

NEWS

From



United Reformed Churches
of Romsey and Braishfield

FEBRUARY 2026

www.abbeyurc.org.uk

Abbey United Reformed Church

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Services

Sunday Family Worship 10.30am

Monthly Bible Study first Sunday evening 6.30pm

On Zoom (ID: 864 1780 6994 Password: learning)

Weekday Meetings – any updates will be on our worship sheet

Monday (2 nd)	BALM (Bereavement) Group	10.30am
Tuesday (2 nd)	Chill Out Tuesday, The White Horse, Romsey	7.30pm
Thursday	The Social Cup - refreshments and warm space. Open to all, in Abbey Hall Lounge	10am - 11.30am
Wednesday (1 st 3 rd)	Church Table Tennis	2.30pm

For baptisms, weddings or funerals please contact Revd Mike

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of Romsey or Braishfeild URC, nor the elders or production team.

February 2026

Dear friends in Christ

Every year, during the season of Epiphany that brings Christmas to a conclusion for another year, I encourage us to reflect upon the truth that, "Christmas is not the end but a new beginning!" How then do we take the warmth, light and love we share and celebrate at Christmas into the new year?

Not so long ago, to conclude my Epiphany Sunday address, I read a poem by Howard Thurman, an African American preacher active in the civil rights movement, who joined the Wider Quaker Fellowship in the 1960s:

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman,
The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations
© Friends United Press, 1985.

In our denominational magazine, Reform, there is a section where four people write a response to a particular question which is often very thought-provoking. In the most recent issue, the question is 'What does the Christmas story say today?' and Revd George Kalu, the Minister of Christ Church, Swanley, Kent wrote as part of his response:

"Christmas encourages us to welcome strangers, just like Mary and Joseph were given a place in Bethlehem. The humble shepherds were the first to hear the good news. We are called to show compassion to genuine refugees seeking protection and marginalised voices crying out

for justice. Christmas creates the kind of hospitality where kindness is stronger than fear.

Christmas is not consigned to the past. It calls us to today, to salvation and responsibility. It is a living narrative that speaks into our present: hope in hardship... the power of divine hope... In a world of uncertainty, I echo its high point: 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy.' (Reform Issue 8 2025, p 28)

What does the Christmas story say today, as we continue our spiritual journey into the new year, especially in how we respond creatively to the ever challenging and chaotic situations in the world? Let us continue to live that hope that lies at the heart of our faith.

In Christian love,

Revd Mike

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

Material for March 2026 to be submitted by
5pm (latest) **on Monday, 16 February 2026** (due to holidays)

Please email to abbeyurcnews@gmail.com

Alternatively, you could call Carole C, pop it in her letter box, or leave in the pigeon-hole at the back of the church.

Thank you.

CHRISTMAS AT ABBEY URC

Thank you to all those who helped make Christmas a memorable time at Abbey URC.

A special thanks to those who made our Candle-light Service so special. It was great to welcome the singing group.

Listing names always runs the risk of missing someone; so a big thank you to all of you who helped in so many ways with all the services throughout Advent and Christmas, with decorating the church and trees, stewarding the church for concerts and opening the church, allowing angels to fly to our railings or the Angel Tree, distributing Christmas cards, clearing things away and so much more: thank you to you all.

If you have any comments to help make Christmas 2026 even better, please pass these to any Elder or either Minister.

Andy B

PRAYER FOR FEBRUARY

We come before You, Almighty God, as the month of February dawns, with hearts full of thanks and hope. This month, known for love, light, and renewal, reminds us of Your constant care and never failing love for us all. May the inspiration of Your love be the foundation of all our relationships, and may it guide us in all our interactions with other people.

Let this time be when we apply Christ-like love in every relationship and interaction. Help us to be guiding lights to those around us and to bring joy and encouragement to all. "Let all that you do be done in love." – 1 Corinthians 16:14

Almighty God,

We give you all the praise and glory. We trust in your unfailing love and faithfulness, and know that together with you we can resolve any difficulty. We understand that you are always with us, and that you will never forsake us. In Jesus' blessed name we pray. Amen.

Howard C

MOVEMENT FOR GOOD

Would you like an easy way to help Abbey URC raise £1,000? The Benefact Group Movement for Good giving programme is back, and you can nominate Abbey URC for a £1,000 donation. It takes just a minute to nominate us, click <https://movementforgood.com/draws/1000> and then click Nominate a charity. You can find us by typing in Abbey United Reformed Church. Please pass to friends and relatives who may be happy to help. Thank you.

CHILL OUT TUESDAY



The new venue for Chill Out Tuesday worked well. Four of us had a pleasant evening chatting together over our drinks in the warmth and comfort of the White Horse Hotel bar. 9 o'clock came all too quickly, as we made our farewells and promises to meet again in a month's time.

We invite you to join us for the next one on Tuesday, 10 February from 7.30pm onwards, at the White Horse Hotel bar, Romsey.

Wendy

HOME COMMUNION



If you are unable to get to church and would like someone to bring communion to you at home, please contact Carole by email at carole.cox@btinternet.com or call 01794 518184.

CHURCH GARDENING PARTY

We are looking for volunteers to help tidy up the church riverbank and Abbey Hall garden areas during the next month. If you would like a morning of fresh air combined with mild bending and stretching exercises, this is your opportunity.

No skill needed and no gym joining fee; just let me know when you are free so that I can arrange the session. Your reward – a free cup of coffee and I might remember the chocolate biscuits to maintain your energy.



Andy B

SUPPORT ABBEY URC ONLINE

As cash becomes a thing of the past, dropping a penny in the pot isn't always easy. You can still support Abbey URC - simply and securely - from the comfort of your home.

Through your bank or by BACS: you can select a regular direct debit from your bank account or make a one-off donation by card or digital wallet. Bank details: Abbey United Reformed Church Romsey, Sort Code 40-52-40, Account Number 00033457, Bank CAFS.

SumUp card machine: the machine is in Abbey URC; it works the same as a card machine in a shop – except you can choose the amount to donate. Please ask an elder, or the person on duty, if you are unsure how to use it.

QR code: scan this QR code on your phone to make a donation via SumUp to Abbey URC. Simply follow the instructions and add your payment details. Any donation under £30 automatically qualifies for Gift Aid, so there is no need to put in your personal details. Any card or digital wallet will work and simply add your email address for a receipt.



Thank you for supporting the work of our church and upkeep of our buildings.

TO MAKE YOU CHUCKLE...

The oldest computer was owned by Adam and Eve. It was an Apple with very limited memory. Just 1 byte and everything crashed!

THE SOCIAL CUP



Whatever the weather, you will always find a warm welcome at Abbey Hall Lounge from 10am-11.30am every Thursday. With free refreshments, it's a place to read a book or paper, meet with friends, sit quietly - or there's always someone to chat with, if you need some company. No pressure, no obligation - just a warm welcome for everyone.



We're very grateful to the Warm Welcome Campaign for the Co-op voucher they shared with us towards the tea and coffee we provide each Thursday morning at the Social Cup.

PRINTING OF WEEKLY SERVICE SHEET

We are very grateful to our small band of volunteers who print our weekly service sheet, some from home and some on the church printer.

However, we are now down to only four volunteers. If you are interested in helping the church by printing the order of service for use at our weekly services, please speak to Andy Bevan for further details.

Andy

	CHILL OUT TUESDAY Everyone Welcome	
No down time? Find some "you" time A safe space for everyone.		Life hectic? Meet new people. A warm welcome for everyone.
the 2nd Tuesday of each month	7.30pm onwards The White Horse, Romsey	Contact: abbeyurc.chillout@gmail.com www.abbeyurc.org.uk

REMEMBER...

"If you're not making someone else's life better, then you're wasting your time."

Barack Obama

MORNING PRAYERS

If you would like to take the opportunity to reflect upon God's word and to pray for the needs of the world, and the Church, in your own time during the week, here are the readings for February.



February	1	Psalm 15	Matthew 5:1-12
	8	Psalm 112	Matthew 5:13-20
	15	Psalm 99	Matthew 17:1-9
	22	Psalm 32	Matthew 4:1-11 (Lent 1)

ZOOM BIBLE STUDY



Our monthly Bible study and discussion group will take place on Sunday, 1 February at 6.30pm on Zoom (ID 864 1780 6994 PC learning) when we will look more deeply at the Gospel verses listed under Morning Prayer.

If you are looking for a different way to prepare yourself for the good news that Easter brings why not join us for an opportunity to look again and discuss the Lent gospel readings.

We will also be holding a Lent Course of Bible studies on Sunday evenings at 6.30pm on Zoom, same ID and PC as above. These will begin on Sunday, 22 February to 29 March (Palm Sunday). You do not even need to leave the comfort of your own home - bring your own beverage! All welcome!

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that that one of the most common phrases in the bible is 'do not fear'. There are 365 mentions in fact – one for every day of the year! A repeated encouragement not to be fearful, anxious or worried. That's easier said than done, but these words from Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani can help:

"I don't think we're expected to be fearless; we are however invited to resist the worst of what fear can do to us by holding on to hope."

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE...

Every milestone in a relationship deserves to be celebrated. We will be holding a special service where couples are invited to remember the promises made to each other and the life built together on Sunday, 15 February at 10.30am when they will be celebrating the love and partnerships in their lives.

Revd Mike said: “We’re looking forward to welcoming back as many couples who were married in the church as possible. Also, we’d like to celebrate the love anyone has experienced. As we’re an inclusive church, we’re not just celebrating those in a traditional marriage, but love in all its forms.”

The service will be led by Revd Mike, and Revd Terry Hinks will be returning to deliver the service’s reflection. Mike added: “The service will include hymns, readings and music, plus a prayer celebrating the blessings that marriages or partnerships have brought us. Time will also be spent asking for forgiveness for the times when we have fallen short of our promises to each other.

“This is also a time of remembrance and reflection for those whose partners are no longer with us, or whose marriages have not stood the test of time,” added Mike.

While St Valentine’s Day is often marked with cards and flowers and seen as a celebration for couples, it is also a time to pray for guidance in relationships, strength in marriage, hope in seeking a soulmate, and for God’s love to fill us with patience, kindness, and faithfulness. For some, it is a joyful occasion celebrating new love, long partnerships or cherished memories. For others, it can be a difficult time, particularly for those who are alone or grieving the loss of a loved one.

If you are struggling at this time, there will be small pocket hugs, pebbles painted with small hearts, on our railings for you to take and place in your pocket - keep it with you and know you are in our prayers.



REVD MIKE’S PREACHING ROTA

February 2026

1	Avenue St Andrew’s (with Church Meeting)
8	Bitterne
15	Abbey URC, with Revd Terry Hinks
22	Bitterne Park URC

REACHING OUT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Over the Christmas period we opened our church during various Romsey events, offering a warm space, use of our facilities and a quiet place to sit and find some peace in the hustle and bustle of the season. It was lovely to welcome people into our church on each occasion, and during the various open periods we welcomed approximately 100 people into our church. We have had very positive responses from the people who came in, and some have since attended services.

Our two new banners, which were purchased as part of the grant from Synod, looked great on the railings and let everyone know they are welcome in our church and that the church is open.



The crafted angels flew in from all corners of our community – each one so individual and special. Our heartfelt thanks are sent to everyone who has supported us in crafting angels, there was such a wonderful display at church and the joy of watching people look at each angel and choose the special one for them was wonderful.

The Tree of Angels was much appreciated by those missing a loved one, at what is supposed to be a time of joy. Many people said how important it was to leave their messages and remember them. The simple white angels carry many memories, feelings and wishes, sometimes difficult to put into words; Christmas can be such an emotional and difficult time for many people. These angels have been collected and placed in the prayer corner. We'd like to thank Leena, who has offered to spend some quiet time praying for each person mentioned on these angels.



We offered free Christmas crafts for young people in Abbey Hall during December; there were Elf or Santa paper chains, lolly-stick stars, lanterns and the opportunity to be creative with the art supplies. Lots of families came in and enjoyed the activities, and there was very good feedback from everyone attending.

Thank you to everyone who bought tickets for the Christmas Hamper, this raised £69 for church funds. Barbara Goom was very pleased to collect the hamper after the Carols by Candlelight, just in time for Christmas.

Our congregation, and the wider community, were extremely generous in support of our request for donations for both Amber and the Southampton Voluntary Services Toy Appeal. It was heartwarming to see so much donated, and know it would make such a difference over the Christmas period.



Last January, Chris L collected unwanted Christmas jumpers. She laundered and stored them, ready to share with the Methodist Church for their Christmas Jumper Swap in December 2025. They were very grateful and told us that over 75 jumper swaps took place, and a total of £790 was raised. Chris has been collecting jumpers again this January, but if you've missed the collection, please let Chris know.

Thank you to everyone who supported our outreach efforts this Christmas. There was a great deal of engagement with our local community, and we look forward to continuing this during 2026.

If you would like to help at one of our open events in the coming year, or have an idea that could open our church to our local community, please let Carole know.



CAKES AFTER MORNING WORSHIP

We are very excited that Val has offered to provide cakes after the service on the 1st Sunday of February. She is hoping to be able to do this monthly, moving forwards. Monies raised will go to church funds. Thank you so much, Val!

THANK YOU!

From Amber:

Thank you so much to the members of Abbey URC for another generous year of donated items for our Christmas Gift Bags, given for women we support who are selling sex on the streets of Southampton. We are incredibly grateful for your kindness, which made a real difference to women who are often estranged from family and would not usually receive gifts at Christmas. There were many smiles as women eagerly rummaged through the bags to discover the treats inside. It was a joy to offer special items we don't usually carry on the outreach van, as well as much-needed gloves, socks, and scarves during the cold weather. We thank God for your generosity, and for everyone who helped make the bags so special. Thanks again! *Sue*

From Step by Step for our Christmas donation:

We really do appreciate this donation and particularly you giving this week so that we get double the funding. I know that my colleague Jenny is going to do a proper thank you, but I wanted to thank you too. *Nic Goom, Step by Step*

I wanted to thank you for your generous donation to our Big Give Christmas Campaign. Timing your gift to fall in the Big Give week and acting so promptly has ensured that the impact for young people facing extreme challenges has been doubled. I'm sure Nic has kept you well informed since her presentation, but should you wish to know more about our services, please do let one of us know. Please do pass on our sincere and heartfelt gratitude to the congregation and everyone involved in making this gift possible. *Jenny Westmoreland, Supporter Engagement Lead Step by Step*

From RAFA for our Christmas donation for The Wings Appeal:

The Wings Appeal, that runs throughout the year, is the fundraising arm of the Association. We are constantly amazed at the generosity of

people as we raise the vital funds needed to support serving and ex-RAF personnel and their families. Thank you, on behalf of the RAF Association and all our beneficiaries, for the extremely generous donation of £200 to the RAFA Wings Appeal. *Mike Richardson, Wg Cdr M G Richardson OBE RAF (Retd), Chair, RAFA Romsey*

From Ruby for our Christmas donation to the Romsey Branch of Muscular Dystrophy UK:

Dear Church Members, on behalf of Muscular Dystrophy UK, I would like to thank you most sincerely for the very generous donation you voted to give to us as one of the charities this year. This money will be used for research into this muscle-wasting disease and to support sufferers in many different ways.

Since the inception of the Romsey Branch over 50 years ago we have raised a very large amount of money for this worthy cause but, regretfully, have decided to close the local branch due to lack of volunteers to continue the fundraising.

Thank you for the support that you have given us over the years.

With kind regards, *Ruby Hiscocks, Chairman*

From Wessex Synod Commitment for Life representative in response to our donations in lieu of Christmas cards:

Please ensure that your congregation is aware of our gratitude for its generosity and make sure they know that every penny they give to Commitment for Life will be match-funded by Wessex synod. *Christine McMillan*

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY LIGHTING

We are very grateful to Thérèse for her hard work in obtaining grant funding for upgrading our church and hall lights to more environmentally friendly lighting, and for arranging for these works to be done. We are also grateful to Test Valley and Hampshire County Council Councillors, Test Valley Community Asset Fund, Romsey Rotary, the Syder Foundation, The Benefact Trust and the Romsey Rock Choir for covering the costs for these works as we all as the repairs to Abbey Hall Lounge roof and guttering. As a consequence of these works, we now have a surplus of light bulbs which are no longer of any use to the church. Before disposing of these, we will leave them at the back of church for the remainder of February. Please do take any which are any use to you.

Andy

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

The preparation had been undertaken, the candles alight and the church was ready to welcome our congregation and community to our annual Carols by Candlelight. It was a lovely service, organised by Revd Mike and with contributions from so many people from our congregation, local churches, the Southern Fellowship and our local MP. Each year this service reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas, not the hustle and bustle, striving for the “perfect” day; it is about the arrival of a special baby, to a single mum, in a stable – not perfect, and not as planned.

We are very grateful to everyone from our local community who made up the choir, encouraging us to raise our voices in song. Thank you also to Kirsty and Rod for the music, and a special note of thanks for Chloe and Kirsty for their beautiful rendition of the traditional Coventry Carol.

Sarah

Familiar faces were joined by singers from local singing groups to form a wonderful community choir for the candlelit carol service. Seeing the church glowing in candlelight is always magical and a choir of voices singing in such a beautiful setting made the evening even more special.

Many of the singers had sung in the church before, but coming together in this way gave our carol singing a renewed sense of purpose and felt like a meaningful contribution to the service, and to everyone at Abbey URC. A few of us were able to sing the high descant parts, which we hope added a little extra sparkle to the sound.

Jayne, member of Romsey Voices and Rock Choir said, *“It was an honour to be invited to sing at the candlelit service. I have enjoyed singing in the church with my choir on many occasions, but to take part in this special Christmas service was pure joy.”*

Kevin, organiser of Romsey Carollers, said *“we were delighted to join with members of Abbey URC to form a choir for this very special occasion.”*

Ray, of Romsey Male Voice Choir and Romsey Carollers, said, *“It was a huge pleasure to take part in such a wonderful service. Rod Blencoe’s piano accompaniment was a joy to sing to, as was the organ.”*

Our heartfelt thanks go to Abbey URC for the invitation, to the musicians who supported us so beautifully, and to the congregation for such a warm and appreciative welcome.

Thérèse

CHURCH NEWS

Joy P was delighted to have a visit and flowers brought to her for her birthday earlier in the month. She said "Thank you for the beautiful flowers which have brightened up my day. Sending love and best wishes for 2026 to everyone at Abbey URC." **Joy P**

Just to say thank you for the lovely flowers Barbara brought me, when I was under the weather at the beginning of December. They did make me feel better and cheer me up. Thank you. **Gwen S**

It was a nice surprise to see Gwen on our doorstep with some lovely flowers for us. December and January have been rather stressful, with Barry having various medical investigations at the General including an overnight stay, and not to mention numerous GP appointments!! He doesn't do things by half! Anyway, he's ok, not driving for a few months, but otherwise life is as usual. It's so lovely that our church friends were thinking of us, so thank you all very much indeed. **Jill G**

I would like to express my thanks for the beautiful flowers I found on my doorstep today. They were much appreciated. **Eireen**

Our prayers are with the family and friends of Joyce Maunder, who passed away peacefully in December. Joyce was a member of our church community for many years and when she was no longer able to attend Christine regularly visited her. She enjoyed the many years spent with our church and congregation. Details of her funeral will be shared, once known.

Cynthia C, who used to attend and help at Table Tennis, passed away shortly before Christmas; her friendliness and cheerful personality will be much missed. We keep her family and friends in our prayers.



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CALENDAR

February		
1	10.30am	Morning Worship, including Holy Communion, led by Revd Sarah Hall
4	2.30pm	Church Table Tennis in Abbey Hall
5	10-11.30am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge, free refreshments and a warm welcome to all
7	10am-12.30pm	Church open for quiet reflection and prayer
8	10.30am	Morning Worship led by Joan Smith
8	6.30am	Bible Study on Zoom ID 864 1780 6994 PW learning
9	10.30am	BALM in Abbey Hall Lounge
11	2pm	Pastoral Group Meeting in Abbey Hall Lounge
12	10-11.30 am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge, free refreshments and a warm welcome to all
14	10am-12.30pm	Church open for quiet reflection and prayer
15	10.30am	Morning Worship celebrating love, led by Revd Mike with Revd Terry Hinks providing the reflection
17	7.30pm	Chill Out Tuesday at White Horse Hotel, all welcome
18		Ash Wednesday
18	2.30pm	Church Table Tennis in Abbey Hall
19	10-11.30am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge, free refreshments and a warm welcome to all
21	10am-12.30pm	Church open for quiet reflection and prayer
22	10.30am	1st Sunday in Lent: Morning Worship led by Revd Wendy White
22	11.30am	Church Meeting chaired by Howard Coulson
22	6.30pm	Lent Bible Study on Zoom ID 864 1780 6994 PW learning
24	7.30pm	Elders Meeting in Abbey Hall Lounge
26	10-11.30am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge, free refreshments and a warm welcome to all
28	10am-12.30pm	Church open for quiet reflection and prayer
28	2.00 pm	Musicals Sing-a-long at Bitterne URC

Please note: there is a change of date for the church meeting this month; it will now be held on Sunday, 22 February. Thank you.

Braishfield United Reformed Church

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	The Reverend Doctor Sarah Hall e-mail: sarah.hall.swhg@gmail.com Day off: Thursdays	02380 768004
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Serving Elders:	Shirley Smith Allison Symes Sharon Whitfield	01794 368447 02380 262803 01794 328853

February

1	9.30	Holy Communion led by Revd Dr Sarah Hall
8	10.00	Family Worship led by Andy Bevan
15	10.00	Family Worship led by Joan Smith
22	10.00	Family Worship led by Revd Mary Thomas

March

1	9.30	Holy Communion led by Revd Mike Perrott
8	10.00	Family Worship led by Sharon Whitfield
15	10.00	Mothering Sunday and Annual General Meeting
15	10.00	Family Worship led by Revd Dr Sarah Hall
22	10.00	Family Worship led by Revd Wendy White
29	10.00	Family Worship led by Peter White

Please note that the third Sunday of the month is the time to bring in tinned goods etc for the food bank collection.

News from Braishfield

Hello, it is good to be back with you again. Doesn't Christmas seem such a long time ago now? I mention it because I'm pleased to report Braishfield URC's Christmas Day offering, which goes to Crisis - the homeless charity, raised £134.21, which is a splendid result. Many thanks, everyone. It was also lovely to welcome Abbey URC to our short service, and for some of our folk to join them at the end of the year for theirs. A huge thank you must go to Kirsty too for coming over to play for us at Braishfield on Christmas morning. It was lovely to hear the organ being played again.

Moving into 2026, we look ahead to our Annual General Meeting and church meeting which will follow a short service led by the Reverend Sarah on 15 March. This is also Mothering Sunday. A jobs list will go at the back of the church soon so please put your names down for tasks you would like to do. A huge thank you to all who have and continue to serve the church in their roles. It makes a huge difference to us.

It was wonderful to welcome speakers from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance to talk to us as part of our service on Sunday, 25 January 2026. I hope to share more about this in the next magazine. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance was our charity project for 2025 and, after a vote at a church meeting, we decided we would continue to raise money for them in 2026. We were pleased our Christmas Hamper raffle raised the great sum of £68 for them. Please do let us know if you would like to hold an event for the charity so we can put dates in our diary. The Jars of Coins raised £244.13 for the charity and we hope to be doing this again. Do start saving your coins now. It is amazing how the money mounts up over the year (and yes notes are always welcome!).

I'm sure you'll remember that Daniel Symes took a service at Salisbury URC back in November. Well, one of the people we met there was their church secretary, Joan Smith, who is coming to preach to us on 15 February; we are looking forward to welcoming her. Daniel has also been invited back to preach at Salisbury.

As I write this, it is bitterly cold and there are heavy frosts and snow around. By the time this magazine goes out, the weather should have improved a bit and there will be more evidence that spring and new life is finally on its way. So appropriate as we rapidly head towards Easter, I think.

Allison S



2026 WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



The 2026 World Day of Prayer materials from Nigeria bring us a powerful invitation drawn from Matthew 11:28-30. At a time when people worldwide are carrying heavy burdens, our Nigerian sisters offer profound insights into finding rest in God. Through their exploration of different kinds of burdens - shame, systemic oppression, religious persecution, poverty and despair - the writers help us understand both the weight of human suffering and the depths of divine rest. Their work shows us that true rest isn't just about physical relief, but about transformation through God's grace and community support.

You'll find this theme beautifully expressed across all program components. The Worship Service features a playlet about a young girl named Chioma and stories of three Nigerian women: Beatrice, Jato, and Blessing. Their experiences reveal how God provides rest through community support, faith, and hope. More details can be found on the website at [World Day of Prayer 2026](https://www.worlddayofprayer.org/2026)

Join us for the World Day of Prayer service at 2pm on Friday 6 March at Abbey URC, followed by refreshments



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THE COMMUNITY PANTRY

Abbey URC support the Community Pantry in Romsey through the year; it is good for us to understand a little more about the charities we support. I have been speaking to Margaret Griffin who is a volunteer at the Community Pantry and I asked her a few questions:



Q: How long have you been a volunteer for this charity? And why?

M: about 5 years. I offered to help after first Covid lockdown. I needed a focus and to be involved with helping others. I love it. It's an eye opener to recognising the needs of the less fortunate in our society in Romsey.

Q: What can you tell us about what you do?

M: We operate as a small shop. We receive donations of food from various sources including churches and individuals. The donations are put on the shelves, in fridges or freezer. We restock constantly. Customers pay £6 for their shop and choose what they want within the boundaries set, two more expensive and ten less expensive items for their £6. We check their basket to ensure they have enough items. We also welcome people to stay for free coffee and a chat and regularly have three or more people who are lonely and want a warm welcoming neutral place where they are wanted and cared for.

Q: Can you tell us about any of the people that need the help of the community pantry?

M: Several homeless people come into the shop and we give them any food items they can eat on site. We do not have any cooking facilities. People who are struggling with either or both budget and resources are offered help in obtaining low-cost food.

Q: Do they need a referral from a professional body, i.e. doctor, social services, etc?

M: No. No referral is needed; people hear about us from their friends and social media, ie our Facebook page. Everyone is welcome, we do not question them on their financial position or household situation. We operate on trust.

Q: Donations from our church tend to be tinned or packet goods but I believe people can take more perishable goods like dairy items or even meat direct to the pantry on the days of opening: Monday 09.30-12.00; Wednesday 16.00-18.00; Friday 09.30-12.00. Can you tell us a bit more about this?

M: We are very happy to receive any food and household items, toilet rolls. We welcome fresh and frozen products as we have appropriate storage facilities. We are always in need of meat, fish, cheese, eggs - things that can be used as a basis for a meal.

Our main source of food donated comes from FairShare weekly, who collect excess items from supermarkets and then we pay a very reduced amount for these items. We also have a free donation of fruit and vegetables from Brakes wholesalers in Eastleigh which we collect once a week. We never know what we are going to receive. We are grateful for all items donated.

Q: Who are the umbrella organisation of Romsey Pantry?

M: Gateway Central Services based at Romsey School deal with the finances.

It was lovely to speak with Margaret; I hope you've found this interesting.

Chris L

ROCK CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT

What a truly epic evening! The singing was absolutely brilliant; they should all be so proud. A grand total of £825.15 was raised, in aid of Abbey URC and Cash for Kids Mission Christmas Appeal, through donations, refreshments and the raffle. What an amazing result! Thank you for supporting us; your energy and enthusiasm is amazing!



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Abbey United Reformed Church, Romsey



A JANE AUSTEN CHRISTMAS

A wonderful evening was had by all celebrating the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth in full Regency style, held in Abbey Hall and organised by Kirsty. There was a delightful programme of carols and music, accompanied by poetry and readings. The refreshments were period offerings including real mince pies, which included minced beef and beef suet, made by Sylvia. The brave people who tried them confirmed they were delicious!



The evening raised an amazing £480 for church funds, thank you so much to Kirsty and all those involved in the evening for organising such an enjoyable event.

We have received some lovely comments:

"I have been wanting to say how very much I enjoyed this event. The musicians and singers were wonderful, as were the Georgian style refreshments, parlour games and decorations. It must have taken a lot of work to prepare it all, thank you. Thank you again for a lovely afternoon. I'll certainly look out for any other musical gatherings held by you in the future."

Alison P

"I was present at the Jane Austen event at Abbey Hall. It was a perfectly delightful night - I only wish I had period clothing to wear! I was very impressed by it all.

I wanted to say how much I really enjoyed it. I've never been to anything like it before, but it was something above and beyond my imagination, so thank you very much. The music and singing were perfect, the carols equally so. I could close my eyes and be transported back 250 years.

I have a particular interest in the past, but for my ancestors who were actors during the Victorian period, so it's interesting to see how Christmas developed from the time of Jane Austen to much later. Certainly, historical periods like the Regency and Victorian times fascinate me in terms of cultural and social history.

The food was fabulous too - fascinating how much 'minced pies' have been altered. The 'Twelfth Cake' was delicious. I loved the idea of being to try past recipes and how they've changed.

I also loved the Christmas decorations - very 'traditional' in style. Sometimes I wish I was a screenwriter, as I'd try to make a very good Regency costume drama!

Please let me know if any other events are in the works. Thank you very much!"

James

The photos were shared by James, we're glad he enjoyed it and thank him for sharing.



SUPPORTING SHELTER



At the beginning of December our family received a video from my granddaughter Penny, aged 9, with this message:

"Hello everybody, did you know that there's ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY THOUSAND children that won't have a home this Christmas and I don't think that's ok - so I want to help. So I'm swimming 170 lengths of the pool to raise money for SHELTER. If you don't know what Shelter is, it is a charity that helps homeless people.

So could you please sponsor me. Thank you."

The challenge was to swim 170 lengths before Christmas and on her first swim she swam 30 lengths, stopping each length to turn around to do another, proudly watched by her parents.

On 21 December myself and other sponsors received a video on our mobile phones from Penny, with the excited message that she had swam 170 lengths over the course of several weeks, here is what she said:

"Hello everybody! Guess what? I did 170 lengths in time for Christmas, which is only 4 days away, and thank you all for sponsoring me, I'm really grateful for it - and I raised lots of money, and guess what? Mummy's work will match it, so that means I have raised £1,015 and that is quite a lot of money!




Hope you have a great Christmas. Thank you everybody. Bye!"

I know we as a church support Shelter at Christmas, but hearing about the charity from Penny's perspective made me think differently. It's so easy to think we are helping by donating, but at the end of the day do we stop thinking because we have donated?

Chris L, Proud Granma

MORE GOOD NEWS.....

Greenpeace UK shared some GOOD NEWS to start 2026:

-  Green sea turtles are NO LONGER endangered
-  Solar & wind power just had their biggest year EVER in the UK
-  The Antarctic Ozone Hole is the SMALLEST it's been in 5 years

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ROUND THE SOUTHERN FELLOWSHIP OF UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES

Southern Fellowship elders social

In January the elders of the Southern Fellowship met at Abbey Hall in Romsey for a social event and a fun quiz. It was great to see so many people attend and lovely to meet new people within the fellowship. Thank you to Andy B, at Romsey URC, for organising the event and to all who helped provide tea, coffee and cake.



2026 sees the 40th anniversary of moving into their present premises and they are planning a series of special events to celebrate.



2026 EVENTS

Bitterne United Reformed Church are celebrating 40 years in the precinct! We've planned a special programme of events in 2026, and we'd be delighted if you can join us!



MARCH 1 – 2:00 PM

Christian Musicals Sing-Along

MARCH 22 – 10:30 AM

Reunion Service & Lunch



APRIL 24 – 7:30 PM

Solent Fellowship Band (Salvation Army) Concert — Ticketed



MAY 16 – 7:00 PM

Quiz Night in Support of Christian Aid



JUNE 27 – 7:30 PM

Imerys Singers (Cornwall) Concert — Ticketed



JULY 18 – 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

Summer Fair on the Patio



SEPTEMBER 26 – 7:30 PM

Saxophony Concert — Ticketed



OCTOBER 27-31

Jigsaw Puzzle Festival



NOVEMBER 20 – 7:00 PM

Barn Dance — Ticketed



DECEMBER

Christmas Tree Festival



For the latest updates, please visit our website



Important Information:

Dates and details may be subject to change.
Everyone is welcome — bring friends, family, and neighbours

or follow us on social media.



CHRISTIAN MUSICALS SING-ALONG



The Christian Musicals Sing-Along at Bitterne URC will be on Sunday, 1 March from 2pm 🎤🌟 Join us for a joyful afternoon of Christian Musicals from 1977-2002; sing along with live piano, relive the classics, and reconnect

with our vibrant church family.



All are warmly welcome — long-standing members, new faces, and anyone who loves a musical moment! For more information, visit our website: <https://bitterneurc.org.uk/40-years-in-bitterne-precinct/>

A free community event with live piano, tea & cake, and a warm welcome for all. Can't wait to sing with you!

KENTS ALMSHOUSES VACANCY

Kents Almshouses were started in the late 17th century by a Romsey resident to provide homes for ladies in Romsey who had fallen on hard times and who would otherwise have had to go to the workhouse. We are a registered charity and the almshouses are run by a committee of voluntary trustees, with support from an administrator and a treasurer who receive an honorarium each year.

We are very conscious of our history, and our constitution requires that new residents have a good link with Romsey. We have 9 small individual flats for ladies of retirement age who are in housing, financial or other significant need, have links with Romsey and can live independently. Our Almshouses are surrounded by lovely communal gardens, and our residents pay a Monthly Maintenance Charge, (currently less than £400 a month) rather than rent, so they do not have any tenants' rights. Usually the almshouse is their home for life, unless they become too infirm to continue living there even with support, or if they do not adhere to our guidelines. It is also vitally important that our residents become part of the Kents community and do not isolate themselves. We have built a good supportive community and residents are caring and helpful to each other but equally do not intrude on others' lives but respect each other's privacy.

We currently have a vacancy in a first floor flat, with stairs and stairlift access. Although we advertised it before Christmas, we were unable to find a suitable applicant from those we interviewed, and we are now trying to widen our areas of advertisement. We think that the Romsey Churches may well know of some parishioners who might be suitable

candidates, and the Methodist Church and The Abbey have agreed to support us in this search. We are hoping that the topic will be brought up at the next Ministers' Meeting in early February. As a longstanding trustee of Kents, I'm hoping to talk to the Churches Together meeting later in February to raise awareness of what we have to offer.

For an application form, further details and an opportunity to view the flat contact the Charity Administrator to Kents: kentsromsey@gmail.com Alternatively, send an enquiry to The Trustees of Kents Almshouses, c/o Romsey Town Hall, 1 Market Place, Romsey SO51 8YZ. Deadline for applications: Friday, 20 February 2026. Thank you.

Kate Allen

PROOF READING IS ESSENTIAL!

These bulletins were published in church newsletters. Thankfully we have proof-readers who try to ensure this doesn't happen in our magazine.... however, we're all human and some things do occasionally slip through the net!

- ❖ Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
- ❖ For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- ❖ Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
- ❖ At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?". Come early and listen to our choir practice.
- ❖ Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.
- ❖ The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

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Advertising in our church magazine is
a great way to share your business
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church.

Get noticed by a local audience and
connect with the community.

Contact abbeyurcnews@gmail.com

!! YOUR NAME/IMAGE !!

Cost for 10 issues per year.

1/6 page square £50 per year

1/3 page rectangle £71.50 per year

½ page rectangle £87 per year

Full page £153 per year

Each issue is distributed to
our congregations, local businesses,
retirement homes, can be found on
our website and Issuu and has over
20k impressions on social media!

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- the church by the arch

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Bereavement and Loss Meeting

10am on 2nd Mondays

We meet on the 2nd Monday of every month at 10:30am in the Abbey Hall Lounge. BALM is a gentle, welcoming space for anyone who has lost a loved one. Come to connect, share, or simply be with others who understand.



Chill Out Tuesday

from 7.30pm on 2nd Tuesdays

Join us for a relaxed social evening at 7:30pm on the second Tuesday of each month in the bar area at The White Horse, Romsey. Enjoy a warm, welcoming atmosphere and the chance to meet new people.



The Social Cup

10am-11.30am every Thursday

Drop in any Thursday for free refreshments and a warm, welcoming space to relax. Whether you'd like a quiet read, some company, or a place to meet up with friends, you'll be warmly welcomed.



Part of the Warm Welcome Spaces
and the Chatty Café scheme.



Abbey Hall, Romsey SO51 8EL



www.abbeyurc.org.uk



2026 MAGAZINE CHARGES

We hope you have enjoyed our 2025 magazines. The subscription for 2026 was due in **January**. If you collect a printed version from church, or if you have it delivered by hand, the cost for the year is £10.50. Please let Jill Girdlestone know if you want your name added to the list.

Payment can be made:

- by bank transfer/BACS to: Abbey United Reformed Church Romsey, Sort Code 40-52-40, Account Number 00033457 (please use the reference MAG and your name; and let Jill and Reg know)
- by post with a cheque to Jill Girdlestone and a note stating MAG and your name/address. Cheques to be made payable to "Abbey United Reformed Church".

You can have a paper copy posted to you at a cost of £20 per year, to cover the printing, envelopes and postage for 10 issues. If you wish the magazine posted to you, please tell Jill Girdlestone, and ensure payment is received as soon as possible.

It will still be available on our website and via social media. Thank you

DRIVER SKILLS 60+ SCHEME

Hampshire County Council (HCC) operate a driving appraisal scheme for Hampshire residents called the 'Driver Skills Scheme 60+'. The appraisal takes place from the person's home using their own car and is delivered by specially selected and trained Driving Standards Agency (DSA) Approved Driving Instructors (ADI) who have a good understanding of the needs of experienced drivers. The appraisal costs £65 and lasts around one and a half hours. Click [here](#) to find out more.

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COMMUNITY AUDIT QUESTIONNAIRE



The Outreach Group is looking into what activities are available in our community and where there might be needs or gaps.

We would really appreciate your help by taking a few minutes to answer these questions.

- 1. What activities do you take part in? Who provides them and where are they held?**
- 2. What do you enjoy about these activities?**
- 3. What is your main reason for going to these activities? This might be to meet people, make new friends, or to stay active in body and mind.**
- 4. Are there activities you've had to stop doing? If so, what made it difficult to continue?**
- 5. Are there any activities that you would like to take part in that aren't currently available?**
- 6. What other activities take place that friends and family do that you know about but wouldn't want to do yourself?**
- 7. Are there any activities that you volunteer to help with?**

We are looking for input from our congregation and our local community, so please pass this to friends and neighbours who may wish to be involved.

If you would like to leave your answers for us to look at, please give them to Carole, put them into the Outreach pigeon-hole, drop them into the prayer post box by the church door or email them to carole.cox@btinternet.com. We would like to discuss these, and for you to share your thoughts and ideas, at the church meeting on 22 February. Thank you.