

Alton Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER



Robert Schneider, iStock

May 2025



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,

On a beautiful spring morning my day began with an early morning walk through Ackender Woods, which is just a short way down the road from the Manse – it was beautiful!

As I made my way up through the tree lined path, the sun's rays danced amongst the branches, bouncing off the new leaves with a real sense of joy.

On each side of the path a vista of bluebells opened up, transforming the woodland floor with its delicate blue flowers.



I learned that I must take care when photographing them as bluebells can take years to recover after any damage caused by walking on them.

I also discovered that almost half the world's bluebells are to be found in the UK, being relatively rare elsewhere. The National Trust states that bluebells have been called crowtoes by botanists in the past, wood hyacinths, cuckoo boots, lady's nightcap and even witches thimbles! It also says that

13th century monks used the contents of the bluebell bulb as a cure for snakebites and leprosy (don't try this at home – its poisonous!).

On a warm spring day, a bluebell wood is also filled with a strong, sweet scent which only adds to creation's beauty.

Making my way back through the wood I listened to the many sounds of the birds singing amongst the trees. Putting on my newly acquired bird app (*Merlin Bird ID*) I learned that nature's orchestra included Great Tits, Wrens, Chiffchaff's, Robins, Blackbirds, Blackcaps, Chaffinches, Dunnocks, Magpies and even a Wood Pigeon or two!

I returned home, not only enjoying the walk, but also with my heart soaring in praise and worship to God at the wonders he has made!

The Psalmist writes (Psalm 147)

Praise the Lord.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,

How pleasant and fitting to praise him!

In his book 'Sacred Pathways', Gary Thomas writes:

If you feel like your time in front of books or listening to sermons has become stagnant, grab a coat, pick up a walking stick, and step outside into a school that never closes.

Now that is *not* an excuse not to read or listen to my sermons! But it does remind us that we can meet with God anywhere, be refreshed in any number of ways and enjoy God in nature's Cathedral.

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,

I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;

When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur

And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze;

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God the thee,

How great thou art! How great thou art!

Every blessing

Philip

The Compass Course

Exploring Christian Faith Together

We will 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.

Lunch Club



It was great to welcome some new members to lunch club during April and the catch up on everyone's news.

Andy and Denise cooked a very tasty sausage casserole along with lots of healthy vegetables, which was most enjoyable.

A refreshing trifle followed as did a cup of tea.

Philip reminded everyone that a male donkey is a Jack and a female donkey, a Jenny, before giving everyone a taste of the Palm Sunday story in our short reflection at the end.

The next lunch club is on Tuesday May 13th, with lunch served from 12.30pm. Price £4.50. (After much encouragement from our lunch club attendees this will rise to £5 from September)

Thank you to all who provide our meals and help in so many ways.

Alton Methodist Church AGM Sunday May 18th

4pm followed by a bring and share tea.

Everyone is welcome to come along to a time of fellowship and sharing as we celebrate all the activities that go on in the life of the church and continue to consider its future path, including choosing our charity for the coming year – we are thinking of something more local so all ideas welcome.

This is the meeting where we annually elect our church stewards and our representatives from the congregation to the Church Council.

We are very grateful that our present stewards all appear to be willing to continue – however there is always room for more! We also recognise that two of our stewards will have completed a six-year term this year and whilst willing to remain for another year, will need a break after that – so maybe you would like to consider it!

The next Church Council is on June 12th at 7.30pm

Would you enjoy offering support to older people where Anna Chaplaincy began in a part-time paid post? If so, potential candidates are invited to submit their applications for this crucial role by the afternoon of Friday May 16, 2025.

'The Alton Anna Chaplain is a really key post in the national Anna Chaplaincy network, as the Hampshire market town and surrounding villages are where the story of Anna Chaplaincy began. There is a large team now of Anna Friends volunteering to support the chaplaincy work locally,' says Debbie Thrower (our first Anna Chaplain back in 2010 and the Pioneer of Anna Chaplaincy nationally)

It is a paid post, under the auspices of the ecumenical Greater Alton Project (GAP), formed in 2009 as a joint initiative between Anglicans and Methodists in the area. You would be part of a growing team as in recent years there has been an emphasis on growing the number of volunteer Anna Friends - men and women - working alongside the chaplain.

Alton's Anna Chaplain to Older People is 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 is sought, as well as leading care home worship and offering pastoral care to people of all faiths and none.

It is for 20hrs per week and the salary range is £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 May 16, by 5.30pm.

Application Pack from Mrs Liz George altonmethodist@hotmail.com or phone: 07703 648935

If you are interested yourself, or you know someone else who might just have the right qualities and skills for the role, here are the full details you might wish to forward to them. https://16c83d98-45f1-46e6-af2d-f9ea21360d6b.usrfiles.com/ugd/16c83d_e8d9521ecb1e445e8893e799f1939096.pdf

Anna Chaplaincy Update

We give thanks for all that the Anna Chaplaincy team are doing in the Residential & Care Homes, attending Groups and visiting at home.

We are advertising for a new chaplain at present and hope to interview in early June. There has been some more interest in this post recently so please pray that together we may be God led in our decision making.

The Anna Chaplaincy Summer Event will be held in Alton Methodist Church on Wednesday 11th June 2-4pm. There will be crafts, singing, and a Strawberry Cream Tea. All are very welcome and if you would like to invite a friend please do encourage all to come.

Thank you

Sarah (07761 933031)

We are very grateful to Sarah Neish who has done a wonderful job of overseeing and caring for the Anna Chaplaincy Team, in the absence of a chaplain.

Anna Chaplaincy in the News!

Please do read the **'Connect'** magazine in the church – it contains a two-page spread about Anna Chaplaincy in Alton!

This is distributed to Methodist Churches all over the country!

It also features Anna Carrington (Front page!) a former LP in our circuit who is now a minister in circuit. An interesting read!

GAP (Greater Alton Project) Coffee Morning

Saturday 31st May 10-12noon at Alton Methodist Church



Please come and share friendship and fellowship with refreshments with friends from the Parish Churches. All proceeds raised will go towards the work of the Anna Chaplaincy.



Many thanks to all those who have been raising funds towards our chosen charity for this year – MSF (Doctors without Borders). Your generosity, interest and support are much appreciated.

MSF works in many parts of the world with medics risking their lives to provide specialist help to those living in war zones and unstable parts of the globe.

A recent report from MSF highlights the ongoing suffering in Gaza since the ceasefire broke down. Israeli forces continue to advance into this small and already shattered area. Medics are increasingly finding it difficult to work and a recent article from MSF describes it like this:

Healthcare under attack

Medical facilities are not exempt from attacks and evacuation orders by Israeli forces. MSF teams have had to leave many facilities, while others continue operating with staff and patients trapped inside, unable to leave safely for hours at a time.

On 7 April, MSF teams and patients found themselves trapped in the MSF field hospital in Deir Al-Balah, central Gaza. Rockets were launched by Hamas in close proximity to our field hospitals in Deir Al-Balah endangering both patients and staff and leading to an evacuation order of the area by Israeli forces, who also carried out strikes near the compounds of Al Aqsa and Nasser hospitals.

“Humanitarians have been forced to watch people suffer and die while carrying the impossible burden of providing relief with depleted supplies”

Please do continue to think and pray for a new peace deal to be reached and for the medics working in such harrowing circumstances.

[<https://msf.org.uk/>]



The Easter Saturday coffee morning arranged by Liz, Angela and Christine was very well supported with lots of cakes and conversation.

Donations totalling £170 were received for MSF / Doctors without Borders.



The Good Friday Reflective Music with Alton Choral Society raised £460.20 for MSF. Thank you to all who attended and contributed so generously to the retiring collection.

Good Friday Re-enactment



Crowds of children, parents and friends gathered in St Lawrence Church Yard for the re-enactment of the Good Friday story led by Rev David Chattell.

Sheep, donkeys, chickens and goats all added to the story which was well supported by budding actors!

News from around the circuit



The plans afoot for the Hants Surrey Border and the Berkshire Surrey Borders Circuit's to become one will have been passed through synod in April. This means that from September 2025 Alton Methodist Church will become part of the new circuit named '**Blackwater Valley Circuit**'.

The amalgamated circuit will include churches from Bracknell, Crowthorne, High Cross (Camberley), The Church at The Pines, Sandhurst & Yateley, Wokingham and Woosehill Community Centre. All this in addition to our own eleven circuit churches that include the likes of Fleet, North Camp, Farnham and all!

The Circuit ministers, as of September 2025, will be Rev Nick Oborski (Superintendent), Rev Philip Simpkins, Rev Anne Day, Rev Kyung Mi Banks, Rev Sharon Gardener, Rev Wes Hampton and Deacon Joy Everingham.

A new formula for allocating the assessment cost to each church is at present being worked out and will be discussed and amended with church treasurers before coming to Circuit Meeting.

Locally in Alton, there may be little change noticed by the local congregation with perhaps the occasional local preacher or minister coming from distant parts or indeed travelling from Alton far afield!

The amalgamation aims to assist the ministry team during staffing shortages across the connexion. It is also a way to share worship, fellowship and our resources.

There will be a welcome service in September for the new minister, Rev Wes Hampton along with a recognition and celebration service for the two circuits becoming one.

Rev Nick Oborski will enjoy the second part of his sabbatical during May and June 2025.

We are pleased to hear that Rev Conrad Hicks will become the Chair of the Southeast Methodist District from September. Conrad was minister at Farnham and Aldershot a few years ago and is known to many of us.



May Market

Saturday 10th May, 10am-12noon



Our Spring fundraiser is fast approaching. Please save the day and come to browse the stalls and take a break with coffee and cake.

- 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 and would welcome donations of goods.
- Graham & Diane Titterton (01420 80054) will be running the book-stall 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.
- We'll have a Lucky Dip.
- Christine Allan is putting together a team to provide the ever-popular refreshments.

We'll be setting up after the BB Display on Friday evening, from about 9pm. If you have items to donate, please bring them along after the BB Display on Friday 9th May (from 9pm) or on Saturday morning from 9am. If you would like items collected in advance, please contact me or the stall holder.

Nancy Buck (01420 85994)



2nd Alton News



Anchors

The anchors have been continuing to learn about prayer and have even had a go at writing their own prayers .

We made Easter bunting .

The boys are working hard on their preparations for the display after which we will start our summer programme .

Glenda Bentley

Juniors

We did some more baking this month. We made cinnamon sugar biscuits and decorated cupcakes for the coffee morning. We also put together an Easter Garden that was displayed in church.

We have started practicing figure marching for the Display in May and we will be finding out which boys have a secret talent !

The summer programme has been planned and there are lots of fun things ahead.

Helen Vaughan





The Easter Garden made by the Junior boys

Company and Seniors

We're looking forward to our summer programme, when we will be out-of-doors every Friday, weather permitting! It will be good to have the four Boys who are transferring from Juniors with us over the coming weeks, and we hope that they will enjoy the activities that are in store for them.

David Allan (Captain)

Everyone is invited to attend the 2nd Alton BB
DISPLAY EVENING
 being held in the Church on Friday 9th May
 starting at 7pm prompt

Girls' Brigade News

On our last evening before Easter, we invited Philip to our meeting. He re-told the Easter story with many graphic illustrations to an attentive audience.



Afterwards we had an Easter Egg hunt around the church - I think we found them all!

We'll be meeting again after the Easter break, on Monday 28th April.



Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The East Hampshire DofE Presentation Evening took place on 2nd April in the Assembly Rooms. 17 of our 22 Award Achievers were able to attend, and, as well as receiving their Certificates, they enjoyed an inspiring talk by Holly Budge, an adventurer who has sky-dived from above Mount Everest, among other remarkable feats.



The DofE Achievers from our 2nd Alton group

Two DofE Silver practice expeditions took place in the Forest of Dean and on the Welsh border hills. The first had glorious sunshine, while the second had rather mixed weather, with a whole day of rain, mist, wind and cold!



The first Silver group enjoying the sun at 2000 feet up



The following week's group disappearing into the mist – at the same place!

The Bronze group are going out on navigation practice on Hankley Common as this newsletter goes to print. Then the focus moves on to planning for everyone's assessed expeditions, over the summer and into the autumn.

David Allan

Stay and Play
At Alton Methodist Church
Wednesdays 10am to 11:30am
(term time only)



Adults with Children 0-4yrs.

Stay & Play will be closed on the 28th May, as it is half term.

Angela & Liz

Enjoying their journeys



At the beginning of April, on two successive days, groups of young people from School Year 7 undertook their first-ever expeditions under the watchful eyes of Karen Murrell and Geoff Goodall. On the Saturday, one group chose to walk in the Odiham and Dogmersfield area, while on Sunday the other group navigated from Newton Valence to Alton. And the weather was kind to the walkers on both days.



Dione Watson will be helping me to look after the Year 8s this month, when they will have their first experience of camping wild in local woodland.

David Allan



Ladies @ Wetherspoons

Another month has passed, so it's time for our Thursday morning get together at Wetherspoons- ladies do come along on **Thursday 29th May**, any time from 10am.



Church Family News

It was good to see **Nigel Hughes** back at church on Easter Sunday after several weeks of being unwell.

Brenda Milam's husband, Ernie, is now home from hospital but still far from well, so our prayers are for the family at this time.

Several friends are planning a move - **Karen and Bob Booker** have moved to Scotland, **Clare Allen** will be going to Surrey to be nearer family, especially her little grandchild. **Ian Robertson** plans to move, just a road away but into a bungalow which will be suitable for **Eleanor** to transfer from Marlfield. We wish them all the very best in their new surroundings, when it happens.

There will be our annual training afternoon for church family visitors coming up - more details next month.

Prayers at Noon

Tuesday 6th May is the date for our monthly prayer time. It's a chance to bring our concerns to God and to ask a blessing for our church. Join us at 12 o'clock.



Singing our Faith

Our next singalong will be on **Tuesday 6th** at 2pm to sing some hymns and enjoy fellowship over a cup of tea and biscuits.

Bible Study

We have been enjoying our study of the Psalms and it's surprising where it's taken us! Our next session will be on **Tuesday 20th** starting at 2pm. All are welcome.



Message from the Sheridans

Hi everyone, sending best wishes from the Sheridans!

As part of Liam's theological studies, we are continuing to worship at Waltham Chase Methodist Church in the Meon Valley. At the time of writing Liam is just about to have a study week in Birmingham and hoping that the bin strike won't lead to too many rats!

It has been good to preach at a number of different churches around the Valley circuit and also be involved in a range of other church activities including thinking about a vision for the church and supporting with pastoral activity. This year, the academic modules include church doctrine, church history and ethics. The upcoming study week is thinking about interfaith relations and as part of this there will be visits to other places of worship. There is also a full programme of worship in the chapel at college to help lead, so plenty to keep occupied with! Recently Liam also led online prayers for Holy Week in an online church community (Shoreline Community Church – those with Facebook access can find it there).

All the family are well and send our love and prayers to you at Alton Methodist. Please pray for ongoing discernment, wisdom, faith and time management!

Liam

Thank you..

I am finding it increasingly difficult to organise getting my crafts to the church for the Markets. I am not driving as much and I always have to rely on John for help. So, I will not be bringing my crafts to the May Market or future markets.

I would like to thank you all for your support through the years. I still have some glass coasters if you have need of them.

My contact details are in the church contact list, and you can view 'my wares' on my Pam Pell Jones Facebook page.

Kind regards, Pam Jones

Seasonal Walks

A reminder that the **Spring Saunter will take place on Thursday 22nd May** – watch for details on the usual notice board in the foyer.

Please make a note in your diary: the **Summer Stroll will be on Monday 21st July**.

Speak to me if you'd like more information.

David Allan

Tap and Pay Terminal

The Church will soon be able to accept donations by contactless credit or debit cards. This should make life a little easier for us all and avoid the awkward moments when we are short of change. Cash donations will still be very welcome however! To use the device you will simply have to type in the amount you wish to give, and touch it with your card. Donations anonymous and secure. It will therefore not be suitable for paying for room hire etc, but should be fine for everything else.

Graham Titterington



Our Easter Cross, beautifully decorated with flowers and foliage on Easter Sunday

News of aid for Romania

I am no longer taking goods to Romania. However, generous donations received are being used to provide books for the English Lab at the Nicolae Iorga School, to support Marius, the assistant Director of Learning Disability in Ploiesti and for craft materials to be used in the Nederlea nursing home.

The good news is that there is no longer an acute need for medical supplies in this area of Romania, so these are now being sent to Ukraine.

Norma Duke

HARD OF HEARING GROUP

at

ALL SAINTS CHURCH HALL, ALTON



For our April meeting we had the pleasure of welcoming Bev Scammell, who told us about the charity, Canine Partners. Fascinating! - dogs can be trained to be of such wonderful assistance for those with limited mobility!

On 27th May we will be welcoming Kate Dando, who will give us a talk about Hearing Loss and Listening Skills. Whether we have hearing issues ourselves or wish to talk to someone who is hearing impaired, then Kate will provide us with valuable advice.

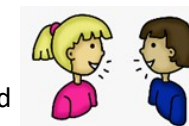
Our meetings are very very sociable – so obviously tea/ coffee and biscuits are on the agenda, as is a bumper raffle – with items donated by members. Entrance to the meeting is £3 and the raffle is £1 a ticket. So a fun and entertaining afternoon for a minimum of £3!! Where else could you find such value!

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 the 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 6th May 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 once again been very busy supporting our various charities, thank you to you all! **The next collection for Bliss, (prem babies) will be taken to the collecting point on 15th May** which is before our next meeting so if you have any donations they can be left in the back of All Saints Church and will be picked up in time for this delivery. We are also very grateful for the donations of wool which are so useful in replenishing our stock, thank you for your generosity.

Our next meeting of the group will be on Tuesday 20th May, from 2pm until 3.30pm in All Saints Church hall, Queens Road. Do pop in for a chat and to see what we do, and remember new knitters are 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 meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at All Saints Church Hall at 2.30pm. The **next meeting will be held on 19th May** when we have a guest speaker from Hart Wildlife Rescue.

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 onpto

01420 54952.

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

Eco Corner

Replacing plastic

Plastics are used in the manufacture of a huge range of things we use in our daily lives. Plastics are produced from hydrocarbons with the starting point being crude oil.

In the automotive sector, probably the last use of a natural material in car construction was the ash frame on the back of a Morris Minor Traveller. However, from the mid-1930s, vehicles in general were largely made of steel. However, in order to save weight, vehicles have recently adopted a range of plastic components, such as bumpers, wings, wing liners and many of the interior fittings.

A sustainable alternative to plastics is becoming possible. It starts with flax, of which huge quantities are grown in France. Flax is most familiar as the fibre used to make linen. Flax's properties, including its high strength and low weight, make it suitable for some automotive parts. The fibre can be used to strengthen a sheet material which can be shaped to make trim panels and even parts of seat structures.

When the time comes to dispose of components containing flax, it is biodegradable.

Nigel Hughes

Acknowledgements:

Some material came via Google AI, and an IMechE newsletter

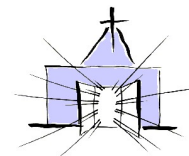
Dates for your Diary

MAY

Tues 6	12.00 2.00pm 7.30pm	Prayers at Noon Singing our Faith The Compass Course (1) at the Manse
Fri 9	7.00pm	Boys' Brigade Display
Sat 10	10.00-12.00	May Market
Tues 13	12.30pm	Lunch Club
Thurs 15	4.00pm	GAP Council at Old Schoolhouse
Fri 17	5.30pm	Anna Chaplain applications deadline
Sun 18	4.00pm	Church AGM
Tues 20	2.00pm 7.30pm	Church Bible Study The Compass Course (2) at the Manse
Thurs 22	tbc	Spring Saunter
Thurs 29	10.00→	Ladies @ Wetherspoons
Sat 31	10.00-12.00	GAP Coffee Morning here

Please look at articles in the Newsletter giving more information.

The June issue of the Newsletter should be available from Sunday 25th May.



Services at Alton in May 2025

Sunday 4th	3rd Sunday of Easter 10.00am Terri White
Sunday 11th	4th Sunday of Easter 10.00am The Stewards with Liz George
Sunday 18th	5th Sunday of Easter 10.00am Revd Philip Simpkins - Holy Communion 4.00pm Church AGM
Sunday 25th	6th Sunday of Easter 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 administrative matters, including bookings, please contact Mrs Liz George via the church email address (above) or Tel 01420 88721

Items for inclusion in the **June** issue of the **"Newsletter"** should reach the editor, Nancy Buck, by noon **Sunday 18th May** at the latest, please.

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