



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

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

18 July

## Welcome to our weekly newsletter

### Sunday Service – 18<sup>th</sup> July

**Worship Online at 10:30 a.m.**

**Led 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.

Tina's spot the difference from last Sunday, all age worship



### Spot the difference?

Tina spoke on Sunday about change using this photo challenge:

in a year often described as 'unprecedented' sometimes there hasn't been an easy answer to the question as rules change back and forth. However, we do know that we will spot the difference next week as we say farewell to our minister Rev. Roy Fowler and his wife Christine (although she officially was already retired!). We also know that from Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July Covid-19 restrictions are largely lifted which may make a difference to our daily routines. Concerning the first event **we will say farewell to Roy by sharing worship once again as the WEBS Pastorate via Zoom**, with an online presentation after the end of the service. Please note that we will therefore not worship in person at Abbey Lane this week. With regard to the lifting of restrictions, Church Meeting on Sunday accepted our **Elders' proposal that we only make cautious changes to our current worship arrangements** for Abbey Lane. Reassuringly the guidance that subsequently emerged from Synod was very much in line with this. In summary, from the 1<sup>st</sup> August we will resume use of

live music, but will restrict hymns to three each service. We will allow congregational singing, but masks must continue to be worn indoors at all times. There will not be refreshments after the service, but attendees are welcome to gather to chat outside. We will continue to use social distancing inside the church and have sanitizer available. Hymn books will remain in the pews for quarantine purposes, and we will not yet use pewsheets. We have seen a considerable number of Covid-19 cases and isolations locally, including in our own church family, and the Elders will review these arrangements mid-August. Val Bowtle attended the worship leaders' meeting for Churches Together in Saffron Walden, and others are also treating the lifting of restrictions with caution.

### Song of Songs 6:11

I went down to the grove of nut trees  
to look at the new growth in the valley,  
to see if the vines had budded  
or the pomegranates were in bloom.



### Further news from Church Meeting

**Changes to worship from home will coincide with the return of live music and singing in church.** From 1<sup>st</sup> August, the live streaming of services will switch to YouTube only. This makes operating the stream simpler for our volunteers! The recording will be available weekly. The Zoom Meeting before and after worship will be arranged in future as needed for individuals, but we hope that as restrictions lift and infection rates go down, we will be able to meet at church or visit anyone who is housebound.

If you are worshipping from home there will not be the music slides because music will be live from church; initially the hymn words will be circulated with the Order of Service in advance, by email or print as required, but please ask your Elder if you would like to borrow hymn books for use at home in future.

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 offering pastoral care



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

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

18<sup>th</sup> July

**The weekly newsletter:** this will take a break over August until 12<sup>th</sup> September. An order of service will be sent out weekly. Then from September, Church Meeting agreed that we should trial a shorter weekly newsletter which will include the Order of Service. In future we hope also to make better use of our website for worship resources. Please, if you do not have online access or technology such as smart phones, computers or printers let us know so we can make sure you receive printed versions. Phone 01799 528325 or email [contact@saffronwaldenurc.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:contact@saffronwaldenurc.onmicrosoft.com).

As more of us return to church, work and socialising in person let's remember these words from the Synod Moderators in April: **“When restrictions start to be lifted it is essential to recognise that people are in different places on their own journey out of lockdown...For some the wounds of the pandemic will take a long time to, or may never, heal. We must continue to support and love everyone for who they are and their own individual situations.”**

Church meeting also discussed the need for pruning and removing some trees close to the building and received our treasurer's report. Below [Stephen Rapkin](#) gives more information about the finances.

**Projections for 2022 and our contributions to “M & M”** If you were at Church Meeting, you will already know that the URC has now told us what level of Ministry and Mission Fund contribution it is seeking for the second half of this year and, then, for 2022.

We are asked to think of this as a freewill offering by our church to help with the essential work and costs of our denomination. Because of the way the URC is structured this can seem a little confusing. The reality is that by far the largest share (81%) of the M&M Fund pays for stipendiary ministers and Church-Related Community Workers, all of whom are paid centrally. Other significant funding is needed for the training of ministers, ministers' pensions and retirement housing.

So how much will this cost us? Immediately, from July 2021, our M&M contribution will increase from the 'special' low covid rate of £1,500 p.m. to 2,000 p.m. Then, in 2022 it will rise to £2,333 p.m. This scheme, by which regular monthly payments are requested from local churches, is known as 'Fairshare'. Why? because the objective is that support of the denomination and our ministers should be shared *fairly* between all the

churches of the URC. Sadly, some URC churches have closed in recent years and this, of course, puts greater demands on those that remain.

Can we afford this? We will need to examine carefully our finances in terms of both income and expenditure. I have circulated a preliminary projection for 2022, just to get us thinking about these issues. All of us have some responsibility for the finances of our church, so all of us should get involved in preparing and committing to a budget for 2022. We should not think of this as a negative exercise. A budget will enable us to prepare for and enable our mission and ministry objectives and can, at the same time, help us to focus more generally on what really matters in the life of our church.

The Treasurers of the URC have sent a letter of thanks to all churches who have contributed to the M&M Fund during the difficult times of the pandemic, and we are including a copy of their letter in this Newsletter. Thank you, once again, for your generous support of Abbey Lane and continuing generosity throughout the pandemic.



## More great fundraising!

Mary Brooks and Karen Start held their first church book stall last Saturday aided by Marion Barker.

They were delighted by not just good sales but very generous donations raising in total £150. Thank you to them all for their hard work and to everyone who supported the stall.

## Reminders for your Diary

- 18<sup>th</sup> July** Farewell Service on Zoom for Roy Fowler
- 25<sup>th</sup> July** Tina Wilson leads her last service at Abbey Lane before training for the Ministry from September
- 1<sup>st</sup> August** Rev Michael Lovegrove will lead Abbey Lane worship including the celebration of Holy Communion, with live music (organist John Evans)
- 4<sup>th</sup> September** Coffee morning in aid of the ~Friends of Essex Churches Trust~ (FOECT)
- 11<sup>th</sup> September** Saffron Walden Bible Focus. Speaker Rev Rob Hudson “Get Ready!”



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

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

18<sup>th</sup> July



**12<sup>th</sup> September** Eco-Church service for Climate Sunday, led by our young people, and Eco-church volunteers

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>**

**September** Heritage Open Days at Abbey Lane

Details on September events will follow next week.

**Bible study concludes** The Bible study group has continued to meet on Tuesday morning for lively discussion via Zoom on Ephesians. Val Bowtle shared these short but helpful study notes on **Ephesians 3:18**

*God's love is total. It reaches every corner of our experience.*

*It is wide – it covers the breadth of our own experience, and it reaches out to the whole world.*

*It is long – it continues the length of our lives.*

*It is high – it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation*

*It is deep – it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair and even death.*

*When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God's love.*

Stephen is considering ways in which to continue Bible Study after the summer break. Elfreda is still planning to run a monthly book group via Zoom if you would like to join her reading some faith based books such as "Celebration" by Dr Margaret Spufford. You can leave a message for either of them on the numbers listed on the front page or via the vestry phone.

## Church Family

Marion Barker writes: 'It is with sadness we announce the death of **Ray Jenkins**, who farmed at Little Walden. Ray and his late wife Anne were connected to Abbey Lane for a great many years with some very happy memories. Ray was always keen to welcome people to the farm taking the tractor and trailer around at Christmas visiting outlying farms to sing carols, or entertaining the Church Ramblers group for lunch. He made many generous donations including a Meat Voucher every year for the Winter Fair Raffle, and supplying the turkeys to the Salvation Army for their Christmas Lunch. The funeral is to be at Cam Valley Crematorium on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July at 11am.'



**Christine Fowler sent** this card to Val thanking us all for her book tokens and saying how much she had enjoyed working with Abbey Lane.

**News from Bolivia:** Louis and Maribel report that they have recovered well themselves from Covid-19. However, vaccination rates are only around 18%. They ask us to pray for those ill with coronavirus and for vaccines to arrive and be distributed. They give thanks for the Operation Shoebox gifts (pictured) that have helped local children. Sunday school teachers will distribute more of the boxes on 21<sup>st</sup> July at a village 2 hours away from Potosi.



Congratulations to **Val and Ken** whose great niece Kasia has graduated in History with a First Class degree.

Our recent collection for **Christian Aid** raised £170

**Pray for our young people** and their parents, carers and teachers: a number of them have been subject to disrupted events at the end of their school and college year, with several having to go into isolation, as numbers of reported Covid cases have been widespread at local schools and in universities. These lines from a prayer shared by Meg Nettle from her daughter's school seem appropriate:

*'May the Lord make my year ahead a happy one... Not by shielding me from difficulties and challenge, but by strengthening me to bear it if it comes... Teach me grace that I may walk with strength. Teach me goodness that I may walk with those in need.'*

## From WhatsApp...



Val Bowtle's colourful windowsill (left)

Gill Howe's Seaside



## ROY'S LETTER for 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Friends,

The roses have bloomed well this year. Both our domestic roses in our gardens and the wild dog roses in our hedgerows. Although as I write this, the first flush seems over, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that there are more roses to come. In the meantime, our hollyhocks are making a bold attempt to grow higher than the plum tree. A few weeks ago, I took this picture on one of my walks – it's a dog rose. Look carefully and you will see that, as well as the rose in the foreground that has begun to drop its petals, there is also a new bud just about to open.



To my mind, it speaks of both endings and beginnings.

This week end marks the end of my ministry with you as well as forty years in full-time ministry. I could say a lot about those years again, but in previous letters I have already said most of what I would want to say about them. It is enough to note that it is an ending, but it is also a beginning. It's an ending and looking back and realising that God has been with me and sustaining me in ministry. It is also a beginning when I look to God to reveal what being faithful in the future will mean. 'I'll thank him for all that

is past and trust him for all that is to come.' And thank you for being companions in the service of God these last seven years.

There will be more continuity for you as churches – you are in the same places with the same people. I shall steal off the scene and you will still have your church life. In different ways, all the churches in WEBS are looking to the future of their mission as God's people. I have every confidence that God is with you in both your seeking of God's call and you responding to God's call. There are buds awaiting to blossom. During the pandemic you have grown closer together in WEBS and I pray that will continue. As you begin to look for ministry in the future, I hope that you will find God guiding you into that future, and that when you are able to actively seek that person, I pray that God will lead the right person to you.

Since March of last year, the road has been bumpy to say the least. We have been in and out of lockdown and regulations have been constantly changing. No-one has been unaffected by the upheaval. We've all had to adjust and re-adjust. The miracle of vaccines developed and delivered within a year of the pandemic's start appears to be the way out of this all. We have done well in this country at getting people vaccinated, and the situation gets better every day. It's now important that vaccines are got to every nation. And we cannot give up on pursuing other matters of peace and justice in the world. Whether or not next Monday proves to be the start of an irreversible move back to a normal life, we are seeing the buds of hope that eventually we will emerge into a future where at last the Covid 19 virus is contained.

I first started writing this weekly letter when we went into the first lockdown in March of last year as a way of maintaining contact with as many people as possible. I also hoped, whether we were able to worship or not, to provide some spiritual support to everyone. I am grateful to those who have supported me in this, Tina, Caroline, Alison and Stuart who have provided the content some weeks, as well as those who have helped with distribution. This will be my last letter, and with it comes my prayer for you that God will continue to support you in the ups and downs of life, and that whenever you experience the petals of your rose dropping, you will also find a bud of hope.

God be with you all and bless you all,



**LETTER SHARED BY STEPHEN RAPKIN FROM:  
The United Reformed Church Finance Committee**

**To: All members and adherents of  
United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships**

It would be fair to describe the year-and-a-bit since March 2020 as having been “different”, wouldn’t it? Lots of us have experienced loss of loved ones, loss of income and perhaps jobs. All have experienced periods of lockdown; periods without ‘non-essential’ shops; and continuous and extensive disruption to our ‘normal’ social interactions and relationships. The world we thought we understood and could take for granted has been utterly transformed. How many of us imagined at the start of 2020 that we could go months without a haircut or without people not in our ‘bubble’ entering our homes?

As members of United Reformed Church congregations ourselves, we understand much of what your church community has experienced since March 2020. The absence of what is now regularly labelled “in-person worship” for much (or all) of this time has compelled us to turn to other ways of being church. Buildings in which we used to praise God regularly have been shut, both to regular worshipers and others who might have sought solace within their walls during these desperate and troubling times. It has been hard to maintain close fellowship with people we only meet over Zoom (or the like) – if we are digitally enabled.

Financially, things have been extremely tough too. Plate offerings have collapsed; some regular givers have had to reduce or entirely stop giving to support God’s work; and those churches which hire out their premises have seen income from that source disappear.

At denominational level, we feared that these financial troubles would spell disaster for the URC’s Ministry and Mission (‘M&M’) fund through which the URC has always supported and developed our stipendiary ministers and Church Related Community Workers. It would have been all too easy for congregations to forget that for almost 49 years this fund (under various names) has provided stipends, pension contributions and training for all ministers throughout the three nations in which the URC operates: so that ministry reaches where synods judge it to be most needed and is paid for according to each congregation’s ability to contribute (though the ways of determining that vary from synod to synod). It was all very well to remind ourselves that the M&M fund is meant to be the first call on every congregation’s resources if the undertaking to financially support our ministers is to be honoured. We feared that drastically reduced income would make that impossible and that, because the need was less visible than the other calls on your diminished resources, payments to the M&M fund would have stopped first.

We are sorry if we ever doubted you.

It quickly became apparent that, although some congregations had to reduce their pledged giving to the M&M fund, many more of you were continuing to meet the 2020 commitments you had made during better times, despite the struggles that required. At the start of that year we had been expecting churches and synods to contribute around £18.5 million to the fund. By the year end, all but half-a-million pounds of that had been received. Since Church House staff and committees managed to reduce their budgeted expenditure by almost £1 million, your money enabled us to meet the full costs of our Ministries, Education & Learning, Children’s and Youth Work and Mission departments in 2020 as well as covering amounts spent on safeguarding, denominational governance and communications.

What is perhaps even more amazing is that, collectively, you have pledged to give £17.3 million during 2021 despite the financial problems caused by the pandemic being fully apparent well before your offers for this year were made.

We are always grateful for the financial support given each year to the M&M fund by all of you; but this past year has been phenomenal.

Thank you to those of you who have been able to maintain or increase financial support for your church congregation through this difficult time. That has enabled those responsible for your congregation's finances to keep more money flowing to the M&M fund than we expected.

Thank you for all your previous financial support to those of you who, after prayerful consideration, have had to reduce or stop giving in response to your changed financial circumstances.

Thank you for the pledges your congregation has made about contributing to the M&M fund during 2021 even though you were by then aware of the impact the pandemic was having on your local congregation's finances.

Thank you in anticipation for what you agree to offer to the M&M fund during 2022 to enable the denomination to deliver ministry, education and learning, children's work and mission activity on God's (and your) behalf.

We are aware that synods have played a significant part in encouraging and supporting many congregations with their contributions to the M&M fund. We have separately written to Synod Treasurers to express our thanks to them and their colleagues too.

Of course, our giving for God's work is in response to the amazing generosity and love of God which we see in Jesus. Nonetheless, it is important for us to thank every one of you for what you do for God, your congregation and its and our denominational finances.

### **Thank you!**

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

**Ian Hardie (Treasurer) and John Piper (Deputy Treasurer)**

**- On behalf of the whole United Reformed Church Finance Committee**

The United Reformed Church was created by church unions in 1972, 1981 and 2000, facilitated by Acts of Parliament passed in each of those years. It has a number of associated bodies: The United Reformed Church Trust (URC Trust) is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (Registered Number: 135934); it is also a registered charity (Registration Number: 1133373). The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pensions Trust Ltd is a limited company registered in England & Wales (Registered Number: [2821011](#)). The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd. is a registered Community Benefit Society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (Number 15986R). The Registered Office for all the aforementioned bodies is Church House, [86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT](#). This message does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, policies or procedures of the United Reformed Church, or any of the members of the Group, and does not give rise to any contract, undertaking or agreement. This message is private and confidential. If you have received this message in error, please notify us and remove it from your system.