

Alton Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER

October 2025



*We thank the Lord
for the harvest
from field, garden
and allotment.*

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,

I was doing Collective Worship (school assembly) at St Lawrence Church School this month when they concluded the service by singing the song '***This is amazing grace***' – a hundred young voices singing with such enjoyment was truly wonderful to hear!

It set me thinking about the word 'Grace' and its many different meanings.

For some people - **Grace is a prayer** that we say before meals' – as one child prayed '*Dear God, please make this broccoli taste like chocolate!*' (Amen!)

For others – **Grace may be a title** that you use to address royalty, nobility or even clergy – whenever I went to Hale Chapel to take a service, I was often greeted tongue in cheek with the words '*Welcome your grace!*' (the late Pete Wisby)

On Strictly Come Dancing, the judges may ask the contestants to **dance with a little more grace** - lightly, elegantly, effortlessly.

When we are short of money and have a big bill to pay, I may be given a **grace period** in which to pay – meaning a little extra time.

Those who are musical among us will be aware that in a music score there can be '**grace notes**' which I think are small extra notes that add an extra twiddle and pizzazz to the tune!

And I am sure that we all hope that we will aim to **grow old gracefully** – meaning that we will become even more kind, compassionate, understanding and content!

There are so many different meanings to the word grace, but the children in school were singing about '**amazing grace**'.

And in the context of our Christian faith this form of grace is speaking about **a gift from God that is given freely, generously and that is totally unde-**

served.

The story I was asked to tell at that Collective Worship was that of the Prodigal Son.

A father had two sons, and he loved them both equally, even though they were so different in character. Like most farmers it was probably his hope and intention that they would follow in his footsteps and inherit the farm, but the younger son had different ideas. He grew restless and wanted to leave home. Going to his father he demanded that he have his share of his inheritance NOW!

The son went off into a far-off country where he lived a wild life, and wasted his inheritance. It was only when he was penniless and left feeding pigs in order to survive that he 'came to his senses'.

In a state of regret at how his life had turned out he wondered if his father might take him back just as a servant if he made his return. He knew that he didn't deserve anything.

And yet as he nears home, his father sees him coming. He tucks his coat into his belt and he runs towards his wayward son and throws his arms around him and welcomes him home – a beautiful picture of God's amazing grace, undeserved kindness!

I don't know about the children, but I came home singing the lyrics to their song!

This is amazing grace, this is unfailing love

That You would take my place, that You would bear my cross

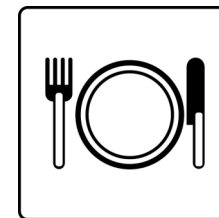
You laid down Your life, that I would be set free

Oh, Jesus, I sing for all that You've done for me.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all

Philip

Lunch Club



It was lovely to have a full house for our monthly lunch club after the summer break, with 58 guests plus helpers!

We all enjoyed the friendship and conversations around the tables as we were served with a delicious meal of pork, potatoes, carrots, sweet potato and cabbage, all in a lovely sauce.



A summer fruit sponge pudding followed with cream – we didn't go hungry!

Emily, our Anna Chaplain, was introduced to everyone, helped with collecting money, serving food as well as doing the short devotion after we had been served with cups of tea! (What an introduction!)

The next lunch club is on October 14th 12:30 to 1:45pm and the price is £5.00 (cash or card).

With a full house this month do let Philip know if you are unable to come or wish to bring a friend as we were at capacity in September (01420-83167 – feel free to leave a message).

Quiz Evening & Supper
Saturday October 4th at 7pm
Alton Methodist Church

The date is almost upon us!

Don't forget to place your name on the sign-up sheet as a team or as an individual (into which you can be placed in a team).

The quiz will be run by Alison and Graham Noakes from Farnham who regularly host a quiz at the Spire Church & elsewhere!

The price is £15 per person which covers the cost of the supper and hopefully raises funds towards our chosen charity of the year Naomi House & Jacksplace.

Harvest Festival – Alton Methodist Church
Sunday October 5th at 10am

Come and celebrate the abundant harvest with a service of praise and thanksgiving led by Rev Philip Simpkins.

*For the beauty of the earth,
 For the beauty of the skies,
 For the love which from our birth,
 Over and around us lies:
 Gracious God, to you we raise
 This our sacrifice of praise.*

Collection in aid of 'All We Can' the Methodist relief charity.



It was lovely to meet with Karen Sander-son (Chief Fundraiser) for Naomi House & Jacksplace at the Tuesday Coffee Morning in September.

Karen was delighted that we had chosen to support their charity as a church community over the coming year.

She gave lots of ideas for fundraisers for all ages including the likes of Cameo, Boys' & Girls' Brigade and the church family. She also offered a small group tour of the hospice for two or three people which we hope to take up shortly. Karen has arranged to come and speak at Cameo in the new year and would be happy to speak with BB & GB groups to help them to learn about their work and inspire them to do a fundraiser.

This is Charlie's story, told by his mum Dee.

From birth we have always called him Cheeky Charlie. He's just got the most beautiful cheeky personality. He's adorable and laughs at all the things that he shouldn't laugh at! We gave him that name when he was a couple of days old and he has grown up with it. It suits him to a tee. When Charlie's not poorly he's just the most fantastic, happy child to be around and he's always smiling and laughing.



Charlie wasn't breathing when he was delivered after an emergency caesarean. He was resuscitated before being placed in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) under one of the cooling blankets. We were told that Charlie had widespread

brain damage and it was made clear to us that we probably wouldn't be taking him home.



There came a point when all the machines had to be turned off and we were to say our goodbyes. But we waited and waited and he just carried on breathing. During that first night we were convinced that we were going to lose him, but by the next day he was still going. He was a little fighter.

Although Charlie loves food, he can only eat small amounts and so he is fed via a tube directly into his stomach. He can see light and dark and the different colours,

but he is registered blind; and beyond that we're not entirely sure. We have to do everything for Charlie, 24 hours a day. He has epilepsy, and very severe dystonia, which is a movement disorder, and because of that he finds it very difficult to sleep unless he has medication.

Charlie has scoliosis and because of his dystonia, he's had hip surgery three times. We are hoping that once he is fully grown it might not be such an issue. He really does have a tough time and I think he is a lesson to us all on how not to moan about the smallest things in life. I think it has changed the type of people we are and our whole outlook on everything. We always see the positives in Charlie.

Early in 2024, Charlie had the metal plates from previous surgery removed from his hips. A major challenge for Charlie is that his dystonia is severely triggered by pain, so to help manage this after his surgery, he had a symptom management stay at Naomi House & Jacksplace. The team monitored his pain and the hospice doctors, Dr Tim Warlow and Dr Kate Renton, wrote a symptom management plan to increase his medication as he needed it. **This is something that we can't do at home and being at Naomi House & Jacksplace made his recovery much quicker.** There have been times when we've been discharged from hospital and then found ourselves trying to get him admitted again because he is in so much pain.

It's harder to manage Charlie at home after his surgery. You need an extra pair of hands to move him and if you try to do it on your own, you might hurt him. At Naomi House & Jacksplace they've got those extra pairs of hands.

[Charlie's story shared with permission from Naomi House and Jacksplace co/Karen Sanderson]



Church Family News

A number of church friends are experiencing health issues, so we pray that they will receive the care they need and be assured of God's love for them as well as our care and concern. It was a joy to see Maureen Fry in church, with her daughter, our town mayor, as part of her 90th birthday celebrations.

Prayers at Noon

Tuesday 7th October is the date; 12 o'clock is the time; the small hall is the place. Come and join the prayer group for just about fifteen minutes of silent or spoken prayer.

Singing our Faith

We begin again with a singalong of hymns on **Tuesday 7th at 2pm** followed by a time of fellowship over a cuppa.



Jennie Marlow

Candles of Remembrance Service
Sunday November 2nd at 4pm
Alton Methodist Church

We warmly invite you and any members of your family or friends to attend our Candles of Remembrance Service whereby we offer space and time to come and reflect on the lives of people we have loved and lost, whether recently or some time ago.

This reflective service will contain music/hymns, readings, poems and an opportunity to light a candle of remembrance. It will last about 30-40 minutes. followed by refreshments.

If you would like to come and have a particular poem or wish to suggest a piece of music which would be suitable for all, please do contact us by 26th October and we will try and include it if able.

We look forward to welcoming you, and hope that a quiet place of reflection would be helpful.

Rev Philip Simpkins & Mrs Liz George altonmethodist@hotmail.com
01420-83167



News from the Blackwater Valley Methodist Circuit

As of September 1st the Hants Surrey Borders Methodist Circuit joined with the Berkshire Surrey Border Circuit to form the Blackwater Valley Methodist Circuit. A service of celebration and welcome was led by Rev Conrad Hicks on the 1st September at High Cross Church, Camberley.

The circuit has seven ministers led by Rev Nick Oborski as the superintendent. As a ministerial team we meet monthly to support and encourage one another over a light lunch time meal in one another's homes



A new logo was designed and agreed after consultation with both the circuit leadership team and the young people of the new circuit. Some people even bought hoodies and zip up jackets with the logo emblazoned on them!

One of the highlights of the new circuit is that a sizable group of young people are going to attend 3Generate in the autumn, joining hundreds of other young people at the NEC in Birmingham. It is a place where faith is formed and nurtured with the focus this year being 'The Journey of a Lifetime'. Some of you may remember attending M.A.Y.C events in yellow and green in years gone by – this is of the same ilk!

The newly formed Local Preachers meeting was able to affirm Pauline Matondo as completing her WLP studies and going on not only to be an accredited local preacher but also as a minister in training at Queen College, Birmingham.

Greetings from your new Anna Chaplain!



I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Anna Chaplain and to thank you for the warm welcome I have received since joining you. I started my role at the beginning of September, and have already met some of you out and about in the town, in your homes or at community groups such as the Methodist Church coffee morning. I am very much looking forward to working in Alton and becoming part of this friendly and active community, working alongside the fantastic team of Anna Friends as we seek to support the spiritual and emotional care of our older generation.

In my second week I experienced the buzz of Alton Methodist lunch club, where many of us gathered to share a very delicious meal together. I was truly stuffed by the end! I have also started getting to know the array of care and independent living homes in the town, bringing communion and leading services for the residents and staff. I will strive



Alton Methodist lunch club



Anna Friends at our first meeting together

to continue the brilliant work that has been achieved by my predecessors, and look forward to getting to know more of you in the days ahead.

Emily Spencer

News from 2nd Alton Company



Anchors & Juniors

Staff and boys are looking forward to the term ahead including a joint session with the girls from GB on Friday 10th October which will be led by David Betts. We're expecting a fun-filled evening!

Company and Seniors

The Autumn Term has started, and already the Boys have enjoyed an outing to Ten-Pin Bowling at Guildford; we've now selected our team of three who will travel next month to compete in the BB National Competition in Bedfordshire.

We'll shortly be meeting up with Boys from other Companies for an evening at Laser Quest, and competing in the Battalion Orienteering competition.

Our normal Friday evening activities are in full swing, and the four Boys transferred from Juniors will soon achieve their Membership badge.

We look forward to joining the congregation for our annual Enrolment Service on 19th October.

David Allan (Captain)

Girls' Brigade News

We've had such a lovely start back at Girls' Brigade! It's been brilliant to see lots of familiar faces again, and also to welcome some new girls into the group.

We look forward to enrolling them at the parade service we share with BB on Sunday 19th October.

This term we're trying out the brand-new badge work from GB, all based around the theme of Autumn. The n:gage and n:counta girls have already made some fantastic autumn trinket dishes from air-dry clay, they looked amazing!





Air-drying clay trinket dishes

We also had a visit from Judy Nichols, who came to tell us all about her work as a food bank volunteer. The girls really enjoyed hearing how important the food bank is and the difference it makes to people's lives.

The n:vestigate girls are also thinking about Autumn. They collected leaves and made a collage of the different shapes and colours, then used some of the surplus to make leaf rubbings. We have also talked about the Girls' Brigade motto – Seek, Serve and Follow Christ – starting with "what do the words mean?"

We've still got space for more girls to join us – so if you know anyone who'd like to come along, send them our way! And we'd love some extra helpers too – so if you've got a little time to give and fancy joining the fun, we'd love to hear from you.

Amy Evans (Team Leader)

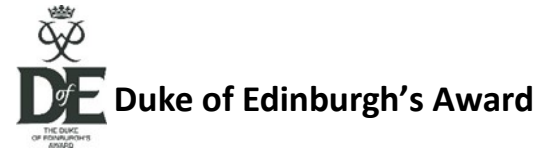
Nancy Buck (n:vestigate leader)



Dressing up for Autumn



n:vestigate girls with leaf collages



The final expedition of the season took place near the beginning of September, as five boys headed for the Peak District for a three-day expedition. They enjoyed good weather on the first day in the Manifold Valley, but on the second day the weather deteriorated into a real storm, with exceptionally strong winds and torrential rain. Their campsite had no shelter, and so for the first time ever we had to bring a group indoors overnight. Fortunately we had the North Staffordshire BB Outdoor Centre at our disposal! Their third day was not pleasant either, but they enjoyed The Roaches and Lud's Church, and finally reached their chosen destination – Flash, Britain's highest village.

This month, all three expedition groups will be making their Presentations, so finishing off this part of the DofE Awards.

David Allan



A high point on the second day



Completion!

The four Young Venturers, Charlotte, Emma, Emilia and Zara, appreciated receiving their Certificates in church last month, and will shortly be moving on to tackle the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The next Young Venturers' training will start in the New Year. Anyone in School Year 7 or 8 is welcome to take part – they should contact me for details.

David Allan (01420 84739)

Ladies @ Wetherspoons

Let's say 'welcome to autumn' with a cup of coffee or tea and a natter. Ladies, why not come along on **Thursday 30th October** any time from 10am.



Thank you to all who contributed to the home collection boxes which raised £683.54 to help with the work they do for children and families.

Brenda Milam would like to thank the church for her flowers, messages and cards of support but most of all being surrounded by love and kindness following my husband's death. It was uplifting and heart-warming. I always feel that attending Alton Methodist Church is like being wrapped up in a warm duvet and I am very grateful for that. I am looking forward to taking part in more church activities



Christmas Fair at Alton Methodist Church

Saturday 29th November, 10 am-12 noon



Save the day for our Christmas Fair on Saturday 29th November! The following selection of stalls are planned and donations of goods to sell would be welcome nearer the time:-

Cakes	Sonja Williams
Fancy Goods/Bric-a-brac	Terri White
Toys	Jennie Marlow
Baskets	Christine Allan
Jar Tombola	BB & GB

As usual, **Judy Nicholls and her team in the Café** will be there to provide welcome refreshment for all weary shoppers

Volunteers to help with stalls or clearing up afterwards would be much appreciated.

This event traditionally has a great atmosphere – so book the date and join the fun!


Nancy Buck (01420 85994)

CAMEO NEWS

No report from our **September session** as we don't meet until **Saturday 27th** (after the deadline for the October Newsletter) when Margaret Hodson will be sharing memories of her trip to Nepal.

On 18th October we welcome Anne Miller, who will be describing her solo pilgrimages.

Judy, Janet & Anna.



*Benefice of the
Resurrection and GAP*

HARVEST & HARMONY

Please come and join us for Lunch
and some singing

At : Old Park Farm , Beech GU34
4AP

On: Sunday 12th October, 12 noon
Cost £5.00 with all proceeds going to
GAP

Please contact Sarah
email sarahneish65@gmail.com or
call 07761933031 to book your place



GAP Indian Meal

Join us for a GAP meal, plus entertainment, at the Spice Bank Indian Restaurant in Alton High Street, **6.30pm on Monday 3rd November**. Cost is £20 for a starter, main, side and rice or naan bread.

Earlier this year over 30 PotR members and friends enjoyed a delicious meal here. The event was so successful it was decided to take over the whole restaurant for a GAP meal. I am co-ordinating numbers from AMC and have menus available so you can choose your meal in advance. Please see me if you are interested. **The deadline for menu choices is 26th October.**

Don't be put off if you aren't keen on spicy food. I have a friend who baulks at a bit of extra pepper in a sausage but loves the Spice Bank's kormas!

Judy Nicholls

A Great Craft Swap!

Judging by the huge amount of donations we received for St Lawrence' Eco Church Craft Swap held on 6th September, this event has gained a strong and steady reputation. As usual, we had a long queue before we opened the doors, and eager crafters quickly reduced the goods available to them.

Furthermore, we have a lot of donations left over, and we are hoping to extend the list of organisations able to benefit from them. We have already been able to give pencils, exercise books and craft scissors to St Lawrence School and we kept back some super goods to be sold in Resurrection Furniture. In addition, we are approaching local care homes, other schools and community groups, as well as the usual charity shops, to see what they can use.

We raised the magnificent sum of £315.35 in monetary donations, a testament to the quality of the goods received and the gratitude of the very happy crafters who left satisfied with their bargains.

This money will be split between two very worthy charities: Home Start, Alton, supporting families and helping to give children the best start in life,

and The Pink Place, Basingstoke, formed in 2010 to offer ladies with cancer assistance outside of the hospital environment.

We are exceptionally lucky to have a hard-working band of volunteers, willing to give up their time to make this event a success, but we are always happy to welcome more, so next time round, do please consider coming to join in what is a very rewarding and fun afternoon.

Thanks to everyone involved for a great event.

Jackie Epps (for St Lawrence Eco Church)

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 **20th October** when local historian Jerry Janes will be giving us a talk on “Why the first world war still resonates today”

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.

Have you heard about the **SENIORS CLUB** which is held in Alton Library from 2 – 4 pm on the first Monday of the month As well as changing any books that you may have it is also an opportunity to catch up with the local news, puzzle over a quiz and to meet friends for a chat and a cup of tea. You will be made most welcome!

To find out more this friendly group contact Barbara on 07342 34759 or Sue on 074701 27280 **or just turn up!**

Transport (via a minibus) available if required .



HARD OF HEARING GROUP

at

ALL SAINTS CHURCH HALL, ALTON



In September we gathered to celebrate a Harvest Service in All Saints Church. This has become a wonderful annual tradition. On this occasion we were delighted that the service was led by Emily Spencer, the newly appointed Anna Chaplain. Harvest Gifts a plenty were later donated to the Food Bank. Afterwards we all enjoyed tea and biscuits [and Sarah's cake!]

In October on the 28th at 2pm we will return to All Saints Church Hall to welcome once again Sarah Slater, who is a guide at Hampton Court Palace. She will be giving us one of her fascinating talks – this one entitled: Kirtles, Corsets and Curtains. Should be most interesting!

Our Programme for 2026 is being prepared – but to enable the group to continue successfully it would be really helpful to have a new volunteer – or 2!! If you might be able to help us for a couple of hours once a month on a Tuesday afternoon please do get in contact with me!

In anticipation.....!!

Contact: Annette Blackman 01420 543219

ablackman4@googlemail.com



LIP READING

Did you realise that hearing aids, while enhancing the hearing that we may have, do not actually replace the hearing that we have lost? Hearing aids are amazing devices (and with modern technology they are improving all the time) but they are not a miracle cure! A person with a hearing loss needs all the support and understanding they can get from hearing family members and friends. If you have any sort of hearing loss why not come along to the Lip Reading Group, you may be surprised at how much that the tips and

techniques can improve your communication skills. The next session is on **Tuesday 7th October** at 2pm in All Saints Church hall, Queens Road. The hour long session is followed by light refreshments, a time to practice skill learned and to make new friends who also experience the difficulties we encounter. All will be made most welcome!

For more details contact Kate on 07811744843(text only) or email kaddan-do@gmail.com

KNITTERS ANONYMOUS

Another month gone by and you are all still continuing to donate such beautiful knits to our two charities! Thank you all so much!

The Help for Refugees in the UK and Overseas Charity are always very pleased with everything we send but at the moment are particularly looking to build up their reserves of blankets, all sizes, all thicknesses and all colours so I have sent them the three large bags that we already had. We now need to replace these with more!

The BLISS charity for the tiny premature babies are collecting ready for their Christmas deliveries. These will go out in November, so again any of your favourite knits will be most welcome as they now support over fifty hospitals and prem baby units here in the south from Kent to Cornwall. If you would like a change from knitting, the charity, is also requesting some fabric drawstring Memory Bags approx. 6/7 inches by 8/9 inches in attractive nursery or patterned fabric (some ladies are recycling suitable duvet-covers from charity shops)

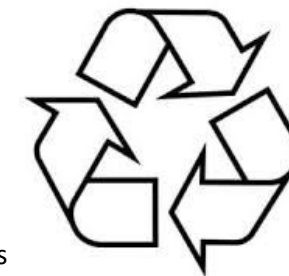
The next meeting of the group is on Tuesday 21st October from 2pm until about 3.30m, in All Saints Church Hall, Queens Road. Do drop in if you are passing, have a cup of tea with us and see what we are doing. We would love to meet you!

For more details contact Kate on 07811744843 (text only) kaddan-do@gmail.com



Handmade – with Love

Eco Corner - Going Circular



Steel making has underpinned the industrial revolution at the cost of releasing large quantities of CO2 into the atmosphere. I remember learning about steel making using blast furnaces when I was at school. We visited a steel works and were shown large quantities of red-hot coke being pushed out of the coke ovens. This had, of course been made from coal.

Now, the steel industry in the UK requires government support which will be used in part to aid a transition to electric arc furnaces which produce much less CO2 than blast furnaces. The snag is that this only makes sense if there is ample cheap green electricity available.

However, assuming that this all goes ahead, there is the possibility that scrap steel can be fed into the electric arc furnaces where it can be recycled into clean steel. there this could ultimately create a circular process, where the same steel is continuously being recycled.

The remaining problem is that the demand for steel for buildings, transport systems etc is steadily growing. Apparently, the controversial plans for new or extended runways at Heathrow and Gatwick, including the changes to terminal buildings will require large amounts of steel. However, new, high-grade and specialty steels can also be made in an electric arc furnace by managing the raw material mix.

Steel making has come a long way since the industrial revolution. With care its production can go greener but, as with so many things, much depends on the availability and cost of green electricity.

Nigel Hughes

Dates for your Diary

OCTOBER

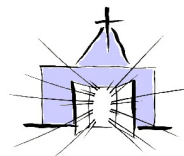
Sat 4	7.00pm	Harvest Quiz and buffet meal
Tues 7	12.00 noon	Prayers at Noon
Sun 12	12.00 noon	Harvest & Harmony at Old Park Farm
Sat 18	2.00pm	CAMEO
Tues 21	7.30pm	Family Committee
Thurs 30	10.00-12.00	Ladies @ Wetherspoons

NOVEMBER

Sun 2	4.00pm	Candles of Remembrance Service
Mon 3	6.30pm	GAP Indian Meal at the Spice Bank

Please look at articles in the Newsletter giving more information.

The November issue of the Newsletter should be available from Sunday 26th October.



Services at Alton in October 2025

Sunday 5th	Harvest Festival
	10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins
Sunday 12th	28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
	10.00am Jennie Marlow
Sunday 19th	29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
	10.00am Liz George - Girls' and Boys' Brigade Parade
Sunday 26th	30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
	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 administrative matters, including bookings, please contact Mrs Liz George via the church email address (above) or Tel 01420 88721

Items for inclusion in the **November** issue of the "Newsletter" should reach the editor, Nancy Buck, by noon **Sunday 19th October** at the latest, please.

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