



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

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

20 June

## Welcome to our weekly newsletter

### Sunday Service – 20<sup>th</sup> June

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

**Led by Rev. Roy Fowler**

**To attend in person please be aware that places  
will be limited in accordance with social  
distancing requirements. Face masks are  
required to be worn inside.**

**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 Stephen Rapkin of the Junior Church work from last week's service, now on our notice board at Abbey Lane



**New normal...** At the time of writing the government has announced that current restrictions will not be lifted until 19<sup>th</sup> July. This means that it is likely our

current arrangements for worship will remain largely the same until then with socially distanced and limited numbers attendance. It also means that sadly there is still no congregational singing allowed in church. However, we were pleased that on Sunday thanks to using the new in church sound system for the first time we were able to use spoken responses that people in church and worshipping at home could share, and at home we could hear people in church. Also, for most people watching from home or using the YouTube recording the sound of

the service was improved with the use of the permanent microphones, and for people in church the speakers' voices were once more amplified. We will try to resolve the sound balance for those at home who found the spoken voice too quiet. A couple of people have requested that we keep the Zoom aspect of worship going permanently: as Stephen recently explained it is the intention to keep streamed provision a permanent part of our worship so that we can include anyone unable to attend church physically. Additionally, we also still 'meet' anyone joining from home 'in the vestry' via Zoom, and we will continue that fellowship whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain. Last week we had similar numbers enjoying worship from home and in Abbey Lane, so we are pleased that we can keep both options available.

### ... and 'Let's Keep Covid in Check'

Meanwhile, we have been asked to share the Essex campaign to Keep Covid in Check. This is intended to mark the transition from lockdown restrictions to a new normal, where we can try "to do more of the things we love because we are all still observing Covid-safe behaviours". The aim is to unite Essex residents in a shared responsibility to promote Covid-safe behaviour "in an optimistic, benefits-driven way". The TV adverts feature real people, and are meant to raise awareness of the need to stay safe, focusing on keeping up the good habits we have already taken on board, particularly:

- Hands: wash and sanitise your hands regularly
- Face: wear a face covering in indoor public places
- Space: socially distance where possible
- Vaccine: get your jabs
- Work from home if you can

Alongside these measures the campaign is encouraging people who do not have symptoms to self-test regularly because around 1 in 3 people who have Covid-19 do not have any symptoms, so they could be spreading it without realising. This is particularly important for anyone going out and mixing with others, or who cannot work from home. The recommendation is to do two self-tests a week to make sure they do not have Covid-19. Packs of self-test kits are free from local pharmacies such as Boots.

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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The campaign organisers write that we need to be aware, and ready to deal with, future surges and variants. They conclude, “We’re all depending on each other to stay safe, ...to help protect and show respect to others. Covid-19 is still a real threat – it is lingering silently, waiting to return if we let it... The vaccine isn’t 100% effective so we still need to follow the guidance” but “Together we can keep Covid-19 in check by doing the right things and that means we can enjoy the life we love...Don’t give Covid-19 another chance.”

## Psalm 107: 4-6

### Refugee Week

14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021

*Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress...*



(image c. Marcia Chandra)

<https://refugeeweek.org.uk>

## Reminders for your Diary

21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June ‘It’s Your Move’ see article below

**22<sup>nd</sup> June - Thanks East Anglia:** As part of a review meeting of this year’s Christian Aid week the Christian poet Malcolm Guite will give a 30 minute online performance. Alex Cassidy, our regional rep, says if you would like to watch it will start at around 7.45pm on Zoom meeting ID: 868 3030 8088 Passcode: 275217 or link at <https://christian-aid.org.zoom.us/j/86830308088?pwd=VnFtdHhvVE5GZFVQVmtva1BMdldOdz09>

**27<sup>th</sup> June - collection for Christian Aid at Abbey Lane or from home:** please ask Elfreda for an envelope if you wish to donate but are not at church in person

**27<sup>th</sup> June – 2pm Interfaith Service** for London Climate Action Week, invitation via our local interfaith group. Zoom meeting ID 815 6341 5979 Passcode: 199963 or link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81563415979?pwd=bWNHWXF0enlSS3NRcGlrcEpCNmtnDz09>

**4<sup>th</sup> July - Marion and Pat’s bake sale in Emson Close.** As reported last week please support this fundraising event for our church funds.

**18<sup>th</sup> July - reminder that this will be Roy’s farewell service, to be held via Zoom**

## Calling photographers for the URC

(June edition, URC Communications)

**Do you have a good photo of your church building? Or do you have a keen photographer in your congregation?**

The URC is publishing a calendar of church buildings for 2022 to give a flavour of the length and breadth of the denomination in its anniversary year. From Victorian churches, post-war pre-fabs, to churches opened in the last couple of years - all exterior photos of buildings are welcome. Landscape for preference, but square and portrait images are also invited, by the end of July. JPG or PNG file format. Please include the name of the church and the photographer. No bigger than 3600 pixels wide (which should be around 3Mb) please. Please email them to [andy.jackson@urc.org.uk](mailto:andy.jackson@urc.org.uk) If photos are sent, the photographer is granting the URC permission to use the photographs in print and digitally.



## God’s Garden

Following on from the service on 13th June, for those watching via zoom and YouTube here is a photo of the plants Alison used to illustrate her reflections and for a related song with an

appropriate message, she suggests listening to Eric Clapton's "Let it grow."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIP961nxobQ>

## Big Green Festival Continuing with our considerations of how we can protect God’s creation,

our Christian Aid colleague Edward Gildea is making plans for Saffron Walden to be a hub of activities for [The Great Big Green Week](#). This is a national event, scheduled for 18 - 26 September, intended to raise interest, awareness and political pressure in advance of COP 26. Edward writes: “The aim is for it to be a Festival rather than a protest. Fun rather than political. A way of getting people to feel more connected with the natural world and God’s creation, so that COP 26, the Climate Crisis summit in Glasgow, feels more meaningful and its outcomes better understood in November.

I would very much like the churches of Saffron Walden to get involved. It co-incides very nicely with the Harvest Festival season, but also more urgently because I have just been appointed as a Christian Aid Climate Awareness Organiser with the task of engaging churches of all denominations in the fight for Climate



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Justice. The fight to save the world's poor desperately needs to be won in Glasgow!

I have registered Saffron Walden for a series of events, which are getting uploaded already onto the national system of publicity. The public feed in their postcode and find the nearest events which interest them. This could include the services or other special events you arrange in your church! I would very much like there to be a strong, spiritual dimension to the week."

Val and Elfreda have been in touch with Edward, and he may be able to speak in Abbey Lane this summer or attend our own planned 'Climate Sunday' service on 12<sup>th</sup> September. Planned activities for the Big Green Week in Saffron Walden so far include a River Cam walk and talk, Hedgehog Hospital, 'Adventure, Activism and COP 26', Permaculture in your garden, Apple pressing, Eco-market, Beekeeping with the Mayor, Allotment Open Day, Wildflowers and scything, and much more.

## More Thoughts on Bible Study

Last week Elfreda wrote a piece about 'hermeneutics'. This week Roy offers his insight on reading Scripture in his pastoral letter. Coincidentally, Shawn Martin in the local Interfaith Group has also shared an essay, from David Dickens, on the Bible as the Living Word: "Most people think of the Bible as a very large book. It is in fact a large collection, a library, of many different kinds of documents, written by many different people...The oldest of those documents were written about three thousand years ago, and the most recent about one thousand nine hundred years ago. The society in which the earliest writers lived was very different from that of the latest writers, and our society is very different from either. But they... were human beings created by God, who longed to make sense of their experiences of the world around them... They used all their abilities to reach out towards God, and... those who had the experience of meeting Jesus... became convinced that through him God was reaching out to humanity... I believe that what God asks of us, in studying the Bible, is to use our own God-given abilities to try to understand what [the Bible people] were experiencing and then to relate that understanding to our own experiences and situations. ...The Christian faith is about receiving the promise that the Word of God is with us, vibrantly alive."

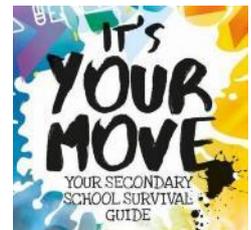
## Prayer

**Lord, give us the humility to admit that children can often teach us the way to live. Help us to see the needs of others and to know that there are times when someone else's needs must come before our own. Amen.** (Judy Merry; Prayers to See You Through Each Day, ed. Wybourn)

## It's Your Move

Stort Valley Schools Trust run a project called "It's Your Move!" It is part of their chaplaincy work and they make visits to year six pupils, to talk to them about moving up to secondary school and all that it entails. They will be visiting fewer schools in comparison to previous years, but we hope the existing relationships with pupils and classes that have been built through chaplaincy, will enrich the session. They have asked for our prayers for the sessions at our local schools:

**Monday 21st June at St Mary's, and Wednesday 23rd June at St Thomas More & Katherine Semar**



## Church Family

We were sad to receive news of the passing of **Bettie Kime** from her son Simon. No doubt many people, especially those connected with the Methodist Church, will remember her as a local preacher and 'a real character' in the words of Meg Nettle. Prayers for her family please, who have said they will keep us informed regarding the funeral.

After catching Covid-19, **Louis and Maribel** write from Bolivia: "Thank you for your prayers and encouragement. We are much better and over the worst. We can now go out but must avoid crowds and we cannot travel for the moment. We are slowly returning to work from home."

## and from WhatsApp....

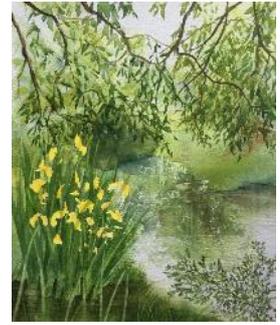


The Bowtles taking a sunny break

Peonies, Audley End by Mary Duxbury



## Roy's Letter, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021



**Dear Friends**

Timothy Verdon, in his book 'Art and Prayer', writes '... [N]ot every text elicits prayer, but only texts that illuminate and give joy.' He is discussing Messina's painting of the annunciation in which Mary is depicted reading scripture (our Old Testament) as she receives her calling from God to bear Jesus into the world. There's not an archangel in sight. Whether Mary was capable of reading scripture is debatable, but it is clear that, according to Luke's version of the annunciation, the gift of Christ to her both brought joy and insight into God's purpose. Later, of course, the gift of Christ would cause confusion and sorrow to Mary.

Most of us are privileged that we can pick up our Bible and read it. I expect most of us have mixed experiences of this. Some passages do bring joy and illumination, even inspiration. As Verdon goes on to say, they open us to Christ. But that isn't always our experience – even with study aids, other passages leave us confused and we fail to find any great spiritual insight or uplift in them. They do not open us to Christ.

Like many preachers, over the years, I have consulted the lectionary to find out what the appointed readings for the coming Sunday are meant to be. It is fair to say that some weeks, I do not find immediate joy or illumination in them. What can I say on the basis of one of these texts that will speak to me and to the congregation this coming Sunday? It is not recent problem. I am just old enough to remember when preachers would often begin their sermon with a text – maybe a verse or just a phrase. It might not even come from one of the readings. They were searching for a starting point to speak a word from God for the moment. This was well taken off by Alan Bennett in his 'Beyond the Fringe' sketch 'My brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a smooth man'. In his case, he goes on to deliver a series of anecdotes and very general reflections on life that have absolutely nothing to do with the text or with Christian faith. No wonder that it was used in college as a humorous example of how not to preach. All this illustrates why we read scripture: we believe it will bring us close to Christ, strengthen our faith, and help us to shape our lives according to the way of Christ.

Beyond the written word of scripture, there is a living word, Christ. And this is why as a preacher, I have never given up on reading scripture. For when we prayerfully approach scripture, something of Christ is revealed to us. There are times when that shines out easily. There are times when it is more hidden, and it is alright to accept that there are texts that do not lead us to Christ. The United Reformed Church affirms that the word of God is discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit to connect us to the living Christ who still can bring us joy and inspiration. Every time we read scripture, we believe this to be a real possibility.

In communion with Christ, I wish you joy and peace,

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