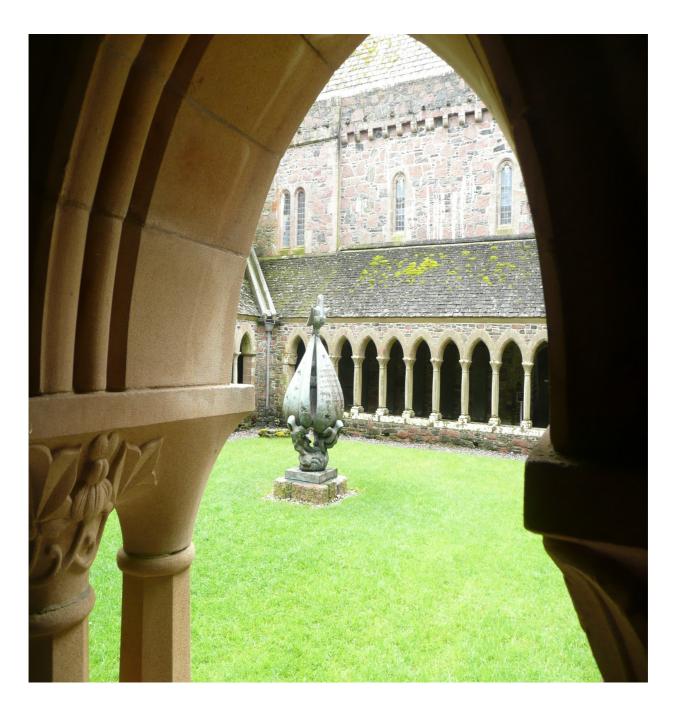
CONTACT September 2022



Volume 63 - Issue 9 Sawston Free Church – Castle Camps URC

Churches Services and Dates for Your Diary

Future Services-(also available via zoom) SFC email: secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk, Castle Camps email: sarabdavey@outlook.com

Sawston Free Church:

04 September 10.30 Morning Worship – David Lloyd
11 September 10.30 Morning Worship and Holy Communion – Rev Phil Nevard
18 September 10.30 Morning Worship – Rev Phil Nevard
25 September 10.30 Go4th Team

The closing date for **October** Contact is Monday – 19th September

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Photo Front Cover – The Cloisters in the Monastery on Iona

Contact

The monthly magazine of Sawston Free Church United Reformed Methodist & Castle Camps URC

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Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago we hosted a Repair Cafe at Whittlesford URC run by 2G3S alongside the Whittlesford Eco Group. It is such a joyful thing to see people bringing in much treasured, but broken, items and walk away with them working again. It is far too easy to accept the forces in our culture which urge us to assume that broken things should be thrown away. It is even more important with people than it is with "things". Too often, broken people feel that they have been discarded, thrown away by society, consigned to the scrapheap of life.



If you read the Gospels you find that broken people are drawn to Jesus. On the surface of it you might be tempted to think it's because he fixed them. On one level, that's true, but there are deeper levels. I think they were drawn because Jesus did not think that broken people were people to be discarded. In fact, he built most of his early movement from people who were broken or discarded in one way or another. The Church, the company of people trying to live Christ-like lives, has not always grasped this, but it is a place FOR broken people, a place where people who realise they are broken in some way come together to find wholeness.

It can be tempting to interpret Jesus' healing miracles as some kind of sign that in the Kingdom of God everything has to be perfect and fixed and flawless, as if the presence of God demands perfection. Yet, God was born in an animal's feeding trough and Christ's resurrected body still bore the scars of crucifixion. I think it's worth pondering what it means to follow the Jesus whose resurrected body still carried the scars – they were not magicked away or swept clean. For me, it's a sign that those wounds or scars, our brokenness are part of the fabric of who we are, and God is not waiting for them all to be gone before calling us into God's Kingdom. Maybe sometimes it is those cracks and scars that help us see our vulnerability and they become the very things that allow us to look beyond ourselves to the one who made us.

Jesus wasn't the only one to grasp this. Maybe you're more comfortable with the words of Leonard Cohen in his song "Anthem", either way, it amounts to the same thing:

Ring the bells that still can ring Forget your perfect offering There is a crack, a crack in everything That's how the light gets in

Every Blessing, Phil

God Calling

The Child Spirit

Does the way seem a stony one? Not one stone can impede your progress.

Courage. Face the future, but face it only with a brave and happy heart. Do not seek to see it. You are robbing Faith of her sublime sweetness if you do this.

Just know that all is well and that Faith, not seeing, but believing, is the barque that will bear you to safety, over the stormy waters. "According to your faith be it unto you" was My injunction to those who sought healing of Me.

If for wonder-working, if the healing, if for salvation faith was so necessary then the reason is clear why I urged that all who sought entrance to My Kingdom must become as little children. Faith is the child-attitude.

Seek in every way to become childlike. Seek, seek, seek until you find, until the years have added to your nature that of the trusting child. Not only for it's simple trust must you copy the child-spirit, but for it's joy in life, it's ready laughter it's lack of criticism, it's desire to share all with all people. Ask much that you may become as little children, friendly and loving towards all - not critical, not fearful. "Except ye...become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

Such simple words that can change our lives. Kate Leach





Messy Church is restarting on Sunday September 4th at 3 pm.

We will be delighted to welcome all families to join us. Our theme is "**Frozen**". Feel free to dress up in keeping with the Disney theme!

There will be the usual mix of fun, stories, games, crafts and refreshments.

See you soon, the Messy Church Team.

Mary Simuyandi

Greetings From Castle Camps



Our school room will be open to events this month and I am so happy about that! It has been a few years since folk have used the chapel without it being related to services or congregation.

Buildings are a funny thing. As a person who experiences anxiety about small things regularly, I understand the feeling of hesitation involved in going into an unknown building. It's the potential for unpleasantness, the potential to be caught unawares and feel silly or frightened.

One of the reasons we bought our little cottage was because as soon as I walked in I felt that the house itself was giving me a warm hug. I felt the same the first time we attended the Chapel.

Church buildings can have a feeling of holiness about them, no matter if it's an old or new build. People tend to mind their manners within the building, a bit more than they do outside. Quietness and stillness tends to pervade any gathering. Sometimes this scares people, sometimes this bores people, sometimes it encourages people and rejuvenates them.

I sincerely hope that people feel a warmth of friendship and welcome every time they come into our Chapel. Whether it's for a service, Choir rehearsal, coffee mornings, or Good Companion meetings, I pray that every foot that crosses our threshold feels at home and leaves feeling happy and restored.

Churches are more than buildings, they are family.

Sara Davey

Government Urged To Keep Its Promise To Afghans

On the first anniversary since Kabul fell to the Taliban, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church have joined Together with Refugees and 160 other organisations in calling on the UK government to fulfil its promise towards Afghans.

In an open letter published in *The Times* on 15 August, signatories – including the Revd Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC and The Revd Graham Thompson, President of the Methodist Conference called on the government to support Afghans still languishing in hotels and provide safe routes for those still at risk in Afghanistan.

The letter stated:

"It is a year since Kabul fell to the Taliban and despite initial evacuation efforts, the government has broken its promises to so many Afghans whose lives remain at risk.

"Those who were evacuated to the UK have felt abandoned, with thousands of families still living in hotels unable to rebuild their lives.

"The promised safe routes for those left behind are too slow and too restrictive, meaning that Afghans at risk are forced to take dangerous journeys to reunite with loved ones and find safety. Those who make it to the UK are cruelly threatened with banishment to Rwanda.

"The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme was heralded by the government as one of the most generous in our history, yet one year on it is failing to provide what was promised.

"The government must urgently help those already here and ensure that Afghans can safely reach the UK and their families, as it has rightly done for Ukrainian refugees."

There are several schemes under which Afghans have been resettled in the UK. These include the Ex-Gratia scheme which began in 2013 for locally employed staff and their families; the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which launched on 1 April 2021, before the Taliban took control; and the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme launched in January with the aim of allowing up to 20,000 refugees to settle in the UK.

So far, the government says that around 21,000 Afghan refugees have resettled in the UK, most as part of Operation Pitting: the British military operation which started on 13 August 2021 to evacuate British nationals and Afghans from Kabul.

However, that number is dwarfed by the 75,000-150,000 who have applied to be evacuated since August 2021: estimated by Raphael Marshall, a former member of the Afghan Special Cases' team as part of the Foreign Office's Afghanistan crisis response, in written evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee .

Simeon Mitchell, URC Secretary for Church and Society and Interim Team Leader of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), said: "Churches and community groups have been reaching out to Afghan families in hotels, offering all sorts of provision and kindness – embodying the posture of welcome that the Bible demands of God's people. But the government needs to urgently do more, both to help Afghans already here and to enable others at risk to get to the UK safely."



(If wet the event will be held at the Footprints Café at the rear of Sawston Free Church)

Saturday 10th September 2.30 - 5.00pm

Entrance by ticket: £8 (10 years and under £3) from

Mary tel: 01223 837433 or Pam tel: 01223 834220



In Zimbabwe, the climate crisis is causing aching hunger for families like Jessica's.

You can help turn hunger into hope.



Holiday Club 2022

This year holiday club was called "Time Travellers". With the help of Nicola Grieves from the URC Eastern Synod, we built a time machine and used it to travel with the young people to explore stories from the Biblical books of Exodus, Samuel (1), Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.



From Exodus we looked at the story of the Israelites following a pillar of smoke during daylight and a pillar of fire in the darkness. Our story from Samuel was about the young Samuel helping Eli in the temple and mistaking a call from God as Eli calling him in the night time.

When we visited the time of Luke's Gospel we learned about feeding the 5000, and we learned about the story of Lydia from the Acts of the Apostles.



We had about 22 young people: not everyone came every day, and helpers in the kitchen, looking after our security and helping directly with the youngsters. In addition to stories, we sang some great songs, played games and made amazing crafts to take home.

To illustrate the story from Exodus we made a pillar of cloud and flame. For the story from Samuel we made pan-pipes (as we were talking about listening to God's voice). Craft for the feeding of the 5000 was a paper basket with loaves and fishes, but also salt dough models of the same thing. And for Lydia's story we made hearts with purple wool. We also made time capsules which we hope to use in a Sunday service sometime soon.

I had a great time, and I should thank Nicola and the other volunteers for all their help. I also need to thank my work (who gave me two days volunteering leave to help with a charity of my choice). And of course we need to thank the other Sawston churches for their financial contribution (holiday club is run under the banner Christians Together in Sawston) and the parents of the young people for entrusting them to our care.



Matthew Jones

The Seven R's

Louise Cook (writing at <u>https://greenchristian.org.uk</u>)

From childhood I have heard the mantra "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle". So much so that I have almost forgotten the original three "R"s it is based upon – the Reading, Writing and Arithmetic of basic education.

"Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" – sometimes with the addition of "Refuse", is used as if it is a summary of the entire thinking of the green movement, or at least of the actions that should be taken by ordinary people trying to "do their bit". But I have realised two things: firstly that there are plenty of other "green" actions not covered by the three R's, and secondly that too many people were assuming that if they were recycling and occasionally reusing a plastic carrier bag, that they were being pretty green.

So let's unpack the three Rs and add a few more.

What do we need to **Reduce**? We need to buy less, travel less, and probably do less. Reduce the pressure we put on the earth's resources and reduce the pressure we put on our time-poor selves.

How can we **Reuse** more and bin less? By not buying anything that is intended to be used only once – packaging, coffee cups, paper plates, disposable nappies, batteries, tissues. Who dares use washable wipes instead of toilet paper?

Recycling involves a huge amount of energy for transporting and processing of the materials. It is important as it reduces the speed we are using up natural resources, but it should be the last resort. Recycling also means closing that loop by buying recycled things!

We can reduce our consumption by **Repairing** as much as we can. Get the sewing kit out, have a go at fixing that toy instead of binning it, find that little workshop that's been there for years where they might just be able to fix your old Hi-Fi. Look after your stuff!

My fifth R is **Rent, boRRow and shaRe**.

How many things do you have in your house that you use only once or twice a year? Why do you and your neighbour/friend/father-in-law all need a power drill and a hedge trimmer and a pressure washer? Do I need to buy that book my friend recommended or shall I just borrow her copy? Many people are car-sharing now, especially in city centres where cars are not needed every day.

The **Refuse** I mentioned as the original fourth R, used to just mean Refusing plastic bags and the like. We don't automatically get given plastic bags any more but we still need to Refuse: Refuse to believe the adverts. Refuse to believe that your life is lacking something because you don't use a particular shampoo, have a particular electronic gadget, or you haven't been to a particular sunny destination. **Refuse to believe you are worth less because you have less.**

My seventh R is really the first. **Rejoice**! Take delight in all the good things that God has given us for free. And again I say Rejoice!

The full list of seven R's, in order of importance is:

Rejoice Refuse

Reduce

Reuse

Repair

Rent, borrow and share

Recycle

The three R's does have a ring to it. Three is some kind of magic number used by speech writers and poets since Biblical times. But the Bible also uses seven as a perfect number – as it was in seven days that God created the heaven and the earth. And perhaps the greatest thing that God created was Rest on the seventh day. Rest could be another of the R's, but I rather think it sums up all of them.

Be satisfied with all the good things you have, Rest in the Lord, and give the rest of creation a break!

SFC - Church Workday – September 10th - 8am till noon

Please come and help keep our premises looking good. There are various tasks to suit all talents and capabilities from painting to gardening, and a chance for a chat over cake and coffee.



Please let me know if you can come it really helps me to plan the work.

Thank You Gordon (833983)

Four Short Devotionals From Paul's Letter To The Romans

Romans 1:1-7 Francis Brienen, former Deputy General Secretary (Mission), URC

Recently I was at a meeting where people were asked to introduce themselves by sharing an experience in their life that still shaped who they are today. One person had grown up in a single parent household when that was still unusual, another had become the carer for an elderly parent at age 11, yet another had lived in a war zone. All these events had deeply shaped their identity and how they viewed the world.

When the apostle Paul introduced himself to the Christians in Rome, there is one event that had deeply shaped him. That is his encounter with the risen Christ. That shaped his identity and his entire outlook on life.

Paul is writing to a Christian community of Jewish origin. A community he did not establish and had never visited, so introductions matter!

His greeting is striking. He used only his own name – no co-sender – and called himself a servant of Christ, who was called to be an apostle and who was set apart for the gospel. Scholars think that how Paul describes the gospel in verses 3 and 4 are not his own words, but a Jewish Christian formulation that would have been known to the Roman Christians. It may be that he was trying to show that what he had preached agreed with what the Romans believed.

But perhaps it was simpler. Perhaps Paul was merely trying to express that even though they had never met, they had one thing in common: a new identity in Christ. They were God's beloved, called to belong to Jesus Christ and to be saints: people of grace and peace.

There are many things that shape our identity. Our life stories; our relationships with family, partners and friends; our work and our interests; our goals in life. To what extent have your life experiences been shaped and challenged by the encounter with Christ? When asked to introduce yourself, what story would you tell?

God of love, called by you, may we know who we are: you call us beloved, you call us to belonging, you call us to follow, you call us to be holy, you call us to be saints. In all that we are, in all that we are, in all that we say and do, may we share your grace and peace and by our love may the world know that we are yours. Amen.

Romans 1:8-15 The Rev'd Dr Matthew Prevett, Trust Secretary for the Yorkshire Synod

I've lived 'in community' a number of times in my life. Just like a family situation, you occasionally find yourself getting under each other's feet, getting on people's nerves, being frustrated with someone's behaviour, unable to find a compromise, or even being angry about how someone's behaved. Of course, as well as being the recipient, we too do our fair share to aggravate, frustrate or annoy. Community life can be a rough ride.

But community life can be inspiring. People encourage one another or give each other support. You can feel down and yet find yourself inspired by the wisdom and generosity of others. People can share a perspective on life that you've never seen, or offer a solution to a problem you're struggling to see. And just as others can inspire, we too play our part in guiding and encouraging. Community living can open our eyes.

Church life is community living too. We may not live in the same house as others who share our Christian life, but when we gather in community (as our congregations tend to be 'gathered') we share together in the communal living of the Church. We should long to share with one another in spiritual gifts to strengthen each other. We should long to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. We should long to take part in mission to share our faith with our local communities.

Yet we must remember that our Churches are not always places where people feel able to step over the threshold and be part of the community. Church life is difficult for people for a variety of reasons. While this restricts, we know that when we share communally, when we meet and build each other up, the life of the Church is enriched and strengthened and we can live God's mission for the Church. We must break down barriers in our Church so we can all be encouraged and inspired by the common faith we share.

May we be inspired by faith as we inspire others. May we be encouraged in faith as we encourage others. May we be love for others as we seek to love the world, in Jesus's name. Amen.

Romans 1:16-17 The Rev'd Steve Faber, Moderator, West Midlands Synod

Paul boldly proclaims that he is unashamed of the Gospel. "Gospel", of course, means Good News. Why would anyone be ashamed of Good News? When we receive our own good news, don't we long to tell others about it, so that they can share in our excitement?

However, Paul is eager to share this good news with the people in Rome. He wants them to be excited about a Jew, a common carpenter (as they might have seen Him), and one who suffered the indignity of crucifixion, the form of execution for the lowest and worst of criminals. What is more, Jesus was killed in Jerusalem, an insignificant capital of an insignificant and remote Roman colony. How could this possibly represent good news to the fine people of Rome?

In these two verses, Paul sets out a summary of all he is about to explain at length and in detail. The Gospel is the power of God to save all people who have faith – Jew, Gentile, citizen, slave, conquerors and vanquished alike. We are all within God's reach through faith in Jesus.

Thanks be to You, O God.

You have a plan to save us all through Your Son.

Deepen our faith in You that we might know Your power to save us.

Oh, and God – help us to get excited over the Good News about Jesus, so that we too are unashamed of the Gospel and eager to share it.

Amen.

Romans 1:18-31 The Rev'd Andy Braunston, URC digital minister

Paul found, in Jesus, new life, meaning, and understanding of his faith. A good preacher – today's passage is part of a sermon as Paul's letters were written to be read aloud. His Jewish listeners would feel smug – critiquing pagans was always good for that!

Rome was the heart of the Empire where most lived lives of desperation surrounded by the wealthy few with their riches, slaves, and decadence. Roman sexual mores were rather more complex than our own, being defined by roles and actions not identity. The Imperial family wasn't a shining example of restraint. Augustus' wife, Livia, was rumoured to have killed various relations. Tiberius' wife, Julia, publicly flaunted her infidelities whilst he was rumoured to have rather distasteful sexual appetites. Caligula lived life to such excess that he was killed by his own guards – but not before declaring himself to be a god. Claudius' wife, Messalina seemed to follow the family custom of wanton abandon.

Paul saw Roman sexual mores as depraved – a punishment by God on pagans who who worshipped creation rather than the Creator. We, however, have a different (though changing) understanding of sexuality. We see sexuality as a given facet of human nature and identity – not a reward, or punishment, for idolatry. We know of faithful Christians whose love and witness would have been unthinkable to Paul.

This doesn't mean we can ignore or write off this passage – there is much here for us. It's always tempting to be dazzled by created things rather than the Creator, to ignore God in the midst of life,

to see our foolishness as wisdom, and to treat others as objects for our own ends. Selfishness and selfcentredness manifest themselves over and over again through the centuries, taking on new forms and identities, tempting us to new patterns of idolatry. Pray that we see it in ourselves, have the courage to act, and not distract ourselves by using this passage as a weapon against others.

O God, you call us from darkness into light, to turn from our idols of technology, status and wealth, and worship you, our Creator. Give us the wisdom to discern you at work in our world, recognise your image in our diversity, and understand, not weaponize, the Word. Amen.

Methodist Pastoral Letter – East Anglia District August 2022

I am writing this letter at a time of deep uncertainty and fear in our society – when we are reminded daily of the crippling reality of climate crisis, war in Europe, sexual violence against women, and a cost-of-living crisis that is likely to bring misery to many thousands of people. Where is God in all of this? And what is an authentic Christian response? It is so tempting to add our voice or opinion to the cacophony of well-meaning solutions and consolations – but I wonder if this is truly wise? The more I wrestle with the nature of Christian discipleship in the myriad complexities of our world, the more convinced I become of the need for silence and less words! The contemplative tradition suggests that it is in the *solitude of silence* that we intentionally curate a space into which the divine might speak and we might become the recipients of wisdom. At a critical point in his experience, the prophet Elijah encounters the presence of God *'in a sound of sheer silence'* (1 Kings 19:12) and only through the silence of this moment is he able to discern the future direction of his ministry.

It is tempting to imagine that silent contemplation takes us away from the visceral realities of a harsh and painful world and somehow insulates the soul from *too* much reality. However, this is to misinterpret the value of the contemplative tradition and to fail to see the vital connection between contemplation and action! Catherine of Sienna reminded the Church of this relationship when she wrote;

'The secret of Christian contemplation is that it faces us with Jesus Christ toward our suffering world in loving service and just action'

If contemplation and silence draw us into the presence of God, then we are surely drawn into the divine passion and pathos for our world and better able to be drawn into the loving, merciful and just movements of God's grace. If our actions are inspired and energised by contemplative practices, then we are spiritually resourced at a deeper level to be responsive to God's call in our human experience. To a certain degree, Jesus modelled this delicate balance between contemplation and action – the synoptic Gospels suggest a movement between engagement and solitude, action and prayer (e.g. Luke 5:15-16 & Mark 6:46). When he was renewed in spirit, Jesus returned to the demands of his ministry and the pressing demands of broken, suffering communities.

I leave you with a prayer from the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta that anticipates this grace-infused movement from contemplation to service:

'The fruit of silence is prayer, The fruit of prayer is faith The fruit of faith is love, The fruit of love is service The fruit of service is peace.'





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