

NEWS

From



United Reformed Churches
of Romsey and Braishfield



APRIL 2026

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Abbey United Reformed Church

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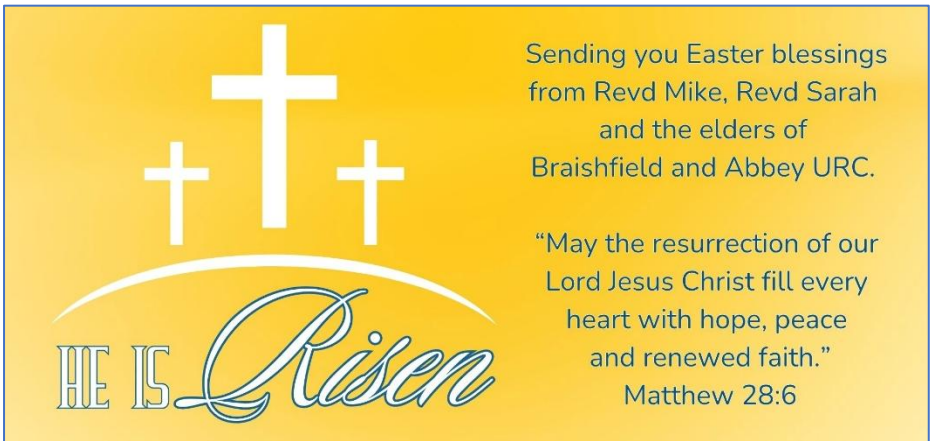
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Services

Sunday Family Worship	10.30am
Monthly Bible Study first Sunday evening On Zoom (ID: 864 1780 6994 Password: learning)	6.30pm
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 Braishfield URC, nor the elders nor production team.



A MESSAGE FROM REVD MIKE

April 2026

Dear friends in Christ

The Right Rev Mariann Edgar Budde, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, even though she has made no direct comment on the current conflict involving the US and Israel against Iran, has made powerful statements endorsing mercy in human relationships, especially in the Middle East. In a joint statement with the Very Rev Randolph Marshall Hollerith, dean of Washington National Cathedral, she said:

‘As Christians, we hear the voice of Jesus, who came among us as the Prince of Peace. “Blessed are the merciful,” he said, “for they will receive mercy. ... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” We stand with our brother Archbishop Hosam Naoum of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, and we join in his fervent prayer that God will “be present for all who suffer, for people of all faiths – Jews, Christian, and Muslim – and for all people of the land.”’

The Christian calling to hold peace and mercy – we might add justice and compassion – at the heart of our relations with other people and between nations, especially with the most vulnerable, is particularly difficult to see at work in the news at the moment. Rather, conflict, brutality and hatred seem to be the focus of some currently in power, and it is so easy to feel helpless. However, it is good that many world leaders have rejected calls to assist in the illegitimate and violent actions of others.

Our Christian striving toward hope, compassion, mercy and peace is still vitally important though. We are in the midst of the solemnity of Lent as I write this, and especially as we travel with Jesus through the events of Holy Week, it doesn't seem possible that anything or anyone can stop the pain, injustice and

loss of life that even God in Jesus experienced on that cross. But our celebration of Easter is just around the corner! The unimaginable, extraordinary, powerful resurrection to new life overcame death and reassures us that having hope that good will prevail in the world is not futile. My prayer for all of us this Easter is that we can fan the flame of hope like a lamp in the darkness, and that our lights, joined together as Christian people throughout the world, can shine like beacons offering that much needed peace, mercy, love and compassion.

Not long ago I took the photo below in our local woods. There are twisted, brittle and seemingly lifeless shrubs; they have the beauty and fragrant wild Narcissi flowers growing among them. They bring the colour and new life of Spring to our lives. Thanks be to the Living God who makes all things new at Easter time!



In Christian love,

Revd Mike

HOME COMMUNION



If you're not able to make it to church for any reason but would still like to receive Communion, we'd be more than happy to bring it to you at home.

Staying connected to our church family is important, and we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to share in this special part of our worship, even if you cannot join us in person. Please contact Carole by email at carole.cox@btinternet.com or call 01794 518184.

THE SOCIAL CUP

Advance warning: there will be no Social Cup on 9 April; please make a note in your diaries. Thank you.

PRAYER FOR LENT

Our lives are shaped by rhythm. Our hearts beat to a steady rhythm. Days and nights, weeks and months, seasons and years all follow their own pattern. When we sing or play music, when we march or dance, we rely on the right rhythm; without it, there is confusion and disorder. Even our bodies remind us how vital rhythm is - when the heartbeat falters, life itself is affected.

Despite the challenges of climate change, the seasons still follow one another in their familiar order. After often difficult winter months, we welcome Spring with its blossoms and bright colours, carrying the joyful message of resurrection and the hope of Easter.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, we are reminded that:

”There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot...
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance...
a time to search and a time to give up...
a time for war and a time for peace.”

At this Easter season, we give thanks to God for the free gift of eternal life in Christ - a gift that brings joy and hope strong enough to carry us even through the darkest valleys. Out of this abundance, we are invited to share God’s compassion and generosity with those around us.

The apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth:

”Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesús Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” - 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4

May this season renew our hearts, steady our steps, and deepen our desire to bring God’s comfort to others.

Leena

CLOCKS MOVE FORWARD

Just a reminder, that clocks jump forward one hour on Sunday, 29 March. So, don't forget to change your clocks when you go to bed that Saturday night, otherwise you will miss our Palm Sunday service led by Pam Humphreys.



MATTERS ARISING FROM FEBRUARY CHURCH MEETING

We will be holding our first Community Thanksgiving Service at 10.30am on 18 October. This service is being planned in response to an earlier Church Meeting request for all local charities to be invited to the Community Awareness service. Although the Community Awareness Service will continue in its present format, we will also be holding this Community Thanksgiving Service, to which we would like to invite as many local voluntary organisations as possible and offer thanks for their work. If there are any local voluntary organisations you would like to be invited to this service please pass their details to Andy.

In response to the question raised about the short notice given about the Celebration of Love service, please be aware of the following events currently scheduled for the next three months.

- 9 May at 2pm Southern Fellowship Group Anniverdary Service at Braishfield URC with guest speaker Revd Stephen Thornton.
- 24 May at 10.30am Pentecost Sunday worship led by Revd Sarah.
- 28–31 May Romsey Chamber Music Festival is being held, with 9 concerts taking place in our church.
- 7 June at 11.30am our Annual General Church Meeting.
- 14 June at 10.30am we will be holding our Community Awareness Service led by Andy B, with guest speakers from the Romsey Ukrainian Refugee Group.
- 14 June 3pm Afternoon Tea for those living alone or older in years. If you know of anyone who is no longer able to attend church regularly and may welcome this chance to meet others, enjoy a chat and some entertainment, please pass their name and contact details to Andy B or Jeannine Macartney.
- 1 July to 30 September Revd Sarah will be on Sabbatical leave.
- 4 - 19 July Romsey Festival. There will be a display of quilts in the church, an art workshop and several concerts. Details to follow.
- 5 July our rededication and thanks service, with the induction of newly elected Elders.
- 11 July the Beggars Fair will be held around Romsey venues; we will be looking help stewarding for the church and hall.

CHILL OUT TUESDAY

A small but interesting gathering this month for Chill Out Tuesday. We have a regular visitor now joining us each month, and March was no exception as she joined us for drinks and a get-together. We also had a visitor from Lymington who had seen the group meeting on Facebook and was interested to learn more. She assured us it was not so far to come, especially as the venue was so inviting.



It was a pleasant evening with much chat and laughter, so much so that diners from the White Horse restaurant stopped to find out more when all left at the end of the evening. There is still room for a few more 'members', so why not join us next time from 7.30pm, Tuesday 14 April at the White Horse Hotel bar, Romsey.

Wendy

COMMUNITY MINI-BUS

We are investigating the possibility of the use of the Test Valley Borough Council Community Mini-Bus. The Mini-Bus is available for hire at small fee. However, we would need to provide the driver who must hold a valid mini-bus driving licence. This licence can be obtained through the council at a small cost, and there is the possibility that this could be covered by a Synod grant. If anyone is interested in volunteering to undertake the training and to drive the mini-bus on behalf of the Church, please let Andy know.

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

Material for May 2026 to be submitted by
5pm (latest) **on Thursday, 23 April 2026**
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.

BIBLE STUDY



Our monthly Zoom Sunday evening Bible study will take place on Easter Sunday, 5 April at 6.30 pm (ID 864 1780 6994 PC learning) when we will look more deeply at the Gospel verses set for that Sunday (see 'morning prayer' readings). All welcome!

A FOND FAREWELL

I am very sad to be leaving my job as caretaker at Abbey URC and moving from 1 Abbey Water to Kents Almshouses from 1 July 2026.

The last 30 years have been such a happy time, and my family and I were always treated and supported with kindness from everyone connected with the Church. Both my Andrews loved being here; and although my husband sadly passed away in 2024, I have many memories of him leaning on the railings looking down the river. Young Andrew, although living in Nashville now, will always think of Abbey Water as home.

I would love to have stayed put, but my health and mobility are not so good at the moment - so the time has come to hang up my keys and broom.

Angela W

CHURCH NEWS

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Angela, who has been our caretaker for 30 years. She has been such an important part of Church life, quietly ensuring that our church and hall are always ready for our users. She is known for her welcoming smile and for the care she shows to both the building and all who pass through it. We are so pleased that Angela has found a home locally that will suit her moving forward, and we look forward to seeing her around town. With love and gratitude, and our very best wishes for the future, from everyone at Abbey URC.

We were saddened to hear the news that Ann Viney passed away on in early March. Anne and her family have a long association with the church; she had a wonderful friendly nature and welcoming smile. We remember her family and friends in our prayers.



Thank you to everyone who provided posies for the Mothering Sunday service. The daffodils, tulips, hellebores and rosemary were absolutely beautiful – and much appreciated by all those who took a posy home, or shared with a friend or neighbour.

Thank you, Gwen, for bringing the lovely flowers for my birthday it was so nice to see you on such a rainy day.

Ros M



Alice C recently had a birthday; she sends her thanks for the lovely flowers taken by Gwen.

Wishing Allison S a very happy special birthday from us all!
We hope you had an amazing celebration!!



Wishing you all a Happy Easter from everyone at Unity.

A huge thank you to Thérèse. The work she has undertaken on behalf of the Church to obtain grants and support for the LED lighting has made such a difference to our church and hall – both in CO2 emissions and in financial savings. Thank you so much from every one of us, we really appreciate your support.

Thank you for the flowers and for people's good wishes for a speedy recovery from my broken ankle.

Carole

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COMMUNITY AUDIT

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the recent community audit. Your time, insights, and thoughtful input have been invaluable, and we are truly grateful for the care you have shown for our shared community.

What has become clear through this process is just how much Romsey already offers. It is a town rich in activities, support networks, and opportunities, with many groups - including Abbey URC - working hard to meet a wide range of needs. At present, there does not appear to be an obvious gap.

However, this is not the end of the journey - far from it. We remain committed to building strong partnerships with others across the town and to playing our part in supporting and encouraging the work already taking place. Our hope is to continue growing as a church that is at the heart of the Romsey community.

Thanks again for being involved.



MORNING PRAYER

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 April.

April	5	Psalm 118: v 1 & 2 & 14-24	Matthew 28:1-10 (Easter)
	12	Psalm 16	John 20:19-31
	19	Psalm 116 v 1-4 & 12-19	Luke 24:13-35
	26	Psalm 23	John 10:1-10

EASTER BREAKFAST



Come and join us as we celebrate Easter morning together with a relaxed Easter breakfast in the Abbey Hall Lounge at 9am on Sunday, 5 April - everyone is very welcome.

It's just £3 per person. To help us make sure there's plenty to go round, please pop your name on the sign-up sheet at the back of

church by Sunday, 29 March.

Please speak to Carole, Sylvia or Sarah if you have any food allergies or intolerances. We look forward to seeing you.

SHINING BRIGHTLY

You may have noticed something a little brighter at our service on Sunday 1 March - the church shining beautifully under its new LED lights.

Thanks to the encouragement of church members and the generous backing of several funders, the lighting upgrade is now complete in both the church and the hall. It's already making a difference. Since the hall lights were replaced in July 2025, electricity use has fallen noticeably - and with the church now fully upgraded, even greater savings are expected. We'll continue to monitor the impact in the months ahead.

For those who enjoy a few illuminating facts:

- ♥ 90 light bulbs replaced in the church
- ♥ 32 light fittings upgraded
- ♥ 15,000 steps walked by our electrician in a single day
- ♥ 1,216 kWh reduction in electricity in the hall during the first 7 months
- ♥ Already saved £300 in just 7 months
- ♥ 0.3+ tonnes reduction in CO₂ emissions each year from the hall LED alone

We are especially grateful to Test Valley Climate Change Grant, The National Lottery Community Fund, Benefact Trust, Hampshire County Council councillors and Test Valley Borough Council councillors, Syder Foundation, and the Rotary Club of Test Valley. This project would not have been possible without their generous support.



This project isn't just about better lighting (though it does look wonderful!). It's about careful stewardship - reducing our environmental impact, lowering ongoing costs, and investing wisely in the future of our church.

We were delighted to welcome Cllrs Nik Daas and Sandra Gidley from Test Valley Borough Council on 11 March to see the new LED lighting in the church and Abbey Hall. It was also a great opportunity to show how widely the buildings are used - with Rum's Eg holding a choir rehearsal in the church that morning and a Tai Chi class about to begin in the hall.



Thérèse

Free Easter Egg Hunt in Romsey!

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Easter Saturday, 2–4pm
at Abbey United Reformed
Church (by the Arch)

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Journey towards Easter with us.....

Palm Sunday 10.30am on Sunday, 29 March

We remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with palm crosses given out during the service. Pop by during the day and add a palm cross; these can be found at the base of the cross in the front garden .

Maundy Thursday, 2 April

We remember the Last Supper and Jesus' call to love one another.

Good Friday, 3 April

The empty cross reminds us of the reality of Jesus' suffering and death. It points us forward, reminding us that even on the darkest day of the Church's year, this is not the end of the story.

Saturday, 4 April

10am-12.30pm our church open for quiet prayer and reflection.

2-4pm Everyone is welcome to join our FREE Easter hunt in our church. A prize for every child; refreshments will be available.

Easter Sunday, 5 April

9am Easter breakfast in Abbey Hall Lounge - a joyful start to the day.

Our Easter raffle will be drawn before our 10.30am service - don't forget to check if you've won an egg!

10:30am He is risen! Join us to celebrate with Holy Communion. Bring a flower to add to the Easter cross. If you're passing later in the day you're welcome to add a flower at any time and share in the celebration.



ROMSEY CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Between 28-31 May, this year's Romsey Chamber Music Festival turns to the elements: earth, air, fire and water. It is a theme that opens up an enormous musical landscape. The natural world has inspired composers for centuries, not just as a source of imagery but as a way of understanding ourselves. Storms, tides, birdsong, flickering flames and shifting seasons become mirrors for our own emotional weather.

SERVICES FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY

There are various Maudy Thursday services or events to join:

- 11am–1pm at Wisdom House, The Last Supper Experience led by Sr Marie Turner DW. Gathering in the spirit of fellowship for a simple Mediterranean style lunch with prayers, hymns and a ritual of washing of the feet/hands. Please book for this event via email reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk or tel: 01794 830206.
- 7pm communion service at Romsey Methodist church.
- 7pm St Joseph's will be meeting at St Andrews North Baddesley, for Mass of the Lord's Supper and stripping of the altar.
- 7.30pm at Romsey Abbey stripping the altar and symbolic washing of feet; followed by a Watch for one hour of silent prayer.
- 7.30pm a united service at Avenue St Andrews with Isaac Watts, led by Revd Sarah.
- 7.30pm communion service at Bitterne URC.

On Good Friday the following services and events are available:

- 8.30–9.30 am Easter Breakfast at Romsey Methodist church. Their church is also open 9.30am–3pm for sensory prayer trail and at 3pm they are holding a short reflective service.
- 10am united service at Isaac Watts with Avenue St Andrews, led by Revd Sarah.
- 10am at Romsey Abbey, the Liturgy of Good Friday with Romsey Abbey Choirs and Holy Communion. At 2pm an hour by the cross for readings, reflections and hymns.
- 11am join Bitterne URC for a joint walk of witness with the Church of Holy Saviour, returning to Bitterne URC for refreshments afterwards. At 7.30pm they are holding a Tenebrae Service.
- 3pm St Joseph's will meet at St Andrews, North Baddesley, for the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion.
- 10–11.30am Freedom Church are holding a Good Friday Family Event.

CALENDAR

April		
2	10-11.30am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge
3	12noon	Good Friday open air Act of Witness in The Cornmarket
3	7.30pm	Tenebrae Service at Bitterne URC
4	10-12.30pm	Church open for quiet prayer and reflection
4	2-4pm	Easter Hunt in Abbey URC for young people, refreshments available
5	9am	Easter Breakfast in Abbey Hall Lounge
5	10.30am	Easter Sunday service, including Holy Communion, led by Revd Sarah Hall
6-12		Revd Sarah Hall on annual leave
11	10-12.30pm	Church open for quiet prayer and reflection
11	7.30pm	Stuttgart Jazz Choir and Tango Ensemble Concert
12	10.30am	Morning Worship led by Revd Julian Macro
12	6.30am	Bible Study on Zoom, ID 864 1780 6994 PW learning
13	10.30am	BALM in Abbey Hall Lounge
14	7.30pm	Chill Out Tuesday at White Horse Hotel
15	2.30pm	Church Table Tennis in Abbey Hall
16	10-11.30am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge
18	10-12.30pm	Church open for quiet prayer and reflection
19	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Mrs Andy Bevan
22	2pm	Pastoral Group Meeting in Abbey Hall Lounge
23	10-11.30am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge
24	7.30pm	Solent Fellowship Salvation Army Band concert at Bitterne URC
25	10-12.30pm	Church open for quiet prayer and reflection
25	3-5pm	Sunnenday Concert in Abbey URC
26	10.30am	Morning Worship led by Revd Wendy White, including the baptism of baby Jacob
28	7.30pm	Elders Meeting in Abbey Hall Lounge
30	10-11.30am	The Social Cup in Abbey Hall Lounge
30	7.30pm	Finance & Fabric Group in Abbey Hall Lounge
May		
1	7.30pm	Romsey Male Voice Choir with special guests Mansfield & District Male Voice Choir

Braishfield United Reformed Church

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April

5	9.30	Easter Sunday Holy Communion led by Rev Dr Sarah Hall
12	10.00	Family Worship led by Nick Tustian
19	10.00	Family Worship led by Daniel Symes
26	10.00	Family Worship led by Chris Noyce

May

3	9.30	Holy Communion led by Rev Mike Perrott
9	2.00	Saturday: Southern Fellowship Anniversary Service at Braishfield URC led by Revd Mike Perrott, Preacher: Reverend Stephen Thornton. Refreshments to follow, all welcome.
10		No service at Braishfield URC
10	9.30	Christian Aid Service - to be held at All Saints Parish Church
17	10.00	Family Worship led by David Stone
24	10.00	Favourite Hymns Service led by Sharon Whitfield
31	10.00	Family Worship led by Revd Mary Thomas

June

7		NO SERVICE – RUNNERS
14	10.00	Church Anniversary Service
14	10.00	Family Worship led by Rev Mike Perrott

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

It was good to see All Saints Parish Church packed for the funeral of Hazel Davies, who is much missed by us all. Our sympathies and prayers are with her family.

Many thanks to all who came to the Annual General Meeting and Church Meeting on Sunday, 15 March which was led by Revd Sarah. Many thanks to all those who help the church in any way – this is very much appreciated. It was good to have the jobs list pretty much completed ahead of the meeting too. Well done, all.

Just ahead of this, the Braishfield Elders met with Revd Mike on Saturday, 7 March. We will meet again just ahead of our autumn church meeting in October.

Many thanks to Margaret Batchelor for organising the Easter Egg raffle and to all who contributed to a delicious looking selection of eggs. I hope to share news of how much this raised in the next magazine and that everyone who won enjoyed their chocolate.

Looking a little further ahead, Braishfield will be hosting the Southern Fellowship Anniversary Service on Saturday, 9 May 2026 starting at 2pm. All are welcome and refreshments will follow the service. Do come if you can. Please note that parking will have to be on one side of the road around the church.

Braishfield will be joining All Saints Parish Church for the United Christian Aid Service this year. Please note the service will start at 9.30am. All are welcome. I always think it is lovely the two village churches take it in turns to host this wonderful annual service.

You will need to be in good voice for our Favourite Hymns service on Sunday, 24 May. Can Braishfield beat its record of ten hymns, readings, prayers, notices, the collection etc and still finish a few minutes early? We shall see!

I will flag up now that we won't be having a service on 7 June because the runners will be in the village for their annual event. However, I'm sure the good folk at Romsey will make us most welcome if any of us can join them on that Sunday. It might pay to note that in your diaries.

Talking of which, if you have ideas for supporting our charity project, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance, do let Shirley know so dates for these can go in the church diary. Thanks.

Allison S



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LENT LUNCHES 2026

Thank you to all who helped and supported the Lent lunches, especially to those who rose to the call for helpers for the first Lent lunch on 20 February, which raised £121.50 for Christian Aid.

MINISTERS' HOLIDAYS

Our Ministers will be taking a well-earned Easter Break; Revd Mike will be away from 28 March to 2 April and Revd Sarah will be away from 6 to 12 April. During their absences, for Abbey URC queries please contact Andy Bevan via email at andybevan1@btinternet.com or telephone 07483319618. We hope they have a lovely break.

ROUND THE SOUTHERN FELLOWSHIP OF UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES

Bitterne

Chocolate – this is very topical at Easter time. Hasn't the price of chocolate become ridiculous? Have you also noticed that Cadbury's (now owned by American company Mondelez), and some other brands, are now substituting fabulous, tasty dairy milk for unsavoury and environmentally damaging palm oil, and their cocoa content has dropped? Please look at the labels before you buy. Lidl and Aldi are using milk and have a high cocoa content.



We are led to believe that the price of chocolate has risen because of a world shortage. But, according to Reuters, Ivorian cocoa farmers are being forced to store unsold cocoa beans in their homes and accept low prices for their crops, while global markets pretend there is a cocoa shortage and keep consumer prices artificially high.

700,000 tons of chocolate is sitting in warehouses rotting as multinational buyers/ exporters have stopped buying, and are refusing to pay growers the government Farmsafe price, set by the regulator. The farmers have no means to sell to anyone else, so access to trade is a real problem and is causing poverty. The only way to break this is for countries to manufacture the chocolate themselves and sell it on the world market as a finished product, as Ghana (one of the world's largest cocoa producers) has started doing. So, for example, instead of exporting cocoa beans for \$2k per ton, it will export finished chocolate for \$10k+ per ton. It will be interesting to see how this develops.

Maria Boys

Following our appeal and the kind donation of plastic sweet and chocolate tubs, I am pleased to announce that Teddy, the young boy from Hamble, has exceeded his target and collected 11,233 tubs, which are now saved from landfill. Thank you, all, and especially Margaret Whale, who delivered them.

Abbey URC Editor's Note: Thank you to everyone at Abbey URC, and their friends, who also helped to collect plastic sweet and chocolate tubs – your help was much appreciated!

GEOFFREY PRESTAGE

10 February 1933 – 25 February 2026



A large congregation gathered at Abbey URC on Monday 23 March to give thanks for the life of our friend, Geoff Prestage. The service was led by Revd Dr Sarah Hall, with Revd Terry Hinks giving the address. Music was a special part of the service, with Kirsty Newbury singing and playing a variety of hymn tunes and folk songs before the service began. Geoff loved the music of Vaughan Williams and his settings of folk tunes. The hymn 'I heard the voice of Jesus say' (set to Vaughan Williams' arrangement of Kingsfold)

was particularly moving, following on from the readings (Ecclesiastes 3.1-8 and Luke 19.1-10).

Son Dan and daughter Penny shared memories of Geoff, with stories of his upbringing in Bexleyheath, his work at Cambridge University Press and his later family life. His parents, Stan and Ethel, took Geoff and his siblings, Gwen and John, to Bexleyheath Congregational Church. Stanley was a pacifist and, in time, both Geoff and John became conscientious objectors. Geoff served two years in the Pioneer non-combatant Corps. Throughout his life he continued to support peace efforts, joining anti-war marches and supporting Christian Aid's peace and justice work, especially focused on Palestine and planting new olive trees. As part of the service, we shared the peace, sang 'Put peace into each other's hands' and prayed for peace and justice across the world.

Geoff and Jennifer met at the Bexleyheath Church and were married in 1959. They settled in the area and continued to be very active in the church up to Geoff's retirement. Geoff worked for CUP throughout his career, developing a great knowledge of publishing and the main London bookshops. As rep for CUP he took a lead in Bible sales including the Revised Bible Version (the pew Bibles at Abbey URC Church).

Having lived his whole life in Bexleyheath, retirement brought new opportunities; in 1998 he and Jen found a garden with a house attached in Whiteparish. They gave the house the name Tetherdown, and spent the following years making improvements to the house and land to take full advantage of its beautiful location. During this time, they rejoiced in the birth of their four grandchildren (and last July shared in the joyful wedding of grandson, Joshua, to Courtney).

Sam and Miranda spoke on behalf of all four grandchildren and described some of the great memories they had of Geoff at Tetherdown, especially in the garden: 'he built wigwams for us, dug a pond where we would look for tadpoles and catch newts, and planted trees with Josh and Ollie when they were small, one of which now stands metres high ... Grandpa always taught us the importance of making use of old material and not being wasteful. His manner, kindness, patience, humour and values have shaped us all ... he brought us countless moments of joy and enriched our lives immeasurably.'

In his address Terry shared some of his own memories of Geoff, from his time as minister in Romsey between 1998 and 2015. He recalled how Geoff served the church so faithfully as worshipper, elder, work party organiser and labourer, mediator and friend. Reflecting on the reading from Ecclesiastes he spoke of the rhythm of our lives and how Geoff's long life saw so much change and so many events; he faced many choices and experiences, good and bad and in between.

Then Terry turned to the story of Jesus and Zaccheaus, one very special to Geoff and Jennifer from their days teaching in Junior Church: 'Jesus was himself on a journey, to Jerusalem and rejection there, but he stopped and spotted the little man Zaccheaus up the sycomore tree (Ficus sycomorus or sycamore fig and important in Bible times). That led on to Jesus being welcomed into the man's house and the transformation of a life. Geoff had a generous heart and wanted the church to be a place where all were welcome, whatever their background or past. That reflects God's welcome of us all. We affirm that for our friend Geoff, safe in the love of Christ'.

After refreshments in Abbey Hall, family members and neighbours gathered in the church graveyard at Whiteparish, an ancient burial ground full of primroses and other Spring flowers. During the simple ceremony led by Terry, the vicar Revd Jane Dunlop read Psalm 121. After the committal, Sarah read a simple affirmation: In the earth we give him a place to rest. In our memories we will not forget him. In the eternal

love and mercy of God he will be at peace. All shall be well. May Geoff rest in peace and rise in glory!



The flowers for the funeral were beautiful. The arrangements included freesia, the flowers that Geoff would buy Jen, plus spring flowers and pussy willow as well as sprigs of ornamental grasses from Geoff's beloved garden.

REVD MIKE'S PREACHING ROTA

April	5 & 12		Revd Mike on annual leave
	19	10.30am	Bitterne Park URC
	26	10.30am	Isaac Watts URC

CAN YOU KNIT OR CROCHET? FANCY A CHALLENGE?

We all love seeing the decorated bollards around Romsey when they have been "yarn-bombed"! The question is, do we have anyone in our church community who enjoys knitting or crochet? If yes, do you fancy taking part in this year's annual dressing of the bollards on behalf of Abbey URC? If so, let the editor know at abbeyurcnews@gmail.com and we'll make sure you get the guidance on making the actual sleeve.



This year the theme is "it makes me smile".

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

The following were submitted by Gordon Tatley

A little boy told by his mother that he might go on a picnic she had previously forbidden sighed, "It's too late Mummy, I've already prayed for rain."

A mother asked her son what the lesson was about in Sunday School that morning. "Cherry Coke," he answered confidently. "Cherry Coke?" his mother asked. "Are you sure?" "Oh, yes," he replied. "We even sang a song about it. 'Joshua fought the battle of Cherry Coke, Cherry Coke, Cherry Coke.'"

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WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



A big thank you to our friends at The United Reformed Church for looking after us so well on Friday. It was a good service. The testimonies of the four women were very moving and our singing was good, led so well by Kirsty. We had about 50 people attending which is not bad for a wet day.

The Gift Aid collection made £234.50 and the other £155.30 making a total of £389.80. Next year the service will be on 5 March 2027.

**Jo Cockwell,
Romsey World Day of Prayer Organiser**

The World Day of Prayer service took place in Abbey URC on 6 March 2026. Taking part in this service, we joined a wave of prayer which went around the world, beginning in Samoa and ending 146 countries later, in American Samoa. The final hymn always includes the words, ‘The sun that bids us rest is waking our friends beneath the western sky’.

This year we were praying with, and for, the country and people of Nigeria. The service was based on Matthew 11:28-30 ‘I will give you rest, come.’ During the service we heard the testimonies of 4 women of different ages, each carrying a burden – insecurity of schooling for girls; marginalisation of widows, who lose status as well as their husbands; religious persecution, where Christians have been regularly kidnapped and killed; poverty and despair, a bag of rice, a staple food, is now a luxury for some and young people, full of potential, fall into despair as they cannot find work.

Thank you to everyone who helped in any way with the service, with music, flowers matching the Nigerian flag, cakes, serving refreshments and stewarding.

Carole



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HAVE YOUR SAY: DEMENTIA STRATEGY SURVEY

The NHS, Voluntary and Community Sector and local government partners across Hampshire are working together to create a Dementia Strategy. We want to make sure our plans are based on what matters most to people with dementia, unpaid carers, families, and professionals.

If you have experience of supporting people with dementia in either a professional or personal capacity, please share your views to help shape the future of dementia support and services in Hampshire.

Please also share the survey with anyone you think might be interested.

To take part in the survey please follow the link: [Dementia Strategy for Hampshire | About the Council | Hampshire County Council](#)

The survey closes 11.59pm on Sunday 12 April.

Please note that there is a 'print ready' version of the survey available, please click this link [print ready survey](#).

An easy read version will be available on the [consultations web page](#).

SUPPORT THE WORK OF 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.



SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.....

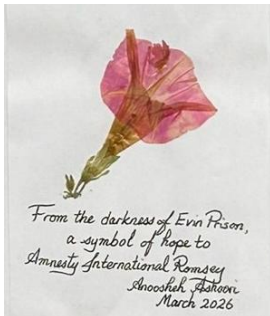
The nice thing about becoming forgetful
is that you can hide your own Easter eggs

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

On 18 March we had the pleasure of welcoming Anoosheh Ashoori to talk to us. Anoosheh is a British-Iranian engineer whose prison ordeal started when he was arrested in 2017 whilst visiting his mother in Tehran. He was wrongly convicted and spent nearly five years in the notorious Evin Prison, initially in solitary confinement under constant psychological torture, including his interrogators telling him his children's movements in London.

Just under a hundred of us were in the church to listen to an intelligent, articulate and unassuming man describing how he found the strength and resilience to cope. He was eventually moved into the main prison, which was just as dirty and rat infested but where he could borrow books from the library. Some showed him how to persevere by giving meaning to his suffering and goals for his release. He could also socialise and exercise by running round the prison yard.

He was eventually released in March 2022, on the same day as Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Since then he's used the fitness he'd built up in prison to run the London Marathon in aid of Amnesty International and to raise awareness of other wrongly-imprisoned people around the world.



**LIFE HECTIC?
NO DOWN TIME?**

JOIN US FOR CHILL OUT TUESDAY

**Find some “you” time and
meet some new people.**

**A welcome, safe space
for everyone.**



**at The White Horse,
Romsey**

**7.30pm
2nd Tuesday
of each month**

Contact: abbeyurc.chillout@gmail.com

ROMSEY EVENT LAUNCHES DEMENTIA ACTION WEEK WITH COMMUNITY INFORMATION DAY



Romsey Dementia Action Group (Romdag) is inviting local residents, carers, and families to attend its upcoming Dementia Information Day at Crosfield Hall on Sunday 17 May 2026, from 10am to 3pm, marking the start of Dementia Action Week, a nationwide campaign to raise awareness and improve support for people living with dementia.

The free community event will bring together a wide range of local organisations and professionals who provide services to people living with dementia and those who care for them. Visitors will have the opportunity to speak directly with experts, discover available resources, and learn more about the support networks available in the local area. The Dementia Information Day is free to attend, and everyone is welcome.

Dementia Action week runs from the 17–22 May please keep an eye on our website to find out what other events we are organising in this week, particularly the Dementia Bus which will be in the Town Square on Wednesday 20 May. www.romdag.co.uk

FREE MEAL PLANNING SUPPORT FOR TVBC RESIDENTS

Five Dinners, a simple online meal-planning platform, is now available for free to people living or working in Test Valley. It offers personalised weekly meal plans and a single shopping list to help residents save money, reduce food waste and make cooking easier.

This is part of TVBC's wider work to support households who may be feeling the pressure of rising costs. The housing team are trialling the platform with residents who may benefit from budgeting support or healthier meal ideas.

Residents can sign up for free by using their Test Valley postcode.

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Fed up of deciding what to cook every night?

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Get a new personalised meal plan & shopping list every week designed just for you - for FREE

Scan the QR code:



FiveDinners

Share with your friends and family - download or save this image to show them the QR code or visit -

FiveDinners.com/MyCommunity



DEMENTIA INFORMATION DAY
providing information, support and possibilities!

Take time to chat with many local organisations who provide engaging activities, social connection, and essential resources for living well with dementia

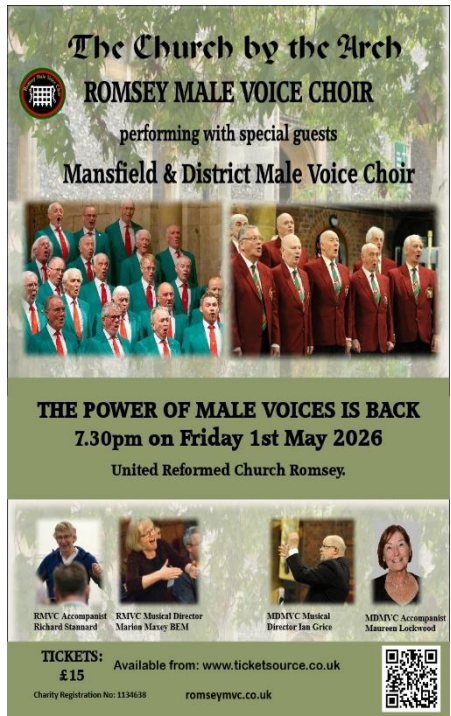
SUNDAY CROSFIELD HALL
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 MD&MVC Accompanist: Matthew Lashwood

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“Songs for an April Afternoon”
A concert in aid of Naomi House
 With **SOPHIE AYNLEY** – Accompanist

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AT 2.30 pm

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