



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

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

23 May

## Welcome to our weekly newsletter

Which, approaching Pentecost, celebrates and commemorates various anniversaries and notable events

### Sunday Service – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021

Worship Online and in Abbey Lane  
at 10:30 a.m.  
Led by Tina Wilson

Zoom meeting and Passcode details are listed on the order of service sent separately, or call our Church Contact on 01799 528325  
To attend in person please book in advance:  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/abbey-lane-sunday-service-at-1030am-tickets-150314794597>

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.

## Service marks anniversary of George Floyd killing

This article comes from the Churches Together in Great Britain and Ireland website and can be read in full at <https://ctbi.org.uk/service-marks-anniversary-of-george-floyd-killing/>



An array of senior Church leaders from Britain and Ireland will call for justice at a national Church service marking the first anniversary of the killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2021. Titled 'Doing Justice: A National Service of Reflection on the Anniversary of the murder of George Floyd', the service... at the NTCG Brixton Community Church in south London... will remember the tragic death of Mr Floyd, as well as challenge

Ministers	
Revd Roy Fowler	01279 814 809
Church Secretary	
Val Bowtle	01799 526 271
Vestry Phone & Church Contact	01799 528325

churches and communities in Britain and Ireland to stand up for justice, and against racism, ignorance, and hatred. The service was initiated by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), an ecumenical organisation that encourages Christian unity, and includes churches of all traditions and denominations. One of the organisers, Richard Reddie, Director for Justice and Inclusion at CTBI said: 'Last year, George Floyd's killing and the Black Lives Matters protests that followed, showed that many were saying "enough is enough" when it comes to racism, especially the form experienced by Black people on both sides of the Atlantic. This anniversary is a timely reminder that we need to continue the work started last year, if we are really committed to ending injustice in church and society.'

You might also be interested in watching the BBC Documentary series available on iPlayer 'Black and British: a Forgotten History'. In four parts it covers the BBC history project commemorating forgotten elements of Black history in Britain from the African battalion stationed in Roman times near Hadrian's Wall through slavery, abolition, colonialism and right up to the arrival of the "Windrush" generation and the terrors of National Front activism in the 1990s.

## Proverbs 16:2-3

All a man's ways seem innocent to him but the Lord weighs motive; Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed.



## Celebrate? Commemorate? (Elfreda TW)

Observing changes in daily life as restrictions ease has set me reflecting on the last year or so. I found news pictures of grandparents hugging grandchildren for the first time in months both joyous and painful in recognising the losses that have been suffered - and that for some people their loss is permanent. For those

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 offered pastoral care



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bereaved, not always via Covid-19, it is bitter sweet to see the joy of others knowing that joy for them will not return. As I write, this would have been my father's 98th birthday: he died in 2003 and I know that one learns to live with loss, but the loss remains. When we open our doors to loved ones, I will hold in prayer all those who continue to come to terms with their losses.

I have also thought about public events, particularly the first anniversary of the death of George Floyd, and I am sad that whilst we continue to battle the pandemic, human unkindness and injustice still bring more loss, as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sometimes anniversary is celebratory; sometimes it is commemorative lest we forget an important lesson from the past. As Christians the mix of commemoration and celebration is important and I recommend the book, 'Celebration', by Dr Margaret Spufford. It is a powerful testament to what it means to be loved by Christ. Recently, Tina Wilson considered how we could reflect that love to each other. All these current events give us chances to do that.

In our church I hope combining premises and online worship is one such opportunity. Preparing for this reminds me that events which equal excitement for one person may be the cause of someone else's concern. For instance, as restrictions ease, the advice for anyone on the CEV (Clinically Extremely Vulnerable) register remains to act with caution, even if fully vaccinated, until the 21st June; government guidance recommends they go out only in quiet hours, avoid socialising indoors and minimise the numbers of households with whom they interact. Hence some people have enjoyed their visits to private prayer and are looking forward to returning to the Abbey Lane building on Sunday, but others will not do so because of medical advice or simply as yet they prefer not.

As we approach Pentecost I remember that last year Kurt had us all shouting "Happy Birthday WEBS" on Zoom: a birthday can be a time to celebrate and renew.



I hope we are able to do that this Pentecost weekend – perhaps by combining tradition and technology we can all experience love and renewal within our church family.

Photo of Greg sound checking speakers for live & streamed worship, Abbey Lane



## Remembering the Covenant

Next year we will be celebrating 50 years of the United Reformed Church since our formation when English Presbyterians merged with English and Welsh Congregationalists in 1972. Meanwhile, while editing the layout and photos of this newsletter I have been enjoying the documentary series 'Grand Tours of Scotland's Lochs.' One episode referred to our Presbyterian 'cousins' in Scotland by visiting an old meeting point of the Scottish Covenanters. A helpful summary of their origin is provided by the Scottish Covenanters Memorials Association: "Simply stated, the Covenanters were those people in Scotland who signed the National Covenant in 1638... to confirm their opposition to the interference by the Stuart kings in the affairs of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Stuart kings harboured the belief of the Divine Right of the monarch. Not only did they believe that God wished them to be the infallible rulers of their kingdom - they also believed that they were the spiritual heads of the Church of Scotland. This latter belief could not be accepted by the Scots.



No man, not even a king, could be spiritual head of their church. Only Jesus Christ could be spiritual head of a Christian church. This was the nub of the entire Covenanting struggle."

The National Covenant was drawn up in 1638 and the original was signed in Greyfriars' Churchyard, Edinburgh. Copies of the National Covenant were made and taken around Scotland to collect signatures - it is thought that there may be up to fifty copies still in existence. The Presbyterian Scots ironically won their theological independence from the monarchy when the eighteenth century Scottish Parliament arguably ceded the independence of Scotland in signing the 1707 Acts of Union to create the Kingdom of Great Britain. In the 1707 Act church government in Scotland



was ensured as being Presbyterian. Meanwhile, of course, south of the border the English Presbyterians are key to our own origins as a church.

Incidentally, original copies of The Covenant can be seen at locations including Blair Castle, Perthshire close to where our old friends the Lukes have settled. Photo credits to Louise of the Tay Bridge, Dunkeld and view of Ben Lawers, in old Covenanters country!



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## Reminders for your Diary

**25th May - 7pm Doing Justice:** CTBI service for George Floyd 7pm via YouTube and other platforms. Repeated BBC Radio 4 at **8:10 am, Sunday 30 May**

**Continuing until 23rd May - 'Thy Kingdom Come'** is a global prayer movement that annually invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus in the period between Ascension Day (13th May this year) and Pentecost. What started in 2016 as an invitation to the Church of England has grown into an internationally ecumenical call to prayer. The website states, "After the very first Ascension Day the disciples gathered with Mary, constantly devoting themselves to prayer while they waited for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost... Through the centuries Christians have gathered at that time to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit. 'Thy Kingdom Come' picks up this tradition... This praying together has been across our diversity and differences as every person, household and church are encouraged to pray in their own way... It has been amazing how many varied ways there have been in which people from every tradition have taken up this challenge. The effects have been remarkable."

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/about-us>

**Saturday 22nd May The United Reformed Church History Society 10:30am – 12:00pm** Stephen Rapkin recommends this online event. Professor Clyde Binfield will speak on 'New Court Congregational Church and the First World War'. The talk will consider the nature of this North London church and congregation with a focus on the period of the First World War; he will explain the attitudes of Congregationalists to the War; and explore why they chose an organ as a war memorial to those men from the parish who served during the First World War. The organ itself has recently been restored with help from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It was built in 1920 - when the church was the New Court Congregational Church. A dedicated team of volunteer archivists has been researching the stories of the men commemorated by the organ. Visit the 'Soldiers' section of the project website to find out more about their discoveries: [www.stmellitusorgan.co.uk](http://www.stmellitusorgan.co.uk) There is also a short film that gives an overview of the work of the St Mellitus Organ Restoration project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11h8JY-rRQs>

**5th June - UN world environment day**

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/environment-day>

**Prayer** from Bob Kikuyu, who featured in last week's Christian Aid celebration. From the forthcoming Christian Aid 75th anniversary book 'Rage & Hope', it seems appropriate to this time of remembrance for George Floyd and the fight against injustice.

*Lord of the Battle,  
when I stand amongst many who face injustice, and yet  
feel alone in resistance,  
when I raise my voice in protest, and find it drowned in  
the hopeless cries of the suffering,  
may I in discovering the path not easy, and yet still  
following it,  
find hope in knowing the footprints I leave behind,  
deviant from the common way,  
could one day be uncovered as the way  
by those who seek it, and in seeking it find  
that we are not alone.  
God is with us. Amen.*

## Church Family

We send continued good wishes for improving health to Ron Snowdon, Brenda Johnson and Colin Baldock. Please remember Tina Wilson as she makes a long journey to Scotland for a family funeral on Friday. Mary Brooks has offered her thanks again to everyone involved in organising private prayer last week, especially to John and Jenny Evans for music and flowers. Karen Start has remarked that seeing Pat Barker well enough recovered to visit Abbey Lane with Marion for private prayer 'made her day'. We wish our young people well, especially that Abigail gets a well earned rest after GCSE assessments, to Clara and Rhona both facing year 9 tests and to our university students preparing for exams.

## and from WhatsApp...



This beautiful pastel picture by Gill Howe was snapped up by Meg Nettle with a donation to Church funds.



Val Bowntle's colourful plant was the subject of botanical discussion about hot water plants and correct names – an Archimenes, related to the African violet



## Roy's Letter for 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021



Dear Friends,

Almost forty years ago, Christine and I were ordained to Christian ministry in the United Reformed Church at Cross Street, Barnstaple after being called to the North Devon Group of Churches. The Holy Spirit was invoked upon us as it is at all ordinations (in the United Reformed Church on Elders as well as ministers of word and sacrament). But of course, the Holy Spirit had been at work within us before this as we heard the call to offer ourselves for ministry, and in Christine's case before that for service as a missionary nurse in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The Holy Spirit has been working within us ever since our ordination as we have been called to ministry in different places, and each place as brought it owns challenges.

Personally, I could not imagine back at the beginning of my ministry just where the Holy Spirit would lead me. Every pastorate has of course involved the weekly leading of worship and preaching, pastoral care and being involved helping churches find and realise their vision for whom they want to be. It has been the other aspects of ministry that perhaps surprised me. I have had the opportunity twice to be a part-time hospital chaplain. In one church, I was part of a project to establish a house for homeless young people from which they were able to move on to more permanent homes. I've been the Governor of three different schools and in one school particularly worked on the provision of special education needs. Over the years, I've been part of the process of testing other people's call to ministry, as well as supporting ministers and lay preachers in their formation for their ministry. Somehow, I became more and more involved in sustaining ecumenical relations and in particular with the Methodist Church. None of the places where I have ministered nor the different avenues into which my ministry has branched out have ever been planned. I have been led to them and other aspects on ministry too.

This is my story that has by the very nature of my calling been very church based, although it has continually spilled out into the life of the wider world too that is of course also the sphere of the Spirit's activity (see how the creation story begins in the first chapter of Genesis). I don't believe God limits the Spirit to the church, but as we celebrate Pentecost this week, we cannot ignore the Spirit's power to create and re-create the church. So, I leave you with some thoughts to ponder: Where is the Spirit leading each one of us at present both in our daily lives in the world and in our service to the church? Where is the Spirit leading our churches at present particularly as we move into the future? Where God is leading me as I prepare to retire from full-time ministry I don't really know, but if the Spirit has any part in it, I will probably be surprised! Come, Holy Spirit, and lead us on.

God bless you all,

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

P S Please note that there will be no pastoral letter from me next week as Christine and I are spending time again looking for our retirement home. Please pray for us as we search for home into which settle for the next phase of our lives. R