



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

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

9 May

## Welcome to our weekly newsletter

### Sunday Service – 9<sup>th</sup> May

Worship Online at 10:30 a.m.

Led by Rev. Roy Fowler

Reflection 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

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 by Karen Start of flowers by Margaret Hearne for private prayer at Abbey Lane



### Returning to worship in person?

As people feel safer after their vaccines and the Covid-19 infection rates continue to drop some of us have even been lucky enough to get away for short stays now that “self-contained accommodation” has re-opened. If progress continues then on 17<sup>th</sup>

May restrictions will lift further, and according to the URC Synod advice churches not yet open – including Abbey Lane – may return to worship in our premises for Pentecost. The “tech team” who have been running Zoom were very touched this week with messages of thanks for what they have done over the lockdown months; we are now trying to work with Roy and Elders to organise the best way to offer worship in church and at the same time at home to those people who are not yet able or wishing to come back in person. This poses some technical challenges and as an example we may need to delay the introduction of live music until we become familiar with new cameras and the sound system. This use of technology will certainly be a

permanent change as with our cameras installed we have the chance to continue ‘streaming’ the service live as well as a recording to our website for anyone in our WEBS family to watch remotely or later if they cannot attend church physically for whatever reason.

We know people are keen to know the details of what is happening over the next few months, but it will take some careful planning to make sure we are set up safely for live worship, and reliably to continue recording and streaming. Please be patient with us – we have a lot to learn!

Abbey Lane Elders will be meeting this week and will be looking at suggestions of how to phase the transition from home-based Zoom to live streamed church-based worship. But whatever we work out at least we will be making the first steps and making a positive change for the future that means more people will be able to experience church even when they can't attend physically. It's not long before 21<sup>st</sup> June when the government hopes to lift restrictions. With patience we just have a short season between Pentecost and midsummer before our services may look, sound and feel more like we remember. Elsewhere in the newsletter there is information about how the national URC Walking the Way group is exploring other uses of technology in our church lives in the future. (Elfreda, Greg and Rhona)

### This week is Christian Aid week:

#### Revelation 7: 16

inspired their teatime prayer (see page 3)

Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat.



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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## Diary Dates

### May 9<sup>th</sup> – 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service for Christian Aid

Diary Date Sunday 9 May at 6.30pm.

Co-hosted by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Christian Aid. In times of extreme challenge, community is born when we stand together. Please join us in prayer and worship. Christian Aid began in response to the refugee crisis following World War II. For 75 years, we have lived out the challenge to stand together with sisters and brothers across the world –join us in celebration, reflection and recommitment to the cause. Please sign up to attend via the Christian Aid website.

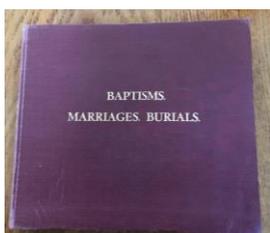
**May 15<sup>th</sup>** – private prayer at Abbey Lane 10am-noon

**May 23<sup>rd</sup>** – live streamed worship for Pentecost from Abbey Lane 10.30am, and via Zoom and YouTube

## Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials (Stephen Rapkin)

Abbey Lane has a rich recorded history with many documents now stored at the Essex Records Office. While this is certainly the best place for them to be preserved for those who wish to investigate the history of our church in the future it is not quickly and easily accessible, necessitating a visit to the ERO Reading Room in Chelmsford.

I have recently removed a number of documents from the iron chests which live behind the pulpit and have now transferred these to the ERO. They included the account book for the Japanese Bazaar of 1906 (I'd been looking everywhere for that!) and some wonderful tradesmen's invoices (paid and stamped I'm pleased to say) from 1893. These would probably be of greater interest to someone researching the commercial history of Saffron Walden than that of Abbey Lane. There was also a membership roll (including 'congregation' – what we would now call 'adherents') from 1950 and a voting slip for a 1960 Deacons' election, listing all those eligible and stating 'TEN to be elected of whom TWO shall be ladies'.



However, there were also two register books – 'Baptisms, Marriages and Burials' – covering the period 1940 to 1990. I felt that these may be of more general interest, although it doesn't appear that anyone's looked at them recently. So, for these I photocopied the contents

and put them into a blue ring binder on the shelf in the photocopier room. If anyone who doesn't have access to the room would like to inspect these please let me know.

## Looking at Online Discipleship

**(Elfreda TW) Recently I attended two sessions run by the URC Walking the Way Steering Group about Online Discipleship.** They are looking at how online technology affected churches during lockdown and whether there are any lessons our churches could take forward about using online technology in our discipleship. Some of the points mentioned using less formal communication tools such as WhatsApp to build and keep church family connected and that in some cases more people are coming to things online than would normally do so in person. The intention is that the Steering Group will gather these thoughts and produce a guide to support churches using technology; the hope is to reach out to people who might not otherwise approach church and support those who are unable to attend worship, study or fellowship in person.

It was noted that online technology has been helpful in running church administration, discussions and meetings: visual aids can be easier to show and interact with online than in-person to help explain points under discussion. It was also agreed that meetings seem to be kept shorter: people are not so keen to stay on line for a long time as for a normal meeting! However, "there is still much to be done on enabling people to disagree well and to be honest without causing tension or upset. We need to build each other up in love as disciples. This can be challenging online."

Looking at the use of technology is a reflection of our church life generally. One comment was that we need to understand the difference between worshipping and being a community of disciples. In some ways online technology has brought church right into our daily lives: "Online has changed church from being somewhere we go to an experience in our home, which has greatly expanded our thinking. Online brings communion and the sharing of bread and wine into our homes." But of course, even with these efforts there was wide agreement that what is missing from online, is the social experience before and after gatherings, as well as during breaks. And we can't have the same awareness of body language or atmosphere in online meetings as with physical meetings. "For these



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reasons, online is still seen by many as second best to physical community and worship. It has enabled things to happen, but not an alternative to physical interaction.” We were left with questions for us to consider such as:

- Will hanging onto digital cause divisions when things open up again physically?
- Our work online has tended to be intergenerational, but will we go backwards if we're not careful?
- How do you help communities which have started online to flourish after lockdown?
- How do we continue to extend Whole-of-life discipleship away from Sunday-morning only.
- We have learnt that people can be excluded online and offline: it can be just as hard for people to make the step of entering a church building as for others to use technology.

The notes from our meetings conclude: “In terms of next steps, sharing best practice seems important. We need to share stories of how technology has been used imaginatively during this time, especially how older people and very young people have been using it through this time. The recovery from Covid will be long, and face to face will come back to people at varying paces. Ultimately, being a disciple online is the same as being a disciple physically. Perhaps a blended model will help us enjoy online and physical more fruitfully... above all, we need grace. Grace is missing from our society, and as disciples of Jesus, we must take the lead in restoring it, both within ourselves and others.”

## Music from Iona

The recently recommended television series about hymns featured, amongst others, John Bell, a minister with the Church of Scotland who also works with the Iona Community. An instrumental of one of his psalm settings (Psalm 46:10) will feature in this week's worship. Should you wish to look it up it is 347 R & S with one line of words: “Be still and know that I am God and there is none beside me.”

## Christian Aid have made the climate crisis and its impact on poverty their focus this year.

You can make a donation in church if you attend private prayer next Saturday when there will be a collection bucket or by contacting Elfreda or Stephen or direct via Alison Jiggins [www.justgiving.co/fundraising/ajiggins-christianaid2021](http://www.justgiving.co/fundraising/ajiggins-christianaid2021) or <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

### Also consider supporting their work through prayer.

**Christian Aid write:** This year is crucial in the struggle for climate justice. To rise to the challenge, we must underpin it in prayer. Prayer that will transform us and our actions, shape our understanding, and help us start anew. Tea is the most consumed drink in the world besides water - and demand is increasing. But climate change threatens its future through temperature rise, drought, floods, hail stones and pest increase. This Christian Aid Week we're highlighting the threat of climate change on tea producers in Kenya. **Pray** with us to see God's creation healed and restored. Grab a cuppa, say our tea-time prayer and post a picture of yourself and your brew at 11am every day during Christian Aid Week.



*God of all of life,  
waiting for the water to boil we confess and lament  
the rise of temperature  
that has led to a climate crisis across this beautiful  
planet. We wait, impatient for change.  
Pouring out hot water  
on loose-leaf or tea bag,  
into teapot or favourite mug,  
we pour out our intercessions  
for a change of heart by politicians to put planet and  
people first.  
Stirring teabag, leaves or sugar  
we ask that you would stir in us  
a passion to take action,  
to do all we can at this critical hour  
to take care of our common home and amplify the call  
for climate justice.  
Drinking that first satisfying sip we give thanks for the  
day when 'they will hunger no more,  
and thirst no more'\*  
Infuse us with a strongly brewed vision of your creation  
healed and restored. **#AmenToClimateJustice**  
\* Revelation 7: 16*

### and from WhatsApp....



Thanks to Janet for re-edging around the gravestones (photo by Jenny Evans)

The Oxford Radcliffe Camera (TW family on trip to visit Phoebe)



Karen Start's photo of flowers at  
Abbey Lane planted by Pat, Marion  
and Janet

## ROY'S LETTER for 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2021

Dear Friends,

'Weeping may linger for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.' (Psalm 30: 5)



How many of us are longing for the joy that comes in the morning? The Covid pandemic has created a long night. For some of us, the dawn appears to be lightening the sky, but for plenty of others around the world, the darkness persists, and even appears to be getting darker.

Covid has not been the only shadow that some of us had had to endure since March of last year. There have been bereavements, illness and accidents, as well as significant life events that have not been celebrated or marked in the expected way.

Our immediate experience is that life is beginning to open up again following the sadly so necessary third lockdown in this country. Some of us are rushing to greet the new dawn, but others of us are creeping out into the open a little more cautiously. There is some joy, but many of us still clinging to the promise of joy to come. I hope all of us are finding some moments of joy to recall with gratitude and finding some reasons to give thanks to God. Jump for joy if you feel able, but also more quietly savour a moment of joy.

The verse from the Psalm I quoted at the beginning of this letter also contains the phrase 'his [God's] favour is for a lifetime'. Joy, the hope of joy, is rooted in God, who manages to hold within his loving care for us both the sorrow and joy of our actual lives. Is not one of the joys of trust in God that we discover that God is with us in both joyful and dark times? As the Easter Season works its way towards Pentecost, we hold in our hearts that Christ is both crucified and risen, and that 'there is nothing in life or death that will be able separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8: 38 & 39).

Alongside the new dawn, there is also a lot of healing, recovering from tiredness, letting go of fear, and putting back together of old routines and establishing new routines that will be needed. In faith, we watch for the dawn. We watch not only for ourselves, but also for each other. And watch too for those for whom the dawn still seems a long way off. 'God takes the vulnerable by the hand to lead them home' (Thom Shuman).

May God lead us all on, both in our joy and our looking for joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Roy', written over a horizontal line.