

Alton Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER

December
2021



Minister: Rev. Philip Simpkins

Tel: 01420 83167

Church website www.altonmethodist.org.uk

Circuit website www.hsbccircuit.org.uk



Dear Friends,

As we enter December the dark nights of winter are now upon us and many of us will say 'I don't like these dark nights!'

In the dark our fears grow, our imaginations run riot and as a child we can perhaps remember that spine tingling moment when you are convinced you hear footsteps on the landing or picture a monster under the bed! Growing up in a creaky old farmhouse I confess to often hiding under the bed clothes and holding my breath just in case my worst fears were realised!

In the bible darkness also evoked a sense of fear and impending doom. It became symbolic for wrongdoing, depravity, trouble and affliction. A time when people had misplaced their moral compass, lost direction and had given up all hope of a better day to come. God's people certainly experienced such times which came to a head when they were conquered and taken off into exile.

But it is into this dark situation that the prophet speaks and brings hope:

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned... (Isaiah 9.2)

The light he speaks about is the coming Messiah, the one who will bring about a new age.



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9.6)

As we make our journey through advent, we will light a candle each Sunday to re-live that growing expectation that Jesus the Saviour is born, the one who brings us love, peace, joy and hope even in the darkest of days.

Light a candle in a darkened place,
In its flame see hope on every face,
Christ our Saviour will be born,
Heralding a brand-new dawn,
So let it burn.

In the darkness, see the coming light,
Word of God speaks through the darkest night,
Keep a watch, the time is near,
Time for hope and not for fear,
So let it burn.

Stepping through each page of history,
Prophets contemplate this mystery,
Celebrate the coming King,
Words of joy and hope they bring,
So let it burn.
(Clare Stainsby b.1959 StF 174)

May we use this advent time to re-live the Christmas story, making room in our hearts and lives to worship Christ, the new born King.

Every blessing for Christmas
Philip

Alton Methodist Church is in a covenant partnership with the Parish of the Resurrection in the Greater Alton project.



Christmas Services

Sunday, December 19th, 6:30pm - A service of lessons and carols

Christmas Eve Dec 24th, 4pm – A Christingle Service for all the family with a special invite to those who attend Messy Church.

Christmas Day, 10am – A Service for all the Family

Boxing Day, 10:30am – A GAP service held at St Lawrence

Farewell from Rev Rachel Sturt

Dear friends,

I will be leaving Alton after nearly five years and moving on to a new church in Wrecclesham (walking distance from home) where I was a curate. I will be sad to leave you and have been made to feel like one of the family. When I arrived, my predecessor, Helen Jesty said; 'you'll really like the Methodists, they're so friendly and they really get mission'. She was right.

I will miss the coffee mornings, the lunch club, the services I have been to and the friendship you have shown. You have all been supportive of Anna Chaplaincy right from the start in 2010, financially and in prayer. Many thanks are also due to Bob Weighton for his inspiration and encouragement. It has been a privilege to have known him. I will continue to use his poems in sermons.

Last of all I would like to thank Philip for being an inspiring line manager, a wise counsel and never too busy to listen.

God bless you all, *Rachel*

Congratulations

to Betty Dane who celebrates her 90th Birthday on 8th December.



Caring for Creation

5 Week House Group

Starting Monday Jan 10th at 7.30pm

A five week group discussion using material written by Brian David of York Courses on the topic of Caring for Creation.

Session 1 The Environment

Session 2 Global Warming & Climate Change

Session 3 The Age of Humans

Session 4 Coming Out of Denial

Session 5 Faith, Hope and Love

The course will include an audio presentation of about 10mins, material to reflect on together and discussion for everyone to participate in as you wish. (Course booklets will be purchased for you at a small cost)

We will discuss whether we prefer to meet on Zoom or in person with those interested. Please let Philip know if you are interested and add to those on the list to date. Thank you.

Messy Church

Children and their parents gathered for Messy Church at the beginning of November. After table games and refreshments, we enjoyed a group time together with a nautical theme. Following a game of 'Port, Starboard, Bow and Stern, we listened to the story of a very courageous young lady called Grace Darling.

If you visit Northumberland on your holidays you can go on a boat trip to the Farne Islands where you can climb the lighthouse from which her dramatic story unfolded. As one of a lighthouse keeping family Grace spotted one stormy night a ship crashing into the surrounding rocks. Recognising



the danger Grace raised the alarm and very bravely she and her father rowed out to the wreck in stormy waters to rescue those who had managed to survive. Once on dry land the story of this heroic rescue hit the headlines, especially Grace's part in it. She was awarded a medal

by Queen Victoria and the tale was depicted on 'Lifebuoy Soap'! We reflected on the faith Grace had learned as a child and the way in which we are called to help and serve one another, knowing that God is with us, even in the storms of life. After a song with lots of actions we went to the hall and enjoyed making lots of crafts including boats, lighthouses, puffins, fish pizza's and making medals as modelled by Norma!



Many thanks to everyone who helped.

We look forward to our next Messy Church on Saturday Dec 4th 10-12 noon which will have an Advent & Christmas theme.

Stay and Play

**At Alton Methodist Church
Wednesdays 10am to 11:30am
Adults with Children 0-4yrs**



We have enjoyed welcoming many new children and parents/carers to our toddler group. We've welcomed about 40 families over the last 3 months.

We have an average of about 12 families a week and there is a lovely atmosphere of children and adults playing together and forming friendships with each other.

Feel free to drop in with your little one—there is no pressure to come every week.

Thank you to Judy who has kindly stood in for each of us when we couldn't make a week.

Our last morning before Christmas will be Wednesday 15th December and we will start up again on Wednesday 5th January 2022.

Liz & Angela

Lighthouse

Our Lighthouse group for children will be meeting on **Sunday 12th December**, during the morning service.

New children are always welcome to join us and if you are able to let us know beforehand that will help us plan the session.

Nancy Buck



'Open the Book' News

The GAP Open the Book team have at last been able to return to school....



Our first assembly was at the Butts School and we felt 'The Creation' was a good one to restart with...who knew we had so many soft toys?



The team recently took part in my service of worship too at the Methodist Church on 7th November to give the church family a taste of what we do....the virtual service also included the same story of 'The Widow's Coins' .

We would be delighted to welcome some new recruits to the team....if you would like to join us or find out more go to the Alton Methodist Church website [Alton Methodist Church - Open the Book](https://www.altonmethodistchurch.org.uk) or contact myself or Jennie Marlow via the church email address: altonmethodist@hotmail.com.

Pam Jones

Lunch Club

We have now had several busy Lunch Club sessions with some new friends as well as our regular members and are looking forward to our **Christmas Lunch on Tuesday 14th December**.

We will be continuing after Christmas and meet for the first time in 2022 on **Tuesday 11th January**.

Please make sure you book your place either by paying in advance (£3.50) or by contacting Christine via the church email:

altonmethodist@hotmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you on the second Tuesday of each month when meals are served promptly at 12.30 pm.

Christine Allan

CAMEO

This month saw our annual visit to Avenue Nurseries. Twenty-five of us sat down for lunch, then indulged in a little Christmas shopping. Very few of our members now drive, so we are very grateful to kind friends who helped with transport. Thank you to Angela, Christine, Karen and Sarah.

Our last meeting of 2021 will be on **Saturday 18th December**, when we have our Christmas Tea Party. Carol already has the cake in hand!

Janet Meager & Judy Nicholls

Olive Wheeler and family would like to thank you all for your prayers, kindness and help in so many ways following John's sudden death. Please continue to pray for us as we try to come to terms with our loss.



2nd Alton Company



The last month has seen us getting into familiar routines, although with no Remembrance Parade in the town it seemed a little odd, I did lay a wreath on the company's' behalf. The band travelled to Yateley in the afternoon to take part in their service and lead the parade.

Battalion competitions and events are happening with the junior section team games in a weeks' time and the Company section table tennis tournament all planned to go ahead as usual. We aim to have some of our boys at these events. The company section orienteering was held in Alice Holt Forest recently, but unfortunately we had no boys taking part.

As the season of festivities is all but upon us, we will be supporting Save the Children's Christmas Jumper day, where the boys can wear a Christmas jumper to Brigade on Friday 10th December for a donation to the charity.

Some of the Company section boys will be off on Winter Venture over the Christmas break

The date for and place for summer camp for Company section boys has been set as the 13th -20th of August at Belchamps scout site, near Southend.

Pete Burgess (captain)

Company News

Parade Nights

Our Friday Parade nights have seen the boys in the different year groups work on activities from their annual badgework handbooks. This has included some finding out about Fire Prevention, playing Chess and experiencing a taste of Italy (which requires the eating of pizza and drinking of coffee).

Our oldest boys, the Seniors, are busy and secretively working on a project to produce an audio-visual spectacular that will entertain the other boys

once it is finished. The stated aim is to make the younger members laugh; we shall see. The enthusiasm shown by the Seniors in bringing along and rigging up the necessary equipment each Friday is impressive.

Messy Church recruitment

The Church's recent Messy Church session led to the Company gaining a new member. He is keenly working on his Compass badge and he should be in uniform very soon. The coffee and pizza has proved a hit with our newest member. With Brioche con Gelato (that Sicilian breakfast classic: the Ice Cream Sandwich) likely to be on the menu soon, we may have another form of messy church for him to enjoy.

Remembrance Sunday

There was no Remembrance Parade to the Cairn this year, however Captain Burgess laid a wreath on behalf of the Boys' Brigade at the simple ceremony that did take place in Alton on the morning of Sunday 14th November.

There was a Remembrance Parade in Yateley in the afternoon, and our Boys' Brigade band led that parade.

Lt. Rolfe Bridson

Christmas Post



Once again, the older BB Boys will be delivering cards this Christmas. Stamps will be on sale as usual – they can be found in the church foyer, 2nd Alton Company, The Boys' Brigade where there is also a posting box. The cost has been held at **30p per card**, less than half the Royal Mail second class rate. Please do make use of this service, as not only is it convenient, it also provides a significant source of income for our BB Company.

As last year, we will deliver to **Alton and Holybourne ONLY**. Please don't ask us to deliver to out-of-town addresses! The last posting date is **Friday 17th December**.

(Alternatively, unstamped cards, with payment in cash or cheque payable to "2nd Alton BB", can be put through my letterbox at 16 Amery Hill at any time up to Friday 17th.)

David Allan

Girls' Brigade News



In the last month we have been busy following our Enrolment Service in late October. For that it was great to see so many new & old members make their promises to our group in Church.

November has seen us continue with our badgework, the older group have been looking at the story of Zacchaeus learning how to give and receive gifts and the amazing gift of friendship with Jesus.

We have even taken time to learn the song "Zacchaeus was a very little man" in Makaton. With the Christmas Fair we have been busy making tree decorations so please come and see our stall.

Every Monday our girls are meeting in a safe and supported environment, should any girl like to join us to make friends and learn life skills please make contact with our Team Leader,

Kym Burgess

Our youngest girls, in n:vestigate section, have been thinking about Autumn.

We had a session on the Firework Code, when sparkler etiquette was the most relevant point, and made firework pictures with brightly coloured crayons on a black background. We've also talked about 'signs of Autumn' and how animals prepare for winter. We thought about Remembrance Sunday and what it means to us and yet to come is a session on the 'hedgerow harvest'. Oh, and we had a very messy session with glue and glitter (Glenda's favourite craft ingredient!) making Christmas tree decorations to sell at the church Christmas Fair.

We have space for more girls, so if you know any girls of infant school age who would like to join us, I'd love to hear from you.

Nancy Buck

(n:vestigate leader)

You can contact Kym or Nancy via the church email:

altonmethodist@hotmail.com

Expedition preparations



The indoor training for our expedition groups has now been completed, with a final practical First Aid session led by Valerie Spencer of St John Ambulance.

Outdoor activity has been possible on several autumn weekends, with all the Young Venturers completing their accompanied training walks. The DofE Bronze group has enjoyed navigation training on Kingsley and Broxhead Commons, as well as a day using their compasses on the heathlands and in the woods on Hankley Common. And the weather has been generally kind!

Planning for their assessed expeditions will begin on Wednesday evenings in the New Year.

David Allan



On a Year 7 Venturers' walk



DofE Bronze group at a checkpoint

Coffee Morning



Do come along to our **bumper Coffee Morning on Friday 3rd December**, when we hope to have cards, cakes and cookies for sale, plus any other suitable gifts etc. Contributions and tea/coffee drinkers are most welcome between 10am and noon.

Jennie Marlow

MARION ROSE ALLEN 1935 - 2021

Angela Weatherbed and I had the privilege of being asked to speak at the funeral of Marion Allen in AMC on 17 November. Angela had been her Church Family Visitor; Marion formed part of my Support Group when employed as Pastoral Assistant. She was a treasured friend.

A visit to Marion meant one left feeling much better than on arrival. She was wise, faithful, well organised, and had an infectious sense of humour.

Marion had organised her funeral after her husband, Jim, died. Having cared for him at home throughout his final years of dementia and cancer, she faced up to her own death, and wrote down her instructions. Philip too had Marion's own information on which to base his eulogy!

We acknowledged Marion's lifelong faith - like her mother before her - that guided and sustained her, until death returned her home.

As a church family, we extend our condolences to Marion's only child, Jeremy, (delivered by midwife Mary Thomas) and to the wider family.

We are grateful for the example she has given us.

Karen L Booker

Ladies @ Wetherspoons

How about a post-Christmas get together on Thursday 30th December any time from 10am? We'll say goodbye to 2021 over a cup of coffee.

Jennie Marlow

Church House Group

We are meeting on Tuesday 30th November and 7th December at 2.30pm to discover more of what Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians and how it can help us today.

Jennie Marlow

Prayer Group Invitation

Is anyone interested in trying an ordered group for prayer of silence/waiting/contemplation/meditation ?

Also sharing any experience and questions, in love and humility which might emerge from the prayer.

The aim would be to grow in “the Divine Dimensions” mentioned in Ephesians 3:17-19.

This would be for people from all churches and traditions.

Contact Peter Brown on _petelaine@btinternet.com



Notes from the Church Treasurer


Harvest Thanksgiving

I am pleased to report that church members gave £251.25 (including Gift Aid) to All We Can from the collections at harvest Thanksgiving. Thank you. Graham


Giving by envelope

We have decided not to purchase any more envelopes for weekly giving because of the high cost of buying these and their declining use. However, the envelope giving scheme is still very much alive! We have been encouraging members to give their regular donations by standing order wherever possible, but if this is not possible or convenient, please continue to put your donation into the donations basket. If you are giving cash, please put your donation in any envelope, and write either your name or your envelope number on the outside, so that we can reclaim Gift Aid on your donation. If you have forgotten your envelope number and you want to use it, please ask me. If you are giving by cheque, you do not need an envelope at all, but if you prefer to put it in an envelope for privacy this is fine. In this case you do not need to write anything on the envelope.

Graham Titterington



Greater Alton Project
Anglicans & Methodists Journeying Together



Anna Chaplaincy
for older people
Alton

Anna Chaplain to Older People

An ecumenical post promoting the spiritual and emotional welfare of older people, including those living in residential care homes, sheltered housing and the wider community of Alton, Hampshire.

An ability to develop teams of volunteers, lead care home worship and offer pastoral care to people of all faiths and none.

20hrs/week

Salary range £12-15/hour

It is an occupational requirement for the person appointed to be a practicing Christian in a church affiliated to the Council of Churches in England & Wales.

Full COVID 19 vaccination status will be required .
(Recent legislation requires it in all CQC Care Homes)

Closing Date: 7th January 2022, 5.30pm

Application Pack from Mrs Liz George altonmethodist@hotmail.com



THE SPIRE CHURCH, FARNHAM

A Methodist and United Reformed Church

is seeking to recruit:

*Operations Coordinator and Administrator
(part-time)*

Closing Date for applications 12 midday Friday 3 December 2021

Interviews week beginning Monday 6 December

Start date to be mutually agreed, but as soon as possible

Further Information on both posts available on our website:

www.spirechurchfarnham.org.uk

or emailing: michael@spirechurchfarnham.org.uk

or by telephone: 0771 640 9350

Wonder of Christmas Concert



Saturday 11th December, 7.30pm at Alton Maltings

This popular annual event of Christmas music and carols features Alton Concert Band, Alton Choral Society and Ancora female voice choir. Admission is free, but this year by ticket only. Donations are requested for Homestart, to support their work with families in our area.

To obtain your tickets please visit the ACS website –

www.altonchoral.org.uk – and follow the link to our Eventbrite listing. Tickets are available from 11th November and early booking is recommended to avoid disappointment. If you later find you cannot attend the event, please cancel through Eventbrite so we can re-allocate your tickets.



Thank you, Nancy, for taking care of the flower bed outside church, making it such a pleasurable sight for everyone who passes by.

Judy Nicholls



Improving Public Transport: Boosting Infrastructure and Safety & Promoting Integration and Innovation in Local Services Post-Covid

Thursday, December 9th 2021

Webinar

Key Speakers Include:

Lord Bill Bradshaw, Vice Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Rail and Treasurer, and Vice Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Bus and Coach Industry

Stuart Thomson, Head of Public Affairs, Government and Infrastructure at BDB Pitmans

Pam Turton, Transport Officer for Portsmouth City Council

Rebecca Kite, Policy Manager of Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) UK

Professor Peter White, Emeritus Professor of Public Transport Systems, University of Westminster

Emma Forde, Associate at Arup

Dr Suzanne Bartington, Honorary Consultant in Public Health at the University of Birmingham

Alex Hornby, Chief Executive Officer of Transdev Blazefield

Michelle Sacks, Event host & Deputy Chief Executive (Place) Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council

[Event Details](#) [Website](#) [Register to Attend](#)

[For an interactive version of this document, please email the editor (Nancy Buck) or the church office who can forward the original email.]

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the number of passengers on rail, bus, trams and metro networks has declined significantly – and even as restrictions have eased, passenger numbers remain far below pre-lockdown levels. As a result, much of public transport became unviable overnight, leaving most sectors dependent on councils and central government paying for services. There is subsequently major uncertainty around the demand for travel and changing patterns of usage, leading to concern at all levels of government about the viability of current infrastructure and the sustainability of current transport projects. As emergency funding comes to an end, there will need to be a renewed focus on ensuring that public transport budgets are effectively targeted to meet chaining needs and that the public are assured that buses and trains are safe to use. This is not just a financial issue for all levels of government, the use of public transport is also key to meeting the government’s carbon emission targets, improving air quality and public health.

[For paragraphs omitted here, please see copy on noticeboard in church Foyer.]

Program

- Examine the efficacy of government support for public transport operators since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Engage with the government’s public transport agenda, identify priorities for action and where further support may be needed
- Learn of successful community rail partnerships transforming under-utilised stations and engaging with local areas
- Discuss the future of big rail projects such as HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the full Transpennine Route Upgrade
- Evaluate the ‘Bus Back Better’ Strategy and formulate strategies for taking control of local bus services and maximising passenger numbers and satisfaction
- Assess how local government and other stakeholders can assure the public that public transport is safe to use
- Explore methods of integrating high capacity cycling tracks within existing rail and motorised public transport infrastructure
- Assess how to utilise public transport to tackle air quality blackspots in local areas
- Analyse how to support the adoption of new ticketing technologies to improve customer experiences
- Develop methods of supporting people with disabilities seeking spontaneous travel

To register for this briefing, please [click here](#).

Eco Corner

Tide, Wave, Wind and Nuclear.

We are surrounded by energy waiting for us to harvest it. Wind and Solar are the obvious sources already being exploited.



There are also parts of the British Isles which can be a rich source of power from the sea. Major barrages across river mouths such as the Severn are very controversial. But tidal power does not have to be that large. The Orkney Islands are being used as a test bed for marine technology which should have its place in our overall scheme for renewable energy.

If you take yourself to the south of the island of Eday, you might spot a yellow floating platform. The fast flowing tide in the Fall of Warness is rushing past it creating a wake as though the platform were moving. However, it is tethered to the sea bottom and contains two turbines converting the tidal flow into electricity. The power is only 1.5 MW but it is a sign of what is possible when scaled up. It is not the only such demonstration going ahead in the Orkneys. Couple that with on-shore and off-shore wind and the electrolytic converters which turn electricity into 'green' hydrogen and the area offers a whole range of options. This is all a part of the European Marine Energy Centre which is transforming the area into a global leader in marine renewable power.

More good news is the Government investment in development of small nuclear power stations. Based on the Rolls-Royce compact nuclear reactors used in UK nuclear submarines for years, these are proven technology and are small enough to be installed locally.

Nigel Hughes

With acknowledgement to Professional Engineering Magazine

Dates for your Diary

NOVEMBER

Tues 30 2.30pm Church House Group

DECEMBER

Fri 3 10.00-12.00 Action for Children Coffee Morning

Sat 4 10.00-12.00 Messy Church

Tues 7 2.30pm Church House Group

Sat 11 7.30pm *Wonder of Christmas Concert*

Tues 14 12.30pm Lunch Club Christmas Meal

Fri 17 **Last Day for BB Christmas Post**

Sat 18 2.00pm CAMEO Christmas Tea Party

Thurs 30 10.00 onwards *Ladies @ Wetherspoons*

JANUARY 2022

Sun 2 10.00 **Morning Service led by Jennie Marlow**

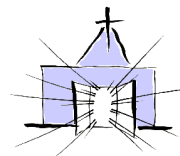
Sun 9 10.00 **Covenant Service - Rev Philip Simpkins**

Mon 10 7.30pm House Group - Caring for Creation (1)

Tues 11 12.30pm Lunch Club

Please look at articles in the Newsletter giving more information.

The January issue of the Newsletter should be available from Sunday 2nd January 2022.



Services at Alton in December 2021

Sunday 5th 2nd Sunday in Advent

10.00am Pam Jones

Sunday 12th 3rd Sunday in Advent

10.00am Liam Sheridan

Sunday 19th 4th Sunday in Advent

10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins - Holy Communion

6.30pm Liz George - **Carol Service**

Christmas Eve 4.00pm Rev Philip Simpkins - Christingle Service

Christmas Day 10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins - Family Celebration

Sunday 26th 1st Sunday of Christmas

10.30am *GAP service at St Lawrence*

CONTACT US

Church Office: Email altonmethodist@hotmail.com (Tel 01420 82695)

The church office is not usually staffed. Emails will be picked up and passed on to the relevant person, but answerphone messages may be overlooked.

For pastoral matters, please phone or email Rev Philip Simpkins.

Tel: 01420 83167 Email: philip.simpkins@methodist.org.uk

For administrative matters, including bookings, please contact Mrs Liz George via the church email address (above) or Tel 01420 561543

Items for inclusion in the **January** issue of the **"Newsletter"** should reach the editor, Nancy Buck, by noon **Sunday 26th December** at the latest, please.

If you are able to email your contribution to the office (or to Nancy) it would be much appreciated.