



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

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

21 March

Welcome to our weekly newsletter

Sunday Service – 21st March

Worship Online at 10:30 a.m.

Led by Rev. Caroline Vodden

Reflection by Rev. Roy Fowler

Zoom meeting and Passcode details are listed on the order of service sent separately, or call our Church Contact on 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.

This week's service will be followed by our Church Meeting at noon, using the same Zoom meeting details. Our Church Secretary will circulate the agenda in advance.

It's Spring – time to go WILD?



Photo of Alison at the steps of the Abbey Lane Hall

Alison Jiggins led our young people's talk last Sunday. Here she shares some more news from the Scouts. On March 1st

Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and various adults from the Saffron Walden District started the **World W.I.L.D Walkabout!** This involves everyone adding together the kilometres they walk in a month, in an attempt to clock up 23,330km as they travel on a virtual hike on the longest uninterrupted walk-able road in the world.

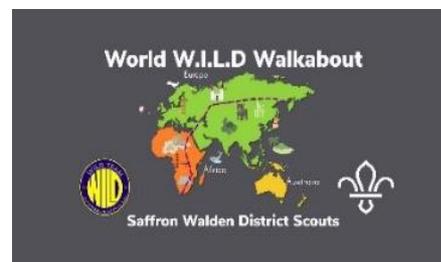
They started out from Cape Town, South Africa and are well on the way to getting to Magadan, east coast of Russia by the end of the month. In addition to walks, when they cross the border into the next country, they are set a challenge linked to that country. So far these

have included eating grasshoppers, making shelters and making origami elephants.

The Scouting website www.scouts.org.uk explains that Scouting offers young people a place in which to develop life skills and to “question and develop their opinions and understanding of the world around them.” This includes giving them “safe, exciting and open spaces to explore faiths and beliefs and engage in personal reflection” although Scouts is open to everyone “of all faiths and of none.”

Psalm 40:5

“Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you have planned for us.”



Like the Scouts, our own bible study groups have been exploring faith and meeting to “engage in personal reflection” and we thank Stephen Rapkin for getting the groups underway again via Zoom meetings. Below he writes about one aspect of the studies.

Biblical Giving – Stephen Rapkin

Our bible study groups have recently finished working through Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church. The letter contains much that is of central relevance to our Christian life, and particularly our communal life as a church. Then, at the end of the letter (chapter 16), Paul makes some comments about giving, in this case specifically for the 'Lord's People' in Jerusalem, and some of Paul's instructions seem as relevant to us today as they were two thousand years ago.

Regular Giving: Paul starts by advising the Corinthians to set aside a sum of money, weekly, 'on the first day of the week'. These days some of us still give money on the first day of the week, using the traditional donation envelopes, others give through bank standing orders, maybe weekly or monthly, but the idea of regular giving remains important, something

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Church Secretary	
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Elders	
John Ford	07969 850 109
Stephen Rapkin	07730 393 603
Karen Start	01799 522 096
Elfreda Tealby-Watson	01799 530 175
Margaret Howell & Meg Nettle	Non-serving Elders offering pastoral care



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consistent and thoughtful, rather than erratic and ‘spur of the moment’.

Give what you are able: Paul doesn’t expect everyone to give the same and he is not unreasonable – he asks everyone to give ‘in keeping with your income’. It has always been the custom in our church to ask for ‘Freewill Offerings’. Sometimes we drop the word ‘freewill’ but it’s an important word. It implies giving in line with our conscience: we should have no regard for what others may give and our church should not impose any ‘expectation’ of what each of us should give. We should each give in accordance with what God’s spirit tells us.



Give to support other churches: Paul knew that the Jerusalem church was struggling and needed support, so he asks the Corinthians to collect for them. As I write this I have on my desk a bewildering form (well it bewilders me as a ‘rookie’ treasurer) asking for all sorts of information about our church finances. This is the URC Fairshare Return which is used to calculate the recommended Mission & Ministry contribution from each church which the URC Eastern Synod then uses to share funds fairly and according to need among its churches. The M&M fund reflects an important principle – it reminds us that we are connected with other churches in exactly the way that the Corinthian church was connected with others. Some are in greater, and some in less need of financial support. So, as a church, we are asked to give generously to help other churches.

Give Cheerfully: Paul, of course, wrote again to the church in Corinth. In his second letter he reminds us of, perhaps, the most important point of all - *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* (2 Cor 9:6-8)

Reminders for your Diary

19th March Red Nose

Day Comic Relief returns for an evening of fundraising and entertainment this Friday on BBC1 from 7pm. Find



further details including on projects that benefit from funding and how to donate at www.comicrelief.com

21st March Census Day details were delivered to every household in early March and help on completing them is found at www.census.gov.uk

21st March Abbey Lane Church Meeting will be held by Zoom (connection as per accompanying email, agenda sent out separately) starting at noon.

23rd March UN World Water Day: article below.

23rd March Pandemic Day of Remembrance: Roy will host a short Zoom meeting at 11.55am including a minute of silence at 12 noon. The meeting details can be found in the accompanying email or call our Church Contact on 01799 528325.

25th March: Can you contribute to a discussion on Children’s and Family work in Abbey Lane?

We have enjoyed a wonderful variety of children’s activities during virtual services and are considering how we should take things forward in the future. Many people in the congregation have helped either recently or in the past to make it such as success. With this in mind, we are planning a small informal discussion group to chat through any ideas and suggestions via Zoom on Thursday 25th March from 7.30 to 9pm. If you’re able to join us, please let John and Jo Ford know (johnandjoford@gmail.com) to receive the Zoom details.

The value of water: is UN World Water Day relevant to us? Elfreda TW



In the Bible we encounter water in many forms and fulfilling many functions, from the creation story to Isaiah (35:6) “Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert” onto Matthew (25:35) “I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” Considering our attitudes to water is a valuable way to examine our response to God’s calling to love Him and to love our neighbour. Surely part of that calling is to stewardship of His creation and to sharing resources in our love for others? It follows that we have a responsibility to make sure our ‘neighbours’ too have access to this essential resource. The Christian organisation World Vision says that **World Water Day** is a day to champion the rights of people everywhere to have access to affordable, safe, and

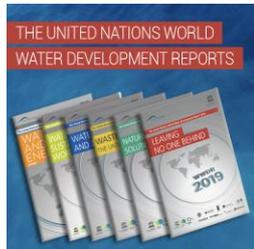


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convenient drinking water. On World Water Day the United Nations also releases the World Water Development Report to provide decision-makers with the tools to implement sustainable use of our water resources. The development of the UN WWDR is a joint effort of the UN agencies working in partnership with



governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and others towards a worldwide Sustainable Development Goal (SGD 6) that by 2030 water and sanitation will be available to all. Reading reports from charities it is clear

that during the pandemic water scarcity and inequality has had an impact on how well the transmission of Covid-19 could be prevented. Regarding this the UN states: 'Hand hygiene saves lives. To contain the spread of COVID-19 and many other infectious diseases, it is critically important to clean your hands regularly... Until just 170 years ago, many people thought infections were caused by foul, polluted air'. Attitudes began to change when Ignaz Semmelweis discovered that handwashing with soap reduced the spread of microbial infection. Yet despite global attempts to improve hygiene standards by nursing experts such as Elaine Larson still three billion people 'live without basic handwashing facilities using soap and water available at home.' The UN reports that 1 patient in 10 gets an avoidable infection while receiving care and more than 800 children under 5 years old die every day from diarrhoeal diseases due to lack of safe water. (WHO 2019). 'Almost half of the schools in the world do not have handwashing facilities with soap and water available to students.'

The theme of World Water Day 2021 is valuing water: this is about much more than its price – water has a complex value for our health, education, economics and the natural environment. Perhaps this year we should be prompted to consider stewardship and sharing: if 2020 taught us anything surely it was that there are many simple gifts we have taken for granted too long – how true that is of water. To find out go to:

- <https://www.unwater.org/>
- <https://www.wateraid.org/uk/>
- <https://www.worldvision.org/category/clean-water-news-stories>

World Vision (USA) Prayer for Clean Water:

Loving God, we ask for Your blessings on children, mothers, fathers, and communities who are thirsty. Purify, protect, and multiply their water sources. Strengthen our resolve so they may fully enjoy the

benefits of clean water — essentials like education, gardens of fresh produce, and good health. Remind us of Your command to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Don't let us rest until we know we have done everything we can to meet this necessity for others. Thank You for equipping people who love You as they bring new health and opportunities to the world's most vulnerable. Amen.

Music Notes **Elfreda TW remembers her mother enthusiastically playing "O Jesus, I have Promised" (one of our hymns this week) to the tune Hatherop Castle in the 1970s. Caroline Vodden, who choose the hymn, writes about her choice:**

The 19th Century hymn "O Jesus, I have promised" is traditionally sung to either the tune Wolvercote (RS 509) or, alternatively, Thornbury (RS 567). Growing up in the 1960s, however, I was more familiar with the rousing tune Hatherop Castle, composed by the Anglican priest and monk Geoffrey Beaumont and at that time quite recently published in (I think) the BBC Radio Hymns for Primary Schools (1964). Another popular tune was Beaumont's composition "Gracias" to which we belted out the harvest hymn "Now thank we all our God". After I joined the Girls Brigade in 1970 we would often sing "O Jesus, I have promised" at church parade services and it became a favourite of mine, chosen when I became a church member in 1970, at my ordinands' leaving service from Mansfield College, Oxford in 2007, and at my induction to the WEBS pastorate in 2015. Now as I approach my retirement from stipendiary ministry, I am grateful to Roy for including it in our worship on 21st March, reminding me of my calling by Jesus Christ and my promise to follow and serve him "to the end".

Church Family we send good wishes to Tina Wilson after her operation, Pat Barker in hospital and our young people returning to school & college.



and from WhatsApp...

Swan Meadow (Janet Bazley)

Spring Blooming (Mary Duxbury)



Peace protest at the Friends Meeting House (Stephen Rapkin)



Roy's Letter for Sunday 21st March 2021



Dear Friends

*“There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children, she didn't know what to do.”*

We will ignore the second half of the rhyme that would get her prosecuted today for child abuse. Instead, we can imagine her trying to keep tabs on all her children. In an earlier church, I had a member who had seventeen grown-up children. I once asked her how many grandchildren and great children she had. ‘I’ve lost count,’ she replied. Although she loved every one of them and was very much the person around whom the whole family revolved.

This Sunday is national census day. Every household will be required to record the number of people who are staying in the house overnight. There will also be other information asked for as well. Everyone is being counted. We shall eventually have a good idea of the population of the whole country as well as in the various other units into which we divide our four nations. The information gathered will be important in planning future provisions of services and the allocation of resources.

Behind the census, there should be the important truth: all lives matter. Black lives matter. Women’s lives matter. Young people’s and children’s lives matter. Every human being is created by God, is a child of God, is known to God, and is loved by God. Maybe, as we all fill out our census forms this week, whether on paper or on-line, we can take time to cherish this thought and affirm in prayer that all lives matter.

Tuesday, 23rd March will be the anniversary of the first lockdown imposed to slow the spread of Covid 19. We are being urged to hold a national day of remembrance next Tuesday and to pause for a minute’s silence at 12 noon. There have now been over 125,000 deaths in this country since the pandemic began where Covid has been named as the cause. This is more than all the civilian deaths in World War Two, and 2020 saw the highest number of annual deaths from infectious diseases for over a hundred years. Thankfully, the death rate has dropped due to the effectiveness of the lockdown and the efficacy of the vaccines. Every death has been a human tragedy and a reminder that every life is precious to loved ones and to God.

To help us remember, I shall be opening a Zoom meeting at 11- 55 am next Tuesday, so, if you wish, you can keep the moment of silence with others, and there will be a brief time of prayer. The Zoom link and codes are included in the accompanying e-mail. Please feel free to pass on the Zoom code to anyone you think might like to join at that time.

In the affirmation of God’s love for all, may we all be blessed,

