

Proclaiming the Gospel. Growing in Faith
Reaching out in Service



CONNECT NEWSLETTER

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



May 2025

Dear Friends,

Last month when Faith Paulding led our worship, her sermon struck a chord with me. One of the Bible readings was about Mary pouring expensive sweet-smelling oil on Jesus' feet and then wiping them with her hair. Perhaps more familiar is the account of his visiting Martha and Mary at their home. In Luke's gospel we read:

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

I wonder which sister we would liken ourselves to. Are we practical like Mary wanting to ensure that all is running smoothly, rushed off our feet and no time to sit down and reflect? Or are we like Martha, aware of what needs to be done but prioritising and focussing on the present? I think I am a bit like both of them. I seem to be busy keeping the day to day running of the church here, and struggle to find as much time as I would like to be still in God's presence. So, I have to ask the question, "Are we too busy looking after our buildings at Abbey Lane and putting our effort into fund raising?" Perhaps we need to pause and think what God really wants of us. It's only by spending time in prayer and conversation that we can truly discern his will for us at Abbey Lane.

Yours in Christ,

Val

Easter Pulpit Fall

Last Easter Val asked me if I would make an Easter pulpit fall: this is what I made and my thinking behind it.

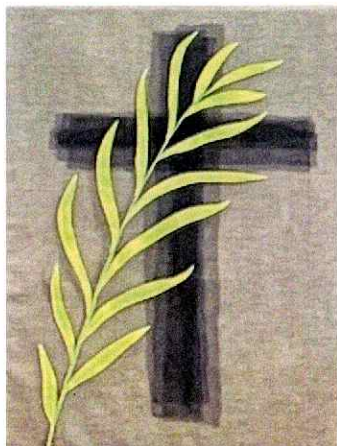
On Palm Sunday, the pulpit fall shows a vibrant, waving palm frond but in the background is a cross, as that's where events were heading. The cross is dark, rough and forbidding. For Good Friday it is just that cross.

But Easter changes everything and the cross has now become a symbol of light and hope, so it is a shining golden cross with rays of light and hope.

The daffodils are for Spring, new life and regeneration.

At the bottom of the fall, the background is a bit darker, a mound for the cross to sit on and the daffodils to grow out of. This is a piece of black net, the same that was used to make the cross on the Good Friday fall. So the golden cross of light and hope, and the new life of the daffodils emerge from the dark cross.

I'd like to thank Val for asking me to make this and also like to thank her, Gill and my daughter for their support, encouragement and help. It wouldn't have been possible without it.



Mary Duxbury



Congratulations!

The recent Cake Stall raised the magnificent amount of **£920** towards the Scouts' international trip!

There will be 75 young people (Beavers, Cubs and Scouts) plus two leaders, going in two coaches.

LGBTQA+ Identities

Following the recent Supreme Court's ruling on the legal definition of a woman, the United Reformed Church was prompt in issuing a statement. It opened with the words "The United Reformed Church upholds the worth and dignity of all human beings as created in the image of God regardless of their sex or gender". It concluded with "The United Reformed Church continues to follow the example of Jesus, who sat with, listened to and uplifted the marginalised in society, and used his influence to challenge the powerful. We invite our own members and others to do likewise." The full statement can be read at <https://urc.org.uk/urc-response-following-the-ruling-on-the-legal-definition-of-a-woman/>

As a result of this ruling, it is even more important that we talk about and understand the issues around LGBTQA+ identities, especially from the perspective of a Transgender person. Therefore our session on this subject which is being held on Saturday 10th May, 10.am-12noon is a timely event. Refreshments will be available from 10.00am and the session starts at 10.30am. Followed by light lunch at 12.15pm.

Continued

LGBTQA+Identities

Continued

Part of the URC heritage is that whilst we were founded on disagreements and dissent, we nevertheless seek to find ways of working together that allow for differing views to be held and people respected. So, this session will be a safe space in which to share and reflect.

Breakfast

Eleven of us gathered for breakfast before worship on Easter Sunday. Ken cooked bacon to go in the rolls, and we had croissants, fruit juice, tea and coffee. Colin and Grace Baldock arrived in time to join us before leading a lovely service to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus.

Thank you for the donations that have been sent to the Food Bank in Saffron Walden.



Board Games & Puzzles Afternoon!

The first Board Games & Puzzles Afternoon took place on 27th April as a welcome step in offering something for our local community. Another is planned during the summer months - watch this space!



From URC News Update:



Christian Aid launches Myanmar Earthquake Appeal

Christian Aid has launched an urgent fundraising appeal in the wake of the 7.7 magnitude earthquake which struck central Myanmar today (March 28). The charity's partners are reporting people have been severely impacted by the disaster, including many who saw their homes destroyed or badly damaged. Access to vital services such as water, power and basic foods have been critically disrupted.

Immediate emergency support is now urgently needed, including food parcels, water kits, shelters, and cash for essential supplies. And – with the generous help of its supporters – Christian Aid is mobilising to assist its partners and quake-affected communities with essential aid and recovery over the coming weeks and months. If you can, please [donate to the Myanmar Earthquake Appeal](#).

Image: Christian Aid.



Restore Debt Campaign

Christian Aid and its supporters are urging the UK government to tackle the twin issues of global debt and the climate crisis, which are trapping millions of people in poverty. A series of workshops and webinars have been organised to give people more information on the issues, and on how they can join the Jubilee 2000 International movement, which won \$130bn of debt cancellation owed by 35 of the poorest countries.

To register for the online sessions, please visit the Christian Aid website, and click on 'Get Involved and Campaigns'.



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| Sun. 4th | Morning Worship at Abbey Lane with Communion led by Rev. Stuart Veitch | 10.30a.m. |
| Wed. 7th | Book Group in Vestry | 2.30-4 |
| Sat. 10th | LGBTQA session in Hall | 10.00 |
| Sun. 11th | Monthly Prayer Meeting in Vestry Morning Worship at Abbey Lane led by Mike Dyer Messy Church at Baptist Church | 9.15a.m. 10.30a.m. 4.00p.m. |
| Mon. 12th | Bible Study in Vestry | 10.00a.m. |
| Sun. 18th | NO SERVICE AT ABBEY LANE: Joint Service with Salvation Army Annual Church Meeting follows Service. | 10.30a.m. |
| Mon. 19th | Knit & Natter in Hall | |
| Sun. 25th | Morning Worship at Abbey Lane led by Elders | 10.30a.m. |

*For lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is
come.*



Christian Aid Week



11th - 17th May

In the last year, Christian Aid has funded more than 400 projects and taken humanitarian aid to 3.2 million people.

Lifesaving assistance and support was taken to people surviving crises and rebuilding their lives in Gaza, South Sudan, Ukraine and many other places across the world.

Support is urgently needed to ensure Christian Aid can be there for indigenous farmers who are bearing the full force of the climate crisis, as they try to protect their families from hunger and malnutrition.

Please support Christian Aid.

From URC News Update:



Watch a new film about the importance of Chorley United Reformed Church and the Hollinshead Centre for the people and communities of Chorley, Lancashire. The video features interviews with Minister the Revd Martin Whiffen, and Community Minister, Andy Littlejohns, a URC Church Related Community Worker.

One person commented: "Amazing people carrying out amazing work. The Hollinshead Centre is truly a remarkable place and is, in my own opinion, the heart of Chorley; the Community of Chorley is truly blessed to have this on their doorstep. Truly wonderful." Watch the video on the URC's YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/URCUK

Action on Child Poverty

Leaders from the URC have joined other senior faith leaders from across the country to issue an urgent call for the government to be 'bold and ambitious' in its forthcoming Child Poverty Strategy. The call comes in an open letter to the co-chairs of the Ministerial Child Poverty Taskforce, Bridget Philipson, Secretary of State for Education, and Liz Kendall, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. The letter is signed by 35 senior faith leaders from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist traditions, including the Revd Tim Meadows, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, and Maya Withall, Youth Assembly Moderator. The letter was coordinated by the Joint Public Issues Team, in which the URC is a partner.

A thank you letter from Nigel Uden

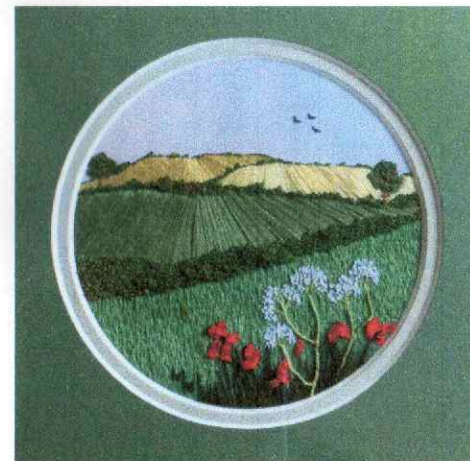
Dear Friends of Abbey Lane Church,

Bethan and I are deeply grateful for all the lovely things that you did this afternoon to mark the completion of my time as your Interim Moderator. The exquisite needlework picture by Meg Nettle will be a lasting memento of my time in partnership with you. The generous cheque will be a blessing when eventually we move to a new home. And the heavily laden tea table was a joy; so many delicious things there, and a super opportunity to meet with everyone informally after the service.

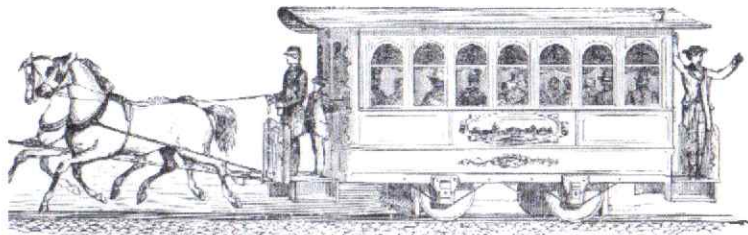
Please accept our heartfelt thanks for so many kind words and gestures. Each is greatly appreciated.

We wish you all well for everything the future holds, and pray God's blessing as, in the words of one of this afternoon's hymns, you 'reach out in hope for all that will be'.

Warmly, in Christ
Nigel



Fancy a Day Out?



It has been suggested that we could have a day's coach trip to the seaside! Would this be of interest to you? Before we start looking at coach hire, etc., it would be good to know if enough people would like to join in (friends invited too). Please let Ken or Gill know in the next week or so.

Bible Study Group

In the Bible Study Group, we continue to look at some of the Psalms. In particular what they have to teach us about life and our relationship with God. Dates are Monday 12th May and then due to the Bank Holiday, Bible Study Group resumes on 9th June and then 23rd June.

Prayer Meeting

Next prayer meeting is on Sunday 11th May, 9.15am in the Vestry. Prayer is an essential part of church life. Praying together helps strengthen a sense of community and unity, as well as being a source of strength and support. Prayers do not have to be spoken out loud to be heard and sitting with others in shared moments of silent prayer can be a time of spiritual refreshment. The monthly prayer meeting is a time for us to come together to be with God and each other. As it says in Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them."

Can you find the names of eleven women from the Bible?

Hannah, Ruth, Rahab, Naomi, Elizabeth, Mary, Hagar, Esther, Anna, Salome, Eve.

Do you know who they are?



a c r d a s e f g h
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WORDSEARCH

Thank You!



To Janet and her grandson, Adam, for hoovering the heating grille in the Hall, removing cobwebs and dealing with the blinds!

Thank You (again)

Steve Parker from Boxers Barbers sends his very grateful thanks once again for all the donations to Ukraine. He and his team left for their latest trip on 30th April.

Digibox

Our new Digibox has been in operation for a few weeks. It is proving more successful than our previous arrangement and saving time. We are still experimenting with the positioning and volume but will get there.

Gill and I have been operating it together to get the hang of it, but it would be lovely to have a rota of people. We have some very straightforward instructions. Let's have some volunteers, please, or we may need to pressgang a team! Let an Elder know if you are interested.

Any constructive criticism is welcomed so we can use it to best effect: it can be difficult for the operator to know how it sounds in the main body of the church.

In all the excitement of the Digibox, though, we must not forget to express our appreciation of those who provide 'live' music for our Services. Our thanks go to Lloyd, who plays on the fourth Sunday each month, and we are blessed with offers from Stephen and Yin, who will play on the first and third Sundays.

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ABBAY LANE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
incorporating
SAFFRON WALDEN METHODIST CHURCH

Abbey Lane,
Saffron Walden,
Essex
CB10 1AG

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|----------------------|--|
| Correspondence etc. | admin@saffronwaldenurc.onmicrosoft.com |
| Secretary | secretary@saffronwaldenurc.onmicrosoft.com |
| Treasurer | treasurer@saffronwaldenurc.onmicrosoft.com |
| Items for Newsletter | gillhowe500@gmail.co.uk |