 175



**Census 2021** We have been asked to publicise that the ten yearly census will take place this year on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March but for the first time everyone will be able to complete the census online from the beginning of March. Look out for your letter with a unique access code. More at <https://census.gov.uk> An article with more about the census and the place of census in the Bible will be in a future newsletter.

### Mon 22nd February – Sun 7th March Fairtrade Fortnight – from Ruth Fothergill

Having taken on the role of Fairtrade Representative at Abbey Lane, I am in the process of considering how to approach the remit. Fairtrade Fortnight is approaching and it seems a good point to begin.

The Fairtrade concept has been under some pressure in recent years. To quote the Fairtrade organisation, 'Ethical businesses are about selling as much as possible, so that more orders can be placed, and more people supported'. The price paid for goods ensures a fair price for producers, with a premium for improving life in the community where the goods are produced. This raises the cost price to consumers. In addition, Fairtrade aims to give income security by providing long term contracts.



Sadly, this commendable ethos has come apart in recent years, for example KitKat (Nestlé) dropped the Fairtrade mark in June 2020. In a Guardian article, 'Is Fairtrade Finished' (2019), Samantha Subramanian discusses the loss of faith in the Fairtrade organisation by large companies such as Sainsbury. The use of premiums is seen as money spent without accountability. Some companies have set up their own Fairly Traded brands, with most consumers not knowing what that guarantees. Communities must apply for premium funding & have their projects approved, rather than having ownership of them.

The Fairtrade organisation is moving towards monitoring these changes rather than solely operating their own certifications. Like many current concerns with making the world a fairer place, it is complex. The well-known Fairtrade logo still guarantees the original principles it stands for.

More information can be found at <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/buying-fairtrade/>.

Information and resources for Fairtrade Fortnight are available at <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-fortnight/>

## Alison Jiggins shares her reflection prompted by a world event happening 18<sup>th</sup> February:

This past year I have spent a fair bit of time star gazing and pondering the wonders of God's universe. In August my son and I were lying down in the back garden on the lookout for Perseid meteor shower. In October I helped the Beavers get their space badge. Then in December, I was fortunate enough to see the Great Conjunction. Where for a few minutes Jupiter and Saturn could be seen together, almost touching as they aligned up with each other in the early evening sky.

And on every star gazing occasion I found myself reciting these words from Psalm 121 "I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." When you think about the year that has been, these are comforting words. But these words also encourage us to look up. For God did not just create planet Earth, "... God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1v1).

Yet when you consider the vastness of space, it could leave us feeling small and insignificant. But despite how small we might feel, God still cares and loves us. For whilst we are only a speck in the multiverse, at Easter we celebrate the risen Christ, the ultimate expression of God's love for us all and proof that as part of His creation, we matter to God.



Perseverance Guiding Itself Towards the Surface: The Perseverance rover guides itself towards the Martian surface as it descends through the atmosphere. In this illustration, thousands of critical sensors track the rover perfectly and exactly on time as the rover is lowered to Mars safely on Feb. 18, 2021. Credit: NASA/ESA

However, I've been prompted to write this reflection because I'm on the NASA Mars Rover emailing list and I was reminded last week that on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at about 7.30pm GMT, the Perseverance Rover will land on Mars. Its main aim is to seek signs of ancient life and collect rock samples for a possible return journey to Earth. This mission is a great example of how to make the most of cutting-edge technology and human ingenuity. Its exciting stuff, because it will give us the opportunity to further explore this part of the solar system, which is also part of God's creation. However, my enthusiasm for this project has been curbed by the recent advert from the charity WaterAid.

Whilst the Perseverance Rover is looking for water on Mars, 785m people on Earth - that's one in ten - do not have easy access to clean water. This issue is highlighted by the story of Fara in Madagascar. The advert challenges us to think about how we have spent money and resources to go to a place to find water where no-one lives, at a time when the lack of access to clean water is having a detrimental effect on so many.



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The various international space programs are helping us understand the world and the universe we live in. These endeavours to explore are inspiring and testament to our human imagination, inventiveness, and creativity; all gifts given to us by God. But we also have a responsibility to care for the planet and the people who call it home. As I reflect on this, I am drawn back to the words of the Psalmist, "My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." God created the universe, which includes Earth, so there is a balance to be struck between searching the heavens and caring for others. Space exploration is not a bad thing. It only becomes a problem when it takes precedence over God's commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself."



So, if you have not already seen it, I highly recommend looking at the WaterAid website:

<https://www.wateraid.org/us/>

and see what we can do to help those who do not have access to water, taps and toilets. And then on Thursday night join millions around the world watching the Perseverance Rover land on Mars and marvel at the heavens our God created.

## A chance to sing

Thanks to our virtual choir from WEBS who continue to produce new tracks, and to Rhona who is learning to edit the recordings we use in services. But if anyone needs more singing then read this letter from Janet Wheeler, the Musical Director of SWCS (with whom several Abbey Lane members already sing): **"Saffron Walden Choral Society is still active, meeting 'virtually' on Monday evenings, despite the lockdowns. Via Zoom, we keep our vocal chords active, with a mix of new and familiar music. Of course, the choir is really looking forward to meeting in person and performing for an audience again, just as soon as possible. Our repertoire is mostly but not exclusively 'classical' in the broadest sense. Our regular concert venue over the past eight years has been the impressive Saffron Hall. Meanwhile, if you have some experience of choral singing and you want to try us out, get in touch and we'll share a link to join one of our 60 minute Zoom sessions. We start with a short warm up to keep in good vocal shape, then work on a variety of music, including some classics of the choral repertoire. For a brief introduction to our style, please watch our 2020 Spirit of Christmas videos – episode 1. Youtube link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CREodMcBJVM&ab\\_c\\_hannel=SaffronWaldenChoralSociety](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CREodMcBJVM&ab_c_hannel=SaffronWaldenChoralSociety). Get in touch via <http://www.swchoral.org.uk/news/> - we'd love to meet you."**

## In January we reported on our Girls Brigade. Now here is a taste of what Beavers have been doing.

Alison Jiggins has been busy! She reports: Just to prove that in Lockdown



#3, we are "carrying on Scouting" on Wednesday 17th twenty Beavers

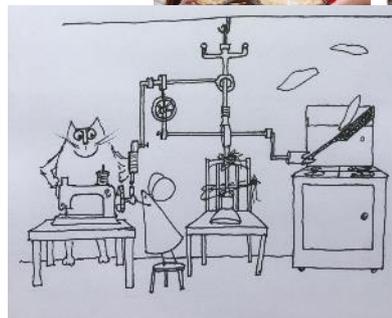
took part in a virtual camp entitled "Beavers in an adventure with scientists in winter". During this they completed the experiment badge (including ice cream, lava lamps, snow fluff and bath bombs!). Then on Thursday morning Caroline lead the "Scouts Own" reflection and was presented with a 5<sup>th</sup> scarf as a farewell gift.



**Church message from Rev. Caroline Vodden: The funeral of Reg Howe will be held at Cam Valley Crematorium at 12noon on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. We hold Joan Draper and Reg's family in our prayers.**

## Pancake Day on WhatsApp

Plenty of flips on camera whilst Gill drew out how it could be done.



## Prayer for the start of Lent (from URC Daily Devotions)

*Loving, forgiving God, we acknowledge our sins. We place our sorrow, guilt, and tortured memories at your feet and beg you to forgive. But, in your grace, you not only forgive us, but acknowledge our seemingly trivial good deeds. May that assurance fortify us this Lent to walk in your way. Amen.*

## Roy Fowler's Letter for Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021

**Dear Friends**

Our spiritual journey through Lent takes us ever nearer to Good Friday and the day that we focus on Jesus' death on the cross. We accompany Jesus in his growing awareness that he cannot remain true to God without suffering and dying. On Palm Sunday, as he rides into Jerusalem on an ass, Jesus makes a deliberate decision to go the place where he will confront the sin, the suffering and disruption in people's lives. In the garden of Gethsemane, he wrestles in earnest prayer with accepting the cup of suffering and death. All this concentrates our appreciation of the cross of Christ as the supreme place where God's love for us is revealed.



God, in love, through Jesus, accompanies us to our dark places. We are still in lockdown at present and we are hopeful that we may move cautiously to some slight loosening of it in the coming weeks. All the signs are that the lockdown is succeeding in depressing the infection rate, reducing hospital admissions and most importantly bringing down the number of deaths. Uptake of the vaccine has been much higher than anticipated and in time widespread vaccination will also help to overcome the pandemic. All are causes for thankfulness and hope. But we know the continuing cost of this pandemic in suffering and death, in grief and disruption, in poverty and anxiety, and so many other ways.

As we journey on through this pandemic and its effects on our lives, will we journey with Christ who comes alongside and shares in our pain with the love of God? But will we also lift up our eyes to the other side of the cross and Easter and the new dawn of hope? For it is both through suffering with us and with the gift of hope that God sustains us now and always.

The love and peace of God be with you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Roy', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.