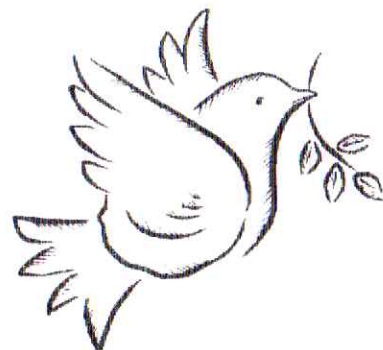


Proclaiming the Gospel. Growing in Faith  
Reaching out in Service

# CONNECT NEWSLETTER

for  
**Abbey Lane URC**  
*incorporating*  
**Saffron Walden  
Methodist Church**



February 2025

Dear Friends,

The Christmas celebrations are over, the decorations packed away for another year. Have we got plans for 2025? Already a month has passed, but we can look forward with hope and gratitude to becoming part of a new Mission partnership, thanking God for leading us north towards Cambridge. We pray also for the other churches in the group, Clare, Sawston, Thaxted and Whittlesford, asking that we may use and share our resources and support each other as we work for the glory of God.

In the last service of the year 2024 we reflected on the past twelve months and its ups and downs. Over the last three months we have had difficulties and challenges to face. Two Bible passages from recent services led by Stuart and Alison have resonated with me. In Matthew 11 Jesus says, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' Although we are mostly of an age where we cannot physically do as much as we would like there are ways around it.

In January we took part in a worthwhile Forum led by Nigel Uden. I had been asked, along with the other four secretaries in our new Mission Partnership, to find out what we need from our Minister. Our conversations helped us to realise how much we can do ourselves and enabled us to focus on what our needs really are. If we can agree on how to deal with immediate concerns, then we will have the time and energy to focus on reaching out to the community and developing our faith journeys.



In Colossians 3 we are reminded of the many Christian virtues and verse 14 sums up by saying, 'And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all in unity.' By all working together and putting our trust in the Lord we can weather the storm and find calm waters again.

By the time you read this we will be about to or have just met our new Minister Revd Phil Nevard who will lead worship on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Let us pray that it will be the beginning of a new phase in the life and work of our Church family at Abbey Lane.

Warm wishes,

Val

On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January we hosted the **United Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**. It was well supported by about 180 people, we just squeezed them in. Alison and Julia had prepared a wonderful all-inclusive service with every Church in SW Churches Together contributing. "The thing that unites us" was the theme and there was a variety of music and singing. I sat with a family from the Community Church and the two young boys, Joshua and Barnabas, joined in very rhythmically with their drumsticks during the hymns and songs. It was lovely to have a section of St Mary's choir to sing for us too. There were many positive comments. Our ladies did us proud and had set out the hall amazingly. The home-made biscuits went down a treat, there cannot have been many left. The site was empty by 12.45pm so well done everyone!

Val

*From Caroline Vodden -*

As I write storm Darragh is making its way across the North York Moors. Our Chapel service has been cancelled owing to strong winds and flooded roads, so I'm staying home and taking the opportunity to write my Christmas letter to family and friends before I fly off to a snowy Canadian Christmas with Alice and Stuart.

Stuart and Alice have been living in Ottawa since February where Stuart is on a year's secondment from the Foreign Office. I spent a wonderful five weeks with them in the summer and we had a fabulous two weeks touring Vancouver Island and the Rockies, driving a huge RV (motorhome) along the Sea to Sky highway, through Jasper and Banff National Parks and finishing with a day at the Calgary Stampede. Wildlife highlights included humpback whales, bald eagles, black bears and a mother grizzly with two cubs - which caused a major "bear jam" on the highway.

Alice and I took another trip, this time by rail and coach to visit Paul's twin brother Christopher and his wife Susan in Chicago, stopping off in Toronto to enjoy a memorable day at Niagara falls. My final weekend coincided with Stuart's birthday when we took a trip to Montreal and were wowed by the Cirque du Soleil's amazing show "Kurios" in its home city.

This was my second holiday in quick succession as I had spent most of May in Scotland, visiting friends on the way there and back. A week with Yorkshire friends in a shared house near Oban, walking and music making, was followed by a solo tour of the Outer Hebrides in my camper van, working my way up from Barra and Vatersay to the northernmost tip of Lewis. Memorable highlights included a boat trip to St Kilda, golden and white tailed eagles, puffins and great northern divers, otters and dolphins, awesome and varied scenery, glorious swims from white sandy beaches and fabulous weather.

I



In August I was back in Scotland to conduct the wedding of friends Ishbel (Luke) and Joshua at Glasgow University Chapel - my first Scottish wedding! I am now an associate minister with the Methodist Church and continued to work on plans for the repair and refurbishment of our little Glaisdale Head Chapel.

"Come and sing" days in York and Beverley, a weekend singing choral works at St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, and performances with local choirs of Stainer's Crucifixion and Requiems by Luigi Cherubini and Ethel Smyth have filled my year with music. Hedge laying at Bank House Farm, cycling with Paul's siblings, climbing Wainwrights in the Lake District, another successful Whitby Regatta sea swim, regular Ranger patrols on the Moors, and weekly yoga and Pilates have kept me fit and well. It has been lovely to see many of you this year and I now have a beautifully resurfaced parking and terrace area awaiting your visits in 2025.

Wishing you love peace and joy for Christmas and the new year,  
Caroline.

### Family news.

Mary and Jim Getty now living in Portsmouth have recently become great grandparents. Bethan has given birth to a little girl, Jesse Mary.

Violet Ashford, a former Church Secretary, sends her good wishes to anyone who remembers her.

### A Line or Two of Verse ...

Alison has suggested that Abbey Lane might like to start a Poetry Group (with the intention of studying rather than writing, although who knows...?!).

This suggestion reminded me of a (very long) poem mentioning Valentine's Day that I came across in lockdown, and I whiled away some of the time creating a few illustrations. The poem was titled 'The Peacock at Home', by A Lady (Catherine Ann Dorset). To set the scene, the Peacock is affronted by the temerity of the Butterfly, who had given a Ball to celebrate bursting from her 'chrysalis state'. He asks the other birds should we:

'Sit tamely at home tete-a-tete with our spouses,  
While the offspring of grub-worms throw open their houses?'

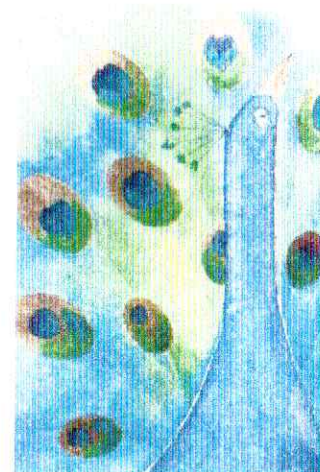
The Peacock decides he will hold an 'At Home' for the other birds -  
'the legitimate children of air':

'To avenge our disgrace, I'll for once lead the way,  
And send out my cards for St. Valentine's Day'

.....  
'This determin'd, six fleet Carrier Pigeons went out,  
To invite all the Birds to Sir Argus's rout.

.....  
'Such ruffling of feathers, such pruning of coats,  
Such chirping, such whistling, such clearing of throats,  
Such polishing bills, and such oiling of pinions,  
Had never been known in the biped dominions!'

*(to be continued ...)*



Do you have a favourite poem that you would like to share in this Newsletter? Or even write one? It would be good to have some contributions!

Gill





## Congratulations!



It's not just our young people who get awards and badges. Sometimes leaders do too. In January Squirrel Leader Tigger (aka Debbie) and Beaver Leader Otter (aka Alison) both received the Chief Scout's Commendation for Good Service. This is awarded in "recognition of the very real contribution made to Scouts, over and above that which is expected within their role".

Debbie not only runs the 5th SW Squirrel Drey, she is also a Cub leader with 1st SW. During lockdown she was instrumental in organising Distant events; as an archery instructor she spends the summer introducing this sport to young people and she is currently working on obtaining her hill walking permit.

During lockdown Alison made sure that the Beaver Colony remained active. In 2021, Alison helped set up the 5th SW's second Beaver Colony, of which she has been the Section Leader. In 2018 and 2023 she helped with the international trips to Ypres and Normandy. As District Beaver Leader she has organised successful events.

This year the "Might 5th" will be living up to their name by embarking on another trip to Ypres in October. Beavers, Cubs and Scouts will have the opportunity to visit Commonwealth and German war graves, WW1 museum and take part in the nightly Menin Gate last post ceremony.

### Used Stamps

Oxfam take used postage stamps but please trim them up to 1cm from the edge. There is a collection box at the back of the church.

### Candles

The Gifted Shop in Thaxted take used candles to re-cycle. If you have any remnants after Christmas, please let Ken have them or take them along yourself.

### Steve Parker

#### (Boxers Barbers 4 Ukraine)

Following Steve's inspiring talk at our service before Christmas Val and I looked on the website and watched one of the Youtube videos where he was talking about his life and experience in Ukraine. We can recommend it, so interesting. Give it a try.

Ken

## Thank You!

### Thank you

To Marion and Janet, who have agreed to come onto the Fabric Committee and a thank you, also, to those members who have recently stepped down for their contribution over the years.

### A Thank You

As well, to Mary D, who is currently working on a new pulpit fall, which we look forward to seeing at Easter.

### Thank You

To everyone who signed the Christmas Greetings sheet for the December issue of 'Connect'. We were able to donate £20 to Christian Aid from this.

### Thank You

To everyone who contributed in any way to the success of the recent Coffee Morning, which raised £779.80 for church funds.





There's a full Programme for Messy Church in the coming year, and a warm welcome for anyone who'd like to join in!

2nd Feb	4p.m.	Baptist Church
23rd March		Abbey Lane
11th May		Baptist Church
13th July		Abbey Lane
8th October		Baptist
23rd November		Abbey Lane

### Coffee Morning Success!

The recent Coffee Morning held to raise money for church funds raised the splendid sum of £779.80 (plus one button...). There was a wonderful atmosphere in the Hall, and it was good to see so many familiar faces.

It is hoped to hold our next Coffee Morning in early March (date to be confirmed, so watch this space). This time, it is to be held to support **Relief Work in Ukraine.**

We have also spoken of resuming our 'monthly coffee morning for charity' practice, so please do say if there is a charity you would like to see supported in this way, and with which you would be able to help.

*Forward Note:* on 24th May, the Model Railway Club are holding their annual Show, with working layouts, a trader and catering. This is being organised along the lines of last year's event, at which £1030 was raised for the Teenage Cancer Trust. This year they are seeking to raise funds for **Guide Dogs for the Blind.** Entrance to the Show will be free, and the suggestion is that people may like to donate by cash, cheque or credit card to Guide Dogs for the Blind. Representatives from that organisation will be present - and there will be a dog!

### ***And not a Coffee Morning .....***

Alison has suggested various events - including Saturday Soup & Sandwich and an occasional Board/Puzzle Sunday Afternoon (with the SA) - to foster links with our local community.

Certainly the Sunday Afternoon Teas (which we held every Sunday!) were always very well attended, and were greatly welcomed, especially by those who would otherwise have been alone on Sundays.

The Teas were held to raise monies in support of George and Marion Mills' work with British Humanitarian Aid and the Revival Centre in Chernigov. This year, the Revival Centre will celebrate its 30th Anniversary - perhaps we, too, should support our 30th anniversary of involvement with this work.



## Sunday Worship Calendar for February and March

Sun. 2nd	Morning Worship with Communion led by Rev. Phil Nevard. Followed by Bring & Share Lunch in the Hall.  Messy Church at Baptist Church	10.30a.m.   4.00p.m.
Sun. 9th	Morning Worship led by Val	10.30a.m.
Sun. 16th	Prayer Meeting in Vestry Morning Worship led by Jerry Heyhoe	9.15a.m. 10.30a.m.
Sun. 23rd	Morning Worship led by Rev. John Proctor	10.30a.m.
<b>March</b> Sun. 2nd	Morning Worship led by Alison, with Scout Parade	10.30a.m.
9th	Morning Worship with Communion led by Rev. Janet Tollington	10.30a.m.
16th	Morning Worship	10.30a.m.
23rd	Morning Worship led by Elders, followed by Church Meeting	10.30a.m.
30th	Mothering Sunday Morning Worship, led by Mark Hayes	10.30a.m.

Please see Weekly Digest for other dates/events.  
**Deadline for March Connect is Monday 17th February.**  
 Your contributions are sought!

### Pastoral - Who's My Elder? Can We Help?

We are currently looking at the way in which Elders (and, indeed, all church members and friends) can offer pastoral care. In the meantime, please do approach any Elder (Val, Ken, Karen, Mary Osborne, Gill) if you have any pastoral concerns, or know of anyone else who does, and we will endeavour to offer any help we are able to give.

### Book Group

Following Alison's calendar of suggested events at the last Forum, we would like to put forward an idea for a Book Group. It would not follow a traditional format, but *would* include tea and cake! The idea is that each person would, if they wished, bring along a book they have enjoyed to recommend to the group. We would hope to meet once a month on a Wednesday afternoon in the Vestry. Our aim is to encourage others to read and share books. If you are interested, please contact either one of us.

Thank you.

*Karen Start and Mary Brooks*

### Recognition!

It was a delight to present Certificates and tokens to Hoi Hoi and Nam Nam, in recognition of their unflinching willingness to help in the kitchen and elsewhere each week.

They are one of Abbey Lane's greatest assets!



### Next Coffee Morning - Saturday, 1st March

Our next Coffee Morning will be held on Saturday, 1st March, to support George and Marion Mills' work for the Revival Centre in Chernigov. Further details to follow, but an early hint - it will include some of Nick Eldred's beautiful woodwork items .....

ABBAY LANE  
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SAFFRON WALDEN METHODIST CHURCH

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