

TIDINGS



Banstead United Reformed Church
Autumn 2025



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Our minister's message

Dear Friends,

As September begins, I'll be marking my first year of ordained ministry—and my first year serving the four churches that make up the North Downs Surrey Pastorate. It's been a brilliant whirlwind of a year, and I've enjoyed getting to know you all.

At home, my five-year-old has been growing cucumbers in the manse garden. Not just growing them—playing with them too, as toy ankylosauruses! Perhaps that's why I've found myself thinking about faith and compost lately.

I used compost in a recent Sunday service within the pastorate—writing down things we wanted to let go of and placing them in the crevices of logs in the church garden, trusting that God could take what feels messy or difficult and turn it into something life-giving. Compost isn't tidy, but it's busy, transforming endings into new beginnings. It reminds me of how faith often begins—quietly, but often out of sight or overlooked.

This year, I've seen moments of growth—emerging from faith and care that have been cultivated in the pastorate over many seasons:

- Worship that invites all ages to take part, with storytelling, prayer, and worship activities that help us connect with God in creative ways;
- Elders offering committed leadership that is rooted in grace and care;
- Friendships deepening over coffee, toddler group conversations, and shared laughter;
- People showing up with courage and kindness, even when life feels uncertain.

These moments remind me God is here among us.

As we look ahead, we'll need more people to help tend this shared garden of faith. If you feel drawn to any aspect of church life—whether eldership, pastoral care, worship, or volunteering—I'd be

very glad to have a conversation with you to explore what it might look like for you to serve in a new role.

This autumn, we also have opportunities to gather and reflect. In Banstead, David Skitt will be leading a Wednesday morning prayer and reflection group in October, inspired by *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. I'll be running a parallel group online on Zoom for the whole pastorate, offering space to explore faith together from home. If you'd like to be added to the sign-up list for either group, just get in touch.

Over the next 12 weeks, I'll also be working with Bethen, who will be supporting me as a temporary admin assistant. You may receive messages from her on my behalf—especially around sign-ups for church events or booking meetings.

As we enter the season of harvest, I'm reminded of these words from Galatians:

'Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.'

Thank you for all the ways you help your church flourish—seen and unseen. With love and blessings,

Siobhán

Recent reading—Beverley Kent

I am currently reading quite an old JoJo Moyes book called 'The Horse Dancer'. I had never heard of it but picked it up for free from a book borrower shelf. I am enjoying it because it is a bit different, I am learning a bit about Le Cadre Noir, (the French National Riding School) and the dancing horses. Two of the reviews that made me pick it up are: 'An engaging and moving tale of love and loss, bravery and the determination to beat the odds', and 'An inspiring story...Billy Elliot in jodhpurs'.

The book is mostly set in London with some sections set in France. It follows the complicated relationships between a divorcing couple, a 14-year-old girl and her grandfather, and of course, a horse!

FROM THE EDITORS

In the two previous issues of *Tidings* we have looked at our Church mural and the memorial window. In this issue, we turn our attention to the cross that adorns our communion table. The cross was made for us over 25 years ago by Jim Davies. We think you will be amazed, as we were, at the amount of research and planning that went into its design and you will find yourselves looking at it through new eyes.

After a summer when she was able to spend time reading a number of books, Diana thought it would be a good idea to ask readers to tell us about books they have enjoyed reading recently. Your contributions are included throughout this issue. We would be delighted to hear details of other books that you have enjoyed for inclusion in the next issue of *Tidings*.

We thought it would be interesting to find out more about the other Churches in the North Downs Surrey Pastorate. We are delighted that Pat Denchfield from Reigate Park Church has agreed to provide us with a most interesting history of that Church. This is timely since, in November, Reigate Park will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the present Church.

Celia Glew has been a member of our Church for the past 25 years and is particularly known to us for her volunteering as a steward and on the communion rota. Celia is the subject of our 'know your Church member' feature this time.

2025 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth and the 60th anniversary of the death of that great theologian, musician and physician, Albert Schweitzer. Roy Jordan has contributed a fascinating article about his life and work.

Finally, as is traditional at this time of year, we include the annual reports from our various committees, detailing all the many aspects of our Church life over the past year.

Fiona, Diana and Cliff

Church Family News

In memoriam—Alan Woollatt



Alan was born in Ealing on 24th March 1943, a wartime baby for Will and Gladys Woollatt. Gladys took him down to the air-raid shelter regularly until they went to stay with relatives in Bedfordshire. When he was 3, the family moved to Banstead where Alan's sister Brenda was born, moving into their own house in Bolters Lane 5 years later. Will was a pharmacist who worked at, then bought, Skidmore's Pharmacy, now Pearl Chemist, in Banstead High Street.

Alan attended St Anne's and then the Priory School in Banstead, later going away to school in Canterbury. During the holidays, the family enjoyed beach and boating holidays on the Fens, the Thames and canals. Alan and Brenda were taught to fish and row a dinghy by their dad. In 1960, the family moved to Greenhurst, a bigger house that is in Woodmansterne Lane, just around the corner from our Church. Aged 17, Alan began Structural Engineering training at Ewell Tech, gaining his HND Qualification in the subject in 1965. Dedicated to his work as a Structural Engineer, Alan worked for the same firm for over 40 years, which included projects at Crystal Palace FC and Hampton Court Palace. By the time he retired, he was notorious for announcing at many places he visited 'I did a job there once'!

At college Alan met Derek Leedham. They used to travel between Banstead and Ewell on fold-up Corgi motorcycles which were precarious and unreliable. Alan and Derek were both members of the youth group at our Church, and Derek was Angela's brother. Angela noticed Alan in the garden with Derek when she was about 12, noting that he was 'very blonde'. 8 years later, in February

1969, Angela was in the 2nd year of teacher training in Eastbourne where Alan visited her and her friends. Dates followed, and a holiday to Keswick, before they became engaged in the summer of 1970, marrying in our church in April 1971, where they had both been members for a number of years.

They bought a house in Carshalton then moved to Witley. Simon was born in 1974 and Paula in 1977. They then moved to Coulsdon which became the family home for the next 37 years. They enjoyed camping holidays in France, visits to South Wales, the Scottish Lakes, and Angela and Alan also visited Lake Garda, Venice and Amsterdam.

Alan's career gave him a passion for ancient buildings and their preservation. His level of precision, planning and practical skills made him very good at DIY, always able to fix things and he fitted out Simon and Paula's bedrooms with shelf and desk units. Alan had many interests and hobbies: dancing classes (he and Angela were bronze medallists); science fiction; photography; playing badminton and watching football at Crystal Palace. He loved nature and owned three cats during his life and had an enthusiasm for tigers. Angela did not go along with his suggestion that it would be a good idea to keep pigs in the back garden. Weather and trees



were also areas of interest for Alan, and he enjoyed his allotment after retirement. As children, Alan and Brenda had received Plaster of Paris kits one Christmas and Alan particularly enjoyed making and painting the butterflies, which the family still has. Butterflies became a lifelong fascination for Alan and he loved watching them round his buddleia bush in the garden and submitting a yearly butterfly count. Those who were at Alan's funeral will remember the touching release of butterflies after the service.

Alan was a loyal member of our Church family for many years. With his technical skills, he was a very useful member of our fabric committee and he and Angela were active members of Evening Club and enjoyed joining in Church outings and social events.

In late 2014, Alan and Angela moved to Redhill, taking up table tennis and bowls, enjoying Warner holidays and embraced being grandparents to Jem and Lyra. Alan enjoyed doing puzzles or building train tracks with them and they had regular outings to a local bridge to wave at Redhill trains.

Sometime after the move to their flat in Colebrooke Lodge, Alan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. When his health declined, he moved to Greensand House Care Home where he was a favourite with the staff for his gentle ways and his ability to win every quiz. Angela visited him there as much as she could. They would watch and listen to favourite programmes together and celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary with many happy memories.

Alan was a much-loved husband, dad and grandad, very kind and selfless, never spoke crossly and was an example of how to treat other people. When Lyra was told the news of Alan's death she said, 'I'm sad because Grandad was such a great guy'!

Engagement



Congratulations to Christianne Parsk and Mike Carroll who became engaged on 19 June.

New arrival



Imogen Rose Diana Franklin was born on 20 August to Annabel and Shane. She is a 10th grandchild for Diana Parsk . We send our best wishes to the happy family.

Recent reading—Cliff Houghton

As a schoolboy, I was fascinated by classical mythology and loved reading about the exploits of heroes such as Theseus, Hercules and Perseus. I remember particularly enjoying Homer's *Odyssey*, which detailed the 10-year journey that Odysseus took when he returned home from the Trojan War. Recently I read Madeline Miller's Orange prize-winning novel 'The Song of Achilles', which is a modern retelling of Homer's epic poem 'The Iliad'. Told through the eyes of his friend and lover Patroclus, it tells the story of the life of Achilles, from his early years under the tuition of the centaur Chiron, through his development into the great warrior he became and his exploits in the war with Troy precipitated by the kidnapping of Helen of Sparta. But the book doesn't just concentrate on Achilles' military career. You see him as a man with a complicated family history and complex personal relationships. As one of the reviewers of this book wrote, 'this is a must read for lovers of classical literature' and I highly recommend it.

Message from Revd Jennifer Millington

My dear friends

Thank you all so much for your prayers and loving messages to me following the loss of Christopher. You did not know what to say to me and I do not know what to say to you - there are no words for a situation such as this. Once again we are back at the basics of Faith, Hope and Love, with the greatest being love. And your love, expressed in your messages and prayers has held me through this worst of all times.



You will have heard through the weekly email that Andrew and two teammates set themselves the challenge of doing a hike along the length of Hadrian's Wall from 8th-12th September to raise money for Cancer Research. Thank you all so much for your warm support, with financial donations, encouraging messages and with loving prayers. It meant so much to Andrew and to me. As this issue of *Tidings* goes to press, the total raised is £6,060. The picture shows a tired but happy team at the end of the walk.

God bless and keep you all,

With much love,

Jennifer

Monday Club

We held an extraordinary general meeting on 1 September. We had a pleasing attendance of 13 members and that enabled us to have a good debate about the future of our club. Sadly, attendance at our meetings has become smaller and smaller, due mainly to members getting older or moving away or, saddest of all, dying. We have been lucky enough to enjoy many fascinating meetings over the years, but we thought that it has become rather unsatisfactory to invite speakers who would be addressing only a handful of members.

In the end, we decided that in future we would reduce our meetings from fortnightly to once a month, meeting on the second Monday of the month. For each meeting we will choose a theme for discussion. The themes for the next four months are as follows:

13 October	Favourite holidays
10 November	Poetry please
8 December	Christmas decorations demonstrated by Pam
12 January	Meal out

Dates beyond that in 2026 are:

9 February, 9 March, 11 May, 8 June, 13 July, 10 August, 14 September, 12 October, 9 November, 14 December. The July and August dates are provisional pending a decision as to whether we close for the summer.

Themes for these meetings have yet to be finalised, although the December 2026 meeting will likely have a Christmas theme. Suggestions for future discussions include favourite music, a good read and favourite films and TV programmes.

We hope to be able to continue in this new format and to carry on enjoying the company of club members. New members are always welcome. Remember, each meeting comes with free tea and biscuits!

Chris Clay

Church Secretary's report 2025

Our Church secretary presented his annual report on Church Life Sunday, held this year on 22 June. As is our custom, we remembered with gratitude those members who had died in the past year and lit a candle for each of them. We remembered:



2024

27 June

Joan Higgins

2 October

Anne Bestente

18 November

Margaret Phillips

16 December

Sylvia Bolton

23 December

Jean Jarvis

2025

18 January

Anne Pearsall

26 March

Justin Wham

29 April

Alan Woollatt

7 May

Christopher Millington



On Saturday 7 September Siobhán was ordained and inducted at Reigate Park by Revd Bridget Banks, when we heard about Siobhan's wide experience of life, including as a mental health nurse and regional organiser for Christian Aid. Although we now share our minister with three other churches, we have been so blessed by Siobhán's spiritual

leadership, her care, her friendliness, her patience and attention to detail. It was a delight to have Siobhán with us all over Easter. It has been a pleasure working with the other churches, having had a joint Elders' training day and an Elders' first aid course.

Siobhán has led a number of the thanksgiving services for the friends we have been remembering and these have been very much appreciated by the families concerned.

Just prior to Church Life Sunday, we were saddened to learn that Bridget had been forced to take early retirement due to ill health and Alan wrote to her saying that it has been such a joy and blessing for everyone having her as our Moderator and as a member of this Church, where to us she has always been 'just Bridget'. Bridget has expressed her gratitude for the loving support from her good friends here.



In the Banstead 5 we have said farewell to Revd Alex Stevens who brought fresh impetus to our ecumenical work as chair of the Banstead 5 executive committee. We also welcomed Father Ian as the new priest at St Ann's. With Alex's departure, we are now considering how the

future should look as to the running of the Banstead 5. The picture shows the Banstead 5 carol singing in the All Saints' orchard last December.

This year Alan decided that it would be good for his report to feature one of the groups who do such excellent work in our church premises week by week, namely Tuesday Club and this is what their leader, Lyn Watson, has written about their activities:

The Tuesday Club has been at the URC since early 1990s. It was originally started by the NHS. At the beginning it was a small Day Centre for 8 people with dementia.

Over the years it has gone through various changes and it now more of a Social Group for both people living with dementia and their supporters.

I took over the running of the Tuesday Club in 2016, when the Alzheimer's Society withdrew its support. I knew the Tuesday Club had a lot of attendees and was on the verge of closure. I had just retired having spent over 30 years working with people living with dementia and their carers, so I thought I would volunteer my services and try to continue to run the club.



Some nine years later I'm still there with my magnificent team of volunteers. The club has grown over the years with around 36 people attending each week. We also have a small list of people waiting to join. Most people come for the day, from 10.30am to 3pm. We have a varied programme of entertainment, both morning and afternoon, guest speakers, seated exercises, crafts, games, quizzes and of course plenty of singing

sessions, with a Christmas party and outing thrown in. Refreshments are provided throughout the day including a light lunch. We try to make the day fun for all in a relaxed atmosphere. Friendships are made in and outside the club, the members all support each other and I am on hand for a private chat if needed.

The group could not run without all my lovely volunteers who turn up each week, bless them. They are all getting older with the majority of them over eighty so if anyone is able to help us and volunteer a few hours, please come and see us and have a chat. I cannot conclude this piece without thanking you the members of URC; without your kindness and support we would not be able to continue the club.

So well done to Lyn and her team.

We are so fortunate to have a great team of elders who do so much in leading the work of this church, including on the pastoral side. Thanks are due to a number of people: to Sheila, as our lead pastoral elder; to Chris Harris who has to step down having served six years as an elder and chairing the Worship and Faith committee (where she will continue to be a member); to her and Sue Dinnage for the work with our young people assisted by many others and to Sue who is standing down as our Elders' Minutes Secretary; to Kevin who is taking a well-earned sabbatical from his

roles as treasurer, and as chair of the House Management committee and here we are very grateful to Cliff for stepping up once again as treasurer and to Paul Chadburn taking over House Management chair with all his practical expertise; to Fiona Gayner and Ian Catt for all the work that they do and to Glenda Chadburn who will be able to apply her guiding experience as elder for Children and Youth work.

Looking ahead the Eldership has now been reduced from nine to seven, putting added pressure on the elders who continue to serve which means that we will be seeking to spread the load. We should not, of course, take for granted our many other volunteers such as the stewards, those providing us with tea and coffee after the service, those providing and displaying the flowers and outside plants and Fiona Lynch for that delicious bread and cheese lunch that we held in support of Christian Aid.

Alan closed his prayer as



report with a follows:

We pray for all who will be taking on new responsibilities—equip them to fulfil their duties wisely and faithfully; those who will continue in work they have already been undertaking—give them renewed inspiration and vigour; those who are standing down from positions of office—may they know that their work has been appreciated. Help us to recognise what you would have all of us do in the days ahead to grow closer to you.

House Management and Finance Report 2025

This will be my last report as chair of these two committees. Having had to deal with a particularly difficult situation and in any case having done both jobs for a few years, I felt it was time for a 'recharge' and to let others take the reins. I will however continue as the guardian of our new Health and Safety policy.

The house management committee has largely focused on following up the most important recommendations of the Quinquennial Inspection, which we finally had last year. This has included a lot of important electrical work to bring things up to current standards. Very much behind the scenes but very important to keep everyone safe. We also have a new gardening company looking after our lawns, trees and shrubs, Andrew Brennan having moved on to a new job.

I'd like to thank Cliff Houghton for taking over as Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee and Paul Chadburn for taking over as the chair of the House Management Committee. Please offer them your support in these important roles. The other people involved in these two committees are Alan Kirby and Pauline Brittain who manage our lettings and collect the lettings income; Michael Taylor of All Saints' who is our independent examiner and Chris Brittain our buildings' steward. Our cleaner is Joanna Coetzer and our 'night watcher' is Phyllis Knight.

The 2024 Financial Report and 2025 Budget were issued at the beginning of the year and showed that our expenses were running very close to budget and our unrestricted Assets (excluding our Manse fund and the Hazel Usher fund) had increased from £146k to £181k, so a broadly healthy position. Lettings' income at £43k was down a little from the previous year and whilst committed giving held steady at £31k we expect this will drop in 2025 with our declining congregation. We have also started to see ministerial expenses coming through to support Siobhán in her work.



The most exciting development – albeit that it will come to fruition in the second half of 2025 - is the funding of a new kitchen at Chailey Heritage Foundation (CHF) by the Hazel Usher fund. The CHF provides fabulous facilities which enable disabled children and young adults to engage in learning and

development activities geared to their needs. The new kitchen, to be named 'Hazel's kitchen', will provide a tailored environment in which the students can enjoy learning cooking skills. The picture shows the kitchen under construction. Our own George Cushnie attends CHF and we are sure Hazel would be delighted that her legacy has been used to support such a worthwhile cause.

My thanks to all the team members for their hard work on your behalf.

Kevin Dinnage

Sunday Club Report 2025

The Children's Corner is 'manned' by a Sunday Club leader most Sundays, although not in August, and we are always delighted when we have some children to be part of the worship. Alongside our 'regulars', Issie, Rex and Bobby, we have welcomed Gianna this year and we are always delighted to see Amber and Nancy when they are able to come. The musical instruments have been brought out once again and the children have enjoyed accompanying some of the hymns.

At Christmas Sunday Club retold the nativity story. This was an unrehearsed presentation and the children were brilliant. Some of the leaders were also able to participate – as the Kings.

Easter saw the ever-popular Easter egg hunt and then the children did craft activities to do with the Easter story.

As leaders we try to find interesting and fun ways to tell the Bible stories and we know that whilst you are having your coffee, the children would be happy to show you and tell you what they have done in Sunday Club.

Chris is standing down as Youth and Children's Elder. but will remain as a leader. We are very grateful to her for her guidance over the last six years and we are pleased that her place is being taken by Glenda. I thank them both and, of course, Jane, Carrie and Karen for their enthusiasm and willingness to try whatever craft activity I have found!

Sue Dinnage

Impact Report 2025

We are a small group who meet to plan our fundraising and social activities, to bring our church to the rest of the world! We also have a band of helpers who go all out to help run events and activities.

In October 2024. we started a new activity and created some patient care packages for people who are admitted to the Royal Marsden at short notice. We produced 60 packets, 30 with the theme of REST (eye mask, slipper socks etc) and 30 with the theme of REVIVE (shampoo, shower gel, etc). We have had some lovely feedback from patients and staff who have used the items and so will look for other opportunities to do something similar.

Our sale of Traidcraft goods, in November, offered an opportunity to start the Christmas preparation and was followed by several regular activities. We bought and were donated a number of Christmas selection boxes which we took to the Prison Visitor Centre, to give to young visitors over the Christmas period. As ever, they were very gratefully received. We sponsored a table at Crisis at Christmas. Our Toy Service has been enhanced by generous donations from hall users and we were pleased to welcome our good friends from the Salvation Army to receive the donations for their work amongst children, young people and

families in South London.

In May, the extended team hosted a simple, but very effective and attractive, bread and cheese lunch which raised over £700 in support of Christian Aid.

Looking ahead, we are delighted that Diana Parsk and her team are busy planning a VE day social on 8 Nov, in aid of MAGGIE'S at the Royal Marsden, so mark your diaries and we look forward to seeing you all there!

Madeline Cranfield



Remembering VE and VJ Day 80



Saturday 8th November 2025
At 2pm
Banstead United Reformed Church

Tickets £10 each from Diana Parsk
Email: djparsky32@hotmail.co.uk
Tea and Cake will be provided after the event

The event will feature music by "The Moonlight Sirens"
Plus
Songs from the musicals of the time – sung by our
guest singer from The Royal Opera House

Proceeds will go to MAGGIES – a Centre at the Royal Marsden
Hospital offering support and counselling to cancer sufferers



Worship and Faith Report 2025

The Worship and Faith Committee has continued to nurture the worshipping life of the church over the past year, drawing on the gifts and contributions of many people across the congregation.

Advent and Christmas were marked by a well-attended Advent course led by Siobhán, based on Rachel Mann's *Do Not Be Afraid*. It was a joy to be joined by friends from Reigate Park Church. The season also included a meaningful joint Banstead 5 Advent service, our traditional giving of Christmas plants, and beautiful decorations prepared by Fiona and her team. Thanks are due to Chris and Ian for their careful planning of the Christmas worship. The Carols by Candlelight and Toy Service were highlights, with generous donations of toys and gifts for families in need.

Lent and Easter provided opportunities for reflection and celebration. Small groups met both in person, led by David Skitt, and on Zoom led by Siobhán, enabling wider participation. There was significant participation in Holy Week services, including the reflective Maundy Thursday service, Walk of Witness, and Easter morning service. The early morning Easter communion service was a moment of peaceful reflection, before the Easter egg hunt brought delight to children and families, while the church was once again made beautiful by Fiona's team. Special thanks go to all who prepared, led, and participated in these events.

Worship through the year has been enriched by a wide variety of preachers, and the committee is especially grateful to Madeline for her tireless work in pulpit supply. Members of the congregation have also stepped forward to lead services, share musical gifts that deepen and enrich our worship, decorate the church, organise readers, and serve in countless quiet ways. We would like to extend a special thank you to Ruth for her many years of faithful service in providing bible readers each Sunday. We are also pleased to share that Alison has very kindly offered to take on this role going forward.

The Harvest service, with offerings for the Foodbank, was another reminder of God's abundance and our calling to share with others. Looking ahead, the committee is exploring new ways to encourage ongoing support for the Foodbank.

The committee has also sought to make worship accessible and participatory for all, and we will continue this work into next year. Plans are already in place for an autumn prayer and scripture group based on Hilary Brand's reflections on *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*.

The committee wishes to thank every person who has contributed to worship over the past year. It is through this shared commitment, creativity, and generosity that our worship remains meaningful and joyful, and at the very heart of our life together.

Siobhán Antoniou

Recent reading—Sheila Costello

I have just read a very charming true story called 'Raising Hare', by Chloe Dalton.

The author is a busy professional who left London during the lockdown and relocated to the country. One day she found a very young leveret on a path. Not wanting to remove it, as she expected its mother to return, she went home and forgot about it. However, next day it was still lying in the same position, so she took the decision to take it home, thus protecting it from the weather and predators. She had no knowledge of raising a very small animal nor was there any information on the internet about raising an orphaned leveret! So the book chronicles their journey together and the challenges of caring for the leveret and preparing for its return to the wild.

I found this a very refreshing change from my normal reading matter; I usually read thrillers by people like Peter James and James Patterson!

Our Communion Table Cross



For many years, we were fortunate to have Jim Davies, a very talented woodworker, within our midst. He was responsible for making a number of items of furniture for our Church, but the crowning glory is the cross that adorns our communion table. When Jim offered to make the cross, he expected to be making a free-standing version of the URC cross. However, the elders at the time had other ideas, and asked him whether he could make a Celtic cross. This proved to be a significant challenge, requiring much research before the design could be finalised. In an article in a previous issue of *Tidings*, Jim explained the design as follows:

The main body of the cross represents God and his creation. Everything hangs on this.

A second cross represents the Holy Spirit and stands clear and bright, framing everything within it like a protective shield. This

framing incorporates four split bosses around the centre. These are for retaining the invisible cords of the Holy Spirit holding the faithful together in the paths of righteousness. Contained within this framework are four, 4-strand pieces of lacework symbolic of the weaving together of the spiritual and physical paths of our lives, wherever we are in the world, north, south, east or west. As the strands of lacework have no beginning or end, they are a symbol of eternity.

The symbol of the wheel behind the crosses originates from a natural phenomenon observed occasionally in a winter sky, when the sun's light shining through ice crystals is diffracted into a cross and circle pattern. The segments of the wheel comprise 2-strand pieces of lacework contained within two bands. This represents the endless interrelated motion of the sun and moon rising and setting within the bounds of heaven and earth. It also represents God's endless love for us all.

At the centre of the ring and the two outer crosses there is a small ring contained within an interlaced cross representing the Earth and Jesus Christ our saviour. This completes the symbolism of the Trinity.

The cross has the same design on both sides confirming that no-one is denied God's love.

Finally, there is the base, which represents the tree of life and the cosmic axis. The base is in four parts with the housing for the cross sitting on a square, three step pyramid. The first step represents the roots of the tree and the underworld, the second represents our living world and the third step represents heaven. On top of this, the housing piece represents the abode of God.

The cross was presented to the Church in 1999, and to this day we remain grateful that someone as talented as Jim was able to apply so much time and talent to designing and making this wonderful cross which continues to adorn our communion table.

Know your Church member

Celia Glew



Good health is what most people strive for, and we are grateful for the expertise of the professionals who help us towards this goal. Celia is one of those experts. While still a young teenager, Celia felt called to take up nursing. She left school at 16 and trained as a nurse for three years at St. George's Hospital in Chelsea (before it moved to Tooting).

But let us go back to her beginning. Celia was born in Worcester Park during WW2 and was the 6th child in a family of nine - six girls and three boys. At this time, they lived in a large house in Cheam. She was raised as a Catholic but attended St. Dunstan's C of E Primary School, where both her daughter and two grandsons (Oliver and Adam) also subsequently went. Her father was a successful businessman who owned a factory in London, which produced quality children's clothes. However, it was always his ambition to own a farm and in 1954 he moved the family to Reigate and then to a farm near Uckfield in East Sussex, initially with 200 acres. Through acquisitions he then progressively expanded it to one thousand acres. It was a mixed farm with cows, sheep and chickens which Celia helped to look after. The innocence of the lambs turned her into a vegetarian.

Initially, Celia was a boarder in Reigate but was not happy there, so she moved to a school in Lewes to which she had a long and

uncomfortable commute from the farm. On leaving school, Celia went to work for a short time at her father's factory in London. However, on a Sunday she used to take children out from Chailey Heritage School (which is where George Cushnie now attends) and her experiences there inspired her to want to take up a career in nursing. As a qualified nurse specialising in children's work, Celia showed her sense of adventure by going to California to be with her fiancé. However, this did not work out, so she moved across America to New York, where she worked for about a year. Celia then returned to England and worked in the renowned Great Ormond Hospital for children for another year or so.

In another turn in her career, Celia then trained in Wandsworth to become a Health Visitor in North Kensington visiting terraced houses before Grenfell Tower was built. She then experienced the drama, sadness and joy of working in deprived areas of London, Croydon and Sutton for some 25 years until her retirement in 2005. Even then, Celia worked as a volunteer at The Queen Elizabeth Foundation in Banstead and in the cafe at the Royal Marsden Hospital until it closed.

Celia's first marriage in 1971 was to Geoffrey, a teacher who was a Head of Science. They had one daughter, Becky, and they lived in Cheam for some 25 years. After a divorce in 1997 Celia moved to Banstead in 1998. She subsequently met David, an engineer in the oil and gas industry, and they were married in northeast England. Celia now also has two stepchildren.

What does Celia do for relaxation? She has enjoyed travelling around the world, having visited Thailand, Cambodia, Australia, America and several countries in Europe. Celia has enjoyed line-dancing, and continues to like walking, bird-watching, reading on her Kindle, especially crime novels, and watching sport on television (cricket, rugby, tennis). Perhaps surprisingly, Celia continues to keep herself fit by working-out in two gyms each week and doing yoga and aqua-aerobics.

How did Celia, a Catholic, come to join the URC at Banstead? She

looked round various churches in the area and then on Easter Sunday in 1998 Celia came to the little church round the corner and watched the Thatching of the Cross. This experience, combined with the warm welcome and a subsequent visit from the Revd. Jennifer Millington, led her to become a member. Here, Celia worked with Audrey Robert's in the Junior Church and then joined the communion and stewards' rotas. She says 'I am so glad I came to Banstead URC that wonderful April morning. Thank you to all our Church family for making me feel at home here'. Celia says that two people who have been an influence in her life are her mother and Audrey Roberts.

What might surprise people about her? She rises early each morning to listen to *Bach before Seven* on the radio.

Diana Parsk

Recent reading—Jane Cushnie

I read 'The Lincoln Highway' by Amor Towles a few weeks ago and when Diana asked me to think of a book I'd recommend, this was the first on the list. Unfortunately, I can't refer to it right now because I have lent it to a friend who took it to France!

The story is set initially in Nebraska in 1954, and it spans an unexpected adventure told over 10 days. It tells the tale of two brothers and two uninvited companions on a journey, and is told from each of their perspectives which gives depth and clarity to the story. The characters are well formed and heartbreakingly flawed. It is a warm-hearted novel telling a journey of love and loss, friendship, sadness and hardship.

The ending takes a darker turn, but I thought the book was beautifully written, and it will stay with me.

Reigate Park Church

As we prepare to celebrate 50 years of Reigate Park United Reformed Church, we give thanks for the vision, courage and wisdom of those involved in its foundation. Reigate Congregational Church began its life on the High Street in the 1660s and grew steadily over 3 centuries.

By the late 1950s it was felt that the current building was getting towards the end of its useful life; there had been several outbreaks of dry rot, the soft Reigate stone was crumbling and the slated roofs were in very poor condition. In 1960, serious consideration was given to the premises, and discussions began with Reigate Methodist Church next door as to a possible merger. When he accepted the call to the pastorate in 1964, Revd David Owen saw this as an attractive prospect, and there was a plan to demolish both buildings and erect a modern united church in situ; there was also talk of the nearby St Philip's Anglican Church joining this venture. The congregational members gave the scheme strong support, but it did not come to fruition. At this time approximately 100 people attended Sunday morning services, with an additional 50 in Junior Church.



Concerns about the state of the church building increased: the roof was sagging and was likely to collapse due to reverberations from the pipe organ and from traffic thundering along the High Street. Falling debris and slates became a real problem, and

something now had to be done. A large site for extensive buildings and car parking was needed, and fortunately one became available in Park Lane East. From the start it felt right and, when a property

developer made a good offer for the High Street site, it was sold; at the same time the daughter church in South Park closed, its dozen struggling members happy to join in the new venture. Before the High Street Church could be demolished, Home Office permission was needed to remove 18 coffins from the vault, and Revd Owen reburied these in a communal grave at Redstone Cemetery.

The closing service was held on 19 November 1972, and the following week, and for the next two and a half years, morning worship was held at 9.30am in the borrowed Methodist Church. Members recall how sad it was to hear the demolition of the old buildings, but they were helped by visits to the new site to monitor the progress. The architect, John Stammers, had been given a good brief, and many people, including those from church organisations, had a hand in the outcome. Building work started in Spring 1974; everything was to be new and modern except the High Street Communion table and chairs and the 3 stained glass windows, all of which can be seen in the Memorial Corridor. The builders, Withers of Mitcham, wanted to make a presentation to the Church, and it was suggested that a foyer table would be very acceptable!

Not surprisingly, there were some concerns about the site in Park Lane East. Moving 'out of town' from central Reigate might be off-putting – casual visitors to the town could no longer 'drop in'; St Luke's Church might be too close; members who came to church on foot could find it difficult to cross Cockshot Hill safely. There were so many details to consider. Some local residents raised objections e.g. the proposed trees at the entrance should not block their view. The bus stop was moved slightly to the east to accommodate the entrance. Should the Minister's vestry have a phone, with extensions to the downstairs rooms and the caretaker's house next door? Who should hold sets of keys? Should the extensive rooms be offered for hire? Would it be good to install a loop hearing system? Should a licence for public performances be applied for? What colour should the sanctuary carpet be? How much should be spent on the chairs? (They were £15 each and are still going strong!)



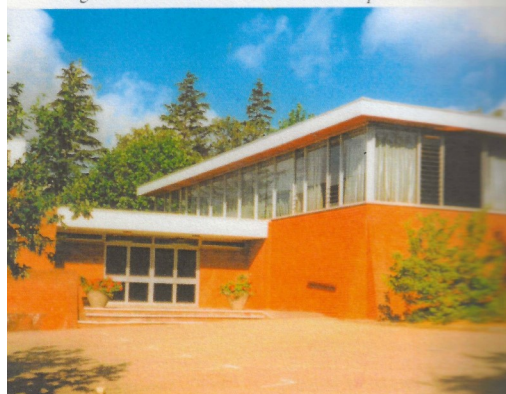
Members became increasingly involved with the final details, and young people were consulted too. For the sanctuary, a team of ladies spent hours on their knees working on an elaborate appliqué tapestry depicting God's creation. The service of

dedication for Reigate Park Church was held on Sunday 23 November 1975.



Reigate Congregational Church - demolished in 1972

Reigate Park United Reformed Church - opened in 1975



Nine years later more ground was purchased for additional parking, and then more for a 4-bedroomed Manse. Thanks to ever-increasing numbers, the sanctuary was extended in 2000 (The Park Room), some of the stage area was developed for more Junior Church groups and office accommodation was also added, along with disabled facilities. This new decade saw the achievement of both the Eco Church Award and the Children & Youth Friendly Church Award.

In 1992 Revd Dr David Owen had returned to his native Wales for the last 7 years of his Ministry, and since then Reigate Park Church has been

blessed by the ministries of Revd David Skitt, Revd George Watt and now Revd Siobhán Antoniou. We look to the future with excitement and with gratitude to all those people over the centuries who have made Reigate Park Church what it is today.

Pat Denchfield

with grateful thanks to:

Eardley Bourne: From the Old unto the New

David Maldwyn Owen: From Start to Finish

Recent reading – Diana Parsk

I first came across Susan Howatch in the early 1970's when I read *Penmarric*, which I devoured and absolutely loved. Susan Howatch was born and brought up in Leatherhead and attended Sutton High School. Although over the years she has lived in various places, including New York, Ireland and Salisbury, she is apparently back now living in Leatherhead. She wrote many books after *Penmarric* all of which I thoroughly enjoyed. Her first novels were all historical family sagas, and each chapter is written from the perspective of a different character in the book. They are all page turners and very gripping.

Recently a friend said that she was going to read *Penmarric* and so I decided to read it again. I know that people say that you shouldn't re-read a book because there are so many new books out there to be read and enjoyed but I was so glad that I did re-read *Penmarric* because, as it had been over 50 years since I had read it, I didn't remember much of it at all and thoroughly enjoyed it. So then I was hooked on re-reading her books and so this summer I have not only read *Penmarric*, but also *Cashelmara*, *The Rich are Different*, *Sins of the Fathers* and I am just finishing *The Wheel of Fortune*. I have had lots of time to read this summer having spent three weeks in a very hot Dubai and a week in a very wet Bournemouth! When I have finished this book I don't think that I will re-read any more of her books but I will read something new - as yet I am undecided what this will be!

Recipe—‘Marry me’ chicken pie

Ingredients

500g chicken breast, cut into medium pieces
1 onion finely sliced
3 cloves of garlic finely chopped
1 tbsp flour
300ml double cream (I use approx 200ml as 300 seems a lot!)
300ml chicken stock
½ tsp oregano
10 sundried tomatoes finely chopped
50g finely grated cheddar cheese
50g fresh spinach
A sheet of ready rolled puff pastry
1 egg beaten



Method

Preheat oven to 180C

Heat a drizzle of oil in a large, non-stick pan and add the chicken. Fry on a medium heat for around 5 minutes, or until no longer pink. Remove from the pan (it won't be 100% cooked through at this stage) and set aside.

Add the onion to the pan and fry for 5 minutes until soft.

Stir in the garlic for the final minute

Stir in the flour until it disappears.

Slowly add the chicken stock a little at a time, only adding more when it comes to the boil. Stir continuously.

When all the stock is used, stir in the cream, oregano, sun-dried tomatoes, and grated cheese. Gently bring to the boil, stirring until the cheese has melted.

Season with salt and pepper.

Return the chicken to the pan with the spinach and give it a good stir.

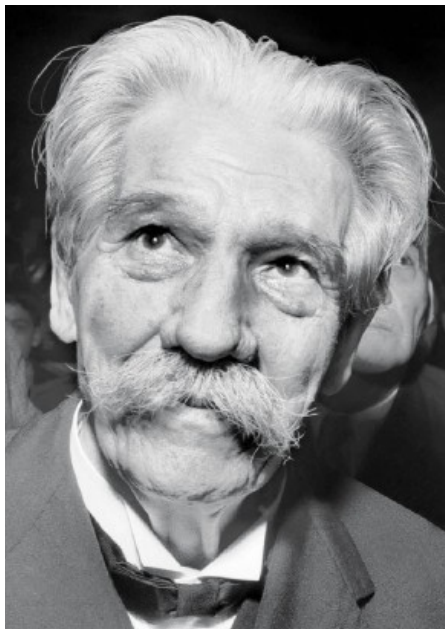
Divide the filling between 4 deep individual pie dishes or 1 big one.

Cover with pastry, add egg wash and bake in oven for 45 mins.

Enjoy with potatoes/veg of choice.

Jane Cushnie

Albert Schweitzer



Older readers will probably remember Albert Schweitzer. He was born in Alsace in 1875 and died in 1965 at the age of 90. The year 2025, therefore, marks the 150th anniversary of his birth and the 60th anniversary of his death. If ever a person deserved to be remembered, it surely is Albert. Through his work, educational output, way of life but above all his personal character, Albert sits high on the mountain of human accomplishment. In 1947, Time magazine described

Albert as ‘The Greatest Man in the World’.

Albert’s father, Louis, was a Lutheran pastor serving in a church in Alsace, which unusually was shared with Catholics. His mother was Adele Schillinger. In 1871, Alsace had become a part of Germany, so Albert started life as a German but after WW1 Alsace was returned to France and Albert was reinstated to the original nationality of his French parents. He did his one-year’s compulsory military service in 1894.

Albert was a person with many talents. He studied and received a doctorate in theology and philosophy, about which he wrote several books. His most well-known book is ‘The Quest of the Historical Jesus’ in which he contrasts the actual teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, highlighting Jesus’s emphasis on the imminent arrival of God’s Kingdom, against the outline of Christian belief agreed by Church leaders in Nicaea some 300 year later. He also wrote about the mysticism of St. Paul. Albert

became a Christian minister. Albert was a gifted organist who was taken under the wing of the composer and musician Charles-Marie Widor. He especially liked the music of Wagner and JS Bach and became a famous organist, playing at concerts and receiving a recording contract. Albert wrote books about the spirituality and motifs of Bach's music and became an expert in designing and building organs.

Then in 1904, inspired by the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Albert felt called to become a medical missionary, aiming to serve God by action not preaching. He started to study medicine in 1905 and qualified as a physician in 1913. In the previous year, Albert had married Helene Bresslau, who was a municipal inspector for orphans. They had one daughter, Rhena. Albert encountered opposition over his doctrine but eventually, accompanied by his wife, Albert went to French Equatorial Africa (now named Gabon), where they established and financed a hospital and later a centre for treating lepers. Helene helped Albert there as a nurse and anaesthetist. As Albert and his wife were German citizens living in a French colony, after the outbreak of WW1 they were initially put under supervision by the French military, but later in the war they were returned to France and interned. Helene had poor health but Albert returned to Gabon in 1924 to rebuild the destroyed hospital. In 1952, Albert was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 'humanitarian work in Africa'. In 1955 Queen Elizabeth II made Albert a special honorary member of the Order of Merit.

One phrase which repeatedly arises when describing Albert is his 'reverence for life' and this was cited when he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Alongside Albert Einstein, he was a strong opponent of nuclear weapons. Albert was also a cat lover and is known for the quote, *'There are two means of refuge from the miseries of life: music and cats'*. He died in Gabon where he is buried. He was an amazing man of exceptional talents who used them in the service of God.

Roy Jordan

Fall, leaves, fall



Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreathes of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

Emily Bronte



Service Details

Our morning worship at 10:30am on Sundays is held in the Church building and on Zoom.

The Zoom link for services is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9922047878?pwd=SmxXY0lKckkvcFhJdFM1UTFHYjR0Zz09>

Meeting ID: 992 204 7878

Passcode: 126600

Recordings of the services are available on our website

www.bansteadurc.org.uk

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We are happy to receive your contributions, ideas and suggestions for *Tidings* at any time but copy for the Winter 2025 edition should be with us by

Sunday, 23 November 2025 at the latest.





TIDINGS - Autumn 2025