CONTACT January 2023



Volume 64 - Issue 1 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:

08 January 10.30 Covenant Service and Holy Communion – Rev Phil Nevard

Followed by a Bring and Share lunch

15 January 10.30 Morning Worship – Rev Phil Nevard

22 January 10.30 Go4th

29 January 10.30 Morning Worship – Rev Phil Nevard

The closing date for February Contact is Wednesday 18th January

David Nunn is the editor, so please email your items to anne.nunn@btinternet.com

Minister		Tel
Rev Phil Nevard	12 Hinton Way, Gt Shelford, minister@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk	07814920187
Secretaries:		
Maggie Jones - Sawston	21 Hillside, Sawston	565637
Sara Davey - Castle Camps	Quinney's, High St, Castle Camps	07766101446
Elders: Sawston		
Rosemary Livings	The Gables, 1a Granhams Road, Gt Shelford	845948
Beryl Penny	April Lodge, 81 Brewery Road, Pampisford	833635
Mike Purdy	42 Granta Road, Sawston	830903
Mary Simuyandi	28 New Road, Sawston	837433
Joint Treasurers:		
Lynne Hays	Baggot Hall, Station Road, Harston	871800
Terry Penny	April Lodge, 81 Brewery Road, Pampisford	833635
Contact Editors	10 London Road, Sawston	
David & Anne Nunn	Email: anne.nunn@btinternet.com	832913
Church Bookings	Maggie Jones, 21 Hillside, Sawston	565637
Church Website:	www.sawstonfreechurch.org.uk/	
	www.castlecampsurc.org	
Facebook page:	www.facebook.com/SawstonFreeChurch	

Contact

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

Minister: Reverend Phil Nevard – 12 Hinton Way, Gt Shelford, Cambs CB22 5BE Tel: 07814 920187 Email: minister@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk www.sawstonfreechurch.org.uk, www.castlecampsurc.org www.facebook.com/SawstonFreeChurch

Dear Friends,

Some of you will know that I half-collect nativity sets. This year we held a Nativity Set exhibition at Whittlesford URC and I set out about thirty sets, all in one go in a bit of a mad rush!

I learned a useful lesson about setting out nativity sets — my top tip.

Don't place the first character that comes out of the box, but seek out Jesus, start with him and build the rest around him. Put Jesus at the heart of the scene and then build the story around him.

You've probably read enough Ministers' letters to know where I am going next! This is a New Year – 2023 – how will you build the story of 2023?

It would be foolish to try and predict what is going to happen, if the last couple of years haven't taught us that, nothing will! But you CAN make a profound change to the way your story looks in 2023. Events may often be out of our control, but the foundations we put in place for how we will live our lives and how we will respond to whatever life throws our way are very much something we can shape and put in place.

Put Christ at the centre, arrange everything else that happens in 2023 around Christ's presence. It may be close to the crib – it may be lurking in the shadows – but wherever it is, it cannot replace Christ at the centre, it cannot dominate the scene and take centre stage.

Everything that happens in 2023 is within reach of the light of God, come into the world. Everything that happens in 2023 can be transformed by advent hope, advent love, advent peace and advent joy. This is the deeply hope-filled message of Christmas: "light has come into the world and the darkness can never put it out."

Wishing you and yours a richly joy-filled New Year,

Every Blessing, Rev'd Phil Nevard

Phil

Brigades Carol Service

At the end of November, the Brigades held their Advent Carol Service in the Church. It was really well attended by Brigades children and their families, with around 70 people enjoying the carols and retelling of the Christmas story. It was wonderful to see the church so full, and with a happy and festive atmosphere and buzz.



The service was lead jointly by our own minister Phil, and also the Girls' Brigade Captain Lucy, and many of the children and leaders took part. In previous weeks the Brigades children had made some wooden Christmas tree decorations which were on display and added to the occasion.



Junior Church Nativity Service

This was held on the second Sunday in December and arranged and led by all the Junior Church leaders. It was heart-warming to see the children and young people from our own Junior Church and Brigades members, dressed in traditional nativity costumes, tinsel halos and tea-towels included! We all enjoyed singing the familiar carols and hearing the familiar Christmas story retold. Thank you to everyone who took part and supported the children in this annual special service.



SFC - Church Workday - January 14th - 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)

A Prayer for New Year

God, I am impressed by all I meant to do in this past year, and failed, the way I have wasted time.

Time chases me relentlessly and saps my strength - another year has disappeared behind me.

Yet something has been gained: you have made rich my home and the life here,

Lord: you have even sometimes enabled us to be part of the richness of others.

My fears you have often turned into relief when I caught up with them.

I know you a little better than I did, your changeless, infinite patience and forgiveness,

There have been a few good milestones too, small triumphs, and victories not so little for those I love the best.

The New Year daunts me with the fears of unknown possibilities, yet comforts me because of fresh beginnings.

I'm so thankful God that time is nothing to you,
the end or the beginning,
that you will never grow old or tired,
never get perplexed,
that nothing is too big or unexpected for you
to have grasped and overcome already.

Thank you that you have always been our home, safe beyond measure or telling, and so will always be.

(By Helen Lee, based on Psalm 90: 1-4 First appeared in Contact January 2017, thanks to Castle Camps



Practicing What We Preach

(Please note that the views expressed in this article are those of the author, Michael Wilson, and not in any way representative of the views of Sawston Free Church.)

I remember hearing of a Mathematics professor who used to begin his first lecture to the new intake by telling them that if they found they had to work hard, they were doing the wrong course. Maths, he thought, was a matter of intuition and insight. If you hadn't got it, no amount of hard work and practice would make good the deficit. Well, it may be true of mathematics, but it isn't true of most things. 'Practice makes perfect,' we say. Even we Christians must practice what we preach. 'Faith without works is dead,' says St James (James2:26). The surprising thing is that we are, to a significant extent, so very bad at it.

At the St Mary's Christmas Eve Midnight Communion, Petra Shakeshaft quoted Richard Rohr (American RC priest) remarking that Christianity is a way of being in the world, not an organised religion. It is 'our way of being in the world' that, I suggest, we need to work on.

For example: Forgiveness, reconciliation and peace-making. If St John is to be believed, the Risen Christ told his astonished disciples that their sole job was to breathe peace and forgiveness upon the world (John 20: 21-23). In sharp contrast, at a recent Warm-Hub ad-hoc ecumenical gathering in Our Lady of Lourdes, we found ourselves sadly recounting to each other a litany of bust-ups and walk-outs that had taken place in our various congregations over recent and not-so-recent years and how the wounds still fester and still cripple our shared ministry to our community. The story of our village over half a century is but a micro-version of the story of Christianity over two millennia. Our problem, it seems to me, is not that we quarrel. Everyone quarrels. The problem is our failure to make up afterwards. *'Let not the sun go down on your anger*,' (Eph 4:26) for (it continues) if you do, you make room for the devil. Sadly, Christians seem to be very good at proving just how true that is. 'Reconciliation' is the big theological word for what we need.

The finest work on reconciliation that I know is Miroslav Volf's 'Exclusion and Embrace' (1996). The title is a give-away. Reconciliation isn't about papering over the cracks, shrugging and getting on with it, or trusting time to be a great healer. (It isn't!) Reconciliation is a spiritual gift, the work of God's Holy Spirit. It operates from the heart - a profound act of courage, trust and intimacy. It is an act whereby those who have brought down the shutters on each other, forced each other out, and obliged each other to leave their own home and go elsewhere, find the courage to recognise the truth in the other and the falsehood in themself. Then, in the intimacy of embrace, they abolish the gulf they have created between themself and the other. 'You who were once far off have been brought near.' (Eph 2:13) This is the costly triumph of Christ-like truth, humility and generosity over selfishness and pride. The best of it is that, as John Wesley was good at saying (but his followers were so bad at hearing), when people act in the Spirit of Christ, it isn't just they who are the beneficiary, nor just they and the one towards whom their act is directed, but, (hallelujah!) everyone, the entire community with whom they have to do, is the richer. And joy abounds.

How our world needs this! Of course it does. Much harder to say 'How *I*, how *we*, need this!' For the latter, we need to work hard on what Richard Rohr calls the Christian 'way of being in the world', the courageously forgiving way of humility, generosity, compassion and truth.

Thank you Mill Road Winter Fair

6 December 2022



We would like to thank all our volunteers who helped set up and run our stall at Mill Road Winter Fair on Saturday.

With decent weather and a reasonable pitch on Petersfield Green, we spoke to many supporters, new and old, and raised over £400 for the charity from merchandise sales and donations.

Thank you as well to the organisers for running such a smooth and fun community event.



Cherena's First Volunteer Convoy

4 December 2022

Cherena went on her first CamCRAG volunteer convoy to Calais in November. Having returned to Cambridge student life "unusually rejuvenated", she recommends volunteering with CamCRAG to all students!

On Sunday evening, I left Calais feeling unusually rejuvenated, and ready to return with a greater enthusiasm to the hustle and bustle of my student life. As a first-timer, I knew little of what to expect, but the deep sense of fulfilment that I brought back with me to Cambridge after the convoy was wholly unexpected.

As a first-year Cambridge Geographer, I spend a significant amount of time reading up on the social injustices faced by refugees and asylum-seekers. I have always had a yearning to offer practical, direct support to the victims of these injustices, and the convoy provided this very opportunity.



Although I signed up alone, I found it refreshing to be surrounded by like-minded people from all walks of life who also wanted the opportunity to act upon such injustices. The sense of community and cheer that was established by the group left me with an optimism, contrary to the pessimism predominant in the news.

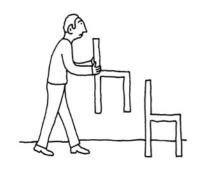
I would particularly encourage students, whether alone or as a group, to sign up and be welcomed into the CAMCRAG community and expand social circles beyond the 'student bubble' for a weekend – my social circle has been widened, but so too has my perspective on the refugee crisis.

In the Refugee Community Kitchen we chopped vegetables, washed up enormous pots and pans, and made bolani. Volunteering here on both the Saturday and Sunday offered a total contrast to my student life where I am used to working or reading away on my laptop. I found there was a strange sense of joy and greater meaning to be found in the arguably mundane tasks such as washing up, because of the greater purpose of our volunteer work.

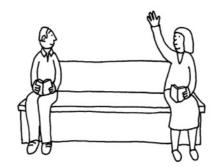
I expected to give my time as a volunteer, but I did not expect to gain such a shift in perspective or priorities across the course of the weekend, and I hope that I can apply my experience when studying migration and immigration as a Geographer.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

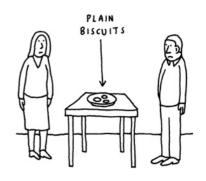
HOW THE CHURCH CAN HELP



EXERCISE



MEETING NEW PEOPLE



HEALTHY EATING



GETTING ORGANISED

AT THE PCC WE'LL DISCUSS THE APCM, CW VS THE BCP, THE LLM'S CRB, AND THE OLM'S BAP. OH, AND THERE ARE LETTERS FROM THE DAC, THE DDO, THE HOB AND THE ABC



LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE



TRAVELLING TO NEW PLACES

Five ECO New Year Resolutions

(based on ideas from greenpeace.org.uk)

1. Ditch single use plastic

Despite a huge increase in awareness, this is still a big issue. Luckily in Sawston we have the Green Weigh Shop. If you haven't been in yet – go and explore. They can refill just about any container you take with all manner of food items and cleaning liquids.

2. Get behind not-so-fast fashion

Did you know the global fashion industry emits almost as much carbon as the entire European continent? Or that textile production accounts for global emissions equivalent to 1.2 billion tonnes of CO2 every year? That's a bigger carbon footprint than all international flights and shipping combined. Make a start by resisting the temptation of the January sales, don't buy what you don't need, and invest in clothes that'll last longer. Commit to buying reused, recycled or sustainably-sourced items – and maybe make a plan to learn to mend and upcycle in 2023.

3. Eat mostly plant-based

Reducing industrial farming is critical in tackling the climate emergency and protecting the world's forests. The livestock industry emits as much carbon as the world's entire transport sector combined. Start small to make it easy and fun – try meat-free Mondays, or Veganuary, and slowly increase the number of plant-based items in your diet. Even being partly vegetarian or vegan is a great move for your health (and your wallet).

4. Travel along the scenic route

Not flying doesn't mean not travelling. Travelling by train is not only more environmentally friendly, it can be a more relaxing and much more authentic experience, allowing you to take in the sights as you travel. Not only will you have more interesting tales from your holiday – you'll also be entitled to "train brag".

5. Be less traffic

Transport is the UK's highest-emitting sector. While it's the government's responsibility to lead the phase-out of diesel and petrol cars, and make public transportation cheaper — you can start now and give your neighbourhood instantly cleaner air from less traffic. Driving only when you really need to means fewer cars on the road, and therefore much less air pollution from cars left running while stuck in jams. Break the driving-everywhere habit and find healthy and fun alternative ways to travel — train, bus, bike, walk. You'll be improving your own health, and the health of everyone around you as well as the health of our planet.

You're not stuck in traffic, you are the traffic.

Christmas Thoughts

An Article from Contact December 1964

Christmas is a wonderful time. First and foremost, we remember a young Jewish 'mother-to-be' riding on an ass, a kind and concerned husband seeking somewhere for her to rest and make ready for her now urgent need, the giving birth to 'The Saviour of Mankind'.

From early childhood we cherish the story - we feel sad at the answer 'No room. No room'. Still we feel the wonder of the nativity, the ox, the ass, the shepherds and the kings. Never will we tire of the story - the birth of Christ, the beginning of it all.

This story lingers long in my mind, then again other stories run through my mind like tinsel through the branches of a Christmas tree, half true, half legend, passed on from distant shadowy figures in the past.

There was a story an old relative told me, of dear sweet Piccola, the little girl whose widowed mother told her not to put her shoe out for St. Nicholas to fill, as he just couldn't come to her, they were terribly poor. All they had in the house was a small amount of bread and milk. The child's faith was so great that she insisted on putting out her shoe for St. Nicholas and it was the mother who went to bed heavy hearted and in tears.

Next morning when the little girl awoke, she dashed out to see what was left for her by St. Nicholas and there in the little shoe was a half starved little bird sheltering from the bitter wind. The child's delight knew no bounds. St. Nicholas could never have left her a better gift, a real live living thing to keep her company, something she could love and care for, something to share her small meal of bread and milk.

Probably you know a more accurate version of this story but every Christmas I listen enchanted to this story with tears very close. It still has its appeal to every child I tell it to.

Then again, I think of the story of the big 'crammer' which my naughty big sister regularly told me at Christmas, of how she, on Christmas Eve, determined to keep awake to see if Father Christmas really did come down the chimney.

Just as she was dozing off to sleep she heard an awful scraping noise. Heavens, was that really the old fellow coming down the chimney? She sat bolt upright in bed and sure enough, sticking out of the fireplace was a big black boot, and that's as much as would come out, the poor old chap was stuck fast in the little bedroom fireplace. He could get neither backward or forward. Well, this was a problem. If the old boy knew she was awake it was coal for her in her stocking, if he stayed stuck in the chimney it would be empty stockings for the rest of the children.

So she called, 'Hold on there, I'll lend a hand.' She heaved and heaved and bang, Father Christmas, with hat askew, covered in soot and perspiring heavily, landed with a bang on the bedroom floor. She dressed his bumps and bruises and helped him up. He didn't tell her off for being awake and as she had rescued him from the chimney she didn't get any coal in her stocking.

Do you know, I believed every word of it for ages!

I'd better stop here for I've already gone from the sublime to the ridiculous, but these are just some of the things I think of at Christmas.

Mrs G Reynolds

Reflections - God Calling

I stand between the years. The light of my presence is flung across the year to come - the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness. Backward, over the past year, is My Shadow thrown, hiding trouble and sorrow and disappointment.

Dwell not on the past - only on the present. Only use the past as the trees use My Sunlight to absorb it, to make from it in after days the warming fire-rays. So store only the blessings from Me, the light of the World. Encourage yourself by the thought of these.

Bury every fear of the future, of poverty for those dear to you, of suffering, of loss. Bury all thought of unkindness and bitterness, all your dislikes, your resentments, your sense of failure, your disappointment in others and in yourself, your gloom, your despondency, and let us leave them all, buried, and go forward to a new and risen life.

Remember that you must not see as the world sees. I hold the year in My Hands - in trust for you. But I shall guide you one day at a time.

Leave the rest with Me. You must not anticipate the gift by fears or thoughts of the days ahead.

And for each day I shall supply the wisdom and the strength.

Wonderful words to give us guidance and strength.

A very Happy New Year to you all.

Kate Leach

The Candle Song (Graham Kendrick) - A Reflection

The Rev'd Martin Knight is minister of St Paul's URC, South Croydon and South Croydon United Church (Methodist/URC)

Read John 1:1-9

Like a candle flame

Flickering small in our darkness

Uncreated light

Shines through infant eyes

God is with us, alleluia God is with us, alleluia

Come to save us, alleluia

Come to save us , Alleluia!

Stars and angels sing

Yet the earth sleeps in shadows

Can this tiny spark

Set a world on fire?

Yet his light shall shine

From our lives, Spirit blazing

As we touch the flame

Of his holy fire

Reflection

I find candlelight beguiling. It draws me in. Its fizz in the dark is profoundly hopeful.

The dimness and shadow of winter in the northern hemisphere means that we welcome the sparkle of tealights awakening our souls, reminding us of warmth and brightness. The popularity of Graham Kendrick's song is testament to our longing for the light. 'God is with us', we are told, like a candle flame flickering in the darkness.

You will know a shaded space in your own life, and we all know it in the life of the world. How we long for a flame's glow! We can be forgiven, in this space between Christmas and New Year, for having shrunk away from the blazing Christ light. It is hard to hold Christ's dazzling love at the front of our daily lives for too long, as the reality of the shadows creep in again.

'Can this tiny spark set a world on fire?'

Yes. Yes it can! Here is a reminder that any glimmer of God's presence in the shadows of life, can spark the kind of hope and joy that can beguile us and draw us in - igniting change, exposing injustice, giving warmth that comforts and heals.

John's words, so often read at the end of Lessons and Carols, are a stark and wonderful reminder of how God is with us: 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it'.

Here is light for us and for all.

Here is light for us to reflect.

Here is light that saves us.

In this weird space after Christmas, the light still shines. Thanks be to God!

Prayer

God with us,
We give thanks for the light of the world.
Shine in our night, we pray.
Shine in the world's shadows.
Shine through infant eyes, and let us sing 'Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia' Amen

Redwing

With the recent cold, snowy weather, my garden has suddenly been visited by large groups of Redwing eating the berries and crab-apples. I find that they only seem to visit under these conditions and I thought I would find out more about them.



The redwing is most commonly encountered as a winter bird and is the UK's smallest true thrush. Its creamy strip above the eye and orange-red flank patches make it distinctive.

They roam across the UK's countryside, feeding in fields and hedgerows, rarely visiting gardens, except in the coldest weather when snow covers the fields. Only a few pairs nest in the UK, and are mostly resident in the north of Scotland.

In autumn, redwings gather along the Scandinavian coast at dusk before launching off on their single 800 km (500 mile) flight across the North Sea to the UK. In rough weather, many may crash into the waves and drown.

Some redwings come from Iceland to winter in Scotland and Ireland. Others come from Russia and Scandinavia to winter in southern England and further south in Europe.

In spring, redwings leave the UK for their northern breeding territories, where they nest low down in boggy woodland and birch forest. Many redwings that spent the winter in Spain and southern Europe also stop off in eastern England to refuel as they head back north. Each year, a few pairs remain to breed in Scotland.

Story on Peace (Author Unknown)

There once lived a very wealthy man who was willing to pay a small fortune to the artist who could best illustrate the presence of peace. Several artists brought paintings of sunsets and quiet meadows, but the man did not accept any of these. One day as he was walking through looking at the most recent attempts, two paintings captured his attention.

One was a painting of a beautiful calm lake surrounded by lush green mountains. The water seemed as still as glass and wispy white clouds danced in the bright blue of the sky. Next to this painting was another with vast differences. It was also a picture of a lake surrounded by mountains, but the strong winds had whipped the lake into a tempest and the dark clouds hovered about the rugged mountain landscape ready to release a downpour of torrential rains.

The audience standing about watched with anticipation to see which one the man might choose to depict the story of peace. All were shocked when he did not choose the first, but instead chose the second. How could such a stormy scene tell a story of peace?

The rich man explained. The first painting was beautiful and peaceful, but it didn't tell the truth of where peace can be found. Anyone could feel peaceful upon a crystal-clear lake with white clouds drifting across the sky and barely a breeze blowing across the water.

Then he pointed out something in the second painting which everyone else had overlooked. If you peered closely into the mountains of the second, there was a waterfall, and tucked into a crevice of that mountain near the waterfall was a small nest on which a mother bird sat upon tiny blue eggs.

The man spoke. "This second painting is a picture of true, perfect peace because it is within the storms of life we find real peace tucked into the side of God knowing His presence will guard and protect us even in the midst of this world's storms."

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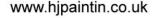
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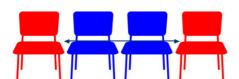
contact@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk

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The Footprints Café



Sawston Free Church

The **Footprints Café** is a community cafe offering a wide range of reasonably priced Snacks and Meals together with Teas & Coffees, Cold drinks, Cakes and Pastries.

We are open Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm. Breakfasts are served until 11.30 am.

The **Footprints Café** is located at the back of Sawston Free Church. Car parking behind the church.

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