



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

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

25 April

Welcome to our weekly newsletter

Sunday Service – 25th April

Worship Online at 10:30 a.m.

Led by Val Bowtle

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.

Photo of the Abbey Lane Pulpit fall by Mary Duxbury

This newsletter is going to be a little different...



So writes George Mills in his newsletter reporting on charity work with children in the Ukraine, which Gill Howe has shared this week. Various things may have felt a little different to us this week with the lifting of some restrictions, but not all news was good news. Shop

and pub staff spoke about fears that customers will not follow rules. It made me think about how we value service. Sometimes it's easy to take service for granted, sometimes it's easy to feel that people who serve us let us down – see the recent headlines about 'lobbying'! But if we choose to look, there are uplifting examples of service all around us. After all the reports last week of Prince Philip's life of service I was then moved by two obituaries about quite different women. Firstly, Shirley Williams, the former Labour Education Secretary and subsequent co-founder of the SDP, was another public figure whose public service was notable but whose Christian commitment sometimes overlooked. I met her several times and was always

struck by her positive and uplifting attitude. Secondly, the actor Helen McCrory sadly lost her fight with cancer, aged only 52. Known for her roles in TV's Peaky Blinders and in the Harry Potter films McCrory was an outstanding stage actor and was awarded the OBE for services to drama in the 2017 New Years Honours. Less known perhaps were her services to charity; last year, with her husband Damian Lewis, she was the driving force behind FeedNHS in the early weeks of the pandemic, and just weeks before her death she made TV appearances promoting The Prince's Trust. Our own 'header' includes the words 'Reaching out in Service'; I hope all the examples in this newsletter will encourage us each to reconsider our own view of service. (Elfreda Tealby-Watson)

Church meeting looks ahead

Thanks to Roy Fowler for chairing our church meeting last Sunday. Reports were circulated by Stephen Rapkin, about our finances, and by John Ford, about how we might develop our ministry to young people and their families. John writes, "Really pleased to say that the paper we took to Church Meeting setting out next steps for children and youth work was approved. Now's the hard work of trying to make it happen!" Suggestions include a Birthday Box for children celebrating, having a contemporary or children's song in our regular worship, exploring how we can involve young people more often and directly in our worship, and also in completing the URC template for the Children and Youth Friendly Scheme. Val Bowtle reported that the Rev. Lythan Nevard has been appointed as the new Moderator for Eastern Synod.



Private Prayer Karen Start reports, "We had a good turn out for Private Prayer considering that certain people were unable to attend for various reasons. The most interesting visitors were a couple called Tracy and Colin Snow who were married at Abbey Lane 28 years ago today. They were passing and felt

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

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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they needed to come inside. The flowers were provided and arranged by Yvonne Bishop (pictured).” Mary Brooks wrote to ask that we thank John Evans for the thoughtful selection of music which he chose to accompany this time of personal reflection, a comment with which Karen agreed saying that the music was “carefully selected for all tastes”.

The next dates are **Saturdays 1st May & 15th May.**

Mark 9:35

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”

Christian Aid Week,
10-16 May 2021



Report from George Mills, shared by Gill Howe “Hi Everyone. This newsletter is going to be slightly different - we thought that an update from Dr. P and Natalia would help us to understand how things are in Chernigov. But first - we have heard that UNICEF had visited the Centre, and given it a vote of Excellence. They also proposed to the Ukrainian government that more centres like the Revival should be opened, and it is slowly happening! There are plans for a Celebration in June to recognise that it is 25 years since our first little patient was treated. Many of you have helped since that first day - thank you. The list of children you will read about shortly are a very small part of the success of the Revival Centre. I know that I have said this before, but the staff are amazingly dedicated.”

Dr P and Natalia have written to George and Marion: “On behalf of all parents who are getting help from you for treatment, rehabilitation or funeral when a child dies. Unfortunately the life didn’t become better when new Government came, and still families with disabled children live in the need. For many years you are supporting these families and Priscilla’s fund is helping a lot. Thanks to it we are able to help children in extra cases.’ Natalia goes on to detail many cases of help given thanks to support from the UK. These include: ‘Julia and She and her elder brother were diagnosed with the rare genetic disease, liver cholestas, when liver is gradually dying. The children were suffering from poisoning of the body, treatment didn’t help. Her brother died. Julia could get better if had transplantation abroad. The family couldn’t raise the

money. A lot of children helped and we as well. She had successful operation. Now she is getting rehabilitation in our Centre after the operation. Now she feels good. The family is very grateful to all the benefactors of Great Britain and are coming to the Centre for the second course of rehabilitation in May.”

Natalia also delightedly reports of the adult progress of people still in touch with the centre that helped them as children. These include Irina who “has got difficult genetic disease, paralysis of arms and legs. Since 1998 she has been getting rehabilitation at the Revival Centre. Her family was thinking that she is completely disabled, and were very depressed. By 16 we managed to restore walking, to teach her to work with hands and the family got hope. Now she is 30, lives in Israel, working successfully as a speech therapist. She is coming to see us, to say how grateful she is to everybody for creating such a unique Centre.”

Natalia concludes her report to George and Marion saying, “Unfortunately, we have fourth wave of the pandemic, mostly affected is Kiev and Western and Southern Ukraine. The Centre is working normal, and at full capacity. Our workers visit constantly very disabled children in their homes, and these are our ‘Envelope Families’.

At the moment, the Centre needs single bedding, any sanitary pampers, coloured paper, paints, coloured pencils, office glue, coloured threads, beads, puzzles, A3/A4 paper, grass mower, garden tools to teach children, balls of all sizes and a tricycle. We hope this information will help you make an interesting newsletter and all people who are helping will understand how important is the work which they are doing. These families won’t survive without your support, and there are many more.... unfortunately. Thank you very much for everything what you are doing for children.”

The pandemic has highlighted the great needs that remain worldwide in disadvantaged communities; it’s inspiring to have George and Marion working so hard locally for this cause. George writes: “If you can help with any of the things that they are requesting, that would be great, and thank you. If you want to help with the finances of the Centre, please make cheques payable to ‘British Humanitarian Aid’. If you would like to help with our ‘family envelopes’, then please make cheques payable to ‘G. H. Mills’. The Cottage, Hawkins Hill, Lt. Sampford, Essex CB10 2QW.”



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Focus of Christian Aid 2021



A recent mailing from Christian Aid asks churches to help mark the 75th anniversary. It summarises many of the campaigns in

which Christian Aid has served since its foundation. 'Ending apartheid seemed a distant dream. Fairtrade looked like an impossibility. Our broken climate? It's almost as if everything we have achieved together over the past 75 years has been preparing us for the greatest of challenges. It's lots of people uniting for a common cause. This is what helped to make a difference to the lives of refugees at the end of the Second World War; to those devastated by crises in Nigeria, Kenya and India in the 1960s; to people in Ethiopia battling famine in the 1980s. And now we fight for climate justice because so many people are caught in a cycle of climate chaos.' Extreme weather threatens many communities trying to farm, as intense rainfall and drought destroy crops creating food insecurity. The pandemic has made difficult conditions worse. Other newsletters have included articles on the benefits of access to water: with Christian Aid £8 helps planting drought-tolerant crops that can grow with only a little water. Alternatively a larger sum, £545 pays for skilled labour to build earth dams so communities can harvest more water. Whatever is raised will be well used. Locally, we will not do a full door-to-door collection but **you can still help**

- Distribute donation envelopes which do not need collection to friends or to neighbours
- Make a donation via envelopes which will be available at church in May
- Support through prayer using the 7 day devotional (available free of charge)
- Form a team to take part in Quiztian Aid 2021
- Sign the Christian Aid petition on Climate Change to the UK Government

For more details on any of these phone Elfreda or email contact@saffronwaldenurc.onmicrosoft.com
Or look at www.caid.org.uk/realchange

Prayer by the River

This week's prayer by Caroline Veitch from the URC handbook is inspired by the St Cuthbert's Way; as part of our farewell we gave Caroline Vodden a guidebook to that walk. Her thank you letter will be circulated separately but Caroline's photos from her new home are a good match for this prayer. After each line the response is given 'You restore my soul'.

*Loving shepherd,
In the company of friends
You restore my soul.
With lovingly prepared food
You restore my soul.
With a gently flowing brook...
With a winding path...
With lush green fields and autumn coloured trees...
With the sun breaking through the clouds...
In the encounter with a stranger...*



*I drink deeply from the well of
life and my cup overflows.
Amen.*

*With the joy of reaching the top
of a hill...
In the beauty of deep red earth...
With the prayers of the faithful
You restore my soul.*



Church Family Pat Barker is home from hospital so prayers for him and Marion in his continued recovery. **Jim & Mary Getty** thanked Val for a new computer chair and a wall mounted garden hose bought with their gift vouchers from Church. We wish special happy birthdays this week to **Grace Baldock** and to **Margaret Clement**. Finally, thank you for all your **book donations but no more for the moment please!** The photo shows our overflowing cupboard (and Elfreda & Stephen have more elsewhere) so we now have plenty to prepare for a virtual book sale or outdoor stall, after Karen and Elfreda have a good sort through the many volumes!



and from WhatsApp... Photos from Ruth Fothergill, in Yorkshire to visit family, including Clumber Park Glasshouse



Val Bowtle's photo of the flowers blooming outside our church in Abbey Lane

Thank You Letter from Caroline Vodden

Dear Roy and Friends,

The past two weeks have been a maelstrom of activity, with farewells and hellos, departures and arrivals, packing and unpacking. I still have a few boxes to unpack but my new house is already beginning to feel like home and I have enjoyed some wonderful early morning walks across the moors. It is good to be here with new paths opening up before me, always accompanied with memories of people and places and times past.



I am sorry I was not able to speak to you all personally in my last weeks in the WEBS pastorate, but now I want to say “thank you” to all of you for the overwhelming generosity and kindness expressed in your words, cards and leaving gifts. Meg’s beautiful embroidery picture is waiting to take pride of place on my landing/study wall and Clara’s birdbox on the stone wall outside. The Saffron Walden tea-towel will be put to good use in the kitchen and I look forward to planning some walks along St Cuthbert’s Way. The cheque has yet to be spent, although I have plenty of ideas about how to use it, and the children’s colourful drawings will brighten up a dull day. In the meantime, Alice and I have enjoyed tucking in to our Fairtrade Easter Eggs! So thank you for everything – not just for the gifts but for all that we have shared of life and ministry, joys and sorrows, over the past six years – and praise God for bringing us together to journey awhile on the same path.

Christ is risen, New Life is beckoning, Love lives! God bless you all,

Roy’s Pastoral Letter, 21st April 2021

Dear Friends

Christine once bought me a rug making kit as a birthday or Christmas present – I can’t remember now which it was. The idea was that I would have something to do when I was sitting quietly on a free evening or indeed any other time. It was a faithful companion for several years on silent retreat when I was not out with my camera taking photographs.

I soon found that as I knotted each strand of wool into the backing canvas, I was starting to pray for someone or somewhere that needed prayer. They were not well-formed prayers (there was none of the pressure to craft prayers to use in worship). Instead, just as I was adding each strand of wool to the overall pattern of the finished rug, I was simply letting each person or situation become part of the emerging pattern of God’s love being woven into the fabric of the world. The only difference being that, whereas I eventually finished the rug (it took several years) and could see the final pattern, we never see God’s completed pattern in the world, we only glimpse snatches of God’s continuing work in the world. Prayer really is an act of faith. We carry on praying even though we never see all the results of any prayer. Just as any preacher never sees the total impact of all the sermons they have delivered.

Some of my devotional reading over the past few days has reminded me that not all praying requires words. I have been encouraged to think about lighting a candle as an act of prayer. Christ is the light of the world, we are told – the light that shines in the darkness. Lighting a candle to pray can be a simple way of letting hope shine into any dark experience of our own, or someone else’s dark experience, or into the condition of the world. At the beginning of the Covid pandemic, we were encouraged to light a candle of hope every day. The great thing about candles is that carry on burning after the initial act of lighting. The prayer continues. (Although it is a good idea not to leave the candle unattended.)

I have also been encouraged to think of using stones or beads as a way of praying. This might mean picking up the stone and holding it for a while as a way of seeing the subject of prayer as held in God’s love. Alternatively, the stone could be placed in bowl and we could see this as handing whoever or whatever we are praying for into God’s love and care.

In the end, prayer is about connecting into God in ways that we do not always understand. Many of the things for which we wish to pray are bigger than ourselves or beyond our own control. If we find a way to pray beyond the stumbling inadequacies of our words, we, others, and the world itself will surely be blessed somehow,