

Alton Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER

April 2025

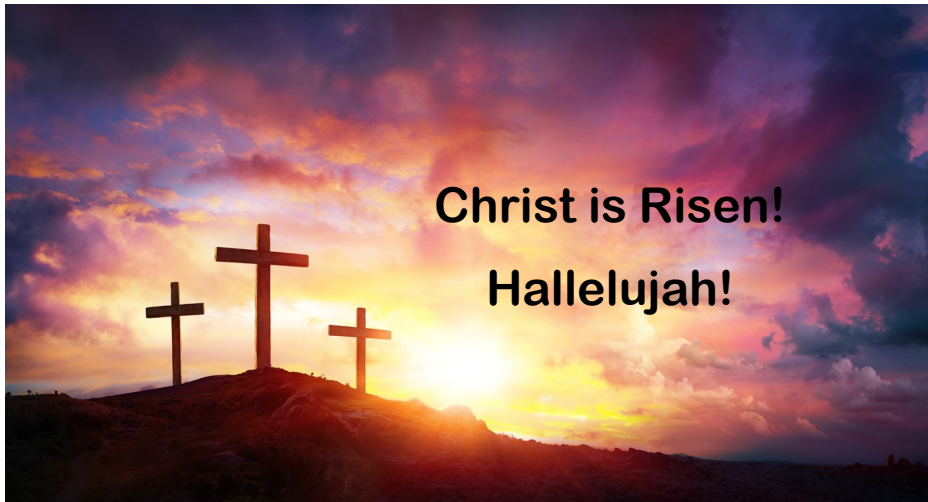


Photo: Romolo Tavani (iStock)



Minister: Rev. Philip Simpkins

Tel: 01420 83167

Church website www.altonmethodist.org.uk

Circuit website www.hsbccircuit.org.uk



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



Dear Friends,

As the clocks go forward an hour (March 30th) we look forward to lighter nights, spring blossom and the celebration of Easter.

On **Palm Sunday** (April 13th) we will relive the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey with the crowds waving palm branches, laying their cloaks on the ground and shouting 'Hosanna!'.

*Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark all the tribes 'Hosanna!' Cry;
Your humble beast pursues its road
With palms and scattered garments strowed.*

The ordinary people celebrated the compassion, kindness, wisdom and healings that Jesus had performed. They were ready to believe that he was the coming Messiah and treated him as one would a king.

On **Maundy Thursday** (April 17th) we remember Jesus going with his disciples into the upper room to share the Passover Feast. So much happened on that evening – Jesus got up from the table, took off his robe, tied a towel around his waist and began to wash the disciples' feet. He set them an example that they would never forget for they were to be servants of one another. During the meal Jesus also gave new meaning to the bread and wine laid on the table. The elements to be a sign and a symbol of God's forgiveness of our sins through the events of the Easter story and the life everlasting.

Hot Cross buns are often enjoyed on **Good Friday**, as a poignant reminder of the death of Jesus. He was arrested, mocked, beaten and tried even though Pilate could find no fault against him and yet succumbed to the crowd and ordered that he be hung on a cross.

A reenactment of the events of Good Friday will take place in St Lawrence churchyard led by Rev David Chattell to which we are all invited. This vivid

retelling of the story is enjoyed by all ages and accompanied by a donkey and sheep!

Many of us look forward to celebrating **Easter Day**! It is a joy to come together on Easter Sunday morning and hear once more the story of the women going to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus with spices, only to find the stone rolled away. In a state of shock and disbelief they run off and tell the disciples who are in hiding for fear of the Jews.

*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!
See God's salvation plan, wrought in love,
Borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man, for He lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!*

*See Mary weeping: 'Where is He laid?
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name:
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope,
Bringing peace to us,
Will sound till He appears,
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!*

Whilst the disciples think the women are speaking nonsense, Peter and John have enough curiosity of faith to run to the tomb and find out for themselves the truth that Jesus is alive!

May we share their curiosity of faith, come hear the Easter story again and like them, be filled with joy at the news that Christ is risen.

Philip

Lent Course

We look forward to joining with other Christians from our different churches to share in our Lent Course for 2025.

The Lent Course will be held at The Maltings, arrive 7.15 for a 7.30pm start (finish by 8.45pm).

There will be a time of worship, a speaker and an opportunity for discussion around the tables.

Table Talk – Conversations Jesus had around the table

20th March – Welcome to the Table

27th March - Dinner at the Table

3rd April – Turning over the Tables

10th April – Supper at the Table

17th April – Breaking Bread around the Table

Why not put the dates in your diary!

Easter Services

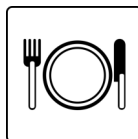
With **Maundy Thursday** being celebrated on **17th April**, Holy Communion will conclude the above Lent Course series.

On **Good Friday (April 18th)** an informal re-enactment of the events of the cross will be offered and suitable for all ages at St Lawrence Church when Rev David Chattell will lead events.

There is no sunrise service at Beech this year.

Easter Sunday Celebration (April 20th) led by Rev Philip Simpkins at 10am which will include Holy Communion.

Lunch Club



What a wonderful lunch once more!

Almost 60 people gathered from church and community to enjoy a Roast Lamb lunch served with a selection of vegetables.

A refreshing sweet followed as did a cup of tea!

It was lovely to have new people join with us and the friendship around the tables was much enjoyed.

The next lunch is on April 8th at 12:30pm in the church hall.

The cost remains at £4.50 until September when we will make life easier for all and raise it to £5! I am sure that you will agree that it is well worth it!

If you have not already booked, please contact Philip on 01420-83167.



News from around the Circuit

The merger between Hants Surrey Border Methodist Circuit and the Berkshire Surrey Border Circuit continues through the planning stage to completion in September when we are likely to be called The Blackwater Valley Circuit.

Rev Nick Oborski will complete his two-part sabbatical during the month of May, having had the first two months in November and December. Sabbaticals are a time for rest, refreshment and renewal and within the Methodist Church are gifted to minister after every seven years of ministry, Philip is due a Sabbatical in 2026 (May, June and July).

The next circuit meeting is on Wednesday 2nd April at 7.30pm and will be held in Ash Vale Chapel.



It is great to hear about the fund raising events being held to raise funds for our chosen charity this year, MSF (Doctors without Borders).

The February newsletter from MSF has the heading:

Bringing health care to a devastated region in Syria

East Ghouta near Damascus was once a lush and green region, filled with fruit trees and farms. After years of relentless airstrikes by the former Syrian government forces, it now stands in ruins.

MSF teams attempted to reach the communities there many times during the rule of Bashar al-Assad. We were repeatedly denied entry, meaning that people had to survive with very limited access to healthcare.

Last month, our emergency teams finally gained access to east Ghouta for the first time in over a decade, and rapidly set up mobile clinics. What we witnessed was devastating.

In addition to this MSF have also sent out an urgent update regarding government funding which reads as follows:

“On 25 February, the UK Government announced a **significant cut to its official development assistance** – often known as the foreign aid budget.

I know from my experience with MSF, as well as that of my colleagues around the world, that this will have a direct and catastrophic impact on the health and wellbeing of people living through conflict, disaster and disease. Put simply, this decision will cost lives.

The Government has shrunk the aid budget to increase spending on defence. But this shouldn't be a choice between one and the other – the people we support need both services and a safe place to live.

Right now, in Sudan, MSF teams are working in what has been dubbed “a

humanitarian void". More than 11 million people have been forcibly displaced by the war, However, many international organisations are barely able to respond. Shameful cuts, such as announced by the UK Government, now risk making crises like this more common.

In Afghanistan, Yemen, Nigeria, and countries around the world, it is clear that aid funding is needed now more than ever to meet the scale and complexity of global events. Instead, the gap is growing, and our most vulnerable people are in the middle of it.

MSF is calling on the UK government to reverse the aid cut and commit to a strategy that prioritises the health and wellbeing of people in need.

They encourage us to write to our MP details about how to do this can be found on their website. (<https://msf.org.uk/>)"

Thank you for all your support towards the work of MSF.

World Day of Prayer

Three Ladies from the Cook Islands!



*A.k.a. Anna (Alton Methodist Church), Jo (St. Mary's)
and Carol (Parish of the Resurrection)*

The Compass Course ***Exploring Christian Faith Together***

We will aim to run this eight-session course after Easter in a house group held at the Manse on a **Tuesday, fortnightly, at 7.30pm beginning on May 6th.**

This interactive course produced by the Methodist Church covers the following sessions:

1. Glimpses of God
2. Meeting Jesus today
3. The difference Jesus makes
4. Empowered by the Holy Spirit
5. Life Together
6. Engaging with scripture
7. Following Jesus
8. Called by name

It is a course suitable for those wishing to explore and grow in faith through teaching, discussion and reflection. A house group is also an excellent way to share in fellowship and to support one another in life and faith.

It is also a course suitable for those who wish to explore Church Membership or to have a refresher! **Please let Philip or Angela know if you would like to come!**

If you are new to the Church or have moved into the area and would like to become a member of the church, please speak to Philip and he will be happy to talk to you about church membership.

People who have been members elsewhere are able to transfer their allegiance, others might want to explore faith further through the above course for example and then decide if membership is for you.

Church Family News

We are pleased that **Margaret Whitford** (Debbi Bridger's mother) has now settled into Brendoncare and it was good to see her at the recent Anna Chaplaincy service. To all our friends who are unwell at this time we send our love for a joyful Easter and hold them in our prayers.

Prayers at Noon

On **Tuesday 1st April**, because we are not fooled, we meet to pray aloud or silently at midday for a short time to get in touch with God.

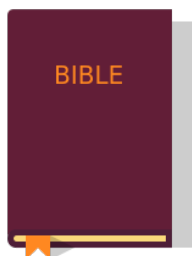


Singing our Faith

We meet again on **Tuesday 1st April at 2pm** to sing about and deepen our faith - anyone is welcome to join us.

Bible Study

This group will continue looking at the Psalms and how they can help us, even after all those years. We meet on **Tuesday 15th at 2pm** in the foyer - why not come along?



Ladies at Wetherspoons

Let's enjoy a post-Easter coffee and chat on **Thursday 24th April** from 10am.



Easter Coffee Morning

Saturday 19th April

@ Alton Methodist Church

10-12 noon

In aid of MSF

Come and enjoy a chat with friends over a coffee & an Easter treat



CAMEO NEWS

At our March open meeting we watched a presentation of the amazing work carried out by Medecins sans Frontieres, our church charity for the year. Thank you to Liz and Jacob for making this possible. Thanks also to all who baked the delicious cakes which we enjoyed with numerous cups of tea.

We were delighted that the donations made that afternoon totalled £127. Another £61 was added on Sunday from a cake sale after the service.

Our April meeting is on Saturday 26th when Liz Parsons will be talking about "Tales from Granny's Attic"



There will be another fund-raising opportunity for MSF at 2pm on **SATURDAY 7th JUNE**

when CAMEO members invite everyone to join them for an afternoon of music and song provided by the delightful soprano Rebecca and her talented accompanist, Claire. This will be the duo's third visit to AMC - they are back due to popular demand. An occasion not to be missed!

Janet & Judy

Stay and Play

At Alton Methodist Church

**Wednesdays 10am to 11:30am
(term time only)**

Adults with Children 0-4yrs.



Stay & Play closes for 3 weeks for the Easter break.

Our last session before Easter is on Wednesday 2nd April & we start up again on Wednesday 30th April.

Angela & Liz

2nd Alton News



Our Battalion Church Parade was held in Woodley this year, and 15 Boys from the company attended. Our band led the march – in drizzling rain – and did remarkable well, considering that three of the members (top year Juniors) had only been playing for a matter of weeks! The service in the church was led by Rev Jackie Case, and dealt with Jesus's journey to Jerusalem, as well as giving us a "Once Upon a Time" story with a profound underlying message.



Anchors

The Anchors continue to have some shared activities, including inspection, with the Juniors, and other activities in their own group.

Since we came back in January, the Anchors have been learning about prayer, asking why we pray, when and where we pray and how we pray. We have also talked about listening for an answer.

We have made a special something for their mums, but shush - it's a secret!

The boys are looking forward to our battalion church parade in Woodley and have started practicing for the Company Display on 9th May .

Lt. Glenda Bentley

Juniors

We have had a busy month getting ready for Easter and starting our Lent journey. We celebrated Pancake Day with races and lots of eating. St Patrick's day had us making shamrock hats.

We had a successful Competition Day at Reading Methodist Church. We came home with 4 certificates and came 4th overall. One of our boys even won the overall best handwriting.

Helen Vaughan



Anchors and Juniors enjoying pancakes



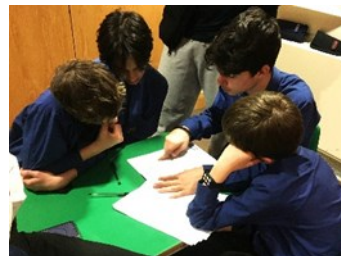
*Anchors & Juniors
games*

Company and Seniors

Our Friday night programme has focused on two Interest classes, namely bike maintenance and cookery, and the Boys have been enjoying both (especially the latter, for obvious reasons!). They also learned how to pitch an expedition tent. (Answer – with some difficulty!)

One evening we took part in the BB National “Top Team Challenge”. This competition is done in your own church, with all the questions and activities in a sealed envelope, with a judge (thanks Alan Robb!) and a strict one-hour time limit. Some brainwork, some physical activity, and much bouncing of ping-pong balls – all enjoyed by everyone. Around 300 Companies take part, and we'll learn how well (or badly!) we fared in May.

David Allan (Captain)



Top Team Challenge and Bicycle Maintenance





Tent pitching



Cookery

Girls' Brigade News

All sections are currently following the 'Approaching Easter' programme.

N:vestigate girls have been hearing the Easter story in weekly instalments and considering a different issue each week. So far we've talked about friendship and becoming a friend of God, how to pray, reading the bible (and how to find your way round it), and God's forgiveness. We've also enjoyed eating pancakes with the older girls and various craft and colouring activities.



On Saturday 15th March, girls from all over the Surrey Downs District met at the Rural Life Living Museum in Tilford for a day out together.....

Nancy Buck

2nd Alton girls enjoying a train ride at the Rural Life Living Museum, Tilford



Seasonal Walks

The next two seasonal walks – open to all – are being planned to take place on the following dates:

Spring Saunter : Thursday 22nd May

Summer Stroll : Monday 21st July

These walks, usually around four miles in length, start at 10am and will take us along country footpaths and bridleways.

We finish with lunch together in a local hostelry, and you are very welcome to join us for the meal, even if you choose not to walk!

Watch for full details on the usual notice board in the foyer.



David Allan

A short stay in hospital meant that I had to modify our plans for outdoor training! However, the DofE Bronze group were out on Kingsley and Broxhead Commons in March, and compass training should happen towards the end of April.

There are two DofE Silver practice expeditions to the Forest of Dean and the Welsh borders during the Easter holiday, and then all our groups – Bronze, Silver, and the Young Venturers – will start to plan for their expeditions in the summer.

The East Hampshire DofE Presentation Evening will take place on 2nd April in the Assembly Rooms. We have an amazing number of young people who have achieved an Award during the last year – 18 Bronzes, 3 Silvers and 1 Gold. Congratulations are due to every single one!

David Allan



This year's Bronze group on Broxhead Common



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 £14-£17 per hour

It is an occupational requirement for the person appointed to be a practising Christian, lay or ordained, in a church affiliated to the Council of Churches in England & Wales.

Closing Date: Friday 16th May 2025 5.30pm

Application Pack from Mrs Liz George

altonmethodist@hotmail.com Or Phone: 07703 648935

May Market

Saturday 10th 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 will be running the **Bric-a-Brac stall** and would welcome donations of goods.

Graham & Diane Titterington (01420 80054) will be running the **bookstall** in the absence of Helen Smith. However, Helen is happy to collect books in advance if required. (01420 544161)

Sonja Williams will be running the **cake stall** and will welcome contributions of home-baking.

Christine Allan 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.

If you have goods for us to sell, they may be brought to the church after the BB Display on Friday 9th May or on the Saturday morning between 9am and 10am. If you would like goods to be collected in advance, please contact me or the relevant stall holder.

Nancy Buck (01420 85994)

THANK YOU

Thank you for your kindness – flowers, cards, phone calls and shopping. It has kept me going [following my foot injury] and is much appreciated.

Olive Wheeler



Alton All Saints Hard of Hearing Group



For our March meeting we had the pleasure of welcoming back Jane Hurst, who told us about The Mills of Alton. It is always amazing how much there is to learn about one's own town

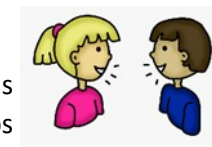
On 22nd April we will be meeting Bev Scammell, a volunteer with Canine Partners. I am not sure whether she will be accompanied by a 'trainee' dog – I hope so! I understand that these dogs can be trained to carry out a variety of tasks for someone with limited mobility.

Our meetings are very, very sociable – so obviously tea/ coffee and biscuits are on the agenda, as is a bumper raffle – with items donated by members. Entrance to the meeting is £3 [from April] and the raffle is £1 a ticket. So a fun and entertaining afternoon for a minimum of £3!! Where else could you find such value!

If you do not have a 2025 Programme then do get in touch with me and I can send one to you. **The start time for the meetings is 2pm and the venue is usually at All Saints Church Hall unless the Programme states otherwise.**

Contact: Annette Blackman 01420 543219 ablackman4@googlemail.com

Lip Reading



Just a reminder - there are regular Lip Reading Sessions held at All Saints Church Hall, Queens Road, giving you tips and techniques that can help you if your poor hearing means that you have difficulty in joining in conversations with friends and family. Led by Maggie Short, Lip Reading Tutor, the next session will be held on **Tuesday 1st April from 2pm - 3pm** followed by a chance to practice the skills learnt, while chatting over light refreshments.

Why not come along, make some new friends experiencing similar difficulties and give it a try? You will be made most welcome! For more details contact Kate on 01420 83514 kaddando@gmail.com

Knitters Anonymous



Our knitters, both known and anonymous, have been very busy supporting out various charities, thank you to you all! The bag of rectangular “squares” found at the Four Marks Hospice shop have been sewn into two large blankets and are in our Ukraine bags awaiting collection along with the usual colourful warm knits that you so generously donate.

A letter of thanks from the Basingstoke/Southampton Hospitals, referring to the adult sized hats that are sent to their intensive care units, includes the following – *“Thank you to all who have been making and donating the lovely woolly hats. We are using them on our intensive care patients when they take a trip outside in their bed for fresh air or to spend quality time with their family/pets. It helps to keep them warm, especially at this time of the year. Please extend our thanks to everyone involved, we are very grateful”* It is suggested that these hats should be medium or medium/large sizes in neutral colours.

Since last month some more beautiful BLISS Baby knits have appeared in the collection box on the pew at the back of All Saints Church. Again, many thanks! **The next meeting of the group will be on Tuesday 15th April**, from 2pm until 3.30pm in All Saints Church Hall, Queens Road. Do pop in and join us, new knitters always welcome!

For further details contact kaddando@gmail.com or 01420 83514

OPEN SIGHT

Alton Open Sight is a social club for those with a visual impairment. It normally meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at All Saints Church Hall at 2.30pm. However, due to Easter Monday, **the next meeting will be held on 14th April when the renowned speaker Joyce Meader will entertain us with a talk about historical knitting.**

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, no commitment, just come along to one of our meetings and we’re sure you’ll enjoy it!

If you would like further information regarding the Alton social group please email Sue at AltonOpenSight@gmail.com or contact Malcolm on 01420 54952

The group comes under the umbrella of Open Sight (opensight.org.uk) a Hampshire-based charity which provide free support and advice to visually impaired people, living in our county, to assist with daily living. If you are interested finding out more, please call Open Sight on 02380 641244.

Alton Choral Society Presents

Reflective Music for Good Friday

18th April, 6pm

Alton Methodist Church

Admission free

Retiring collection for



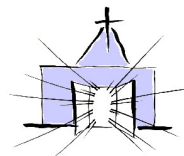
Dates for your Diary

APRIL

Tues 1	12 noon 2.00pm	Prayers at Noon Singing our Faith
Wed 2	7.30pm tbc	Circuit Meeting at Ash Vale Chapel DofE Presentations at Assembly Rooms
Thurs 3	7.30pm	Lent Couse (3) at Alton Maltings
Tues 8	12.30pm	Lunch Club
Thurs 10	7.30pm	Lent Course (4) at Alton Maltings
Tues 15	2.00pm	Church Bible Study Group
Thurs 17	7.30pm	Lent Course (5) at Alton Maltings
Fri 18	tbc 6.00pm	Easter Re-enactment in St Lawrence Churchyard Reflective Music for Good Friday
Sat 19	10.00-12.00	Easter Coffee Morning for MSF
Thurs 24	10.00→	Ladies @ Wetherspoons
Sat 26	2.00pm	CAMEO
Tues 29	7.00pm	Stewards meeting at the Manse

Please look at articles in the Newsletter giving more information.

The May issue of the Newsletter should be available from Sunday 27th April.



Services at Alton in April 2025

Sunday 6th	5th Sunday of Lent 10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins
Sunday 13th	Palm Sunday 10.00am Jennie Marlow
Sunday 20th	Easter Day 10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins - Holy Communion
Sunday 27th	2nd Sunday of Easter 10.00am Rev David Ashby

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 88721

Items for inclusion in the **May** issue of the “**Newsletter**” should reach the editor, Nancy Buck, by noon **Sunday 20th April** at the latest, please.

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