

Alton Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER

April 2026

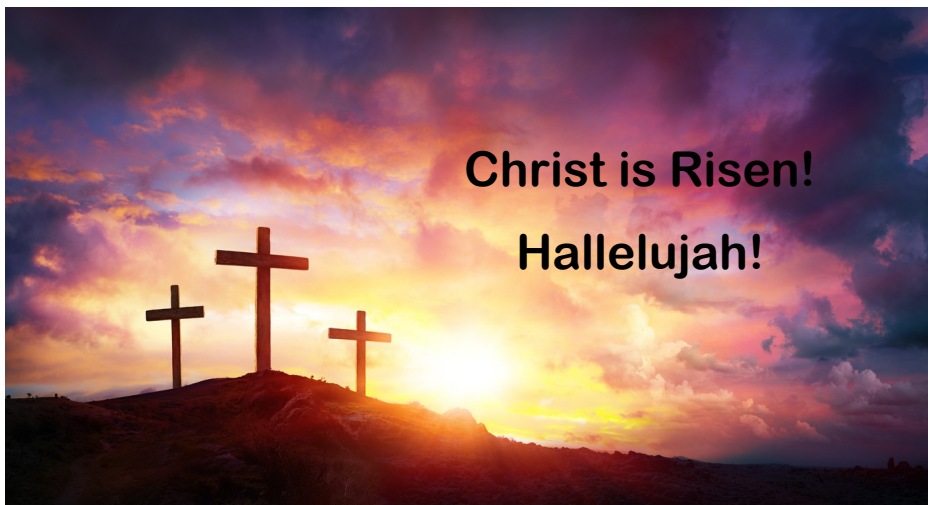


Photo: Romolo Tavani (iStock)



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 wonder what you like most about Easter.

When I asked the internet this question, I was informed that the most cherished aspects of Easter for many people are the joyous celebrations, the tradition of giving and receiving baskets filled with treats, and the anticipation of the Easter bunny arriving with colourful eggs. These elements contribute to festive celebrations and make the holiday memorable for family and friends.

We, too, look forward to a joyful celebration. I will happily enjoy any Easter eggs you care to donate—but don't mention bunnies! I have far too many of them in my garden on the Isle of Wight. My wife often calls me Mr. McGregor from the *Peter Rabbit* books!

I also look forward to Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Having walked down the steep cobbled steps alongside the Mount of Olives towards the imposing walls and gates of the old city of Jerusalem on a trip to the Holy Land, I can imagine both the excitement of the crowd waving palm branches and the curiosity of those peering over the city walls asking, "Who is this?"

We will join our friends at the **Parish Church in St. Lawrence for a 10:30 a.m. service on Palm Sunday (March 29th)**, where I am sure the joy and expectation of that first Palm Sunday will be relived in a celebratory service.

As we make our way through Holy Week, we soon arrive at **Maundy Thursday**, when we remember Jesus going to the Upper Room to share the Passover meal with his disciples. There he took bread, broke it, shared the cup of wine, and gave new meaning to these symbols of God's saving grace.

It was also in that room that he took a bowl of water and washed the disciples' feet as an example of servanthood. In Durham Cathedral, King Charles and Queen Camilla will celebrate acts of service in the community and present Maundy money to those recognised for their service. (Sadly, the an-

cient tradition of the King washing the feet of beggars was discontinued in the 18th century!)

We will, however, have a special guest at the **Lent Course held at the Maltings on Maundy Thursday evening: Bishop Philip**. He will complete our series “*Courage for the Journey*”, followed by sharing communion.

Good Friday brings memories of my dad planting potatoes—but first, he would attend a Good Friday service. On this day, we remember the cruel crucifixion and reflect on Jesus dying for us.

My favourite hymn is:

*“My song is love unknown,
My Saviour’s love to me,
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?”*

A re-enactment of the **Good Friday story for all ages will take place in the churchyard of St. Lawrence Church at 10 a.m.**, complete with animals and dramatic storytelling, and from **2 p.m. a reflective last-hour service**.

I love waking up early on **Easter Day**—not because of bunnies or chocolate eggs—but for the **Easter Sunrise Service at Old Park Farm Beech at 6:15 a.m.** It is always very special. We share Easter hymns, prayers, and reflections as the sun rises over the fields, glistening on dewy lamb-filled pastures and thousands of cowslips.

Then, what a privilege it is to lead the congregation with the words:

*“Christ is risen!”
“He is risen indeed!”*

We will look forward to **Rev. David Wilson leading our service at Alton Methodist Church at 10 a.m.**, while I head to the Spire Church in Farnham. The joy and wonder the women—and later the other disciples—felt as they realized the tomb was empty is always inspiring. This joy is not only theirs but ours, too. Christ rose to reveal that eternal life is offered to all who trust

in Him.

*See what a morning, gloriously bright
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave-clothes,
Tomb filled with light,
As the angels announce Christ is risen!*

Every blessing,

Philip

EASTER SERVICES

Maundy Thursday – Lent Course at the Maltings with Bishop Philip **7.30pm** followed by Holy Communion.

Good Friday – Open air enactment of the Good Friday story in St Lawrence Church – with animals from Mill Farm! **10am**

Music for Good Friday - 6pm at Alton Methodist Church. Free entry with collection for Naomi House & Jackspace.

Sunrise Service – Old Park Farm, Beech (Sarah & Ed Neish) at **6.15am**

Easter Day Celebration with Holy Communion at **10am** at the Methodist Church led by Rev David Wilson.

Please bring a few flowers to decorate the cross, as you arrive for our Easter day service.

Lunch Club

What a great lunch everyone enjoyed on the second Tuesday of March.

They were served up a treat which included salmon, potatoes, carrots and peas.

Lemon sponge and custard also went down very well!

We are very grateful to all who cook our meals voluntarily and serve at the tables.

The next lunch club is on April 14th at 12:30pm, price £5 cash or card.

Please leave a message with Philip if you are unable to come or wish to re-book (if you are not on our list!). **01420-83167**

We are always delighted to see you!



Church AGM

Sunday April 19th at 4pm – Everyone welcome!

Do come along to hear about the life of the church, elect our church stewards and church council reps and share fellowship together with a bring and share tea.

It will also be an opportunity to re-visit our mission statement and priorities for the church for the future.



Blackwater Valley Circuit News

The circuit leadership team continue to look at future staffing across the circuit with four ministers due to retire or become available for re-invitation over the coming year.

The process of stationing begins in May/June this year and Liz Strain is our church rep. on the Circuit Invitation Committee – I am sure she will have a busy yet rewarding time in this role, for which we are grateful. Ministers on the move will then provide a profile, as will circuits looking for new staff in early autumn with stationing happening in November and January.

The South East District Synod for Presbyters and Lay reps will be held within our own circuit at High Cross Church, Camberley on Saturday April 18th. I can almost guarantee that it will be a sunny day (when some might prefer to be in the garden!). As Presbyterian synod was held in Folkstone in March – we are truly grateful for a much closer location!

Rev Anne Day (Aldershot/ North Camp) is recovering well from her hip operation in Early Feb and hopes to be back at work in April.

Congratulations go to Rev Kyung Mi Banks (Frimley Green/Cove HW) who has been recommended for ordination this year which will be held in Shrewsbury at the end of June. Ordination is a very special occasion after years of study and training!

Rev Philip Simpkins will be on sabbatical from May to July, returning in the first part of August. We are grateful to Liz George who will be your point of contact, or Rev Nick Oborski (Superintendent Minister).



As our chosen charity of the year it has been a pleasure to welcome Karen who came to speak both to the Boys Brigade and to Cameo as a representative from Naomi House & Jacksplace.

I can only say the Anchor Boys and Juniors, as well as the seniors listened so attentively to Karen's presentation and made us proud!

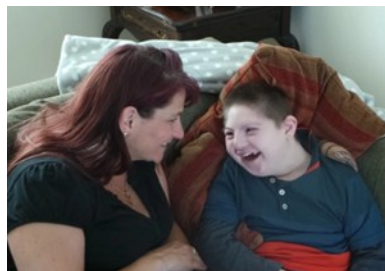
There are lots of fundraisers coming up (or will have just happened) within the church that will encourage us to give towards this

wonderful charity for example 'Hospitality Fortnight', Cameo Open Afternoon as well as fundraisers the brigades are planning. Our annual gift day in July will also give 25% of what is raised to the charity.



Cassidy is living with a terminal diagnosis. She is a regular visitor to Jacksplace, where the care and compassion she receives from our dedicated team gives Cassidy valuable and unique support.

Joseph thrived on the attention he was given at Naomi House & Jacksplace. When he came to the end of his life, the support he and his family received meant so much to them.



Online Service

It was on Easter Day 2020 that we launched our very first online service, offering worship to all those facing lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. That first attempt was quite a learning curve—recording on a mobile phone, discovering the challenges of background noise, and figuring out what hymn music we could legally use without infringing copyright. It was very late on Easter Saturday when my son finally helped me overcome the challenge of uploading it to YouTube! It was a basic effort, but at least we did it.

I remember filming in my greenhouse (too echoing), the garage (too untidy), and the garden—where it was amazing how the dustcart would start beeping just as recording began! We also filmed in bluebell woods and stood among the corn for our harvest service early in the morning, just as the sun was rising.

Since then, we have developed our skills over the past six years—discovering helpful software, learning how to look directly into the camera, and incorporating short videos to enhance worship.

During the COVID period, viewers connected with us from across the country. One particularly special moment was receiving an email from a member of my youth group from when I was 16, saying she often watched and asking if our family could get together to catch up. At one point, we probably reached an online congregation of around 250 people, although it's not always easy to measure. I recall visiting Borovere Care Home one day and being introduced to the residents as "the man off the tele!"—they had been faithfully watching each Sunday.

As you can imagine, producing an online service takes a great deal of time, and after six years, the time has come to bring this chapter to a close. Liz George has been extraordinary, contributing so much of the work, and we are truly grateful for all the dedication and effort that has gone into this ministry.

Church Family News

We are sad to have lost two lovely church members recently.

Mary Sugden worshipped here for a number of years but has been unwell for a long time.

Peter White died after a short illness and his Thanksgiving Service was held on 24th March. He will be greatly missed.

The Thanksgiving Service for the life of **Charlie Shaylor** will be at Alton Maltings on **Saturday 11th April**, starting at 2pm.



Easter Sunday

If it's too early in the morning for you to enjoy the sun rise service at Sarah Neish's, I can offer an alternative hilltop experience. Like last year I'll leave church at 8am and take a prayerful walk up to Windmill Hill to discover a surprise. We will be back at church for a warm-up cuppa and maybe a little chocolate egg!

Jennie Marlow

Bible Study

We will be meeting in the foyer on **Tuesday 21st April at 2pm** to gain more help from looking at the Psalms.



Singing our Faith

Our little singing group will be getting together to sing some hymns and enjoy refreshments afterwards. We'll meet on **Tuesday 7th April at 2pm** - why come not and lend your voice?



Ladies @ Wetherspoons

Another month has gone by - so it's time for coffee and a chat. **We meet from 10am till 12 on Thursday 30th April.**

World Day of Prayer

Despite torrential rain 38 people enjoyed the service at our church. It was a good chance to meet up with other Christians in the town and find out something about life in Nigeria. There were accounts from four women telling of their struggles which was very moving.



Hospitality Fortnight 20th April to 3rd May

In aid of Naomi House & Jackspace

Offers of hospitality have been submitted & tickets are available to purchase.

We have offers of Evening Meals, Sunday Roast, Saturday Brunch, Coffee & Cake and Afternoon Teas.

Please see notice board for all hospitality offers & purchase your tickets from Angela Simpkins

May Market

Saturday 9th May, 10am-12noon

Planning is well underway for our spring fundraising event:-

- Geraldine Mason (01420 88726) will be running the plant stall and would welcome contributions of home-grown plants.
- Terri White (01420 617339) will be running the Bric-a-Brac stall with Anne Miller and would welcome donations of goods.
- Liz Strain and Hannah Primrose will be running the bookstall. Please contact Liz on 07828 934200 if you need books collected in advance.
- Sonja Williams will be running the cake stall and would welcome contributions of home-baking.

Judy Nicholls is putting together a team to provide the ever-popular refreshments.

If you have an idea for a new attraction or would like to volunteer to help, I would love to hear from you.

All rooms in the church will be in use the day before the fair so please do not leave goods here several days in advance. We will be setting up on the Friday evening from 9pm, after the Boy's Brigade Display. Goods may be brought then or from 9am on the Saturday. Alternatively, please contact me or the relevant stall-holder to arrange collection.

Nancy Buck (01420 85994)



2nd Alton Company News



It was good to join with the congregation for our Spring Church Parade, when Philip used the "Gladiator" theme to introduce some thoughts on how we might tackle the challenges that life often sets us.

Anchors

It's been wonderful to be back with the boys after being poorly for several weeks, although the boys were well taken care of while I was away.

Since my return we have potted plants and made medals for our mums and this week we learnt about kindness on national happiness day. We played charades and 'Kind Kim Says'.

We also made kindness super-hero capes for our teddies. Anchor's Ted is modelling his in the foyer, looking very nice.

After Easter we will be getting ready for our display in May.

Lt Glenda Bentley

Officer in Charge of the Anchors



Designing medals...



...and the finished items



Creating super-hero capes...



...for super-hero teddies

Juniors

The Juniors have been busy – as usual! Friday nights have seen them making bookmarks, learning about Naomi House & Jacksplace, preparing gifts for Mothers’ Day, and of course getting ready for Competitions Day, when we were up against the other Companies in our Battalion. It was a great day, and as well as enjoying the event, the Boys came home with lots of certificates! We were best in Reading, second in Handwriting, Challenge Room and Bridge Building, and came third overall. Preparations for the Display are now starting, and a varied and interesting summer programme has been planned.

Beth Henze



Building the Jenga tower



Working as a team



Junior boys with their certificates on Competitions Day

Company and Seniors

We enjoyed having Karen from Naomi House with us one Friday, and the older Boys are now planning how to raise funds for the charity. Watch this space !

The main BB competition of the year took place recently in Fleet, where we were up against Companies from Reading, Guildford, Fleet and Woking. The boys were delighted to win the Surprise event, which involved them building the highest tower they could, using only spaghetti and marshmallows! They also took first place in Drill, second places in First Aid and 5-a-Side Football, and third places in Scripture and Colour Party Drill. Despite their best efforts, Alton ended up in fourth place overall, but the Boys enjoyed their day.

We have entered the BB National “Top Team” competition again this year, and will tackle this in the hall one Friday evening. Then it’s preparation for the Display on 8th May, and planning for our Summer Programme when we will as usual be out-of-doors as often as we can.

David Allan

Captain

Girls' Brigade News



We had a lovely sunny day for our joint parade service with 2nd Alton Boys Brigade on Sunday 22nd March.

As I write we have one more Monday evening meeting before Easter and then our 'camp' to look forward to in the week following Easter. We'll be occupying the church premises from lunchtime on Wednesday 8th April to mid-morning on Friday 10th April, though out in Alice Holt Forest for much of Thursday. We're looking forward to lots of fun and friendship and Gill's cooking!

The n:vestigate girls have completed their 'Risks' badge and moved on to 'Friendships'. The first session on 'What makes a good friend?' used Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth, as the biblical example and the second session on 'Standing by your friend' used David and Jonathan. We got in a tangle of wool making a friendship web, started a friendship wall and were challenged to do one act of kindness during the week. It's been great to have Glenda back the last few weeks!

The older girls have been tackling the 'Spring' badge, with themes of new growth, Easter and the environment. We discovered that Eastertime is a symbol of God's ability to bring life from death, light from darkness and hope from despair. Our Easter craft project was creating sparkly eggs by pinning sequins all over an egg-shaped expanded polystyrene 'ball'. Not quite Fabergé, but very decorative!

Nancy Buck & Gill Thorne



Our fourteen Bronze participants have now completed their accompanied outdoor training, with walks on Kingsley and Broxhead Commons, and compass navigation south of Liphook and on Chapel Common. Planning their routes and choosing their campsites for the practice expeditions will start after Easter.



Flooding covers the footbridge!



In woodland near Liphook

Meanwhile, the Year 7 Venturers will be out on their accompanied training near Medstead during the Easter break, and then their expedition planning will begin too.

David Allan

Stay and Play

Wednesdays 10am to 11.30am

Adults with children 0-4yrs



We start back after Easter on **Wed 15th April** & the last session for this term will be 20th May .

Angela, Liz & Liz

CAMEO NEWS

In February a large audience enjoyed hearing about Norma and Wendy's eventful voyage to Australia, via the Fijian islands and Vanuatu in the New Hebrides. The story of their various adventures was recounted by Norma in her inimitable fashion! As you might imagine, there was much laughter in the foyer that afternoon.

Thank you Norma.



March's Open CAMEO meeting was also well attended. Karen Sanderson, fundraiser for Naomi House & Jacksplace, gave a presentation on the work of the charity and stayed to answer questions over tea and cakes. Thanks to the generosity of our cake makers there were plenty over for Sunday coffee. Donations for those, added to the £190 raised on Saturday, bring the total raised to £255.

Our April meeting will be on Saturday 18th at 2pm when we will be watching the film 'Enchanted April'

Anna Chaplaincy

What a joy it has been to see the sunshine again after the long winter rain! As we begin to embrace the fullness of Spring, the Anna Chaplaincy team are delighted to invite you to a special **May Day Tea** on **Wednesday 13th May 2026, from 2–4pm at Alton Methodist Church.**



This event is especially for the wonderful older members of our community. With a theme of a *"Spring Village Fete,"* there will be plenty to enjoy—'fete-style' stalls and games, a singalong of much-loved British classics, a creative craft station, and even the chance to relax with a soothing hand massage. We'll round off the afternoon with a delicious traditional tea.

Looking ahead, we are also planning a "Holiday at Home" day in early August. This will offer a chance to enjoy a mini holiday atmosphere without the need to travel—more details to follow soon, so do keep an eye out!

We would love to see you at these events, and if you know someone who might enjoy coming along, please do invite them—the more the merrier.

As always, if you or someone you know might benefit from an Anna Chaplaincy visit, please feel free to get in touch on 07535 209537 or annachaplainalton@gmail.com.

Every blessing,

Emily and the Anna Chaplaincy Team

Prayers at Noon

Why not come and share in a short time of prayer on **Tuesday 7th April at 12 o'clock.**

Jennie Marlow



Hard of Hearing Group

At All Saints Church Hall, Alton



We enjoyed a brilliant 27th Birthday Party to celebrate the setting up of our group in 1999. Our founder, Kate Dando, was in attendance to cut the cake and we were also delighted to welcome the founder of the Anna Chaplaincy movement, Debbie Thrower. What a splendid afternoon! - we were able to look back over the group's work and look forward to the future.

Kate Dando, established the Hard of Hearing Group and there are many in Alton who have been grateful for her foresight. Our monthly meetings are geared to better allow those with a hearing impairment to meet and listen to talks and enjoy entertainment. We also of course run Lip Reading classes for those who wish to improve their ability to communicate with others.

But now on to our next event which will take place on **Tuesday 28th April at 2pm**. We are so pleased to be able, once again, to hear from Andrew Negus, an inspired historian. He will be sharing his knowledge of our great naval city, Portsmouth.

Non- members would be very welcome [Entrance fee only £3 and you get tea and biscuits as well!] If you require any further information or indeed a Programme for 2026, please do not hesitate to contact

Annette Blackman 01420 543219

ablackman4@googlemail.com

Lip Reading - REMINDER!

The next meeting is in All Saints Church hall on **Tuesday 7th April at 2pm**.



All welcome!

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

Knitters Anonymous

Very many thanks once more to all our generous donors, both known and anonymous, for your continued support. Knitters of the Flap Hats for premature babies, which are used for keeping little heads warm when it is necessary to insert a line into a baby's scalp, would appreciate donations of small two-holed buttons (not shirt buttons) to replenish our stocks and any donations of pastel or white 4ply or Double knit wool for any of the BLISS Prem baby knits.

The colourful jumpers for Toddlers up to older junior aged children sizes are always welcome too. In fact we are pleased with all that we receive, thank you – it always finds a welcome home! Just choose your favourite patterns and knit away!!

Our next meeting is in **All Saints Church Hall on Tuesday 21st April 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, see what we do and have a chat over a cup of tea? You will be made most welcome!

For more info contact Kate on 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 20th April** when we will experience a hands-on clay session led by a professional potter, courtesy of the Allen Gallery.



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.



Do you want to break free from a **life-controlling habit** such as smoking, gambling, over-eating, internet or social media addiction, shopping compulsions, binge drinking, taking drugs, etc. – in fact any habit which once might have brought us comfort or fun, but is now spoiling our daily living ?

Fresh Start is a 9-week course based on principles from the 12-steps-of-recovery process, backed by 1-to-1 coaching and a support group of others wanting to tackle their dependencies. It's **free** and completely confidential. See <https://harvestchurch.uk/fresh-start>

The next local course will start with an introductory session on Wednesday 29th April, 7:30 – 9pm, at Alton Maltings. It will be led by Fresh Start coaches, Trevor and Anna.

After previous local courses, a man tackling an internet addiction said: "I'd like to thank you...for putting on the Fresh Start course and helping me achieve my goals...I am very grateful for the work you did with us." Another, tackling a gambling addiction, said: "I was gambling to excess and constantly worried and anxious over money. I am now happier and am getting my priorities right... I can never say THANK YOU enough times as I never thought I could beat this addiction". A woman now in recovery from alcohol addiction said: "I wouldn't be where I am today, if I hadn't come on Fresh Start".

If you want to be free of a life-controlling habit, join the Fresh Start course. Or if you know someone who wants to tackle such a habit, recommend Fresh Start to them.

To enquire or register for the course, call Mark Rumsby on 07769 030913 or email freshstart@harvestchurch.uk

Prayer for Iran

Heavenly Father,

We believe that you are aware of the situation in Iran and its oppressed and defenceless people.

We pray that you would protect the people and not allow any bloodshed of the innocent.

We pray for peace, freedom and the war to end as soon as possible.

May your will as it is done in heaven be done in Iran and the Middle East. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

www.altonchoral.org.uk
Charity no.900258

Alton Choral Society Presents

Music for Good Friday

Featuring Fauré's Requiem

Soloists: Andrew Berkley & Wendy Busby

3rd April, 6pm

Alton Methodist Church

Admission free

Retiring collection for



Naomi House
& Jacksplace
hospices for children
and young adults

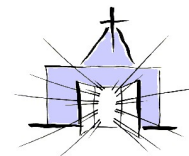
Dates for your Diary

APRIL

Thurs 2	7.30pm	Lent Course at Alton Maltings with Holy Communion
Fri 3	10.00am	Open air enactment at St Lawrence
Good Friday	6.00pm	Music for Good Friday
Sun 5	6.15am	Sunrise Service at Old Park Farm, Beech
Easter Day	8.00am	Walk to Windmill Hill, starting at church
Tues 7	12.00 noon 2.00pm	Prayers at Noon Singing Our Faith
Wed 8-Fri 10	All day	GB Camp in church
Sat 11	2pm	Thanksgiving Service for Charlie Shaylor at Alton Maltings
Sat 18	2.00pm	CAMEO film show
Sun 19	4.00pm	Church AGM
Mon 20		Hospitality Fortnight begins
Tues 21	2.00pm	Church Bible Study Group

Please look at articles in the Newsletter giving more information.

The May issue of the Newsletter should be available from Sun 26th April.



Services in April 2026

Sunday 5th

Easter Day

6.15am Sunrise Service at Old Park Farm
10.00am Rev David Wilson - Holy Communion

Sunday 12th

2nd Sunday of Easter

10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins - Baptism

Sunday 19th

3rd Sunday of Easter

10.00am Liz George

Sunday 26th

4th Sunday of Easter

10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins - Holy Communion

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

Anna Chaplain: Mrs Emily Spencer.

Tel: 07535 209537 Email: annachaplainalton@gmail.com

Items for inclusion in the May issue of the “**Newsletter**” should reach the editor, Nancy Buck, by noon **Sunday 19th April.**