

# Alton Methodist Church

# NEWSLETTER

April 2024

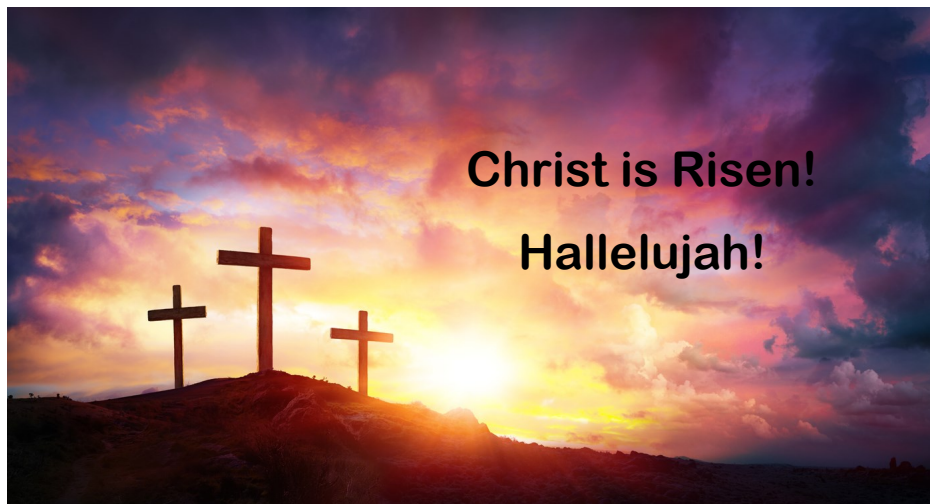


Photo: Romolo Tavani (iStock)



**Minister: Rev. Philip Simpkins**  
**Tel: 01420 83167**  
**Church website [www.altonmethodist.org.uk](http://www.altonmethodist.org.uk)**  
**Circuit website [www.hsbccircuit.org.uk](http://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,

Very early on Easter morning (*it will be early – the clocks spring forward!*) those of us who are able (and up!) will make our way up to Beech for the sunrise service at 6:30am.

The dew will be on the grass, cowslips will adorn the lawn, lambs will (may) be in the neighbouring field and we will gather to exclaim '*Christ is risen – He is risen indeed!*' before singing '*Christ the Lord is risen today – Alleluia!*'

We will recount the Easter story, of the women making their way to the tomb very early in the morning in order to anoint the body of Jesus with aromatic spices.



We will picture their faces, full of fear and bewilderment as they find the stone rolled away.

We will hear the message of the angel '*He is not here – he is risen*' and then '*go and tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee.*'

We will watch as '*trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb saying nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*' (Mark 16.1-8)

**Paul Beasley-Murray** suggests that it would be easy to scoff at these women. [*The Message of the Resurrection, Paul Beasley-Murray, BST, 2000, p23-28*]

They had set off for the tomb without first considering how they might roll away that huge circular stone that guarded its entrance.

They had taken spices to anoint the body when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had already done it (John 19.38-42).

They had been afraid of the angel and the empty tomb when they should have been overjoyed.

They went away, telling no-one (at least at first), because they were full of fear.

But Beasley-Murray goes on to suggest that these women were the true heroes of the Easter story.

All through the ministry of Jesus it was the women who provided economic support and provisions for Jesus and his disciples.

Whilst many of the disciples fled, it was the women that faithfully stood beneath the cross as Jesus was crucified.

Even when Jesus was dead it was the women who rose early in the morning and made their way to the tomb to grieve and anoint the body of Jesus.

And though in Jewish culture at that time women so often counted for little, it was to these faithful, committed women that God chose to reveal to the disciples and the world that Jesus was no longer dead but had been raised.

These very special women are an inspiration! They are an example of devotion, faith, loyalty, service, and love. I wonder how we compare!

Our sunrise service will conclude with a very simple yet meaningful communion as we share bread and wine, giving thanks to God for the death and resurrection of Jesus and his living presence with us and in us today.

After a welcome mug of tea and a hot cross bun we will go down the hill, bleary eyed yet joyful to join with others for further Easter celebrations.

Happy Easter!

Every blessing,

*Philip*

*[This article was written before the Sunrise Service planned for Easter Day was cancelled due to waterlogged fields.]*

## Messy Church

Having not held Messy Church since December we wondered if our March Messy Church would be well supported. As it turned out we had lots and lots of children and parents/carers arrive both past regulars and new attendees. We also welcomed Catherine as a new helper to Messy Church.

There was a real buzz in the church as after refreshments and board games we came together for some activities and to listen to the Mothering Sunday story.



After a song about 'Being in God's Family' we made our way into the hall and enjoyed making all sorts of Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday and Easter crafts. We made bracelets, flowers, donkey's, Easter Circle crafts, painted a large picture whilst also made Mothering Sunday cards out of celery and paint!



Thank you to everyone who came and helped in anyway.

**The next Messy Church is due to be held on Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup> 10-12 noon.**

We look forward to another great morning.

## Prayers at Noon

We meet again on **Tuesday 2nd April at 12 o'clock** for just about 15 minutes. It's a chance to bring our concerns for our world, global and local - he's listening.



## Lent Course Recap

Many of you will have been aware of the lent course held amongst the churches in Alton at Alton Maltings this year in preparation for our Easter Celebrations.

Each week the hall filled up with around 85 people across our different denominations as we explored the theme of the early Church and what we can learn from it today based on Acts 2.42-48.

On the first week Bishop Philip spoke on 'breathing in the Holy Spirit and then 'breathing out' in mission and service. He was an excellent speaker who reminded us of the way the early church grew as they lived close to God and as a consequence were an attractive community that others wanted to join.

Rev Philip Simpkins spoke on the theme of 'Being devoted to the fellowship of the church' as seen in Acts 2. A reminder that we share a common faith, we share a common ministry, and we share a common responsibility to care for one another.

Jason Clarke, Principal of Waverley Abbey unpacked the importance of being a praying community. He encouraged us to stop, be still and take time to be in the presence of God. Jason explored various examples and resources that we can use to help us pray, reminding us that the book of Psalms can be a great help and inspiration to our prayer lives. Jane, Liz and Angela led the opening worship that evening and we are very grateful to them!

Yet to come, at time of writing is Andrew Lawence from the Harvest Church on 'The Apostles Teaching' and Bishop David on the 'Breaking of Bread.' (Maundy Thursday).

The fellowship has been wonderful and the teaching inspiring – it is great to see our churches working together in this way.

## Easter Weekend

**Good Friday** – Unrehearsed acting out of the Good Friday Story at St Lawrence Church at 10am

6.00pm—Alton Choral Society perform Crucifixion by John Stainer at Alton Methodist Church. Retiring Collection for St Michael's Hospice.

**Easter Day Sunrise Service** – *cancelled owing to waterlogged fields.*

**Easter Day Celebration** – 10am at Alton Methodist Church led by David Betts.

## Church Family News

We wish **Joy Wilson** a happy 90th on 4th April.



**Eileen Buddery** has moved into a care home in Wrecclesham and **Ann Steele** has transferred to The Lawn which is convenient for her family in Holybourne. We hope they settle happily.

Several of our friends are currently in hospital - **Roy Stovold, Eleanor Robertson and Maureen Fry** are in our prayers and we are thinking of their families at this worrying time.

## Church Family Visitor Training Session

This will now take place on **Thursday 25th April at 2.30pm**. Philip will share some useful training, followed by cake and a cuppa. This is open to anyone interested in helping our church family to feel cared for and valued.

## Mission Aviation Fellowship News

### MAF enables first South Sudanese female eye surgeon to restore sight!

On 13 March, MAF will fly Dr Aja Paul Kuol – an eye surgeon and president of South Sudan’s Ophthalmic Association – to Yuai in eastern South Sudan. Dr Aja and the team will operate on hundreds of isolated people who’ve been blind for years because they’ve got no access to affordable healthcare. Dr Aja tells MAF’s Jenny Davies why she partners with MAF.



Dr Aja Paul Kuol from Juba is one of only four eye surgeons who work in South Sudan.

She’s based at Juba Teaching Hospital and Queens Hospital in the capital, but her highly sought after skills take her to the edges of society.

Over the years, MAF has enabled Dr Aja and her team to restore sight to thousands of isolated people. Mobile eye clinics by air, are the only way these forgotten communities can receive any life-changing treatment.<sup>2</sup>

**We are delighted to be able to support our very own Anne Miller through our interest, prayers and giving as she joins the crew of a ‘Tall Ship’ after walking the ‘Saints Way’ from Padstow to Fowey first in June.**

After 8-10 days at sea ‘climbing the rigging and scrubbing the decks, Anne will then walk to Santiago de Compostela via the Camino Ingles, over 100 miles just as pilgrims did in the Middle Ages.

We look forward to hearing of this amazing adventure and will give opportunity for us all to give towards MAF as part of our charity fundraising this year.

2. [MAF enables first South Sudanese female eye surgeon to restore sight - Mission Aviation Fellowship \(maf-uk.org\)](https://www.maf-uk.org)

## CAMEO NEWS

March’s guest speaker, Jane Eckles, came to tell us of her surprise at being chosen to receive Maundy Money and her subsequent visit, last year, to York Minster, along with 74 other men and women, representing the 75 years of the monarch’s life.



Jane brought with her the letter of invitation from the Palace, the Order of Service from the Minster and the Maundy Money itself, contained in two small leather pouches - one cream and one red. One contained two specially commissioned silver coins bearing the portrait of King Charles and the other held 75 tiny silver coins, one for each year of Charles’s life. Thank you Jane for sharing your fascinating experience with us.

**Our next meeting at 2pm on Saturday 13th April is an Open Meeting**, when we welcome the return of soprano Rebecca and her accompanist Claire for an afternoon of musical delights, followed by tea and cake. All donations will go to M.A.F. our charity of the year, so please come and support what we know will be a very enjoyable event.

Janet & Judy



### Ladies at Wetherspoons

Why not enjoy a mug of tea/coffee/drinking chocolate alongside a natter? Come along to Wetherspoons on **Thursday 25th April from 10am.**

## Save the Date

### Anna Chaplaincy Spring Event

2024 has been a busy and eventful year so far and seems to be flying past already! March saw me move into my third year as the Anna Chaplain, Alton and I am excited to see what God has in store for me this year...

Meanwhile, Sarah Miscella (an Anna Friend with the gift of administration) has been collating all the hours we have been doing as an Anna Chaplaincy team and found out that, in 2023, we managed to clock up 684 hours. This is remarkable and double the chaplaincy hours I would have done by myself so I want to give a shout out to the amazing Anna Chaplaincy Team and thank them for all that they do to come alongside older people in Alton.

Also, please remember we are holding an Anna Chaplaincy Spring Event in the Alton Methodist Church on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May from 2 – 4pm so put the date in your diaries. We look forward to seeing you there!

Wishing you all a happy and blessed Easter,

Kate & The Anna Chaplaincy Team

Email : [annachaplainalton@gmail.com](mailto:annachaplainalton@gmail.com)

Phone : 07539 026546



### Singing our Faith

Our next singalong will be on **Tuesday 2nd April** at 2pm which will be a chance to enjoy some of the hymns celebrating Easter and maybe a chocolate egg with a cup of tea!



## May Market

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> 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 and would welcome donations of goods.
- Helen Smith (01420 544161) has valiantly agreed to run the book stall again but could do with a helper on the day. Helen is happy to collect books if required.
- Sonja Williams will be running the cake stall and will welcome contributions of home-baking.
- Our resident artist, Pam Jones, will be selling some of her work.
- 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.

Nancy Buck (01420 85994)

Save the date for your diary

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2- 4.30pm

Board games & afternoon tea for all ages

in aid of MAF



### Starting to make their plans...

All the accompanied out-of-doors training has now been successfully completed. Venturers enjoyed a muddy walk around Medstead, while the fourteen young people in the DofE Bronze groups have explored Kingsley, Broxhead and Hankley Commons, learning a lot about finding their way on paths and over open country.

After the Easter break, they will be planning their unaccompanied expeditions, choosing their routes and agreeing who will bring which bits of kit. The Venturers go on 28th April, while the Bronzes will have their Practice in the May half-term and their Assessed expeditions in the summertime. We trust that the weather will co-operate.

I'm very fortunate to have the support of Joe Murrell, Dione Watson and Emily Wood, without whose help these ventures couldn't take place.

David Allan



*The Venturers in Medstead*



*Some of the Bronzes on Hankley*

### 2nd Alton Company

Hello friends.

HOT OFF THE PRESS..! (24/03/2024)

We have just returned from our Battalion "Day of Action" with a fistful of certificates..!

They can be seen on the notice board in the hall, but the highlights are 1<sup>st</sup> in the squad drill, 1<sup>st</sup> in football (possibly a first time achievement!) and 2<sup>nd</sup> overall on the day. If I am honest, this was a better result than had been expected, but shows that as a group the boys can work together and achieve things, the 2<sup>nd</sup> place overall showing that they scored consistently well in all 8 events that they took part in.

Now we have a three week gap to our next meeting due to Easter being a bit early, and then our next big event will be upon us. This will be our parents evening that will be on May 10<sup>th</sup> at Alton Methodist Church. Friends and family are very welcome for a brief look at some of the things we might have been getting up to during the year, as well as awards and presentations.

After that we shall be into our summer programs including Battalion sports day on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Anchor Boys for 5 to 8 year olds and Junior Section for 8 to 11 year olds meet at 6pm to 7.30pm. The company section is for school years 7 and up meets at 7.45. All sections meet on a Friday evening at Alton Methodist Church. If you know of any boys that would enjoy the program that we offer, please point them in our direction.

We are also in need of staff, or at least help, in the company section particularly. Do you have a skill, or knowledge (your specialist subject) that you could pass on to our boys? Come and talk to myself or David Allan about making that happen.

Pete Burgess

## Juniors in action!

The boys worked together to complete the puzzle .

It was tricky, but when we work together it's amazing what we can do.

Glenda Bentley



## Girls' Brigade News



N:gage & n:spire have continued to complete their current badgework, which has included a number of new games, craft & baking.

For Mother's day the girls made a small bouquet of flowers with the flower heads made from buttons. I hope all the Mum's enjoyed the floral displays.

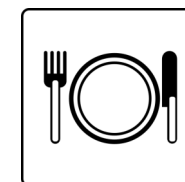
Our n: vestigate group for the youngest girls has been focussing on 'Celebrations'. This has involved balloons, icing cakes, exploring the sanctuary (celebrating God's love for us) and praise songs. Last week we made palm fronds to wave while shouting Hosanna as we heard the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

Looking forward to Easter we will have our usual Easter Egg hunt around the Church building, Our girls are normally good at seeking out the eggs but should you find the one or two we haven't found then sorry & enjoy. We are planning a fun day for later in May for the whole group, hoping to have a day of outdoor activities and, of course, fun.

We are currently few in number so If there is any girl over the age of 4 ½ who would like to join us on a Monday evening for games, learning new skills, friendship & fun please contact Team Leader Kym on 01252 334814 or n:vestigate Group Leader Nancy on 01420 85994.

## Lunch Club

In March we enjoyed a lovely meal of sausages in gravy accompanied by lots of lovely vegetables. Many thanks to the lunch club team for providing a very enjoyable meal.



**The next Lunch Club is on Tuesday 9th April.** If you'd like to attend and are not already booked in, please let Philip know by Friday 5th April if possible.

(Tel 01420 83167)

## **Hants Surrey Border & Berkshire Surrey Border**

### **Methodist Circuits**

The Hants Surrey Border Methodist Circuit (HSBC) was approached by the Berkshire Surrey Border Circuit (BSBC) to enter conversation/discussion about a possible merger. Initially this was driven by anticipated staffing needs when the present superintendent leaves the BSBC in August 2025 and is unlikely to be replaced.

The BSBC has 7 churches – Bracknell, Crowthorne, High Cross, Camberley (URC/Methodist), Church at the Pines (Bracknell), Sandhurst & Yateley, Wokingham and Woosehill Community Church (Wokingham). As a guide Bracknell is 30 miles from Alton (45mins) as the farthest church across the circuit.

The BSBC has at present Superintendent Rev Catherine Bowstead, Rev Sharon Gardener, Rev Soba Sinnathamby and a URC minister at High Cross. It reports to have a good team of local preachers and is said to be financially viable.

Members of the Circuit Leadership Teams from both circuits have met for initial discussions as has the CLT in HSBC to begin to flesh out the reasoning, mission opportunity and detail of any merger.

The timeline if it is decided to merge circuits would/may be Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 2025 (if a decision is reached by Sept 2024 Circuit Meeting).

#### **The Circuit Leadership Teams suggest that:**

Our mission as a merged larger circuit is to resource, support, enable and encourage the local church in its work and mission. (Inspiring, resourcing, training, staffing, financing etc.)

We recognise the importance of being a connexional church that seeks to walk alongside and support one another.

We acknowledge that there will be some things that we cannot do as a larger circuit and that there will be challenges to overcome.

This proposal will be discussed at each of our church councils and at the circuit meeting in the coming weeks.

### **Testimony Service**

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May at 4pm**

**North Camp Methodist Church**

**For Rev Anne Day**

Rev Anne Day joined our Methodist Circuit as a probationer minister in September 2022. She has served as minister of Aldershot and North Camp. After the continuation of her studies and further examination by the Methodist Church Anne has been recommended for Ordination at the Methodist Conference.

Within our Methodist District we will also hold a special service for Anne where she will be expected to share her testimony.

Everyone is invited to this momentous celebration!

### **Ordination Service**

**Sunday June 30<sup>th</sup> 2024**

Rev Anne Day will then be ordained at the Methodist Conference at the end of June which is to be held in Leeds this year. We offer her our congratulations!

### **Farewell Service**

**Sunday July 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm**

**Cove Methodist Church**

A farewell service will be held within our Methodist Circuit for Rev Gina Hoff who has had pastoral responsibility for Frimley Green and Cove Methodist Churches, alongside work at 'The Chapel' in Ash.

Gina came as a probationer minister and has served within the circuit for nine years. She will move in August to take up a new posting on the Isle of Wight, living in East Cowes.



## Alton All Saints Hard of Hearing Group



### Main Monthly Meeting

Please do come along if you have a hearing impairment and would like to find out what happens on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month. On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, for your entertainment we have a group coming along called Chapter and Verse. 'What's that?' you cry. Well, it is a small theatre company that takes a light-hearted look at topics through sketches, prose and poetry. The topic in April will be Animal Antics.

As well as entertainment we have tea and biscuits, a raffle and lots of chat. Come along and make new friends! The afternoon starts at 2pm and finishes around 4pm.

We also have need of a volunteer or two to help making teas etc. If you are able to help or wish to know more about our friendly meetings do let me know.

Contact: Annette Blackman 01420 543219 [ablackman4@googlemail.com](mailto:ablackman4@googlemail.com)

### Lip Reading

The Summer Term of Lip Reading in All Saints Church Hall starts on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April at 2pm. Come along to find out more about this useful skill that is so helpful to the hearing impaired. Led by Maggie Short, qualified lip Reading Tutor, followed by light refreshments with time to continue to practice skills learned during the session in relaxed surroundings. You will be most welcome!



[kaddando@gmail.com](mailto:kaddando@gmail.com)

### Knitters Anonymous

Once more generous donations of knitted and crochet blankets, clothes and toys continue to find their way to the group. Many thanks to those who donated the huge bag of brightly coloured knitted squares, that was left in All Saints church last month, to be collected and sewn into blankets by the group. These are well on the way to completion and will be added to the many



other generous donations ready to go to the Chernobyl Children's charity. Bliss, the charity for tiny babies were pleased to receive so many pastel-coloured diamond shaped blankets, plus the 4 ply baby jackets. The next meeting of the group is on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2.30pm in All Saints Church Hall. Why not come along to pick up some wool, find a new pattern or have a cup of tea and a chat. All welcome!

For further details contact *Kate* on 83514 or [kaddando@gmail.com](mailto:kaddando@gmail.com)

### OPEN SIGHT

Open Sight is a club for those with visual impairment. It meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at All Saints Church Hall at 2.30pm. **The next meeting is on the 15<sup>th</sup> April.** A brief AGM will be take place but the main event will be some of our members giving a short history of their lives and their experience of sight loss.

We have a variety of talks and social afternoons throughout the year, the one **on 20<sup>th</sup> May will be Jane Hurst** giving us some interesting tales of local history. The meetings provide an opportunity to make new friends. We also enjoy refreshments of tea, sandwich and cake and usually end with being told a joke or two!

Open Sight comes under the umbrella of Open Sight Hampshire where there are staff who can provide support and advice regarding equipment to assist with daily living. Several of our members have made use of this service and have found it invaluable.

We are in need of volunteers who can provide general help during the afternoon, and we would also welcome individuals with a visual impairment, who feel that they would like to join us. No commitment, just come along one Monday and see what happens!

If you would like further information regarding the group please contact:

Malcolm Cooper on 01420 549525

## Dates for your Diary

### MARCH

Fri 29th	10.00am	Good Friday re-construction in St Lawrence Churchyard
	6.00pm	Stainer's Crucifixion
Sun 31st	10.00am	Easter Day Celebration

### APRIL

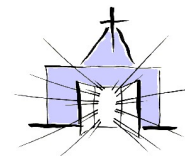
Tue 2nd	12.00 noon 2.00pm	Prayers at Noon Singing our Faith
Tue 9th	12.30pm	Lunch Club
Sat 13th	2.00pm	CAMEO Open Meeting
Thu 25th	10.00am→ 2.30pm	Ladies @ Wetherspoons Church Family Visitor training

### MAY

Sat 4th	10.00-12.00	Messy Church
Fri 10th	7.00pm	Boys' Brigade Display
Sat 11th	10.00-12.00	May Market
Wed 22nd	2.00-4.00pm	Anna Chaplaincy Spring Event
Sat 25th	2.00-4.30pm	Board Games and Afternoon Tea

Please look at articles in the Newsletter giving more information.

The May issue of the Newsletter should be available from Sunday 28th April.



## Services at Alton in April 2024

<b>Sunday 7th</b>	<b>2nd Sunday of Easter</b>
	10.00am Alan Goldring
<b>Sunday 14th</b>	<b>3rd Sunday of Easter</b>
	10.00am Liz George
<b>Sunday 21st</b>	<b>4th Sunday of Easter</b>
	10.00am Rev Philip Simpkins - Holy Communion
<b>Sunday 28th</b>	<b>5th Sunday of Easter</b>
	10.00am Jennie Marlow

### CONTACT US

**Church Office:** Email [altonmethodist@hotmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 21st April** at the latest, please.

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