



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

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

13 June

## Welcome to our weekly newsletter

### Sunday Service

13<sup>th</sup> June

Worship Online and in Abbey Lane  
at 10:30 a.m.

Led by Alison Jiggins

As we are not reaching capacity for attendance  
in person we will no longer require bookings in  
advance at this stage.

Zoom meeting and Passcode details are listed on  
the order of service email 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;  
flowers by Val Bowtle

### Ephesians 1:6 KJV

To the praise of the glory of his  
grace, wherein he hath made  
us accepted in the beloved.

## Our young people have started back at school

for the final half-term of this academic  
year while the older students at Universities are  
tackling end of year or Final exams. Our online Bible

Study group has also started its final work before  
summer break, led by Stephen Rapkin, looking at  
Ephesians. Our Tuesday group is a lively time of  
fellowship and discussion. Below Elfreda puts forward  
some different approaches in scripture study that  
might answer the question,

### “Why take time for Bible Study?”

Enforced lifestyle changes over the last 15 months  
have shown me that it’s possible to reduce my time  
travelling, especially the often daily car runs to work,  
to do the shopping, to do the school run – and thereby  
I have found a little early morning time to read. In the  
first lockdown I often used this for reading the URC  
Daily Devotions which got me back into the happy habit  
of reading the Bible and reflecting on it regularly. This  
year I decided to join Stephen’s Bible Study group. I  
have enjoyed this time with the Bible as a way of  
spending time with God but more and more have  
queried what am I looking for when reading scripture?

Having studied history and politics at university I was  
encouraged not to view the Bible as a literal text of  
truth but as a living document - part history, part  
folklore, part philosophy. In doing group Bible study  
these different strands come out as we grapple with  
what the passage says actually happened and putting  
it in its historic context and asking whether the passage  
offers anything useful for our daily lives - can a  
document of varyingly verified sources, age and origin  
offer insights on life in the 21st century?

Looking for a methodical approach to my reading, I  
discovered the word ‘hermeneutics’, the academic  
term referring to four traditional approaches to study  
of spiritual texts. The Encyclopaedia Britannia explains  
that these are ‘literal, moral, allegorical (spiritual), and  
anagogical’. This gives a structure by which to study  
from different angles. First comes the literal  
understanding of the text: for most of us this equates  
to reading, of course, a translation, and trying to reach  
an understanding of who did what and when in the  
passage, that is what the author was trying to say.  
Sometimes that doesn’t seem very clear so a good

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Revd Roy Fowler	01279 814 809
Church Secretary	
Val Bowtle	01799 526 271
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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 offered pastoral care



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approach is to use Bible notes or even to compare different versions in order to get a clearer view.

Next, we can try a moral approach. As far back as Augustine of Hippo (334-430CE), Christian teachers were seeking lessons within the specific events of scripture writings: what is God or Christ or Paul teaching the characters involved in this passage or parable or letter? This moral approach links to the third strand of 'allegory'. Allegorical interpretation looks for a meaning beyond the people, events and things that are explicitly mentioned. This may view stories and characters as patterns that echo other events. One example is to see the story of Noah's Ark as the pattern by which God wishes to build the Christian Church.

The final approach 'anagogical' is also known as mystical interpretation; this seeks to explain how the events and stories of the Bible relate to or might even predict the future (the future, that is, both to those at the time of writing and maybe those now reading in the current day). Jesus himself urges us to think beyond the present: in Mark 10:28-31 we read, "At that time Peter began to tell Jesus, 'What about us? We have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over... now in this present time and, in the world to come'."

Patrick van der Vorst on his site <https://www.christian.art/en/daily-gospel-reading/816> comments on this passage from Mark, "Jesus always calls us to go beyond the world that is familiar to us and beyond the comforts we have created around us...All of us who want to be close to Christ have something to give up, or something to leave.. [but] that leaving is meaningless unless we know what we are walking towards." Surely reading scripture must be part of discipleship, a way of finding out what we are walking towards?

Joining a Bible Study group has the the advantages of making that happen regularly and of sharing information, opinions, and fellowship. I have certainly enjoyed that but know that not all of us enjoy group study or have the opportunity to join. So, however you read your Bible approaching the text with these simple questions might be helpful:

What is the story? Does another Bible version make it easier to understand?

Is there a direct lesson or advice for the people involved? Does the story illustrate a wider moral point? And finally, has the future at the time of writing now become our present and can we thus see these lessons or morals transferred to our own time, making the Bible "Living"?

## New Book Group

If you are not feeling inclined to join a bible study group perhaps you would enjoy a reading group? Would anyone like to join Elfreda in an online-based prayer and book group. She is aiming to use the URC Daily Devotions as a focus for prayer alongside a monthly book choice and would love some fellow readers! Her planned book choices until year end are 'God is Not a Christian' by Desmond Tutu, 'Celebration' by Dr Margaret Spufford, 'God and Caesar' by Shirley Williams, and 'Jesus is Victor' by Corrie Ten Boom. This is an informal chance to share some faith-oriented reading. We would meet monthly by Zoom (evening) to discuss the books. Contact Elfreda: 01799 528325.

## Diary and notices

**3<sup>rd</sup> July at 9.30am** Janet and Marion are holding a cake and marmalade stall in Emson Close, as a fund raiser for the church. We would be very grateful for offers of help making cakes. We will take orders if anyone has a special request, and will try to oblige.

Janet [01799 527388](tel:01799527388) Marion [01799 523289](tel:01799523289)



**Cards for sale** Gill Howe is making cards £12 per pack of 5 assorted, 50% going to church funds. Designs and colour ways may vary – but Gill says "these are the sorts of things" (photo left). You can reach Gill on WhatsApp.

**URC GEAR from 17 June** – there is another short series of Pray4URC meetings on Thursday evenings

<https://www.facebook.com/Pray4URC>

**Dusting rota** Pat Fisher is drawing up a dusting rota for Church ready for when we are able to resume our former cleaning regime. If you would be willing to help or wish to know more, please give her a ring on 01799 527852. Your turn will come round every four or five weeks; the more volunteers the less often. It will involve brass cleaning once a month too. People work in pairs so there is always someone to chat to while you work. Why not give it a go?



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## Crisis, What Crisis?

Greta Thunberg was interviewed by the BBC this week ahead of the G7 summit and looking ahead to COP26 being held in Glasgow later in the year. She believes that the climate crisis is still not recognised as being an immediate crisis and therefore authorities are not taking appropriate action. She made the comparison with how world leaders have tried to co-ordinate efforts 'rightly' over the pandemic, yet action on the climate crisis has been slow in comparison. Christians have long been advocates for better stewardship of our planet. When Prince Philip established The Alliance of Religions and Conservation in 1995 he sought to encourage faith action in the area of environmental protection. Even earlier than this the Christian missionary Sean McDonagh, prompted by his work in the developing world, posed the question, "How is a disciple of Jesus to respond to the rampant destruction and poisoning of the natural world which, if the current rate continues or increases, will threaten all life on Earth?" (1986 book "To Care for the Earth").

Like Thunberg, Christians are continuing their climate advocacy using the COP26 meeting in November as a focus for action. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland are encouraging churches across Britain and Ireland to hold a 'Climate Sunday' service before the autumn. We plan to hold our own service, involving junior church, on 12th September.

The 'Climate Sunday' campaign is organised by CTBI's Environmental Issues Network, a coalition of major denominations, some Christian orders, and Christian environmental and development agencies. Andy Atkins, chair, says: "The UK will host the COP26 climate talks in November 2021 in Glasgow, so we believe the time has come for all churches across the UK to pray about and act on the climate crisis... Our vision is to leave a lasting legacy of thousands of UK churches better equipped to address this critical issue as part of their normal discipleship and mission." The Climate Sunday campaign encourages churches to do one or more of three things:

- Hold a climate-focused service, to explore the theological and scientific basis of creation care and action on climate, to pray, and to commit to action.
- Make an actual commitment as a local church community to taking long term action to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions.

- Speak up with other churches and the wider society by adding its name to a common call for the UK government to take much bolder action on climate change in this country in advance of COP26. On this point, we will be co-ordinating with Edward Gildea, the Christian Aid Climate Crisis representative in Saffron Walden who is planning a series of local events. We will have more details from Edward next week.

You can check out what is happening nationally for Climate Sunday and Great Big Green Week here:

<https://www.climatesunday.org/>

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/>

And our worship leader this week, Alison Jiggins, has shared this link <https://crackthecrises.org/wave>

**Meanwhile, if you would like to help us organise this service or to help take forward work in becoming an 'Eco-Church' please contact Yin Rapkin or Jo Ford.**

## Prayer from Daily Devotions

*Rev. Lewis-Smith asks that we pray for the strength to stand up to evil of all kinds, reflecting on Martin Luther's words translated into Hymn 585 in Rejoice & Sing by Stephen Orchard: 'And though the worlds seems full of ill, with hungry devils prowling, Christ's victory is with us still, we need not fear the howling. The tyrants of this age strut briefly on the stage: their sentence has been passed. We stand unharmed at last, a word from God destroys them.' Amen.*

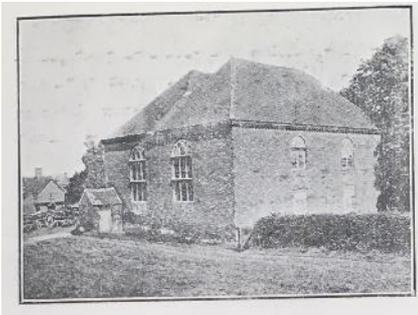


and half-term  
snaps...



Clockwise: Aira Force, Lake District (Yin Rapkin); Swanage sunset (Ruth Fothergill); Christchurch spires, Oxford (Elfreda TW); Peace Globe, Norwich cathedral (Lucinda Bell).





*The answer to Stephen's mystery house last week was the back of the Newport Meeting House*

## **Roy's Letter 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Dear Friends,**

First of all, I am pleased and relieved to inform you that a house is in the process of being purchased for Christine and myself in Chippenham, Wiltshire for our retirement.

I am reading a fascinating book by Alice Roberts called 'Ancestors'. She looks at the what we can learn from various discoveries of ancient human remains around the British Isles from different periods of time. Some of the astonishing things I have learnt are that the earliest human remains in this country are 34,000 years old. Some of our ancestors had dark skins. There was a time when hunter-gatherers lived alongside more settled farmers. I mention these things because I think it is important that we do not lose our sense of wonder and curiosity. The more we know about our universe and our own very small part of it the world, the more wonderful everything seems. The more wonderful the world seems then the more wonderful God seems.

Psalm 8 includes these words of wonder: 'O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory above the heavens ... When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you have established ...' The Psalmist is entranced by the wonder of creation, but had only a fraction of the knowledge we have of the size and the age of everything. We have even more reason to be caught up in the wonder of God. I wonder what has delighted you in the past few days.

Contemplating the vastness in both of the universe in both space and time cuts us down to size. Our being is just a tiny part of the whole. And yet the Psalmist is also aware that being able to be aware of the grandeur of all being singles us out from most of the rest of the universe (I leave open the question as to whether there is other intelligent life in the universe). 'What are mortals that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them. ... Yet you have ...crowned them with glory and honour.' What a great affirmation of the dignity of human beings. What a great affirmation of our own dignity. Dignity that is bestowed upon us by God.

Human dignity can so easily get lost. We can lose sight of our own dignity. We can see people's dignity being robbed from them all the time. Moments of wonder can restore our sense of human dignity. They can also lead us into a greater delight in creation, but also a deeper praise of God, who is the source of all wonder and dignity.

**God bless you all,**



## Order of Service for Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021

At Abbey Lane and online for WEBS Pastorate, 10.30am

**Worship Leader: Alison Jiggins**

**Duty Elder: Stephen Rapkin**

**Theme: God's gardening tips**

**Welcome and introductions**

**Call to worship**

**Hymn: Come let us join our cheerful songs (R & S 382)**

Come, let us join our cheerful songs  
with angels round the throne;  
ten thousand thousand are their tongues,  
but all their joys are one.

'Worthy the Lamb that died,' they cry,  
'to be exalted thus';  
'Worthy the Lamb,' our lips reply,  
'for he was slain for us.

Jesus is worthy to receive  
honour and power divine;  
and blessings, more than we can give,  
be, Lord, for ever thine.

Let all that dwell above the sky,  
and air, and earth, and seas,  
conspire to lift thy glories high,  
and speak thine endless praise.

The whole creation joins in one  
to bless the sacred name  
of him that sits upon the throne,  
and to adore the Lamb.

Isaac Watts *Nativity* (Lahee)

CCLI 214699

**Psalm 92: 1-4, 12-15 – responses in bold**

L How good it is to give thanks to you, O Lord to sing in your honour, O Most High God,

**R to proclaim your constant, love every morning and your faithfulness every night,**

L with the music of stringed instruments and with melody on the harp.

**R Your mighty deeds, O Lord, make me glad; because of what you have done, I sing for joy.**

L The righteous will flourish like palm trees; they will grow like the cedars of Lebanon.

**R They are like trees planted in the house of the Lord that flourish in the Temple of our God,**

L that still bear fruit in old age and are always green and strong.

**R This shows that the Lord is just, that there is no wrong in my protector.**

**Prayers of confession and absolution, followed by the Lord's Prayer**

**Readings: Ezekiel 17:22-24 and Mark 4:26-34**

**Reflection part 1**

*Junior church leave for their own activities and due to Covid19 restrictions will not return to the service*

**Reflection part 2**

## **Offertory prayer (collection at Church exit)**

### **Prayers for others – response in bold**

L supported by the branches of Your Kingdom  
R **may they find justice and live in peace**

### **Hymn: We utter our cry (R & S 642)**

We utter our cry: that peace may prevail,  
that earth will survive, and faith must not fail.  
We pray with our life for the world in our care,  
for people diminished by doubt and despair.

We cry from the fright of our daily scene  
for strength to say "No" to all that is mean:  
designs bearing chaos, extinction of life,  
all energy wasted on weapons of death.

We lift up our hearts for children unborn;  
give wisdom, O God, that we may hand on,  
replenished and tended, this good planet Earth,  
preserving the future and wonder of birth.

Creator of life, come, share out, we pray,  
your Spirit on earth, revealing the Way  
to leaders conferring round tables for peace,  
that they may from bias and guile be released.

Come with us, Lord; love, in protest and march,  
and help us to fire with passion your church,  
to match all our statements and lofty resolve  
with fervent commitment in action involved.

Whatever the ill or pressure we face,  
Lord, hearten and heal, give insight and grace  
to think and make peace with each heartbeat and breath,  
choose Christ before Caesar and life before death!

Fred Kaan     *Uppsala* (Cutts)     CCLI 214699

### **Blessing**