



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

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

28 March

Welcome to our weekly newsletter

Palm Sunday Service – 28th March

REMEMBER CLOCKS GO FORWARD!

Worship Online at 10:30 a.m.

Led by Rev. Roy Fowler

Reflection by Rev. Stuart Veitch

Good Friday – 2nd April

Narrative Service at 10:30 a.m.

Led by Rev. Caroline Vodden

(Music, drama & images for reflection)



**Zoom meeting and
Passcode details for both
services are listed on the
orders of service sent
separately, or call our
Church Contact on
01799 528325**

Photo by Mary Duxbury of her Abbey Lane Pulpit Fall for Palm Sunday

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.

Synod Moderators Offer Guidance

During the Church Meeting on Sunday, our Church Secretary Val Bowtle explained the Elders' decision to wait until Pentecost to reopen Abbey Lane for communal worship. The decision came after careful consideration of the latest guidance from the Synod Moderators which gave a clear lead towards delaying until that time, from which Val read the quote: "all things are lawful but not all things are beneficial, and not all build up" (1 Corinthians 10:23). The Moderators

urge caution saying, "Those you thought safest... might now be most vulnerable as they won't yet have been vaccinated." Val highlighted that this decision, whilst it could be informed by Church Meeting, was the responsibility of the Elders, the Synod document pointing out that "Elders may be criminally liable if serious breaches of Health & Safety occur". The timing of Pentecost is suggested in line with the intended relaxation of restrictions for hospitality.

Responding to members who have asked for in-person worship to resume earlier, Val explained that Elders propose opening Abbey Lane in April for private prayer, hoping that this is a welcome compromise. Karen Start has kindly taken the responsibility for making the arrangements and informed the Church Meeting that current plans are to open for 2 hours on the three Saturdays of 17th April, 1st May and 15th May. Meanwhile, we continue our Zoom worship throughout Easter including this week Palm Sunday.

Psalm 118:27

"The Lord is God,
and he has made his
light shine on us.
With boughs in
hand, join the festal
procession."

Palm Cross production in
Tanzania



Palm Oil – Good or Bad? (Ruth Fothergill)

Palm Sunday seems a good moment to consider the issues relating to palm oil. 66 million tons are produced per annum. For many the production of it is associated with destruction of rainforest, leading to the release of large quantities of carbon dioxide and loss of endangered species such as orang-utang.

Traidcraft notes that the production of palm oil is the biggest contributor to these effects. Its production deserves a little more consideration. Palm oil is used in many ways from manufacture of food stuffs like bread

Ministers	
Revd Caroline Vodden	01799 524 416
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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and chocolate to production of shampoo, lipstick and candles. It is often listed in ingredients as vegetable oil, masking its origins.

The palm grows well in low lying, wet, tropical areas where natural vegetation is likely to be rainforest and peatlands. Its growth is, however, considered less damaging to environments than the growth of equivalent crops of soybean or coconut oil. These require higher levels of fertilizers and pesticides to be successful. Palm also has a higher yield per hectare of land than other oil crops.



So, what is the answer? The Fairtrade organisation has promoted the growth of palms in a more ecofriendly way. This reflects its support of small farmers who currently grow 40% of the palms. Training and advice to farmers is encouraging the growth of palms as a part of a mixed ecosystem. Palms are interspersed with native plants without detriment to either. Best practice encourages more growth without the need to clear more land. Fairtrade has projects in Ghana and Ecuador which produce organic oil with Fairtrade principles. Dissemination of best practice would seem the way forward.

News from friends



John Luke sent this picture of Marion Barker's jam now in Scotland – great advert!

Jim & Mary Getty have written: *We would like to thank all our dear friends at Abbey Lane for the very generous gifts of vouchers, tea towel and cards delivered by Val and Ken. We were quite overwhelmed to receive such tokens of love and will enjoying spending them when it is possible to do so. We continue to thank God for what Abbey Lane has meant to us and for your future as a place of welcome and Christian witness.*

Modern Slavery (from Eastern Synod)

In Matthew 26, Jesus said, "As you know, the Passover is two days away – and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and the celebration of Passover are inextricably linked with the Easter story. Tori Avey, blogger, food writer and convert to Judaism, writes of Passover, "The holiday is ultimately

a celebration of freedom... that is appreciated not only by Jews, but by people of other faiths as well." It seemed timely that just before the start of Passover this year, one of the presentations at Eastern Synod last weekend was about modern slavery. Rev. Dr. Dan Pratt, now the Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator for 'Together Free', explained modern slavery and where we might encounter it today. By law, modern slavery and human trafficking is when a person holds another in slavery or servitude, making them perform forced or compulsory labour, or facilitates the travel of another person with a view to that person being exploited, for example through being forced into crime or marriage. The statistics were shocking. Modern slavery is the fastest growing form of criminal activity: there are currently 208 live MSHT investigations across the Eastern Region. Warning signs can be individuals not possessing any ID, having a distrust of authorities, living in crowded accommodation, or not knowing or being reluctant to share their home address, and a lack of personal possessions.

In one case, Dan said a family exploited at least 18 men, picking them up from homeless shelters and soup kitchens and using them as labour in a driveway resurfacing business. The 'workers' were housed in cheap caravans, sometimes without proper toilet facilities and only given food when they worked. Examples of where we might find exploitation included takeaway food outlets, building labour and car wash facilities. The latter is such a well-known area for exploited labour that the Clewer Initiative developed a safe car wash app (see <https://www.theclewerinitiative.org/safecarwash>). We are all familiar with discussing slavery historically, but the presentation encouraged churches to become actively involved in the fight against MSHT today, for instance by appointing a Modern Slavery advocate, as we might do for safeguarding or Fairtrade.

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem at Passover – a time to celebrate freedom – serves as a timeless reminder that humankind can only achieve freedom through God. Perhaps this Holy Week, knowing that MSHT crimes are on the increase, it is time to focus on how God's love can help us seek freedom from enslavement and bondage, spiritual and physical, whether for us or others. Michael RJ Topple writes that in Mark 14: 22 - 25 the Lord's Supper is a deliberate connection to the Israelites' escape from the bondage of Pharaoh in the sharing of unleavened bread ('matzah' - Exodus 12. 18ff). In his words, "As we ponder the meaning of Holy Communion, each of us coming with our different slants or angles, let us not forget the deepest and fundamental message of this sacramental Meal: through Jesus Christ, we are set free from the oppression of sin and death."

More at www.togetherfree.org.uk



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Missing your Palms for Sunday? Mary Duxbury's Palm Sunday Pulpit Fall is now in place at Abbey Lane (pictured previous page) with the palm fronds now in place. The Palm Crosses normally given out in church come from around the world. One supplier is The African Palm Project started in 1965 by Rev. Alan John Talbot. After serving as a navigator in bomber command, he went to Oxford University and then was ordained Priest in 1952.

In 1963 he went to Southern Tanzania to work with Bishop Trevor Huddleston. After a visit in 1967 by two English Botanists who confirmed that the bushes of wild reeds around his village were palm, Rev. Talbot thought that the villagers could plait palm leaves into crosses & make some extra money for essentials such as salt. This work wouldn't interfere with their daily routine as farmers and would answer the need for crosses in the UK where cross production in Devon had recently ended. The Palm Crosses proved popular, and when Talbot returned to the UK in 1969, he continued



the project. He was delighted when all denominations started to use the crosses, uniting so many Christians on Palm Sunday. The palms are cut from Dwarf Palms *Hyphaena Coriacea* in an area near

Mbangara, then dried and cut into strips before being taken to the villages by bicycle or on foot. Villagers weave them into Palm Crosses which, being handmade, vary in size from 15-25cm in length. The finished crosses go to a collection point (currently in Mpeteta) then on by road to the ports of either Mtwara or Dar-es-Salaam whence they are shipped to the USA and the UK. After a small beginning, nowadays churches in the USA, Canada, Scandinavia and other European countries buy African Palm Crosses for their Palm Sunday service. You can find a video showing the production of the crosses on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/An9iBfSHbsw> or on the African Palms website www.africanpalms.co.uk

The African Palm Project is now owned by APA, a charity formed in 1985 (no 291988). The charity covenants any profits each year into the trust. The aim of the trust is to support education and healthcare in the area where the crosses are made. They have provided funds towards three



projects including £5300 to complete the Miungo water project in the Mtwara region. They write, "The project was completed in 2014. The water project has been a big success! On a recent visit, villagers told us how it had changed their lives. The headmaster of the local school told us how it had made a big difference to children's education because children were now able to attend school instead of having to go and collect water. In 2015 funds were provided to extend the pipeline to Chipinpinbi."

Easter Eggs for Foodbank (Elfreda TW)

A foodbank volunteer once told me that people forget how much families appreciate being able to give their children treats as well as the basics; that will be true at Easter and Uttlesford Foodbank would welcome chocolate eggs. I plan to take some to the Foodbank next week and will collect from anyone else who would like to do the same. If you would prefer to give a bag of the items listed from the regular Foodbank 'shopping list' that is also very welcome: if you would like me to collect call me on 01799 530175. Please only offer Easter Eggs and those items listed; anything else is already in good supply or not allowed.

- *Washing up liquid
- *children's toiletries
- *plain noodles/pot noodles/super noodles
- *peanut butter
- *tampons
- *long-life fruit juice
- *toilet paper
- *rice pudding
- *dog food
- *deodorant

I will go to the Foodbank on Maundy Thursday which happens to be associated with Easter Eggs in some places: in Sweden children collect coins, sweets or Easter Eggs door to door and in Bulgaria it is a day to colour eggs in preparation for Easter decorations.



and from WhatsApp...



Jo Ford's picture of flowers on the Common

Philip Marns' Cherry Plum Blossom

Gill Howe 'Spring on a Shelf'





PASTORAL LETTER for Sunday 28th March 2021

From Stuart Veitch

Dear Friends

Luke 19: 30 Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter you will find a colt tied, untie it and bring it here

"Stuart, could you collect a donkey for me in your Landover and bring it to church next Sunday?" said John. I should have said "no", but, you know how one always wants to help. So next Sunday I and a friend, found ourselves trying to load a long wheel base donkey into our short wheel base Landrover. Oh, if only ours had been a long wheel base one! He stood with his bum tight against the glass window at the back and his nose just about touching the windscreen at the front, passing between my seat and the passenger's, his head in line with ours. What other drivers must have thought as they followed us and over took us as we drove down Bristol Street, heading for the church that was in the middle of the city of Birmingham.

All this to try to make the story of Palm Sunday come alive to the congregation and particularly to the children. Though it was the adults that needed the help really, they had heard the story so many times, it had lost all its freshness years ago.

It was fresh enough for the disciples. It was glorious, Jesus riding into Jerusalem. At last, the crowd seemed to be recognising who he was. This was going to be a terrific week they thought. And we're his mates; wow!! Of course, I with my friend could not create the chaos of the original event, the donkey was most cooperative as it turned out, though what he really thought about it all I would not like to hazard a guess.

Back then in Jerusalem it was chaos, millions of people pressing into the city, soldiers everywhere trying to prevent political upheaval, nervous priests trying to get rid of this tiresome upstart from Galilea who threatened their whole way of life. It's hard to resurrect all this with just one donkey. But John challenged us all to imagine what it might have been like to have actually been there, and to have felt the atmosphere, and smelt the smells. And here the donkey did help in his own little way, much to the delight of the children!

And this was just the start of the week! What amazing things might happen by the end of the week. The disciples were excited.

How do we get excited when the story is told yet again for the umpteenth time? We have to stop, and ponder, and reflect, and let our imaginations take over. What must the disciples be thinking and feeling as each day came and went? From the triumph of Palm Sunday to the last supper and Gethsemane. Try this week to re-live the events as a disciple, and see what new truths God will share with you. And sorry, I am not getting a donkey for you, you will have to do it all without.

God bless you as you prepare for a hugely unexpected Passover resurrection.

Stuart