

Alton Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER



February 2026



Minister: Rev. Philip Simpkins

Tel: 01420 83167

Church website www.altonmethodist.org.uk

Circuit website www.hsbcircuit.org.uk



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



Dear Friends,

I read the story of a professor of philosophy who stood in front of his class and pulled out a big glass jar and placed it in front of them.

Next, he pulled out from under the table a bag of large pebbles and placed the stones one by one into his jar. He did so until there was no room to add another stone to the jar. He asked his students if the jar was now full – yes, they replied.

Once again, he reached under the table and pulled out a bag of small pebbles and poured them into the jar. They rattled as they slipped through the larger stones and settled into place. Again, he asked his students if the jar was now full – yes, they replied.

With a knowing smile the professor then pulled out a bag of sand from under the desk and poured it into the jar and the fine particles filled up the spaces between the large and small pebbles. Is the jar now full, he asked – Yes, they said.

With that he took the jug of water on the table and poured the water into the jar until it was full.

He looked over the rim of his glasses and asked what great truth we might learn from this experiment.

One student replied, it teaches us that as full as our schedules may appear, we can always fit more in!

No – replied the professor. The great truth that we can conclude from this experiment is that if we don't put all the larger stones in first, we will never be able to fit all of them in later.

He then continued: 'What are the large stones in your life?' 'What are the things that really matter to you?'

As we reflect on our lives, we can ask the same question as the professor.

What are the large stones in our life?

What matters most to you?

Do such things have central place?

Maybe the larger pebbles might include our faith, time for our family, helping others, going to the gym or taking a walk each day.

Within the Methodist Church, our membership cards remind us of four priorities that are important to us as a congregation – the large stones!

We are called to be a people who **worship God** – meeting together as a body of people to offer God our praise and thanksgiving, seeking his help for our everyday lives.

We are called to be a people who are active in **learning and caring** – taking time to feed our faith through regular bible reading and prayer, joining with others in discussion & fellowship. Seeking to support others in their faith and life.

We are called to be a people who recognise the importance of **service**. Service to the church and community by using our time, talents and resources to be a blessing to others.

Finally, we are encouraged to **share our faith (evangelism)**. To be open and ready to talk about what God means to us, to share our story when given the opportunity and to help others consider following God themselves.

Prayer

God of wisdom, help us place the big stones in first—

love, faith, and faithfulness—

before the pebbles and sand of busyness fill our days.

Teach us to order our lives by what matters most,
so everything else may find its proper place.

Amen.

Philip

COURAGE FOR THE JOURNEY

Lent Course 2026

March 5th Courage to step into the unknown

Speaker: Rev David Chattell. (Genesis 12)

March 12th Courage to lead

Speaker: Rev Philip Simpkins (Judges 6)

March 19th 'Open Doors' -

Speaker: Geoff & Irene Green

March 26th 'Courage to live counter culturally'

Speaker Rev Ben Burge (Daniel 6)

April 2nd: Courage to follow God's call

Speaker Bishop Phillip (Matthew 20)

A time to meet together as Christians during the season of lent for worship, a talk and time for discussion.

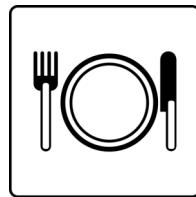
It is held at The Alton Maltings. Refreshments from 7:15 (start 7:30pm)

Course content designed by the Salvation Army



Lunch Club

It was lovely to welcome everyone back to the lunch club held in the Methodist Church on the second Tuesday of January.



The team in the kitchen produced a lovely meal just right for a winter's day – beef casserole and lots of vegetables, the meat was so tender!

Afterwards, we were treated to a large slice of Bakewell Tart and cream which filled any remaining gaps!

A cup of tea was enjoyed by many before Jennie gave a short reflection.

We are so grateful to all who help to prepare and serve our lunches which are regularly enjoyed by 50-60 people!

The next lunch is on **Tuesday February 10th** 12:30-2pm, with coffee always available in the church beforehand as we gather. The cost is £5 and can be cash or card. If you are not already booked in or have a change of plan, please ring Philip on 01420-83167.

Stay & Play



After the Christmas break, Stay and Play was back in January and a very warm welcome was offered to many parents, carers and their children.

The church is buzzing with activity as the youngsters play with all the toys and the parents enjoy catching up with one another – indeed there are often more than 30 children plus carers so you can imagine how busy it is.

Stay and Play meets on a Wednesday morning between 10 and 11:30am and is run by Liz G, Liz S and Angela.



As you are aware our chosen charity this year as a church is Naomi House & Jacksplace.

One of the ways in which they raise funds is through their charity shops. They have 21 across the South of England.

Naomi House & Jacksplace
hospices for children and young adults

time and their skills to make a difference – I am sure many of us have visited the one in Alton.

The funds raised from so many different sources help the lives of those who need hospice care along with providing support for their families.

Over 14 years, Oliver and his family have had respite stays at both Naomi House & Jacksplace.

Oliver's main diagnosis is cerebral palsy with many associated health conditions. He has severe developmental delay, a brain condition called hydrocephalus, and epilepsy. Oliver needs full support for every part of his daily life, 24 hours a day. He needs help with feeding, washing and taking medication and won't ever be able to have any level of independence.

His mum writes: *Oliver has never been able to talk, but it is through knowing him very well that we can communicate with him. He uses facial expressions and eye pointing. How he engages depends on how well he is and the relationship he has with the people supporting him, and how they interpret what he wants.*

Trusting Oliver to the care of other people when you're not there is a big thing. We're putting our most loved and treasured person in the care of someone else. Oliver knows that all the nurses love him. He knows that he is

going to be spoilt rotten while he's there.

Jacksplace is next to Naomi House and the two hospices are connected by a corridor. Jacksplace is for young adults aged between 16 and 35. Oliver transitioned from Naomi House when he was 18. He adjusted quickly because the staff work across both hospices and know him well. He was ready for the change because he was at a stage where he needed to be with young adults of a similar age

Oliver loves to stay up later in the evening, particularly for movie nights and being part of that older group. The activities are more age appropriate for him in Jacksplace.

Oliver always likes the trips out as well as his sessions in the hydrotherapy pool. When he is well, he loves the food at Jacksplace. I always joke with him when I drop him off and say that I am jealous and wish I was staying with him because of the food. He always laughs at that. Oliver loves the music sessions at Jacksplace. Music is his absolute passion, and he has very specific tastes. There are certain songs that make him go wild with excitement when you put them on.



Please do support our own fundraising activities when they come up soon!



The Blackwater Valley Circuit, of which Alton Methodist is a part, is a merger of the Hants Surrey Border Circuit & The Berkshire Surrey Borders Circuit.

A leadership team away day during January will have met to discuss future staffing needs. In 2027 four of our ministers are either retiring, moving or up for re-invitation. In addition to this it is expected that later this year a new URC minister will be appointed to The Spire Church, Farnham and High Cross, Camberley. This will be a shared appointment with Deacon Joy Everingham, with Philip stepping back from his present role at Farnham. It's all change!

The Blackwater Valley Circuit will also have a new website up and running very soon with information about all the churches and its ministers being available for people to view.

Meanwhile we congratulate Rev Anne Day (Aldershot & North Camp) on her 50th birthday and pray that she will quickly recover from a planned operation.

It is expected that Rev Kyung Mi, our probationer minister will complete her studies and be recommended for ordination in the summer. Her husband, John, is a minister in our neighbouring circuit.

We also wish Liam, Rachel, Emma, Noah and Anna God's blessing as Liam completes his initial training at Queens College, Birmingham, to go out into circuit as a Probationary minister in September. Subject to conference, Liam has been stationed to the Coast & Downs Methodist Circuit, West Sussex, living in Goring by Sea.

Date for the Diary

The annual **World Day of Prayer Service** takes place at our church on **Friday 6th March** starting at 2pm - it's for everyone and more details next month.

Church Family News

We were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of **Charlie Shaylor**. He and his wife **Maggie** have been worshiping with us for quite a while. His faith was very important to him, so we know he is safe in God's keeping and we send our love to all the family.



We want to keep **Di Wright** in our thoughts and prayers as she copes with **Bob** being in hospital.

Also we continue to remember **Peter and Terry White** and ask God's blessing on them.

For all those who are feeling depressed by dark days, long nights, and worrying news, we look for signs of spring, giving us hope for a brighter future.

Helping Hand for Ukraine

Jerry Janes gave a moving talk at the first service of the year about the donations of warm clothing, bedding and kitchen utensils which he helps to transport to Ukraine for families who have fled the fighting areas. He wants to thank those who contributed to the funds through www.justgiving.com/page/holybourne-supports-ukraine Goods can be given to Jerry at 81 London Road, Holybourne. Any surplus medicines or medical aids are also required and Gill Marsden is responsible for collecting them. She is usually in church on Sunday or can be contacted on 01420 89659. [See p17-18 for more information.]



Ladies @ Wetherspoons

We will get together again on **Thursday 26th February** any time between 10am and 12 for a light-hearted chat and coffee - there is always room for one more!



Prayers at Noon

We meet on **Tuesday 3rd February** at twelve o'clock for a short time of spoken and silent prayer - anyone is welcome to join us.



Singing our Faith

Why not come and singalong to some hymns with a CD - enthusiasm is more important than ability! It starts at **2pm on Tuesday 3rd February**. There's a cuppa and conversation to follow.



Church Bible Study

We meet in the foyer on **Tuesday 17th February at 2pm** to look at what the Bible means to us through the Psalms.

Jennie Marlow

Housekeeping notes!

As we start as new year let's think about our housekeeping resolutions!

1. **All** who use the church facilities and Hirers need to take home their own rubbish. There are black sacks in the right hand big cupboard in the foyer. Please check your rubbish is put in the correct sacks for recycling. **We do Not have a rubbish collection at the church** so if we all help by taking small amounts away that would be good.
2. **NO damp T-towels** to be left around as we can have an inspection at any time. Please either take them home and wash them and return or bring your own. The box of t-towels for your use is under the sink near the dish washer.
3. **NO nappies to be left in the loos** - please use the little sacks provided and

take them home!

4. Please make sure that the tap is turned OFF in the disabled toilet, just push it closed firmly!

5. If you use the dishwasher ,the water heaters or the plate warmer please make sure it is turned off when you leave.

It is only January but already all these points have cropped up so we must do better!!

Any problems contact Christine Allan (84739)



CAMEO NEWS

At the first meeting of the new year, CAMEO members enjoyed watching their chosen film, "Mr. Holland's Opus." Thank you to Jacob for setting up the recording so everything went smoothly. The afternoon concluded with the usual combination of tea, cake and chat.

Our next meeting, on February 28th, is entitled "The Exotic Travels of Norma and Wendy" - definitely not to be missed!



Our March meeting, on 21st of that month, will be an open one. Everyone is invited to come along to a presentation on the work of Naomi House/Jack's Place, our current church charity. Tea and cake will be served after the presentation and there will be the opportunity to make a donation. Please put the date in your diaries: **SATURDAY MARCH 21st 2pm** at church.

Judy, Janet & Anna

2nd Alton Company News



Anchors

The boys had fun learning about how we could be helpful robots for God by sharing his love and kindness with others.

We are looking forward to Fun Day on 31st January, when we will travel to Woking to meet with other Anchor Boys in our battalion for an afternoon of fun and games.

Lt Glenda Bentley



Juniors

The start of 2026 saw in the new Junior Section's Leader-in-Charge - Beth, who welcomed the boys back after the Christmas break with a session celebrating the New Year including some fun with sparklers, creating their own calendars, learning about God's forgiveness when we make mistakes and discussing new year's resolutions. The boys have made Beth feel very welcome and she is looking forward to guiding the Junior Section on their future adventures, including an opportunity to participate in the upcoming Mid

Southern Battalion Junior Section Competitions Day.



Making 2026 calendars



New Year sparklers

Company and Seniors

After the Christmas break, we enjoyed a party – well, more of a games evening . . . but there was food! And we're now just rounding off our Interests classes, with Airfix models nearing completion and acrylic bookmarks being finished off – and speaking of “finishing off”, there's never much left over after our successful cookery sessions!

We're now starting to practice for the Battalion Day of Action in March, and we've also been exploring why Jesus chose to use parables.

Our Seniors are looking forward to an evening Go-Karting, and we're all hoping to go out for a cycle ride during the half-term break.

David Allan (Captain)

Girls' Brigade News



After a break for Christmas activities and then holidays, the n:vestigate girls have returned to the Storytime topic, using traditional stories to illustrate moral dilemmas and then showing how the teachings of Jesus would answer the question. The Elves and the Shoemaker story illustrated doing kindness secretly and was paired with Jesus advice to pray quietly and not boastfully. It also gave an opportunity to return (by popular demand!) to the sewing project started in the summer. Hannah's assistance in re-threading needles and sorting out tangled stitches was invaluable!

Nancy Buck

The n:gage group are looking at a selection of the Fruits of the Spirit. We kicked off the year looking at all the meanings of Faithfulness; being faithful to each other, to any new year's resolutions we made and how God will be faithful through the year to come. Over the next few weeks we'll be exploring themes of Joy, Peace, Kindness and wrapping up with Love, just in time for Valentine's Day!

Amy Evans



The church is now busy on Wednesday afternoons and evenings as our expedition training sessions get under way. We have three Young Venturers and 14 DofE Bronze participants learning about navigation, safety, food, first aid and campcraft. Accompanied walks will take place this month and next, before the groups are ready to tackle expeditions on their own!

David Allan

HARD OF HEARING GROUP

at

ALL SAINTS CHURCH HALL, ALTON



Have you seen a Snowdrop yet? I spied one on the Coors Estate just the other day and I was very excited as surely it means that Spring is not far away!

Anyway to business!! Our next Hard of Hearing meeting will take place on **Tuesday 24th February at 2pm**. We are delighted to announce that a Regency Gentleman will be coming to talk to us. In an age of Stage Coaches, he is pondering the possibility of a faster means of travel – maybe something on rails? He is sure that Jane Austen would appreciate a quicker way to get around the country – so what is the future of transport? Paul Ebbutt - our Regency Gent. will share his special take on local history.

Our 2026 Programme is packed with exciting talks and events – please let me know if you would like to receive a copy – you won't be disappointed!

On a lighter note, it would be lovely if we could find one or two new volunteers to assist our group. If you can help us for a couple of hours once a month on a Tuesday afternoon do let me know.

Contact: Annette Blackman 01420 543219

abblackman4@googlemail.com

Lip Reading - REMINDER!

The next meeting is in All Saints Church Hall on **Tuesday 3rd February at 2pm**. All welcome!



For more information contact Kate 07811744843 (text only) or kaddando@gmail.com

Knitters Anonymous

Handmade with love



Many thanks to all those who spent the bad weather in January indoors knitting away for our various charities. As a result, you have made and donated eight large bags for the Hats for the Homeless and warm items for the Ukraine charities. Along with their thanks for all we sent before Christmas comes the following message from BLISS for the prem babies – **“So what DO we need now?** Well, everything really, as the cupboard is bare! Blankets, blankets, and more blankets (the smallest size blanket required now is 20" by 20" square) plus cardigans matching sets of cardi/hat/boots, hats, bonding squares and triangles.

About 70% of cardis received are pink. Young Mums these days are much freer in their colour choices than we were (pink, blue, white) but we still can't see them putting a baby boy into pink. So if you are able to find other colours too, that would be great!"

Our next meeting is in All Saints Church Hall on Tuesday 17th February from 2pm until 3.30pm. Donations can be brought along to these meetings or can be left in the box in All Saints Church. Why not come along have a chat over a cup of tea and see what we do?

For more info contact Kate 07811744843 (text only)

or email: kaddando@gmail.com



Alton Open Sight is a social club for those with a visual impairment. It meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at All Saints Church Hall at 2.30pm. **The next meeting will be held on 16th February** when two of our inspirational blind members will describe the accessible travel and holidays that are available to people with failing eyesight.

The meetings provide an opportunity to make new friends over an afternoon tea, with a chance to share information on coping with sight loss.

We welcome anyone with a visual impairment. If you are interested please either email Sue at AltonOpenSight@gmail.com or contact Open Sight via their website <https://opensight.org.uk> or telephone 02380 641244, during office hours.

Help for Ukraine

It was very interesting to hear how Jerry Janes is involved in a group called Helping Hands for Ukraine.

I would like to tell you about another group called Ukraine Mission which regularly takes medicines and medical aids out to Ukraine, particularly to the front line.

I collect such items which are then passed to a paramedic who, with colleagues, drives to Ukraine to deliver them to wherever they are needed.

It might be that you have some unwanted medical items in your cupboard at home. If so I would be very happy to receive them. If they are out of date, don't worry. We will accept medicines up to one year over their "use by" date. Ukraine mission will take all kinds of things that might be useful in hospitals, e.g. crutches, incontinence pads, first aid supplies etc. as well as medicines. If you have something that might be useful but you are not sure, then feel free to ask me.

How Else Can You Help Ukraine?

Last year a small group of us raised enough money to send 2 fully equipped ambulances out to Ukraine by holding 3 local events.

In March 2026, two more events are to be held. This time the money raised will be used to contribute towards helping to establish a rehabilitation centre near to Lviv. This will serve military personnel and civilians who have lost limbs through the war. At present there is a centre but they are very short of equipment and have nothing to send inpatients home with to continue

The two events are:-

Saturday 14th March, 7.30 pm- Party Night at the Assembly Rooms.

Two local bands will play live. There will be food, a bar, a raffle and dancing. Tickets will cost £15.

Thursday 26th March, 7.30 pm - Voices for Ukraine at the Assembly Rooms.

The Alton Community choir and the Basingstoke Hospital Male Voice Choir will perform a concert. There will be a raffle and the ticket will include a glass of wine or soft drink in the interval.

Tickets will cost £15 for adults and £10 for children.

If you are interested in either of these events then put the dates in your diaries. More information, including how to buy tickets, will be available shortly.

There is also a local giving donation account set up with the following link:-

<Http://localgiving.org/fundraising/Alton-Ambulance-Appeal-for-Ukraine>

Gill Marsden

Parish Quiz and Fish & Chips Night

The popular Holy Rood Parish Quiz is back again this January. Join us for a fun and friendly evening

on Saturday 31 January at the Church of the Holy Rood, Holybourne.

Doors open at 6.00pm, with a 6.30pm start. A fish and chip supper will be provided, with alternative menu choices available.

The cost is £15 per person and includes wine and soft drinks.

To book or for more information, please contact Keith at holybourne34@outlook.com or call 01420 542135.

Dates for your Diary

JANUARY

Tues 27	7.30pm	Family Committee meeting
Sat 31	6.00/6.30pm	Parish Quiz & Fish & Chips at Holy Rood

FEBRUARY

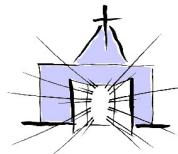
Tues 3	12 noon	Prayers at Noon
	2.00pm	Singing our Faith
Tues 10	12.30pm	Lunch Club
Tues 17	2.00pm	Church Bible Study
Thurs 26	10.00-12.00	Ladies @ Wetherspoons
	7.30pm	Church Council
Sat 28	2.00pm	CAMEO

MARCH

Thurs 5	7.15/7.30pm	Lent Course starts at Alton Maltings
Fri 6	2.00pm	World Day of Prayer Service here

Please look at articles in the Newsletter giving more information.

The March issue of the Newsletter should be available from Sunday 22nd February.



Services in February 2026

Sunday 1st	4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
	10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins - Holy Communion
Sunday 8th	5th Sunday in Ordinary Time
	10.00am David Betts
Sunday 15th	Sunday before Lent
	10.00am Deacon Joy Everingham
Sunday 22nd	1st Sunday in Lent
	10.00am Liz George

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 bookings, please contact Mrs Liz Strain via the church email address (above) or Tel 07828 934200.

Items for inclusion in the March issue of the "Newsletter" should reach the editor, Nancy Buck, by noon Sunday 15th February at the latest, please.

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