



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

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

4 July

Welcome to our weekly newsletter

Flowers by Margaret Howell last Sunday

Sunday Service – 4th July

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

Led by Rev. Christine Fowler

The service will include the sacrament of Holy Communion: if you are attending face to face please bring your own bread, glasses of wine will be provided in the pews.

If you are joining us on-line please have your bread and wine available.

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.

Join us at church meeting (Elfreda TW)

Our next Church Meeting will be at noon Sunday 11th July. Unfortunately, because Covid-19 restrictions have not yet lifted once again this will be via Zoom. The meeting ID and password will be as for Zoom church, which you can find on the weekly Order of Service. I would encourage anyone who regularly worships at Abbey Lane to Zoom or phone in. It's an important part of how we operate practically, but also spiritually reflects the basis of our life of faith. This came out during Bible study this week when we looked at Ephesians 4: 1-16, headed up 'Equipping the church.'

We were discussing the skills and attributes that are needed and encouraged in a church: 'the whole body...grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work' reminding us that every member can bring some gift. This in turn drew comments about the reformed tradition of the Communion of All Believers - that building up the church is not the work of 'clergy' but of each member - and thence the Church Meeting.



I decided to refresh my understanding about Church Meeting by consulting the URC Manual. It states that the oversight of the United Reformed Church shall be 'the concern both of the Local Church and wider representative councils' which are listed as the Church Meeting and the elders' meeting of each Local Church; the area meeting; the Provincial Synods of England or National Synod of Wales & Scotland; and the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church. These four parts each have specific consultative, legislative and executive functions assigned them.

The Church Meeting gives members 'through... responsible decision' the opportunity 'to strengthen each other's faith and to foster the life, work and mission of the Church.' The Meeting 'shall meet at least once a quarter' and members plus regular worshippers may speak at meetings (but only members may vote). 'Functions' allocated to the Church Meeting are split between 'the outgoing of the Church' and 'the nurture of fellowship'. They range widely from considering the Church's mission in the locality, and public questions in relation to the Christian faith, to the more practical concerns such as electing elders, officers, and representatives, and 'oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the Local Church...on the recommendation of the elders' meeting'. In conclusion, the Church Meeting is our chance to follow and contribute to the development of our church. I hope that you will be encouraged to join us again on-line in July. Details of the purposes of the Church Meeting here: https://urc.org.uk/images/the_manual/B-The_Manual_-_Section_B-2019.pdf

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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Psalm 16: 11 A song of Confidence

You will show me the path that leads to life, your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure for ever.

Picture Stephen Rapkin; Junior Church Climate Crisis Poster

What is Truth?

In this article, shared on the local Interfaith Network, David Dickens share his thoughts:

What is truth? Now there's a big question! There's a TV show named "Would I lie to you?" where two teams compete to tell each other something that happened to them – the winning team is the one which guesses more often what are lies and what is true. Faiths and philosophies declare that they know the truth about the meaning and purpose of existence. Scientific research seeks to discover the truth about the nature of the universe and of life.

In the Gospel of John in the Christian Bible we read that when Jesus was on trial before the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, Pilate challenged Jesus about a claim he had been told had been made by Jesus: "Are you the king of the Jews?". That would be a valid charge against Jesus; only through the Roman Emperor could rulers of subject nations be appointed. Jesus replied "My kingdom is not of this world. I was born into the world to be a witness to truth". The cynical politician Pilate remarked, without waiting for an answer: "What is Truth?".

In a Court of Law, the purpose of a trial is to consider all the evidence of what happened at a particular time and place, or over a period of time. Witnesses speak about what they feel sure they saw or heard. Expert evidence is presented and contradicted. Prosecution and Defence are given their say. Eventually a decision is reached on the balance of probabilities between prosecution and defence as to what happened when and why, and the accused is acquitted or convicted. But was the result true?

Public Enquiries are set up to decide what happened to cause a situation to develop which led to very serious consequences. Eventually lengthy reports are published in which the probable causes and consequences are set out. But are they "the truth"?

About 30 years after the trial of Jesus before Pilate, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christian converts in the city of Philippi. These were people who had accepted what Paul taught them about the nature and purpose of Jesus Christ and the ways in which their lives should express what they had learnt. The letter was in Greek, and translations vary. But Paul's words can be expressed this way: "Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely. Reflect on what you can see is praiseworthy. Show by the way you live everything you learned from me. Do all this and you will know peace, the peace of God".

So, I end with two questions: might the principles described by Paul to the Philippians be nearer to being a valid answer to the question "What is truth?" than our attempts to establish the reality of events and situations? How far are those principles expressed through other faiths and philosophies, and provide common ground?

Reminders for your Diary



THIS SATURDAY 3rd July – Bakes and Marmalade at 9.30am, Emson Close
Janet and Marion are hoping for a fine day on Saturday when they are having their Cake, Pie and Marmalade stall in Emson Close. This is a fund raiser for the church; please support if you can, we will open at 9.30am.

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

10th July – Car Park Book Sale at Abbey Lane. Elfreda TW, Mary Brooks and Karen Start have begun the task of sorting all the books we have been given. So far Elfreda has gone through donations from the Lukes and Caroline when they moved, and Mary and Karen have gone through 1/3 of the books in the hall cupboard. So, we will hold a table-top sale of the first batch next week – times to be confirmed.

11th July – as per article above, Church Meeting

18th July – Roy's last service: all WEBS by Zoom



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Joey joins the Tech Team

Last Sunday, Joey Hughes joined Greg Watson up in the tech gallery for a final look at how the sound system and camera works. This weekend, as the TW family take a break, Joey will be 'driving the 'desk' solo so we wish him all the very best. Tina Wilson has kindly offered to be the Zoom host at home so as usual you can join the Zoom meeting pre-service from around 10.15 to say hello. Val Bowtle will be in the vestry with Christine Fowler to welcome you. John Ford is the next person lined up to learn how to operate the system and



do a live stream for a service. Next weekend, Greg is hoping to get the second camera working so our technical systems are nearly completed for this stage. And in a few weeks we will have three people trained up! So the final stages are

Joey going solo 4th July, 2nd camera trial 11th July, John Ford solo 25th July. And, of course, it is Zoom service from home 18th July for Roy's farewell. The 25th will be Tina's last service with us, and she has asked for the virtual choir to record one particular hymn – we shall ask her to explain why...

This means that we are aiming to have live music back in church from 1st August; we pray this will coincide with the lifting of some more Covid-19 restrictions to enable congregational singing, but regardless of that from August we will use live instruments and John Evans will once again join us at the organ.

Church Family

Cath Sladen has written to us as follows:

Dear Friends at Abbey Lane,
Greetings to you all from Knaresborough, North Yorkshire. My husband John and I moved during the first relaxation of lockdown in June 2020 and we are happily and comfortably settled here. We can enjoy town living, a new convenience for us, have lovely new walks and local history to learn and we have lots of our family aged 3-93 living locally. We have friendly neighbours and have discovered many safe outdoor spaces during this last year!

You will know that at the closing of Castle Street Methodist Church in April 2014 I was one who joined your membership as part of the successful ecumenical partnership between our 2 churches and Abbey Lane became my home. I want to thank you all for being my church family during those years.

These last 16 months of the pandemic have impacted on all aspects of society. I have been able to retain a digital link with Abbey Lane during this time which has been invaluable whilst I wait to connect with a new church here. Now, as church services are safely resuming, may I wish you all very best wishes as we look ahead to more freedoms, spontaneity and reuniting with friends.

Prayer from the Methodist Handbook, Jakob Bohme (1575 – 1624)

Let your word be in our mouth, O Lord, your truth in our heart and your will in our mind. Let us think only what is good and discern your presence in all that we do. Let us at all times be alive to the promptings of your Holy Spirit; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

and from WhatsApp....



Meg Nettle has been working hard creating thank you cards for teachers at her daughter's school



Stephen Rapkin made sure the church was suitably decorated for our Christian Aid celebration service last Sunday; the collection is in quarantine and will be counted soon but thank you for the many envelopes given.



ROY'S LETTER for 30th June 2021

Dear Friends,

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.*



William Blake: "Auguries of Innocence"

Sometimes, it can seem like the present moment overwhelms us. The e-mail in-box needs dealing with. The class needs to be taught. The meal needs cooking. The meeting needs attending. The deadline needs to be met. I am sure that you can add your own pressure of the moment. Sometimes, they can all come at once. The grace of the present moment seems like, 'Just get me through to bed-time.'

Timothy Verdon, who I quoted a couple of weeks back in my letter, also has this to say: 'Through the use of material things, whose function is part of daily life – a bit of bread and wine, water, a candle – the liturgy [worship] unites the experience of life in the present to the past and future, consecrating to Christ not only the single season of existence with their particular aspirations, but all of time and all of life.' (Art and Prayer) Bridges are built in worship between our daily living with all its many occupations and our life in God. The ordinary is filled with the divine, and a moment is blessed with eternity.

In our worship, as in our private devotions, we occupy a precarious space that hovers between what is going on in our own lives and in the world around us at that present time and our realisation that any particular moment of time is part of God's one moment of time. This is both an exciting place to be – every moment is filled with God's possibilities. It is also a risky place to be – every moment might just collapse into itself. I think we all know days which seem charged with meaning and others that make us wonder why we bother.

The past fifteen months or so has had days for me, when I have asked myself, 'what am I doing?' I, like you, have found myself doing normal things in abnormal ways, and bits of normality have dropped out of sight. Have they been absent of God? I have trusted they are not.

At the centre of our faith is the cross. What this communicates to us is that there is no moment, however preoccupying or even dark, that is beyond the reach of God. This is what we hold onto in worship and prayer, and ordinary things like 'a bit of bread and wine, water, a candle' or even 'a grain of sand' or 'a wild flower' can help us bridge the gap.

God Bless You,