

Alton Methodist Church

NEWSLETTER

March 2008

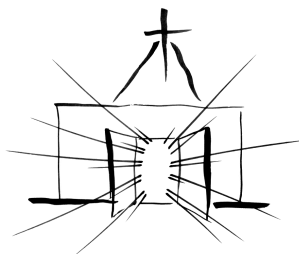


Sunday Services: 9.15 a.m., 10.45 a.m., 6.30 p.m.

Minister Rev Keith Underhill

Tel. 01420 83167

**Circuit web site:
www.faralt.org**



From the Manse....

The daffodils and crocuses are out early this year. In fact the row of daffodils at the front of the church, running parallel to the road have been there in bloom for some time now – defiantly standing up to the elements and lifting our hearts and spirits as we see them. Being so early though, they will probably be finished by the time Easter comes and then look rather sad and bedraggled.

This is not helped by the fact that Easter, as I have mentioned before, is a movable feast, unlike Christmas which is always celebrated on the same day. The practise of how we calculate the timing of Easter as we know it dates back to the Synod of Whitby in 664 – when there was a great show down between the two contrasting and rival brands of Christianity. Championing the cause of the ‘Roman’ way of doing things was St. Wilfred and for the ‘Celtic’ expression of faith, St. Colman. St. Wilfred and the way of Rome emerged triumphant from the Synod and ever since, the method for calculating the date of Easter has remained the same.

For this process, both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches use the Gregorian calendar, a practise that can be traced back even further than the Synod of Whitby, to the year 325 and the first Council of Nicaea. This Council decided to make the date of Easter always fall on a Sunday, and the same Sunday throughout the world. To do this and to work out when that would be for any year to come, the Council constructed special tables to compute the date. The usual statement used to make this calculation is that Easter Day is the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs next after the vernal equinox, which means that Easter can never occur before March 22 or later than April 25.

So sometimes we celebrate Easter very early and other times, far later. The truth though is that we celebrate Easter each and every day – for the miracle of the empty tomb and the first Easter morn is not just for one day only, the timing of which is based on a tricky calculation, but for every single moment of every single day.

Life overcoming death, light replacing darkness, love supplanting hatred and hope triumphing over despair is the daily reality of those who like the first disciples look into the empty tomb, see and believe.

Happy Easter to you all, for whatever date our diaries tell us to observe this most amazing of days, we know it to be true each and every day – each moment shot through with the transforming power and light of God’s love for us all.

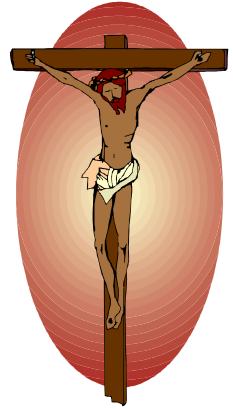
With love and God Bless,

Keith

Diary of events at a glance.

- 1st Mar 7 pm NCH Quiz at church.
- 7th Mar 2 pm Women’s World Day of Prayer here - speaker Rev Jane Walker.
- 16th Mar 4 pm General Church Meeting followed by Faith Tea and evening service.
- 18th Mar 7.30 pm ‘Greening Alton’ at Alton Maltings Centre.
- " " 7.45 pm Network - speaker Christine Allan at church.
- 30th Mar 10 am All Together Service at the Assembly Rooms.
- " " 4 pm Bob Weighton’s 100th Birthday Get Together at Church.
- 10th May 10 - 12 noon - Spring Fair here.

Services for Easter 2008.



Palm Sunday 16th March

9:15 am Revd Keith Underhill

10:45 am Revd Keith Underhill (We are hoping to be able to have a donkey this year for our Palm Sunday celebrations. We plan to meet in the Market Square at 10:15 am and process to church for the 10:45 service.

Full details of this will be made when the arrangements have been finalised – watch this space!)

4:00 pm Church Annual General Meeting with the evening service to follow on after the meeting and tea have finished.

Maundy Thursday 20th March

8:00 pm special service to mark the events of the last supper – to include Holy Communion Revd Keith Underhill

Good Friday 21st March

9:00 am Reflective service for Good Friday Revd Keith Underhill

10:30 am – Ecumenical Walk of Witness beginning at St. Lawrence's Church and as last year, stopping off at All Saints' and our church before finishing at the Harvest Church at the Alton Malting's Centre.

Easter Sunday 23rd March

9:15 am Revd Keith Underhill with Holy Communion

10:45 am Revd Keith Underhill with Holy Communion

6:30 pm Revd Keith Underhill

All together

On Sunday **30th March** there will be **NO** morning services held at church. Instead there will be one morning service to be held at the Assembly Rooms at **10:00 am**. This will give us an opportunity to meet and worship together in a larger space and for as many people

from our 9:15 and 10:45 congregations as possible to come together, something that we are not able to do week by week.

This is a special day and we do hope that as many people as possible will come and join with us. If you would like a lift to this service please have a word with Keith as soon as possible. Transport will be arranged for anyone who needs it. Let's make a real effort to come and worship together as the whole congregation of Alton Methodist Church.

Please note the change of time and venue and we look forward to seeing you there.

General Church Meeting

This will be held at church on Sunday 16th March beginning at 4:00pm. The meeting will be followed by a faith tea and then the evening service. This is a very important meeting in the church year and it is open to anyone who would like to come along.

It gives us an opportunity to hear what is going on in the life of the church, our plans for the future and some discussion on important issues that matter.

There will be reports and updates on what is happening regarding the possible future of our building and the feedback from the groups that have been meeting regarding our vision for the future, environmental and ethical issues and how we can work with the various age groups.

The meeting is also an opportunity for anyone to ask any questions and for us to elect our Church Stewards for the year and representatives to the Church Council. There will be a great deal to do and say and it is very important that as many people as possible come so that we can hear what you think and feel about these matters.

Church family news

We assure **Gordon Barber** of our love, prayers and support at this time following June's death last month. June's funeral service was held here in church on Monday 11th February prior to her burial in Four Marks cemetery.

We also remember **Roger and Robyn Fitzer** and family in our prayers following the recent death of Roger's father Tom. Tom's funeral service was held at Bournemouth Crematorium on February 12th.

Bob Weighton will be celebrating his 100th birthday on Saturday 29th March. Congratulation and much love from us all Bob! There is more on Bob's birthday celebrations further on in the newsletter.

We continue to remember and pray for **Karen and Rob Booker** as Karen undergoes her continuing hospital treatment.

Beryl Walkey is at the time of writing, on ward F2 in Basingstoke hospital and we remember her and all the family at this time.

congratulations!

Bob Weighton's 100th birthday.

At 4:00 pm on Sunday March 30th, there will be a special get – together here at church when we can celebrate with Bob on his 100th birthday. We hope that as many people from the church family both young and old, will be able to come along and be part of this. The afternoon will include tea and refreshments. Later on in the proceedings, Bob will be sharing some thoughts with us under the title “Reflections on a century of change”. These celebrations will then carry on into the evening service. We look forward to seeing you there.

Worship

Over the past couple of months or so, the subject of our current arrangements for morning worship has been raised. We are very fortunate here at Alton Methodist Church to be in the position where we can offer two distinctive and different style of worship to meet the various needs and preferences of our worshipping congregations.

Since I have been here, I have noticed the growth in numbers at the 9:15 am service, as well as the growth in confidence shown by our worship leaders and worship band at the 10:45 am service. It seems that our arrangements are working well. However, I am conscious that this may not be the case for everyone.

If you have any concerns or issues regarding our morning arrangements, then I would ask you to have a word with me about this. As always this would be in confidence and I would be more than happy to meet with you at a mutually convenient time and place. Thank you,
Keith.

Church Stewards and Church Council Members

We are looking to appoint a new church steward and some new church council members at the General Church Meeting and would ask you all to seriously think and pray about this. Stewards and Church Council Members have to be church members and anyone wishing to know any more about this or to suggest a name, should have a word with either Keith or the Stewards ASAP.

Network -

Tuesday March 18th 7.45 pm at the church. Christine Allan will be talking about their trip to the palace, all welcome.

The previously advertised meal will be later in the year.

Help solve a Mystery!!



The catering group have noticed that we are missing about 3 dozen cups and saucers from the large kitchen. Have you borrowed these and perhaps forgotten to return them – or has there been an accident and 36 have been broken?! If you have them please return them as soon as possible as they will be needed soon!

There is no problem borrowing items from the kitchen, however please do let Carol Woodruff know if you want to use anything.

NCH QUIZ

Yes, it's that time of year when you needed to sharpen your wits in order to combat the question master's remarks as well as answer the questions. The date is **Saturday 1st March** starting at 7 pm. The cost is £5 per head, including refreshments, children free. Come along on your own or with a team, for a fun night out and support our Methodist childcare organisation at the same time. Just give your name to Jennie Marlow (Tel: 85698).

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - change of venue

The first Friday in March is always to date when we join together with Christians all over the world in a common act of worship. Come along to **our church at 2 pm on Friday 7th March** to become part of this wave of prayer across the world.

The theme this year is 'God's wisdom provides new understanding' and has been prepared by the Christian women of Guyana and our speaker is Rev. Jane Walker. It's an opportunity to discover something

of this country as well as an opportunity to enjoy fellowship with other local Christians. If you can help with refreshments, please contact Jennie Marlow (Tel:85698)

THE LEPROSY MISSION

If you've been wondering what to do with all the postcards you receive from lucky holiday-making friends, you can now put them to a good use. There's an envelope on the foyer table in which to pop them, old or new postcards are welcome and they will raise funds to help combat this disease.

Greening Alton

As you may have read in the Alton Herald 15/2/08 a Greening Campaign is to be considered in Alton. Householders, businesses and schools will be encouraged to save energy, increase recycling and reduce waste.

Our church's Action Group 3E: Equal, Ethical, Ecological, is keen to support this campaign, and encourages you to attend the local meeting: **Tuesday 18 March 7.30 pm** at Alton Maltings Centre, to ensure that our faith community is represented in this project. For more information phone Chris Chappell (01420 544422) or e-mail greening.alton@hotmail.co.uk or visit www.alton-in-partnership.org

Spring Fair/May Market

Whatever we call it, this event will take place on Saturday 10th May 2008, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Please book the date in your diaries and start thinking now if you could help, whether on the day, with fresh ideas or by making goods in advance.



Nancy Buck

2nd Alton Company, The Boys' Brigade

COMPANY SECTION

Do you know of any boy who is in first year at Secondary school? We have only one in this particular year group, and would welcome others to join us. I will be very happy to tell boys and parents all about BB – just give me a ring on 84739. (Incidentally, Anchor Boys have a similar “gap” in School Year 3 that we would be pleased to fill!)

Narrow defeats by 3rd Hemel Hempstead (Chess) and 7th Plymouth (Badminton) mean that we are no longer in any of the National BB knock-out competitions. However, regardless of the results, participation in these events does give Boys a wider perspective of BB, and allows them to compete in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. They do enjoy taking part, and so no doubt we'll be entering again next year!

On 1st March, 2nd Alton hosts the Battalion orienteering championships. We've chosen to hold it on Whitmoor Common, between Guildford and Woking, and are hoping that the weather is as kind as it has been for much of February!

All eyes are now focused on March 15th, the big Day of Action, when we compete against all the other local BB Companies in eight competitions – “Super Saturday” I suppose the Americans would call it! We usually do well, but of course this means we've a reputation to live up to, and other Companies would be very pleased to knock us off our perch, so to speak! Watch this space.

I know it's a long way off, but I can tell you that our Annual Display will be held on Friday 9th May this year. We would love to see you there!

David Allan, Captain.

JUNIOR SECTION

Recently the third year Boys went off to London for the day as part of their badge work. They visited the Natural History Museum and enjoyed the “Creepy Crawly” house. After lunch we had time to pop into the Natural History museum and try out the earthquake simulator and look at the energy floor. The Boys particularly enjoyed the “Don’t touch” exhibit – a real challenge to touch a sculpture which gave a small shock when a finger was poked into a slot! Needless to say they all “touched”! On the way back to Waterloo we all enjoyed the buskers on the Embankment, especially those pretending to be statues – the Boys were not sure what to make of them!!

ANCHOR BOYS

By the time you read this we will have had our Anchor Boy Fun Day and hopefully we will have finished our frieze and managed to get it transported in one piece! The theme this year is “Castles” and all the games and activities will be arranged around this theme so it promises to be a good day. Our numbers are still healthy but there is always room for more Boys aged 6 and over!

Christine Allan.

Action for Christian Aid

Christmas Envelope Appeal

Cheques to the value of £966.31 have been sent to Christian Aid as a result of the Christmas Envelope Appeal 2007. This sum will increase to around £1145 after Gift Aid has been claimed by Christian Aid on some of the cheques. This is an excellent total and I would like to say thank you on behalf of Christian Aid to all those who so generously gave in order to help those in need in the world.

Christian Aid Week – 11th-17th May, 2008

Christian Aid Week this year is focussing on the empowerment of people in Ghana and Bangladesh. The first day of the fund-raising week, Sunday, 11 May, falls on Whit Sunday or Pentecost, the festival when Christians celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In Ghana they say “one stick can be easily broken but many, bound together, are strong”. Against the odds a Ghanaian man called Idrissu has overcome poverty and physical disability to become a teacher. With support and training from Christian Aid partner SEND, and with incredible determination, he has also taught himself sign language and now works alongside others with disabilities to access debt relief money. By joining together with Idrissu, his community has gained free access to healthcare and the resource centre, to which they are entitled.

Rekha Biswas from Bangladesh goes from house to house talking to families about the problems they face getting clean water, which is a problem throughout the country. In the northeast, water scarcity and lack of infrastructure create difficulties for the many landless communities living there. In the central low-lying wetlands, the land is flooded for more than half of the year and underground water sources can be contaminated with arsenic. In the southwest, the rise in sea-

levels, partly as a result of climate change, is making fresh water salty. It is quite often women and children who have to walk for up to 24 hours to collect water to drink and then carry the heavy pots home, and it is for this reason that Rekha encourages women to attend meetings of their “local water council” to voice their concerns.

Christian Aid partner The Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies has set up “water council” meetings in villages throughout Bangladesh. These community meetings discuss and agree the best water supply solutions for their particular villages, and also address other issues.

Sally Johnson

Girls' Brigade News

The interesting Easter/school holiday arrangements this year leave us with one Monday between the Easter weekend and the two weeks of school holiday at the beginning of April, so the Junior Section have invited the whole company to a “Fun Evening” on Monday 31st March. This forms part of their “Hostess” badge work and we’re all looking forward to benefiting!



On Sunday 30th March we hope to see you at the Family Service at the Assembly Rooms when both BB and GB will be on parade.

Nancy Buck (Explorer Leader)

Kitchen Cooker in need of a home.

June Atkins is moving to a flat shortly and needs to dispose of a Leisure Gas cooker VU505 16. Bought January 2001. As New.

Please contact **June on Alton 84865.**

DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD



I'm delighted to report that three more young people have now completed their Bronze Award.

Mark Denman undertook BB leadership for his Service, took up orienteering as his Physical Activity, and chose music – playing cavalry trumpet in the BB band – for his Skill.

Eleanor Owen helped at Brownies for her Service, chose Rock Climbing for her Physical Activity, and played clarinet for her Skill.

Lauren Fitch also chose Rock Climbing, but she helped in the church crèche for her Service and played cello in Amery Hill orchestra for her skill.

They all undertook a two-day expedition in the New Forest, the girls' being last September while Mark's was the previous year. Both ventures covered 15 miles, with the groups camping wild in a beautiful and remote part of the countryside.

Planning for the various expeditions is now well in hand, with 34 young people involved. Over the next few weeks there will be a Bronze training walk locally, a Silver assessed venture in Shropshire, a Silver training expedition in the Peak District, and two Gold training expeditions in the Brecon Beacons.

David Allan, Unit Leader.



From **Pam and Robyn**. We would like to say a **Big Thank You** to all who helped to make the Civic Service on Sunday 17th February such a grand occasion. The weather was kind, and the singing nearly raised the roof.

The collection amounted to £234.26 to be divided between the Church and Alton Hard of Hearing Group.

Making a Difference - Easter Offering 2008

The Methodist World Church Fund asks for our gifts to support its work. That work is three-pronged; supporting mission partners (i.e. British nationals going overseas), supporting “Nationals in Mission” appointments (i.e. foreign nationals working in their own country) and helping to support our partner churches around the world.

In addition grants may be given in response to a request for help after a natural disaster, e.g. to repair storm damage to the newly completed Out Patients Department at Segbwema Hospital in Sierra Leone. Another hospital in receipt of grants is the Maua Hospital in Kenya which has a world-renowned HIV/AIDS Centre providing food, education and out-patient care for AIDS orphans and their carers, in addition to providing in-patient care for AIDS sufferers.

World Church funds help to support the struggling church in the Sudan through outreach work from the Kenyan Methodist Church. (Many of the displaced persons in camps in Darfur are Christians.) The Kenyan Church has also been sent £10,000 to support people displaced or otherwise affected by the current troubles in the country, but they could use much more. The church in Johannesburg sheltering 1,500 refugees from Zimbabwe is also being helped by World Church funds.

Your giving through World Church funds can make a difference in many parts of the world. Please give generously. The Easter Offering envelopes will be distributed in church over the Easter period. If you are eligible for Gift Aid please write your Gift Aid number on the envelope. [Also please remember that any cheques should be made payable to Alton Methodist Church since the monies collected are paid into our church account and Gift Aid added before forwarding the total collected to the recipient charity.]

News of the Minns Family

Last week I had a long ‘phone - chat’ with Julie Minns, catching up on all her news.

The family is well, although Richards’s firm has merged with another and his position is rather uncertain at the moment. Phil has completed his degree and is working in a specialist music shop in Manchester. He’s saving hard as he wants to go and live in Oslo for a while. Laura is awaiting the results of her mid-term exams at Medical School; and Simon is enjoying his first year of Business Studies at Coventry. Hannah is busy with her music and dancing as well as her school studies; and is currently acting in the church pantomime!

Julie herself is very busy but very happy, knowing that she is in “the right place”, as she puts it. She sends her love to Alton, which she thinks of as a “very special place”.

Her Ordination will take place in Scarborough on 6th July. She asks that we remember her in our prayers as she approached this significant occasion.

Judy Nicholls

Welcome to Vida Foday

In August this year, our new Probationer Minister, Revd Vida Foday will be joining our Circuit to work with and alongside us. Vida will officially start work on September 1st. Keith Underhill our Superintendent Minister asked Vida if she would like to write something about herself for our newsletters and Circuit website (www.faralt.org). This is what Vida has written.

“I am a widow with five children with me in London namely; Sia, Tamba Snr, Sahr also known as (Koby), Tamba Jnr and Maota, the baby of the family. Sia, a Bank Manager, is married to Katib Iscandari and they have a daughter, Zaida. Tamba Snr, a Graphic designer, is also married to Ollie with a daughter and a son, Neshamah and Shecharyah. Sahr works as a Marketer and Web designer. Tamba Jnr is an IT consultant, and Maota is in her final year at Roehampton University studying Drama and Psychology (major). She is hoping to move to Farnham with me and apply for a job there. She is with the Alluminae Dance Group and teaches street dancing (part-time) at Watermans Theatre, which is sponsored by the London Borough of Hounslow.

We are all British citizens but I originally come from Ghana, and my late husband from Sierra Leone. I lived and worked in Sierra Leone for a few years. I have lived in the United Kingdom for over 20 years. My late husband had an international job as the Liaison Officer for Africa with the Miners International Federation (MIF). His work involved travelling around the mining areas of Africa and around the world. Over 20 years ago, we took a decision for me to stay here in London, where the headquarters of MIF used to be, mainly because the children’s education was being affected by the constant move that his job required of him. On his retirement, he developed kidney disease, and was on haemodialysis until his death on the 22nd of December 2002. His body was taken home and buried in Sierra Leone in January 2003, according to his wishes.

I come from a family with strong Christian background. Three of my uncles were Methodist ministers, my father was a class leader and my mother was a choir member. I was a member of the Girls Life Brigade in Bethel Methodist Church, Takoradi, Ghana, where I grew up. I later joined the choir and was also very active in the Youth club performing plays in the church during special activities. I have three older sisters Elizabeth, Edith and Irene and two younger ones, Evelyn and Georgina. My parents, Mr and Mrs Grant-Acquah, are deceased. I had my calling at a time when I was going through a difficult period, with a sick husband at the time and while mourning the death of my mother

and two of her sisters all in the space of three months. However, I heeded to God's call and with the help and nurturing of my minister, Rev. Kevin White, then of the Chiswick Methodist Church, Rev. Veronica Faulks, my local preaching tutor, and Mrs Mary Ludlow, my mentor, I went through the Faith and Worship course and was accredited as a local preacher in June 2003. I have held several positions in the Church for example, a steward, church secretary, Synod Representative, and also organised summer international events and Café worship.

I worked as Personal Assistant to the Sierra Leone High Commissioner to Nigeria. I have worked as a medical and legal secretary in London. I attended the Thames Valley University where I pursued an applied diploma course in French and German translation. I was a Senior Medical Secretary in Ophthalmology at the West Middlesex University Hospital, a position I held for over 10 years prior to my theological training. I did my Foundation Training (part-time) at the University of Kent through the South East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE) prior to studying at Wesley House, Cambridge, where I am now pursuing a degree in Christian Theology. I am in my second year at Cambridge and hope to complete my degree while in circuit.

I am a down-to-earth person, ready to learn and also share the gifts I have acquired through my training with everyone. My initial priorities at Farnham, Rowledge and Hale will be to encourage people within the churches and local community to develop and deepen their faith in God, to assist individuals in sharing that faith in a way that draws other people to God, and to provide pastoral support to the three congregations.”

We assure Vida and all her family of our love, prayers and support as she prepares for this new chapter in her life and ministry, and look forward to getting to know her and all the family later on in the year. Vida's welcome service will be held on Monday 1st September at Farnham Methodist Church beginning at 7:45 pm.

