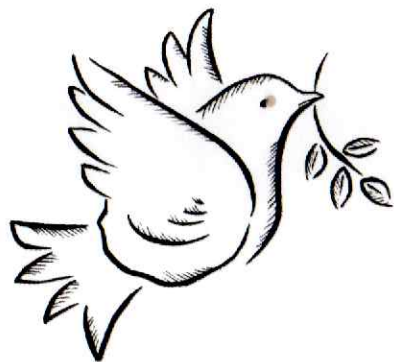


Proclaiming the Gospel. Growing in Faith
Reaching out in Service

CONNECT NEWSLETTER

for
Abbey Lane URC
incorporating
Saffron Walden
Methodist Church



April 2026



From the Rev. Mark Hayes

An Essential Truth

Whether you believe the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to be literally true, or true in the sense that it is a symbolic story that conveys a key element in the story of God's relationship with humankind, it is a story that includes an essential truth. It reveals a loving creator God, and how the people God created turned away from Him. This isn't just about eating an apple (the 'forbidden fruit') in disobedience to God's command; it is about humankind thinking we can usurp God.

In portraying the idealised first moments of humankind, before creation is corrupted, the story holds up a beautiful vision of man and woman living in harmony with all species of animals.

But is this beautiful vision not a daydream? It does not survive, because we were created with free will and it seems we are always going to use that free will to do both good and evil. Being aware of our freedom of action, and enjoying how we can use it, we have lost sight of God's vision, of the Kingdom, for which we were created.

The temptation is for us to usurp the role of the Creator – to try to be on a par with God. We often describe temptation in relatively trivial ways: we speak of being tempted to take another slice of chocolate fudge cake rather than of being tempted to do evil, and so we water down the whole idea of falling for temptation. The chocolate fudge cake is there, in front of us, sayings 'eat me'. If somebody else offers it to us, it makes it even easier to eat the second, or even third slice. We know what we are doing, but more serious temptation is much more subtle: we are tempted by everything that appeals to our selfish desires and that draws us away from the lives the God wants us to lead.

Continued

From the Rev. Mark Hayes

An Essential Truth

Continued

We haven't lived and managed creation as well as we could have done, and this has created a gap between us and God. The cross on which Jesus was crucified is a symbol of the pain and suffering that the world endures. However, we can take heart because the Easter story is of Good Friday followed by Easter Sunday and the Resurrection. We take heart because goodness is always stronger than evil. God always has the last word and it is a word of hope – hope that shines a bright light into our dark world.

Let us celebrate that hope by resisting temptation this Easter and acting in ways that fulfill God's vision for creation.

Revd Mark Hayes
Thaxted United Reformed Church

Calendar for April

Easter Day	Morning Worship at Abbey Lane led by Alison Easter Tea at Abbey Lane	10.30a.m. 2.30p.m.
Sun. 12th	Morning Worship with Communion at Abbey Lane, led by Rev. Dr. Janet Tollington	10.30a.m.
Mon. 13th	Bible Study in Vestry	10.00a.m.
Sun. 19th	Morning Worship at Abbey Lane led by Mike Dyer followed by Prayer Meeting	10.30a.m. 12.00
Sat. 25th	Mission Forum at Abbey Lane Soup on Saturday	
Sun. 26th	Morning Worship at Abbey Lane led by Rev. Michael Lovegrove	10.30a.m.
Mon. 27th	Bible Study in the Vestry	10a.m.

A Little Outing...

We recently visited the Stapleford Granary. Not heard of it? Nor had we until a friend mentioned it. They have just finished an interesting exhibition of Ladybird books and information about the illustrators.

In 1867 Henry Wills opened a bookshop in Loughborough and was later joined by his friend William Hepworth, and they called their company Wills and Hepworth. During the second world war paper was rationed and there was less printing work. To keep the company going they started to create children's books. However, it was a man called Douglas Keen who transformed Ladybird books into the famous children's books we know today. Douglas joined the company in 1936. Ten years later Ladybird sold 24 thousand books, and in 1974 when Douglas retired they were selling 24 million books a year. They were translated into many languages and in 1971 they finally changed the company name to Ladybird Books.

In my early days as a teacher I used them a great deal in school, both for children learning to read and as information books. Maybe some of you remember them too.

The Granary holds concerts as well as exhibitions, and have a lovely tea room. There is ample parking so well worth a visit.

Val and Ken



**FRUITFULNESS
ON THE FRONTLINE.**

What follows relates to the reflection given by Alison on Sunday 22nd March and the item on "Discipleship" discussed at the church meeting.

At a recent URC Moderators' Meeting, someone said of the United Reformed Church "We stand or fall with the vision of the local church". Therefore, the question for us at Abbey Lane is "what is our vision?". Yes, we have a new minister starting in September, but that is five months away and we also have to allow time for Abigail to settle in. But more importantly we must remember that decisions are not made by the minister, nor the Elders, decisions about the life of the church are made by Church Members. So, we should take the opportunity we've been given and over the next few months use that time to reflect on what our "vision" is and start the conversation about what we want and how we might achieve it.

I know one thing that has been said before, is that we want to see more people coming to church on a Sunday morning. But the response to that is, why should they? Sunday worship is about offering praise to God in the company of others. However, if you've never been to church, if you've never had the opportunity to ask questions about God and faith and to find the answers or at least be pointed in the right direction, then why should we expect people to join us on Sundays. How does participating in worship, help someone on their faith journey? In short how can you worship God, if you don't know who God is? Worship is the icing on the cake. Consequently, if we want people to join us on Sunday mornings, then we need to be talking about the cake itself. In other words, what does Abbey Lane URC (incorporating Castle Street Methodist Church) have to offer people that will help them on their faith journey?

Whatever form the conversation takes and whether we use the "Fruitfulness of the Frontline" material, the important thing is that we take the opportunity to talk with each other. So that we work together to develop a vision that will enable us to "stand" and be the church God is calling us to be.

Alison

Newsletter from THE DAVID NOTT FOUNDATION

With over 61 conflicts raging around the world, our surgical training is needed more than ever. In countries where there is a high-risk threshold, very few organisations venture to the frontline.

But our foundation was built on the principle of being there with those who need us most, and this month our Co-Founder Professor David Nott, Dr Tom Avery, and anaesthetist Dr Ian Nesbitt trudged through dense jungle and across rivers to save lives in Myanmar. They spent 10 days in a jungle hospital where they trained doctors and conducted operations - a covert mission to help in one of the world's most deadly conflicts.

It took five days to reach the location – the three doctors travelled upstream in a longboat through the jungle and past abandoned villages, continuing in pick-up trucks. Their vehicle had to be pulled from the river by an elephant. The Burmese army positions were sometimes only a few hundred metres away, and at one point they had to hide in a trench under fire.

When they reached the location, they performed multiple surgeries and ran a five-day intensive course in war surgery.

Patients were brought in on bamboo cane and tarpaulin stretchers known as a 'bamboo-lance.'

David said: "Lots of people are dying because of lack of surgical knowledge. Many doctors working there couldn't finish a formal residency training, and no one has had any teaching for the past 5 years.

The doctors were so keen to learn. One surgeon drove hours through the jungle to discuss a case with us and drove back again."

As well as a medical motivation, there was also a further impulse through his family history. David's grandmother was Burmese and his father studied medicine in Mandalay. "I definitely felt a connection - being there."

Continued

**Newsletter from
THE DAVID NOTT FOUNDATION**
Continued

Ian Nesbitt has huge experience operating in war zones – and has been a vital part of our anaesthetics trainings in Ukraine. He has served in the British Army in Iraq and Afghanistan. For him, looking away is not an option: “Whether it's Ukraine, Gaza, or here in Myanmar, when something like this happens, it concerns us all.”

Tom Avery is one of the newest members of our surgical faculty team and we hope he will go on to work with us on many occasions from now. His values fit exactly with those of our foundation. He explains that for him, charity and compassion are not a feeling but an obligation. “I want to show my children that you can overcome your fear to help other people.” This is his fifth trip to the Burmese war zone, and from the looks of things, will not be his last. He admitted he learned a huge amount on the mission.

“It's really special to work with an expert like David. I've learned an incredible amount myself. I feel like a go-kart driver next to a seven-time Formula 1 world champion.”

David has featured on two radio programmes since his return, and you can listen to the Sunday Programme on BBC R4 here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002rdc2>

The David Nott Foundation - such a worthwhile cause - perhaps we could have another Coffee Morning for them soon?
Gill

Shoebox Appeal

This month we are asking for TOOTHBRUSHES. There is a box at the back of the church for gifts.
Thank you.

ABBAY LANE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
incorporating
SAFFRON WALDEN METHODIST CHURCH

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