

TIDINGS



Banstead United Reformed Church
Spring 2026



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Our minister's message

Dear friends,

As we move towards Eastertide and the early days of spring, I've been thinking about two moments that have stayed with me over



the past few weeks. The first was our Lent workshop in Banstead, where members of several churches gathered to reflect on Holy Week through art, poetry and music. The music was especially moving, and the painting of Jesus washing the disciples' feet felt so full of life that it seemed as though Jesus was speaking directly to us through it.

In the Sanctum, with friends from different congregations, I had a strong sense of God's presence. I know God is always with us, but something about being together — listening, talking and sharing the story — helped us notice that presence more clearly. At a time when the world feels full of conflict, even a small moment of unity felt like a gift. It reminded me how important it is simply to be engrossed in a story together.

A few days later, I watched *Hoppers* with my family — the new Disney film. *Hoppers* follows Mabel, who 'hops' into a robotic beaver to protect a threatened woodland glade and discovers a hidden world of animal politics, danger and friendship. There was a point in the film when the animals realised their home was too beautiful to lose and that struck me. Their courage, their care for creation and their determination not to give up felt close to the concerns many of us carry. Watching it with my son also brought home my own worries about the future he will inherit.

When I place these two experiences side by side, I sense the same message running through both: look for the goodness, don't miss it, hear the music. Notice what is worth protecting. Pay attention to the moments of friendship and unity that remind us of God's

steady presence. And when the world feels heavy, we can ground ourselves in simple prayer or in encounters with others who help us keep going.

As spring unfolds around us, my hope is that we all find small ways to stay rooted in faith — steady enough to face our worries, and open enough to notice the goodness that is already here.

With every blessing

Siobhán

*(Artwork: The Washing of the Feet, 2004 Ghislaine Howard (b.1953)
from the Methodist Modern Art Collection © TMCP, used with permission.)*

FROM THE EDITORS

Back in November, we held our annual toy service when the toys collected together with a financial donation were given to the Salvation Army. We include an account of the service and the response from the Salvation Army telling us how our gifts were used.

On 7 March we hosted a very successful Lent workshop led by our minister. We journeyed through six stages of Christ's passion through the medium of art, poetry and music. An account of the event is included on page 7.

In our series on features of our Church, we come to our organ. An article was included in *Tidings* on this subject some 12 years ago but we thought it would bear repetition, suitably updated, for our current readers.

We learn more about our fellow member, Marion Woodward, in this issue. In particular we find out about her years working as a garden designer and her work with the Surrey Gardens Trust.

Cliff spent Christmas with his son in Greenwich. David sings in the choir at St Alfege Church . This Church has an interesting history including its association with Thomas Tallis , the father of English Church music. This has inspired Cliff to write a piece about St

Alfège and Thomas Tallis - see page 19.

In previous issues we have included articles about the other Churches in the North Downs Surrey pastorate. We conclude this series of articles with a history of Dorking URC. It appears that Dorking has long been a centre of non-conformist worship. The present Church was built in 1834 but a non-conformist chapel existed on a site nearby for more than one hundred years prior to this. The history of Dorking URC can be found on page 22.

Diana has contributed an article about the practice of well dressing. Dressings often illustrate stories and events from the Bible. The article on page 24 is illustrated by the dressing of the Yew Tree well in Tissington Derbyshire, depicting the Feast of the Annunciation, which is celebrated annually on 25 March. Diana wonders whether Banstead's well is a candidate for a dressing.

We hope to include articles about all the other Churches in the Banstead 5 in *Tidings*. We start in this issue with St Paul's, Nork. The article charts the development of Nork as a residential area and the establishment of an Anglican Church there.

When Jo Patterson, our Synod Mission and Discipleship officer, led worship in February, she remarked on the photographs of our previous ministers hanging in our vestry. The conversation turned to Caryl Micklem and the fact that he was a notable hymn writer. In particular we talked about 'Give to me Lord a thankful heart', where Caryl wrote both the words and music. We also mentioned the tune 'Woodmansterne' at Rejoice & Sing 530 which has a local connection. Roy Jordan has contributed an article about Caryl Micklem at page 32.

Thank you to those of you who have told us about your desert island choices of book, music and luxury. These are included throughout this issue and make for an interesting and eclectic mix. We hope you enjoy reading about them as much as we have.

Fiona, Diana and Cliff

Church Family News

Baptism



On Sunday 7 December 2025, Annabel and Shane Franklin brought their daughter Imogen Rose Diana for baptism at our Church. It was a very happy occasion with the service being conducted by Revd David Skitt.

Engagement



Many congratulations to Izzie Cushnie and Mike McCulloch on the occasion of their engagement. This happened on 7 January 2026 on the first day of their skiing holiday in Tignes - on top of a glacier (3600 metres above sea level). We send them our love and best wishes.

Lent through Art, Word and Song

Lent workshop held at Banstead URC on Saturday 7 March 2026

led by our minister, Revd Siobhan Antoniou

Around thirty people attended this excellent event which made all present experience something of the reality of Christ's Passion and capture the reflective mood of the Lent season.

As well as a good number of Banstead URC folk, there were friends from the B5 and our North Downs Pastorate churches.

Siobhan led us through six stages : The Entry into Jerusalem, the Washing of the Feet, the Agony in the Garden, the Mockery, the Crucifixion and the Threshold of Ecce Homo.



Ecce Homo, Susie Hamilton (b.1950)

from the Methodist Modern Art Collection © TMCP, used with permission.

www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection.

We were invited to reflect as we were taken through each stage with music (Ian, Cliff & Emma all participated), gazing at some moving paintings, listening to helpful appropriate poetry, discussing in pairs, in silence and in writing. The pace was just right and as we progressed with our Lord, we felt the uplift of His presence profoundly. It was all pitched just so well to help all present draw the most out of Lent this year.

Our deepest thanks to Siobhan and our eager anticipation of another such event.

David Skitt

Toy Service



On 23 November last year, we held our annual toy service, led this year by Revd Jenny Mills, the URC deputy general secretary for Discipleship and Faith in Action. We were also delighted to be joined by Eileen Swinfen and Margaret and Grenville Burn from the Upper Norwood Salvation Army who received our gifts of toys. We had a magnificent response this year from our hirers which, combined with gifts of toys from our own

members, allowed us to donate a really meaningful quantity of toys. We also received gifts of money and these, together with a contribution from our Church's charitable giving fund, was forwarded to the Salvation Army Chalk Farm Corps toward its 'Be A Star' Christmas toy and family appeal.

In his letter of thanks, Major Michael Kinnear, the commanding officer of the Chalk Farm Corps, gave us more details of their work and how our gifts were used. Our toys were received at the Salvation Army South London Toy Hub in Croydon to be distributed to needy children in time for Christmas day. Our gifts of money were used in the work of the busy Chalk Farm centre. This runs a twice weekly homeless drop-in in the evenings providing a freshly cooked hot meal, shower facility, access to wi-fi and advice, clothing, haircuts and periodic medical support through the NHS and a dental hygienist. They have seen the numbers of homeless increase in Camden, so have around 50 attendees each evening of operation. They also run an advice service on Tuesdays with an employment, benefits and tenancy advisor on site and help people engage with other services. They work closely with Camden Churches for winter night shelters and have partnerships with other agencies to help those in need. They issue food vouchers and emergency parcels and have a day for

older people with a lunch club and social group. In 2026, they plan to open a community hub coffee shop providing a warm safe space and social initiatives to alleviate the serious issue of loneliness.

At Christmas time, the work of the Salvation Army always intensifies. In 2025, the Chalk Farm Corps provided a Christmas meal for the homeless on Friday 12 December and a Christmas Day meal for anyone who would be alone or in need on Christmas Day itself. The 'Be A Star' Christmas present appeal, which we supported, helps families in need providing toys and food vouchers. Last year, the Salvation Army made up 450 children's parcels linking with local schools, social service agencies and responding to individual applications for help. Our financial donation was used specifically to buy chocolate selection boxes and gift vouchers for teenagers and to purchase additional toy items required to complete family parcels. In particular, things for teenagers and young babies are often lacking so have to be bought to ensure every child in the family receives a gift.

We were delighted that we were able to support the work of the Salvation Army in this way.



Desert Island choices—Pauline Brittain

Book: The Boy in the Statue by Sir Erich Reich. The statue is at London Liverpool Street station. I found it interesting for two reasons. Firstly, how did a boy aged 4, when I too was 4, arrive from Nazi-occupied Europe, three days before the war started and become a 'Sir'? Secondly when he first settled in England, it was in Dorking and he went to the same school as me, Dorking County Grammar school, now Ashcombe school.

Music: Handel's Messiah. As a child I had no means of listening to music at home. At school our music teacher was into classics and the school choir learnt a number of things. I particularly enjoyed singing the Messiah; we did a number of performances.

Luxury: a photo album that my son made for our diamond wedding.

Our Church organ and organists

Banstead URC's first organ was installed in 1964 and was a valve electronic instrument. By 1980 it was becoming progressively more difficult to maintain and a decision was made to purchase a new transistorised electronic instrument, the eventual choice being a Johannus Opus 6N. The organ was financed from legacies left to the Church from the estates of Grace Woodcock and Elizabeth Steward. The instrument chosen was an ex-demonstration model and was purchased for the special price of £2,745. Johannus is a major European organ builder based in The Netherlands. As a consequence, the organ was continental in layout. In particular this meant that certain stops (clarion, trumpet and bassoon) formed part of the Great rather than the Swell, which is where they would be in an English layout. The organ was supplied with an internal speaker system which was somewhat overwhelming for the organist. External speakers were therefore installed to assist in spreading the sound throughout the Church, together with a switch to enable the balancing of the internal speaker, at an additional cost of £550. The new organ was dedicated on 5 July 1981 after a recital by Raymond Willis FRCO. The old organ remained in use after being donated to the ecumenical Church in Roundshaw.

The installation of the new organ in 1981 coincided with a change of organist. Maurice Wyrill had been in charge of Church music since 1946, first as pianist and then from 1964 as organist. In 1981, he was appointed organist emeritus and Nick Farnell took over as the Church's regular organist. Nick moved away from Banstead in 1988 and Brenda Houghton was asked to take on the role of organist. At the time she was six months pregnant with David so each week she had to stretch a bit further to reach the keys! David was born on a Sunday morning, and at that evening's service the minister stood up at the start of the service and said 'It's a boy' and everyone knew what he was talking about! Brenda recognised that she was first and foremost a pianist, and so attended some 'reluctant organist' courses run by the RSCM at

Addington Palace and led by a most inspirational teacher in Jeanette Cooper. Brenda found these courses most helpful and a real confidence booster. So commenced over 20 years of service as Director of Music of Banstead URC during which time the worship life of this Church was hugely enhanced by Brenda's musicianship. Unsurprisingly, towards the end of this period, the organ was starting to show signs of its (nearly 30 years) age but was kept going by regular maintenance. Nevertheless it was becoming obvious that the organ was beginning to reach the end of its life span and the Church had begun to build up a fund for its replacement. At the end of 2008, the fund stood at just over £3,000 which was certainly not enough to acquire a new organ.

Brenda died in 2009 at the age of 54. It was felt by her family that it would be a fitting tribute to her if funds could be raised in her memory to enable a replacement organ to be purchased. By 2011, sufficient funds had been raised from friends and family to allow the Church to proceed with the acquisition of a new organ. By then the matter had become more urgent. Just before Christmas 2010, the organ had failed, and due to a heavy fall of snow it was not possible to arrange for repairs to be carried out until the New Year. We therefore had to cope with using the Church clavinova for all the 2010 Christmas services, which was far from ideal. We were told by the repairers that we were living on borrowed time with the organ. Therefore, in 2011, Ian Catt, who had succeeded Brenda as Director of Music, and Cliff Houghton were asked to do the necessary research with a view to making a recommendation to the Church on the purchase of a new organ. The research showed that, with the budget that we were working within, Johannus organs continued to offer the best value for money. We therefore arranged for the Johannus UK representatives, Makin Organs, to carry out a site visit and to make recommendations on a particular model. In the 30 years since the installation of the existing organ, there had been very significant advances in digital sampling technology and the sound on offer was a step change from what we had become used to.



After much discussion, it became clear that the Johannes Opus 27 was the ideal instrument for our Church in that it was easily powerful enough for a Church of our size and was just within our budget. Furthermore, with the latest Johannes organs, we were able to specify an English edition. The organ was purchased in 2012 for a cost of just under £16,000. The installation of the organ was not without its issues. These mainly resulted from our custom specifications, in that we needed

the organ sound to extend to the Sanctum. This involved the supply of additional speakers and switching equipment and required an additional visit after the initial installation to get it all working properly. The end result is excellent. The speakers in the main Church are very well balanced, the sound to the Sanctum works well and as a matter of course the installation involved removing the organ's internal speakers and mounting them on the wall above and to the side of the organ.

On 14 October 2014, an organ recital was held at our Church to celebrate the installation of the new organ. The recital was given by David Oldfield who, at the time, was organist and director of music at All Saints' Church.

After Brenda's death, it was good that her son David took on the role of organist, for four years or so, until he moved away from Banstead. Initially this was when he was home from university and then on a once or twice a month basis plus all festival services. We no longer have a regular organist, but we do have guest organists from time to time and it was good that David played at a recent service during a weekend visit. The organ speakers are able to be used on a regular basis, since Ian has connected them to the digital hymnal. This greatly improves the organ sound we are able to produce using the hymnal.

Cliff Houghton

Christmas Together

Christmas Together, previously called Christmas Alone, was the idea of the Methodist minister, Revd Derek Rigby some 30 years ago. Derek was the minister in charge of both Great Tattenhams and Banstead Methodist Churches. Initially it was held at Banstead church as it had better kitchen facilities. Volunteers from both churches undertook the duties of transport, preparation and the day's entertainment. It was funded by the churches but we often received donations from other sources. Various people undertook to cook the dinner and this was mostly good. Occasionally things did not go well, such as when the chef was drunk or when the frozen turkeys failed to defrost!

Great Tattenhams Methodist church closed in 2004 and united with St Mark's Anglican Church. The united church continued to support the initiative. In 2020, Banstead Church could no longer help with the event due to an aging congregation and so St Mark's took on the task. In 2021, the Covid epidemic prevented us having a gathering so we operated a delivery service like Meals on Wheels. Since then, the event has continued at St Mark's Church and many of the volunteers have been with us for many years.

We could cater for more people. On average we get 30 – 36 guests but we could easily manage 50 plus. We advertise through posters, social media and Age Concern and maybe we do reach all those who wish to attend. So going forward, the Church will continue to provide the meal and entertainment as it seems to be well received and valued by the community. *Janet and David Willock*



Desert Island choices—Tweeny

Book: Peter Pan by JM Barrie. A favourite of mine since childhood.

Music: Anything by ABBA. I love the liveliness of their music.

Luxury: Photographs of my family—these are my most precious possessions.

Know your Church member

Marion Woodward



What is life like on an ocean liner? Someone who knows is Marion. On three occasions she has sailed to Australia and back. First, in 1948-9 via Cape Town and back through the Suez Canal with her mother and father; thereafter, following the death of her father in 1962, with her mother in 1962-3 via the Panama Canal, stopping for a month in New Zealand, and back through the Suez Canal; and finally in 1967-8 via Cape Town and back

through Panama. Generally it took three to four weeks to reach Australia. On the last trip, they stopped in Western Australia and travelled by train across to Sydney. It took nine weeks to return, visiting the Far East, the northern Pacific and the Caribbean. These were small ships by today's standards – not the monsters that now cruise our oceans. They made many friends on these journeys and enjoyed offering hospitality, not only to the people they met, but also to their relatives and friends. Often Marion would meet unknown Australians at Sutton station and bring them back to Banstead for lunch.

Marion's grandparents emigrated to Australia in 1901 because her grandfather had TB and they were told that he would live another ten years in the climate of Australia, which he did. Her mother, Dorothy, although born in Australia at Bathurst, 150 miles west of Sydney, regarded herself as English. After the death of her father, her mother opened a milliners and dress shop and Dorothy's love of clothes began there. She came to England with her mother in 1937 for the Coronation of George VI. Here, she met William Woodward, known to her as Bill, and they married in 1938. Bill

was from Cliftonville near Margate, where he trained as a nurseryman with further training at Leighton Buzzard and Wallingford on the Thames. In about 1927, he took over an existing nursery in Tate Road, Cheam, and later acquired another nursery behind The Bell (now the Grumpy Mole) opposite Nonsuch School and also a florist shop in Cheam High Street. Dorothy was evacuated from Cheam for a short time in the lead-up to WW2 so Marion was actually born in Beaconsfield. However, they soon returned to their house in Cheam Road. Her father was successful and had a huge team of landscapers before the war and also for many years had a contract to maintain the gardens at the All England Lawn Tennis Club at Wimbledon. Marion remembers being responsible for the decoration of the Debenture Holders' Lounge, using lots and lots of houseplants and deadheading the roses in the rose garden by the entrance. Marion's other involvements with the business included pricking out seedlings for which she was paid ½d per box, selling tomatoes in the shop, making holly wreaths and maintaining the accounts.

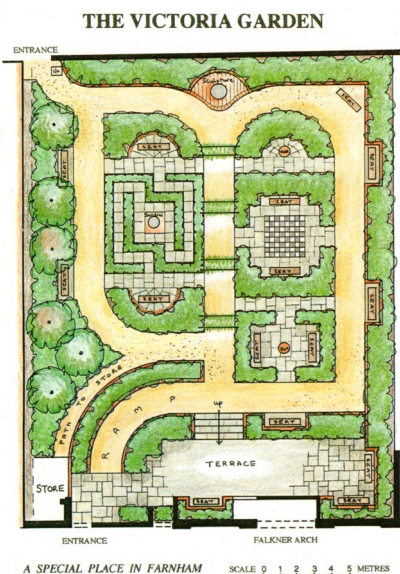
Marion's education started at Ambleside school, continued at Gloucester House (a school for young ladies) and then she gained a scholarship to Sutton High. She loved school and is still in touch with many school friends who now live all over the world. A favourite subject was mathematics, but her mother was against her pursuing this as she felt Marion was too precise a child and that maths would take her further in that direction. Consequently, Marion studied Latin and Greek which she continued, with Philosophy, at Reading University. She graduated in 1961 and then did a secretarial course before sailing with her mother on one of her visits to see relatives in Australia.

Marion has had a varied career. On her return to Cheam, she worked as a secretary at the Institute of Classical Studies and then as a book-keeper for an employment agency in Queen Anne's Gate. On one voyage, Marion met a management consultant who had suggested that her interests and talent were suitable for work in the computer world so she went to work at Legal & General (L&G)

in Kingswood, where she trained as a computer programmer and then a systems analyst. It was at this time that she and her mother moved to Fiddicraft Avenue, Banstead, where she has been ever since. At one time she was in charge of a section of 17 programmers and analysts, much to her amazement. She was then given the task of writing the Systems Analysis Standards Manual for the department.

Another turn in Marion's career came at the age of 40, when she found her dream occupation. In 1976, she visited the Chelsea Flower Show (as she had done for many years) and saw a garden exhibited by John Brookes and the Inchbald School of Garden Design and constructed by Seymours of Ewell. Marion decided to leave L&G and take the Inchbald garden design course and then, for the next 25 years, worked as a garden designer, mostly for Seymours. In 1986, Marion took a two year, part-time, post-graduate diploma course in The Conservation of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens at the Architectural Association and wrote a dissertation on Gertrude Jekyll's plants. This led to her joining the

embryo Surrey Gardens Trust (SGT) which has been a large part of her life ever since and for whom she published three books, something that has interested her since her young days and now made possible with the advance in computer technology. But the achievement, for the SGT, of which Marion is most proud is the design and implementation of the Victoria Garden in Farnham, constructed on a site previously occupied by the open-air swimming baths created to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Nearly 30 years on, it is still a much loved and well maintained, peaceful place in the centre of Farnham.



THE VICTORIA GARDEN Designed by
Surrey Gardens Trust © for Farnham Swimming Baths Trust
on the site of The Old Swimming Baths South St Farnham Surrey

Seymours moved from Ewell to Stoke d'Abernon and Marion spent eight years commuting much further than she would have chosen. She retired in 2004 when the Banstead History Centre was just starting up in Banstead library and has been involved with local history ever since, putting together displays about our neighbourhood which can be seen in the library. She is now part of a group undertaking the cataloguing of the huge amount of archive material that has been accumulated over many years.

Marion first went to the Sunday School at St Andrew's Cheam (then a Presbyterian Church of England) at the age of nine and progressed through Junior Fellowship, Fellowship of Youth and then an over 21 group named the Fishers with whom she enjoyed holidays on the canals – very close quarters so important that they were all good friends, which they were and still are. She never aspired to being an elder but concentrated on the practical tasks of stewarding, serving on the Buildings and Maintenance Committee and giving people lifts to church. For many years she masterminded the decoration of the church for Christmas – a very large Christmas tree and candles and foliage on the plentiful windowsills. She organised a project to make needlepoint hassocks and was involved in planning a successful Flower Festival and a Festival of Leisure. And, of course, for 23 years she edited the church magazine. And lots, lots more. Marion has now become involved in church life at Banstead and has joined the Impact Committee.

Having travelled the world in the 1960s, holidays to far off places are not important to her but she has been to Greece, to New York for the World's Fair, down the Rhine and on many organised gardens visiting expeditions at home and throughout Europe.

What does she do in her spare time? Marion loves any kind of craftwork, is creative with her needlepoint, likes to knit and crochet and since Covid has knitted many squares which are made into blankets by a neighbour and sent to Ukraine and the YWCA in Redhill. She likes reading, especially books with happy endings, although I am not sure I approve of her reading the ending first! She spends time maintaining her garden without the use of chemicals and supports nature conservation. Over the years,

Marion has had many cats as companions. The first moved in not long before her mother died in 1980 – she didn't like men so found a household with two ladies. Others followed, some from Croydon Animal Samaritans and others who have arrived unannounced because they recognise a cat lover.

Who have been most influential in Marion's life? She highlights her wonderful parents and Gertrude Jekyll, well-known as a garden designer and writer but also as a skilled artist and craftswoman which resonated with Marion.

What is surprising about Marion? Well, I know she is not keen on sport but that has not stopped her doing physical exercise. She likes Scottish dancing, walking, and has attended Pilates and Health and Beauty exercise classes. I was, though, rather surprised to learn that she did sculling on the river while at Reading University and that she enjoyed skiing and ice skating in her younger days.

Diana Parsk



Desert Island choices – Chris Clay

Book: *Mariana* by Monica Dickens. This is a book I read a long time ago but have always remembered the pleasure it gave me. She writes characters so beautifully; you feel as if you actually know them. It mostly covers the pre-war years, progressing to war time. The heroine is called Mary and the book covers her life from childhood to becoming an adult and all the heartache and joy that involved.

Music: I love the blues and jazz, so my favourite is George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Once I was lucky enough to be taken to the Albert Hall where it was performed as a ballet, and we were in a box. Definitely something to remember with happiness.

Luxury: As you read in last summer's *Tidings*, I have always adored horses. I have owned two horses over the years, and it was a privilege to be part of their lives. I have also been fortunate to have dogs in my life. Now that I am a little bit older I think I would have a dog rather than a horse as my luxury—it would bring me great joy.

St Alfege Church and Thomas Tallis

I spent last Christmas staying with my son, David, and his wife Eleana, at their home in Greenwich. David is a member of the choir of St Alfege Church, Greenwich so I was able to hear the choir sing at both the Christmas Eve and Christmas morning services, both of which attracted a large congregation.

St Alfege Church has an interesting history. The first Church was



built in the 11th century in honour of Alfege, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was killed by Danish invaders in Greenwich. The Church was rebuilt in the 13th Century and again in 1716, when the present building was erected to the design of the famous architect Nicholas Hawksmoor. More recently, the Church underwent restoration after significant bomb damage in WWII.

Another significant aspect of the Church's history is its connection with the famous Renaissance composer Thomas Tallis, often referred to as the 'father of English church music'. Tallis spent much of his career in the employment of the Chapel Royal, and in that role, he served four Tudor monarchs, Henry VIII, Edward VI,



Mary I and Elizabeth I. One of Tallis's pupils, later his assistant at the Chapel Royal, was William Byrd, who is also regarded as one of the greatest composers of the Renaissance. Throughout his life, Tallis remained a Roman Catholic, although he adjusted his musical style as necessary to cater for the musical needs of the various monarchs he served, whether Protestant or Catholic.

The Chapel Royal comprised a number of chapels, one of which was located in Greenwich Palace. Tallis therefore spent a lot of time in Greenwich and, later in his career, lived in Stockwell Street Greenwich and was the organist at St Alfege. Near the font in the Church is an old organ keyboard, known as the Tallis keyboard, which includes parts that are thought to date back to Tallis's time.

One of Tallis's most famous anthems is *Spem in Alium*, which translates as *I have never put my faith in any other*. This anthem is written for eight separate choirs, each with five voice parts (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass) – making 40 singing parts! It is believed that these 40 parts represent Christ's temptations over forty days in the desert. This famous anthem takes about 12 minutes to sing and is full of contrasts: sometimes everyone sings together, sometimes the choirs call and answer each other, sometimes individual voices sing, or the music is passed from one choir to another. It is a musical triumph and places Tallis among the greatest of composers for the English church.

St Alfege Church is also home to the Thomas Tallis Society, a choir with over 60 auditioned voices, which put on four or five concerts a year, the majority performed in St Alfege. David is also a member of this choir.

Thomas Tallis and his wife Joan are buried beneath the Chancel of St Alfege. The Church contains a stained-glass window showing Tallis standing in front of an organ, and there are two brass plaques on the wall nearby. The upper one is a memorial plaque to Tallis dating to 1876. The bottom one has the text of a poem written at the time of his death in 1585. His death is marked every year by the St Alfege choir singing a moving lament written by William Byrd.

The hymn tune 'Tallis's Canon' is still in use today and is found at 416 in *Rejoice and Sing*, '*Glory to thee, my God, this night*'.

Cliff Houghton



Desert Island choices—David Skitt

Book: The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy.

Though an irascible character who treated women not very well, the words of Hardy's poetry are like a treasure-trove of one's own feelings and thoughts expressed in beautiful evocative language. You feel as though you could never have come up with that way of articulating what it is to be human, but that nevertheless he has reached into the core of your being and captured exactly what life is like in heart and mind. Though a churchgoer, he professed that he lacked faith. However, there is such faith in his phrase: 'Hoping it might be so' that it could almost be a creed.

Music: If possible I would like to take the whole album: 'River of Music' by that amazing musical family, the Kanneh-Masons, produced last year. If I could only take one track, it would be a track composed by one of the family, Isata, entitled 'Hiraeth' (literally meaning a yearning/longing – especially for home). It possesses such flowing beauty, peacefulness and questing that one could bask in the fact that it exudes a tranquil stream of delight.

Luxury item: A cross-stitch of the River Thames. This is very self-indulgent as it was created by my wife, Alison, to mark my first ever long walk, the Thames Path, from barrier to source. It would remind me of all my lovely walks, of all the friends whose company on them has been such a blessing and of family love which makes us feel sometimes that we could walk on water.



Desert Island choices—Kathy Randolph

Book: Hamilton by Catherine Cookson. I have read it several times and it makes me laugh and cry in equal measure.

Music: Mozart's clarinet concerto. It's always been a favourite piece of music of mine.

Luxury: An unlimited supply of shampoo and conditioner. A girl looks like nothing if her hair is a mess!

Dorking United Reformed Church



The town of Dorking has always been known for its dissenting form of worship. The following is an extract from the Dorking Museum records:

'Many people in Dorking followed radical, dissenting forms of Protestantism. In the 1570s Dorking's parish priest, Stephen Richman, was charged with non-conformity. The town was staunchly Parliamentary during the Civil War and many in town were more radical than Cromwell's government! Monarchist dissenter Christopher Feake was discovered living in secrecy in Dorking in 1663. At the same time, an illegal Independent meeting attracting 100 adherents was held by ousted dissenting minister James Fisher.'

It is believed that from 1662 worshippers first met at the houses of the ousted ministers, the Reverend James Fisher and the Reverend John Wood. In 1695 under the later leadership of the Reverend Samuel Brookes, they met in a barn on Butter Hill, opposite the current Friends Meeting House in South Street.

In the following century, Dorking became a centre for Independent Congregational worship and in 1719 a chapel was erected somewhere near the present URC site in West Street to

accommodate the growing congregation. John Wesley made 19 visits to preach, the first in 1764. This chapel served until 1834, when the present church was built.

In the early years, the church was known as the 'Meeting House' and then as the 'Independent Chapel'. In the early 1900's the name 'Congregational Chapel' came into use. This was gradually changed to the 'Congregational Church'. Over the nearly two centuries since it was built many alterations and additions have been made. These include building a large hall to the side of the church; adding a smaller chapel to the rear along with Sunday School classrooms (sadly no longer used in this way); and the erection of the Follett Hall in 1962, named after the long serving congregational minister, Cyril Follett (1947-1961).

With the amalgamation of the Congregational Church in England and Wales with the Presbyterian Church in England in 1972, the United Reformed Church came into beginning. A year before the amalgamation, the Reverend Roy Currie had been called to be the church's minister and upon the amalgamation he became a URC minister. He served the church until 1989 when sadly he suddenly passed into glory. Since that time the church has been served by Reverends Brian Bowyer (1991-2003); Peter Flint (2005-2014); and David Bedford (2016-2021); and more recently the Reverend Siobhan Antoniou, continuing a long and proud history of non-conformist worship in Dorking.



Desert Island choices—Glenda Chadburn

Book: Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follet. A historical novel set in 12th century England. It tells the story of the building of a cathedral against the backdrop of the civil war between Stephen and Matilda. It is Ken Follet's best-selling work.

Music: My favourite piece of music is Love Changes Everything from the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical Aspects of Love.

Luxury: My mobile phone and a solar power bank so that I can look at my photos.

Well Dressing



Dressing of Yew Tree Well - Tissington 2010 by Mick Lobb, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Sometimes, as I pass the well by the Church, I think of well dressing. The origins of this English tradition are not really known, but one source suggests that it started here one thousand or more years BCE as a pagan ceremony to thank the water gods for the supply of fresh water. For this reason, Christianity later opposed it. Subsequently, it was taken up as thanksgiving in some villages for escaping the ravages of the Black Death or perhaps to celebrate relief from a drought.

In more modern times, well dressing was revived in the 18th century to mark the establishment of a fountain or arrival of piped water in some rural areas. Today, the acknowledged centre for this event is in Derbyshire, Staffordshire and south Yorkshire, although it also occurs to a limited extent elsewhere.

Essentially, a wooden frame is built and covered with clay. The quality of the clay is vital. A design is sketched out on the clay and then this design is filled, in stricter villages, with natural materials such as lichen, flowers, petals, fruit, seeds, berries, leaves, twigs,

wood and paper. Other modern materials can be used in less strict areas.

For a time, the designs mainly illustrated stories from the Bible but more recently other designs have appeared, such as the 90th Birthday of Queen Elizabeth. Several well dressings can be seen on the internet in all their fine detail and colour.

An additional benefit of this tradition is that it usually involves the short-term participation of many in the local community, including schools. It takes about one week to make one well dressing and the season spreads from spring to autumn.

Tissington in Derbyshire opens its season on Ascension Day. The dressing then lasts for one week or so before material starts to fade. Often, the local vicar blesses the initial unveiling of the dressing and if there is more than one source of water being dressed, the vicar will head a procession from one to another. There are also competitions to judge the best dressings, and the village may celebrate the event with markets and fairs.

I wonder if our Banstead well deserves a dressing? What would it look like?

Diana Parsk



Desert Island choices—Cliff Houghton

Book: Catch 22 by Joseph Heller. A book I have read several times and it always makes me laugh out loud. Relevant to the world we live in today is its anti-war theme.

Music: My family has been much involved in musical theatre over the years and I have always loved both watching musicals and taking part in productions. I would take the original cast recording of Les Misérables because it's my favourite musical.

Luxury: I thought of taking a sand iron—I might improve my bunker play! But on reflection I would take a guitar and unlimited spare strings. I would have plenty of time to practise.

Nork and St Paul's Church



Nork, that part of Banstead that lies west of the main A217, was largely rural and undeveloped until the early part of the 20th century.

There was a Manor of Banstead in the medieval ages. (A manor is an area of medieval administration). There was an adjacent manor at Burgh or Great Burgh which was held by the Merland family from 1466 to 1614 but passed then to the Buckle family who held it until the mid 19th century. It was Christopher Buckle (1684-1749) who built Nork House, a vast country house which stood at the top of the hill overlooking present day Nork Park. It later passed to the Earl of Egmont in 1847 and then to Mr F.E.Colman (of mustard fame) in 1900. The Colman family left Nork House in 1923.

Nork in the mid 19th century consisted of no more than Nork House, Warren Farm situated at the lower end of present-day Warren Road and perhaps a few farm workers' cottages. Then in 1876, the Kensington and Chelsea School for disadvantaged children was built to the north of Fir Tree Road: twenty-four houses, later to go by the name Beechholme.

All changed in the 1920's. Haldane Estates acquired the land and declared their intention to build a 'garden city of Nork, 1320 acres unspoiled, favoured by nature...as no other... in this lovely England of ours... to become a land of one thousand homes'. The company

also agreed with the Revd A.W.Hopkinson, vicar of Banstead, to donate land for a church and pay half the cost. Regrettably the company failed, or as Revd Hopkinson commented, 'the director, though truly a man of imagination, was lacking in other qualities, lacking most of all in financial discretion.' But other developers were soon to follow to build Nork as we now know it, encouraged, no doubt, by the fact that the railway had arrived at Banstead in 1876.

A Sunday School pre-dated the building of a church. It was held at the home of Mr H.H.Wheeler of Nork Way. It was not until 1928 that a church was planned on land in Warren Road, then a muddy track, donated by a member of the church council. There is a story (can it be true?) that the actual site was chosen by Mr Wheeler, who walked from his house in Nork Way along Warren Road until he became tired, deciding there and then that that should be the site of the church. What Revd Hopkinson described as a 'modest but adequate church building' was then erected with church hall and vicarage to follow.

At first, St Paul's was a daughter church of All Saints, Banstead. It was dedicated to St Paul by the Bishop of Guildford on 6th March 1930. Then, in 1931, the ecclesiastical district of St Paul's Nork was founded by Order in Council. In 1959, it became a full parish. St Paul's first vicarage was in The Drive but then moved to the present vicarage in 1935. The first vicar was Revd Percy Lobb and in 1937 there were 174 names on the electoral register.

In September 1939, Revd Charles Dearnley succeeded Revd Lobb, who became vicar at St Nicholas, Guildford. In the Second World War, St Paul's vicarage suffered bomb damage in April 1941, as did the church to a small extent. In addition, children from Nork School were evacuated .

In October 1955, Revd Dearnley resigned to become vicar of Okewood, to be succeeded by Revd Allan Carey. It was now that the issue of constructing a new church was raised, for from the beginning the existing church had been viewed as temporary, to be used eventually as a hall for a new church. After much

discussion the PCC decided to extend the existing church and build a new hall instead. By November 1957, the new hall was complete. The scheme to extend the church entailed building brick walls eight feet out from both the existing north and south walls to create north and south aisles. The temporary materials on the west wall, sanctuary, Lady Chapel and vestry were replaced with permanent materials. The cost was £25,000, £15,000 to be found by the parish. The church was later consecrated by the Bishop of Guildford on 24 January 1959.

In 1963 a new organ was installed, as well as stained glass windows in the Lady Chapel in memory of the music hall artist, Marie Lloyd, who often visited relatives in Nork. Then, in June 1977, after 21 years' loyal service. Allan Carey retired to be replaced by Revd Peter Naylor.

It was Peter Naylor's lasting legacy to take part in setting up the Banstead Five. He reasoned that ecumenism would be advanced by churches working together and by so doing achieve more. Hence the involvement of All Saints' Banstead, the Methodist Church, St Ann's Roman Catholic Church, St Paul's and the United Reformed Church in the venture. Peter Naylor remained at St Paul's until replaced by Father Peter Brooks in 1991. My wife and I were both resident in the parish by then and witnessed its adherence to the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Peter and his wife Elaine, who had a lovely singing voice, were well loved. Regrettably both Elaine and Peter died and were replaced by Damian Miles who took over from 2006 to 2010. We then welcomed our first woman priest, Jane Creswell.

There are always long interregnums at St Paul's during which we have often been blessed with the help of Revd John Baxter. Although officially retired, and as well as his work at a school he founded in the Gambia, John has always been available to stand in at St Paul's. Whilst at Paul's, John initiated an agape meal as part of Maundy Thursday celebrations.

Alex Williams arrived in 2018 to take up the difficult job of combining the parish of Nork with that of Burgh Heath. Together with her husband, Michael, Alex, now Alex Stevens, put

everything into the task, helped later by our first curate, the ever cheerful, David Packham .

In mid-2025, Alex left to take over at Ruxley Lane Church and David left for his first incumbency at Heathfield in East Sussex. Another interregnum, then, but watch this space; a new chapter is soon to begin.

Geoff Marshall

Sources:

Renée Willcox, A History of the Parish of St Paul Nork, 1985

A History of Banstead, How a Village Grew and Changes, Banstead History Research Group, 2005

Sue Hay, Private Communication



Desert Island choices—Fiona Lynch

Book: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J K Rowling. Although we'd always read to our son James and he enjoyed being read to, this book was the first one we remember that James became really invested in. He grew as Harry Potter grew, so he was able to follow the journey in real time in respect of their ages. The films were always released around James' birthday, so it became an annual birthday treat to read the next book and see the film. My husband Brian was not a fan and could usually be found having a quick snooze during any of the Harry Potter films!

Music: a favourite piece of music of mine is Elgar's Nimrod. You can't help but be moved when the first bars start up every November at the Remembrance Day service at the Cenotaph.

Luxury: A sturdy pot! If I've got to forage for my food, I need something robust to cook it on over the open fire that I hope I'll be able to start.



Desert Island choices—Fiona Gayner

Book: Would it be better to take a well-loved book or a book I've been meaning to read for ages and risk not liking it? I have decided to be brave and do the latter so am taking *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving. It is a thick book so would occupy a bit of time between the Bible and the complete works of Shakespeare – not having a Kindle, it has never made it with me on holiday. I have been meaning to read it for so long, ever since Cliff based a sermon around it many moons ago, so I am trusting his recommendation!

Music: I have plumped for Bach's Goldberg Variations played by Lang Lang as I won't get tired of them.

Luxury: I am a very cold person – as the temperature on the desert island will no doubt drop suddenly when night falls, I will take a solar powered heated sleeping bag - which will also have a built-in sensor to alert me if any wild animals approach when I am asleep!



Desert Island choices—Diana Parsk

Book: *A Town Like Alice* by Neville Shute.

I first read it about 40 years ago and loved it then and I have recently re-read it and loved it again. It isn't a very long book but I still think that on reading it multiple times I would gain something from it every time I read it. It is a very special book.

Music: *The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert and Sullivan.

I am a huge Gilbert and Sullivan fan. I used to belong to a Gilbert and Sullivan Operatic Society and I used to love singing and performing in their shows. My favourite was always *The Pirates of Penzance* and I would enjoy singing and dancing to the music on the desert island.

Luxury: My luxury item would not be so much of a luxury but a necessity. Unfortunately, anything that bites loves me and so I would need an endless supply of insect repellent so as to make life on the island bearable.

Recipe—Lemon pudding



When cooked this pudding has a light spongy top and a layer of lemony custard underneath.

Ingredients:

50g (2 oz) butter or margarine
grated rind and juice of 1 large lemon
75g (3 oz) caster sugar
2 eggs, separated
25g (1 oz) plain flour
175 ml (6 fluid oz) milk

Method:

Cream the butter or margarine with the lemon rind and sugar until light and fluffy. Mix in the egg yolks, flour and lemon juice, then gradually stir in the milk. Whisk the egg whites until stiff, fold into the mixture.

Turn into a greased 600ml (1 pint) ovenproof dish and place in a roasting pan, containing 2.5 cm (1 inch) water.

Bake in preheated oven 180 degrees C (adjust for fan) Gas Mark 4 for 40-45 minutes. Serve hot.

Serves 4

Fiona Gayner

Revd Thomas Caryl Micklem

When we sang a hymn written by Caryl Micklem during a recent Sunday morning service, newer members may not have realised that Caryl was a former minister of this church and played an important part in developing its progress. Some older members, for example Chris and Pauline Brittain, still remember Caryl. He invited Chris's parents and family to transfer their membership to this then Congregational church.

Ernest Tickner, in his booklet 'In The Beginning' about the first 25 years of this congregation, knew Caryl and recounts how some of the Banstead young people met Caryl at a conference. They were impressed by him and he was invited to visit Banstead. Members here were also impressed and, aged 27, Caryl moved from the Oundle church and was inducted as our minister in April 1953. Caryl married Ruth Monro in 1955 and they moved into the newly acquired manse, which had been purchased through the manse fund for £4,175 from the Gough family. Caryl and Ruth had a daughter Rosalind whilst here and her name is on our Cradle Roll. They subsequently had four more children. They moved onto Kensington Chapel in November 1958.

Ernest Tickner wrote that Caryl 'wove hymn and prayer and lesson and the message of his children's address and eloquent sermons into an artistic whole that was at once an aesthetic and spiritual experience attracting many new worshippers. Added to this, he had a great sense of occasion and a deep human sympathy that made his conduct of a funeral or a wedding and other services on special occasions, most memorable experiences'.

Caryl was born in Oxford in 1925, and so last year was the 100th anniversary of his birth. His father, Edward, was chaplain and a tutor at Mansfield College and his uncle Nathaniel was subsequently appointed principal of Mansfield. Caryl was educated at Mill Hill school and New College, Oxford. Growing up, he was surrounded by theology and music. Caryl was ordained as a minister in 1952. He became an accomplished organist and

pianist, and he treasured his grand piano, which almost filled his study in the manse. He was a keen choirmaster.

Caryl wrote several hymns and hymn tunes. Revd Erik Routley, another influential hymn writer and composer, asked Caryl to compose tunes for two hymns Erik had written. Both of them were on the Board of Composers which Caryl later chaired. This body changed Congregational hymnody with the publication of 'New Church Praise' and later, 'Rejoice and Sing'. A search of the latter reveals four hymns and accompanying tunes written and composed by Caryl, four with the words only and another nine with tunes he composed. Caryl was also chair of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, a member of the URC Musical Guild and of the Council of the Royal School of Church Music.

Caryl was a religious adviser to ATV, a contributor to the BBC Radio 4 'Thought for the Day' and a magistrate. His last Ministry was back in Oxford at St Columba's. He died in June 2003, aged 77.

An example of Caryl's facility with words is illustrated by some lines from his hymn R&S 307 (based on 1 Corinthians 13):

'Love always takes a pure delight
In truth, in people's best:
It trusts, endures, forgives and hopes,
And overlooks the rest.'

Roy Jordan



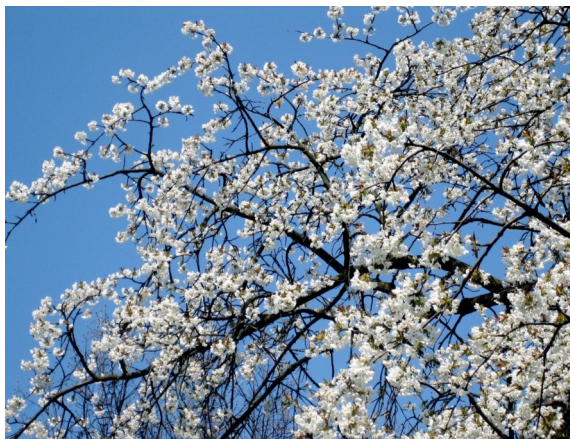
Desert Island choices – John Fannin

Book: *In My Own Words* by Sean Quinn. I found the account of his rise and fall very interesting.

Music: *Good Old Country Music* by Larry Cunningham. He is my favourite country and western singer.

Luxury: My air fryer, as I could cook everything easily (if I could find a power supply!)

Loveliest of Trees



Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

A.E. Housman



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 Summer 2026 edition should be with us by

Sunday, 7 June 2026 at the latest.





TIDINGS - Spring 2026