



ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE



THE GRAPEVINE



FEBRUARY 2026

Volume 5 No 1




Sunset over Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe

*"If I can put one touch of rosy sunset into the life of any man or woman,
I shall feel that I have worked with God."*

G K Chesterton

SERVICES AND OTHER KEY DATES FEBRUARY 2026

There will be a service on Zoom on the third Sunday of the month

Sunday 1 February	10.30 am	Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Revd Stephen Thornton
Tuesday 3 February	7.30 pm	Elders' Meeting Hersham Room
Sunday 8 February	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Mrs Anna Crawford
Friday 13 February	12.30 - 2.30 pm	People Who Lunch - Church Hall - only £5 ! To book your place please contact Elizabeth Scharinger by email: administrator@standrewsurc.org or Fiona Reardon on 07902 485933/01932
247119		
Sunday 15 February (Zoom)	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Revd Russ Clark
	3.00 pm	 Messy Church
Sunday 22 February	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Mrs Vivien Gerhold

ADVANCE NOTICE

Friday 6 March	10.00 am	Women's World Day of Prayer (Nigeria) St Andrew's Walton and Weybridge Walton-on-Thames, KT12 1LQ followed by refreshments
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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.

LENTEN GROUPS

During Lent we are invited to attend ecumenical Lenten groups to be led by Libby from St Erconwald's and Jeannette from Walton Methodists to be held at Walton Methodist Church, Terrace Road, Walton They will start on Tuesday 17th February, Shrove Tuesday with Pancakes from 2.00 pm.
These sessions are always very enjoyable and well worth joining. *Anne Fitzgerald*

Our cover picture of sunset over Lake Kariba was provided by Johnston Simpson. "Lake Kariba in Zimbabwe - full of Hippos, Crocs and Tiger Fish where I spent 2-3 days fishing without a life jacket in a small dinghy with outboard motor. The colours are true and unbelievable."

News of the Church Family

In Memoriam

ERIC LAWRENCE RIGDEN

We were very sad to learn of the death of Jean Rigden's husband, Eric, on 14 December and send our love and condolences to Jean and the family. Details of his funeral can be accessed here: <https://www.dignityfunerals.co.uk/funeral-notice/14-12-2025-eric-lawrence-rigden/>

"Dear friends,

Thank you for your prayers and love at this most difficult, sad time in my life. I know many of you have been through this loss yourselves. Eric and I have been friends for 46 years, partners for 38 years and married for 21 years. He was a good kind man and I am proud to have had him in my life. Eric's funeral is on 4 February at Randall's Park at 2.45 pm. Eric had written out his funeral plan and, although not a Christian, had asked for a Bible reading and hymn for his Christian friends. There are quite a few friends from St Andrew's as we played badminton in the church hall for many years.

Thank you and God Bless You.

Jean"

Mollie Henham has sent this message of thanks

"The family and I would like to say 'thank you' for all the love and kindness shown to us and the huge number of cards and messages received from people of all ages following the loss of Alex. Special thanks to Michael for his constant support and especially for the very personal and moving Service of Thanksgiving on 23 December at Woking Crematorium. Our thanks also to Angela for reading the lesson – as a friend and as a representative of the church. It was good to have so many people joining us in person and to know that many more were joining in on-line around the country and overseas, particularly at such a busy time of year. We have received numerous appreciative comments about the service from people in the church and in the wider community. We were glad, too, that so many people were able to join us afterwards to continue the celebration of Alex's life at a 'get-together' at our daughter Rachel's house. I am sure he would have approved – he always enjoyed a good party! Mollie"

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN



Adaline Willis's Baptism

Michael gave a beautiful baptism service for Adaline on 7 December, peppered with good natured humour and personal touches to the family which we really appreciated. She's rather 'spirited' and he knew just the way to speak to her to encourage her to the front for the ceremony, with a smiling face and to hold her attention - maybe we need to ask for tips for future reference!

Having been enjoying lunch with Adaline's grandparents (Rachel and Mike Snaith) when the news came through that she had actually been born (three years ago) and with such a long-standing friendship, it was important to our family that Michael was the minister to welcome Adaline to the church. He really supported us in our wishes and slotted in the ceremony at extremely short notice! We're very grateful and it will be a special service which we will cherish in our memories.

Gemma and Tom Willis

Wessex Synod

Prayer Calendar for February 2026



- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Christ Church Marlow
Abbey URC, Romsey |
| 8 | Racial Justice Sunday (https://cgtbi.org.uk/racial-justice-Sunday)
Rowlands Castle |
| 15 | Grange, Reading
Blandford Forum |
| 22 | URC Youth and The URC Youth Assembly
Aston Tirrold
Shanklin, Isle of Wight |

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

As the year turns, I want to begin with something simple and sincere: thank you. Thank you for the faithfulness that is so often unseen, for the steadiness that keeps going when enthusiasm is in short supply, and for the care you offer in ways that rarely make headlines or reports. Over the Christmas season especially, many of you carried extra responsibilities with grace, even when energy was limited. Your presence, patience, and quiet perseverance matter more than you may realise.

The arrival of a new year can stir a wide range of emotions. For some, it brings relief; for others, apprehension; for many, a mixture of both. Not every year ends neatly, and not every story reaches a satisfying pause at midnight on 31 December. If the year just past has left you tired, uncertain, or simply glad it is over, you are not alone, and you are not failing. Faithfulness is not always loud or productive. Sometimes it looks like staying, listening, and beginning again gently. January often arrives carrying expectations it cannot possibly meet, forcing us to feel as if we need to reset, reinvent, and improve ourselves at speed. Yet the gospel offers a different rhythm. We are not required to become someone else in order to be valued by God. We are invited instead to live more truthfully, more attentively, and more kindly, to ourselves as well as to one another.

That is why, as we begin 2026, I want to commend once again the spirit of Gentle January, not as a programme but simply as a permission. Permission to ease into the year rather than rush it. Permission to notice what sustains rather than what exhausts. Permission to set aside unnecessary urgency. Gentleness can take many forms:

- a softer pace,
- a kinder inner voice,
- more spacious expectations,
- time to breathe, pray, and reflect,
- and a renewed attentiveness to the people and places entrusted to our care.

None of this is about doing less for the sake of it. It is about grounding what we do in grace rather than strain, and allowing God's faithfulness, not our own effort, to be the firm ground beneath us.

As this new year unfolds, my hope is that you will know moments of rest, clarity, and quiet joy, and that you will feel encouraged rather than driven. May 2026 be a year in which you are gently held, and gently renewed.

With every blessing for 2026,

Michael Hopkins

MIRACLES DO HAPPEN: Widow Ellen's modest home was in a terrible state with rain



pouring through cracks in walls and the roof (Dec. article refers). The family were often forced to cover themselves with plastic sheeting (right). However, a little miracle happened when Yorkshire friends took pity and quickly responded. Photo (left) shows a delighted and surprised Ellen plus donation with her children Mercy, Mary and Tinotenda. These miracles occur too often to be a coincidence and the following account is another example!



STOP PRESS: Heavy rainfall has leached nitrogen from their fields turning maize leaves yellow - photo below of Lovemore's field. The main AP, GV article covers the urgent need for Urea fertiliser to help save the artists' maize crops on which



their families so heavily depend. Fortuitously, friends in Yorkshire, Bristol and Marlow were touched and sent enough funds to buy each artist a 50kg sack of Urea. Photos below L-R show Lovemore with daughter Angeline (15) lending a hand and far right, Lovemore applying Urea to plants. Foot: Happy artists Mike and Peter helped Fortune drag his heavy sack



home on public transport at an additional cost of 2\$ but worth it- life is hard in Zimbabwe. **JS**



MENCAP CHRISTMAS FAIR



Elmbridge Mencap held their Christmas Fair on 16th November and we are thrilled to share that it was a huge success, raising just over £2,340 so far.



The event was wonderfully attended, and the festive spirit stalls were bustling, enjoyed by many, and visits to see Santa were as popular as ever. Thanks to all who volunteered, donated, and joined us on the day. It really was a fantastic day.

was everywhere! All the refreshments were

Paula Walsh

STRATUS IN CONCERT



It feels a long time ago now, but a huge thank you once again to everyone who came along to our lunchtime Christmas concert at church in December. We always love playing at St Andrew's - it's one of those places that instantly feels familiar and calm, and the audience is always so warm and supportive. It really is one of our favourite venues!

We kept the programme as a mix of Stratus favourites and festive classics, so it had a bit of everything: reflective pieces like *Half the World Away* and *Mad World*, some Christmas moments (including Wohlfahrt's *Easy Fantasia* - a new one for us, but one that seemed to go down really well), and then a joyful finish with our Jingle Bells arrangement and Rutter's *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. It was a lovely way to round off the year, and we're genuinely grateful to the church community for continuing to support us.

As for what's next: Nathaniel and I are now in China for the foreseeable, while Sam is still very much gigging and enjoying plenty of music-making in the UK. We're hoping we'll all be back together in the summer, so who knows... another concert, a new recording, or something else entirely. Stratus has always worked like that - we pop up whenever we're in the same place at the same time - and we're always on the lookout for opportunities.

Zacc Rodwell

February
2026

Eco Church

Stay up to date with our Eco Church Journey

Issue
#11



Catch-up on COP30 – Belém, Brazil (10 – 21 Nov)

Climate change is a global emergency that requires international cooperation and does not respect national boundaries. Ten years on from the global Paris Agreement signed by 194 countries and the EU (see panel on left for the three key elements), expectations were high for COP30, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (Conference of the Parties) held in Belém, deep in the Amazon rainforest in November.

Sadly, some leaders chose not to attend including the United States (US), China, India and Italy. Yet together, the US, China and India are the biggest polluters accounting for almost 50% of global emissions. This was the first time that the US did not send an official delegation to COP, although state and local representatives did take part alongside environmental groups. At the start of his second term, President Donald Trump announced that once again, the US will leave the Paris Agreement. He also continues to describe climate change as "a con job".

The final agreement from a COP needs to be agreed by all participating countries. It is extremely difficult to achieve consensus not least because many of the countries producing oil, coal and gas want to continue to sell fossil fuels in order to fund their development, arguing that they have a right to do so just as countries have done in the past. Following bitter rows, the final agreement contains no direct reference to the fossil fuels that are heating our planet. This was very frustrating for more than 80 countries (including the UK) that wanted to see an accelerated transition to renewables with explicit wording about phasing out fossil fuels. While Brazil called for a more ambitious fossil fuel agreement, it was criticised for its own plans to drill for oil at the mouth of the Amazon and for the fact that Brazil's offshore oil and gas production is set to rise until the early 2030s. A representative for Saudi Arabia said: "Each state must be allowed to build its own path, based on its respective circumstances and economies."

COP30 didn't deliver the decisive steps the world so urgently needs. A set of modest actions was agreed, but the countries failed to secure agreements on the most crucial issues even though 2024 was the hottest year on record, with global average temperatures reaching 1.6°C above pre-industrial levels, and 2025 is set to be second or third warmest year on record. There was no roadmap to transition away from fossil fuels – the single biggest cause of the climate crisis – and no agreement on a roadmap to end deforestation by 2030.

The most significant formal decision was the approval of a just transition mechanism to strengthen international cooperation and support developing nations as they move towards renewables.



Things could have been worse. The talks did not collapse or roll back past agreements. The Climate Ambassador for Antigua & Barbuda said: "We are happy that there is a process that continues to function [...] where every country can be heard."

Countries at the talks have competing interests, depending on their national circumstances and how exposed they are to the effects of climate change. Some countries were happy about the outcomes. India praised the deal, calling it "meaningful", and a group representing 39 small island and low-lying coastal states called it "imperfect" but still a step towards "progress".

Poorer nations have come away with a promise for more climate finance to help them adapt to the impacts of climate change. Sierra Leone's Minister of the Environment & Climate Change commented that "It has moved the needle. There is a clearer recognition that those with historic responsibility [countries that emitted more planet-warming gases in the past] have specific duties on climate finance."

Another positive outcome was the launch of the Tropical Forests Forever Facility – the largest fund that has ever been set up for tropical forest conservation.

WWF's Global Climate & Energy Lead, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, criticised the final outcome, stating that the summit delivered "neither a roadmap nor real solutions for the urgent challenges we face." Although the formal outcomes from COP30 were disappointing, climate action is about more than government talks and agreements. "The energy and commitment shown by so many in civil society, science and frontline communities remind us that real change is still possible," said Pulgar-Vidal.

So my conclusion about COP - something is better than nothing, but the truth is that the outcome reflects a failure of global leadership. So what can we do about it? It's always worth writing to our MPs and local councillors about climate change and its effect on the environment, and at election time, whether local or national, we can all use our vote to ensure that tackling climate change is a priority.

Teresa Bacon



Isaiah 55:12
A vivid picture of earth
rejoicing giving us inspiration
to care for the planet

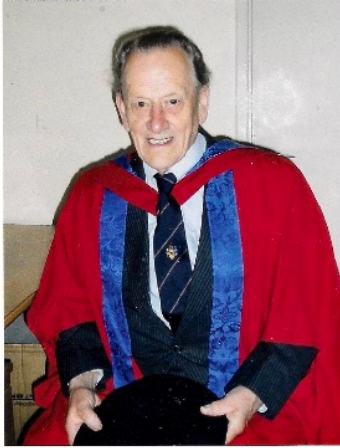
Psalms 24:1
The earth is the Lord's,
and everything in it

Philippians 2:4
Do not be concerned about your own
interests, but also be concerned about the
interests of others.



FRIENDS REMEMBERED

DR ALEX HENHAM



Alex Henham grew up in Thornton Heath with a strong Cornish heritage. His academic prowess soon became evident when he won a Foundation Scholarship to Trinity School of John Whitgift, a 16th century Archbishop of Canterbury. During his time at school, he remembered looking at the names of former pupils who had gone on to university decades earlier, carved into the stonework, and wondering whether he might do the same. In fact, he would spend most of his life in academia.

After school, he earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering and later also qualified as an engineer in the aeronautical and energy sectors. His research achievements are too numerous to list, but he was particularly interested in, and proud of, his work developing alternative fuels to help the environment, which formed the basis for his doctorate. He was a member of the government's Advisory Committee on Energy and also undertook some work for the EU. At the start of his career, he worked in research and development in the aircraft industry. As part of his postgraduate training, he spent six weeks as an apprentice blacksmith, learning how to make tools and marvelling at the skill of his instructor. His practical side continued throughout his life and many repairs at home and at the church in Weybridge bear testimony to his ability.

He spent the rest of his career in the university world, both lecturing and conducting research, predominantly at the University of Surrey. Throughout his career, and under the auspices of the British Council, he travelled widely as a visiting professor and adviser, working with universities in Thailand, Malaysia, India, and Slovenia, the last of these becoming a real home from home.

Cars and motor racing were his passions. He had always wanted to be a racing driver and so at his funeral the standard "lily" picture on the IT screen was replaced with one of a Formula 1 racing car! When he was a student he built his first car—an open two-seater, later refined with the addition of a hood—and he and Mollie made several trips to Cornwall in it, keeping in touch with family and friends there.

Alongside his professional career, he played an active role in the life of Weybridge United Reformed Church, where he made lifelong friends and enjoyed a rich social life. He served as Church Secretary for 46 years, the longest serving Church Secretary in Wessex Synod. He was also an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher, qualifying in the 1960s under the Congregational Church's scheme. As an Authorised Person for Marriages, he conducted or took part in some weddings - and more than a few baptisms - over the years.

Alex was very knowledgeable on a wide range of subjects - the internet before the internet existed. He was also very much a family man, proud and supportive of Mollie, their three children and the grandchildren and great grandchildren.

He had a notoriously casual approach to his own health and spent several spells in hospital over the years. In 2003, he postponed a heart-bypass operation for a month because his diary was too full, he had students to visit during their professional year abroad and didn't want to let them down. St George's Hospital also managed to change his sex, and when he finally arrived for admission he had been renamed Alexandra and offered a bed in the women's ward! An offer he felt tempted to accept.

In 2015, he shattered his pelvis and returned to St George's, where a brilliant surgeon put him back together again rather than condemning him to life in a wheelchair. After another spell in hospital, he moved into Sutton Lodge where he enjoyed a fabulous final year. He made new friends, took part in craft activities, enjoyed music and drama concerts, shared in Spanish lessons, fitness classes and quizzes; all while receiving the loving care and support of the staff.

Alex was an amazing person and throughout his life he did his best to help others. He adored his family and will be sadly missed by many people.

Michael Hodgson



SHIRLEY MORLEY



There were four great strands that ran through Shirley's life – family, guiding, church and music, and the Thanksgiving Service for her life brought these together as we remembered her. Like me, Shirley came originally from the West Midlands, born in Walsall in 1947, thus making her one of the post-war baby-boom generation. She grew up in a loving household with two elder brothers, Steve and Mike. After shining academically and becoming Head Girl at Queen Mary's High School in Walsall, she went on to study German language and literature at Manchester University. After that, she took a job in retail management with Beattie's department store in Wolverhampton. Her promising progress in retail was abruptly curtailed though after she met and married Peter in 1971.

Following a two-week honeymoon in Italy, Peter's job took them to the US for two years. They returned in 1973, moving to South Croydon, where their two sons, Andrew and Graham, were born. Then, from 1979 to 1983, the family lived in Sheffield, where their daughter Helena was born. They moved back to Surrey in 1983 and Shirley soon became a member of Weybridge URC. Shirley took up part-time special needs teaching of art for a few years at Meath School in Ottershaw. She very much treasured that association for the experience she could share and bring to bear with the pupils there.

In 1995, Shirley was diagnosed with breast cancer but this was detected early and she recovered well from her treatment for it. Years later, in 2019, she suffered a minor stroke, and, although she recovered from that too, her general health started to decline. Ultimately it was the cancer from 1995 that had returned and was the root cause of her death. Even during the worst parts of her illness, she was always at pains to think of others though, and sadly, her son, Andrew, died of cancer in March 2025.

Shirley had a real passion for singing. She had a beautiful, clear voice which never seemed to age and she was a good sight-reader. As well as the church choir, Shirley sang with the Ian Engelmann Singers for 33 years and in her service, the choir sang two pieces in tribute.

At church, we remember Shirley in so many ways. She was received into membership by Revd Cecil Macaulay, in a service in January 1990, alongside 14 other people! Shirley was a very active member - a Serving Elder and a member of the Secretarial team. Always willing, always competent, and always totally reliable. We mourn a very faithful member.

It seems right to conclude on a "guiding" note, where she was known as Sam or Sammy Squirrel. Shirley's membership of Girlguiding spanned over 60 years, having been brought up as a Brownie and a Guide. Wherever she lived, Shirley always became involved in Guiding. Returning to Surrey, in April 1984 she joined the 2nd Weybridge Guides as an Assistant Leader. In 1986 Shirley moved to 4th Weybridge Guides to run the unit - and to help with 4th Weybridge Brownies. She was District Commissioner for Weybridge, plus roles in Surrey West County, County Training Adviser for 10 years, and County Secretary for 10 years. And throughout this time, she always went to summer camps where she played a key role. When Shirley finished as District Commissioner, she returned to weekly meetings, helping at 1st Weybridge Brownies, and later also at 4th Weybridge Rainbows. She mentored new volunteers and young leaders, inspiring many to complete their training and qualifications. Oh, and Shirley was also County Badge Secretary for nine years, dealing with all restricted badges across Surrey West.



An obituary for Shirley could run into many volumes, but at her funeral the love and respect for her was almost palpable. She is a lady who made a difference – a difference for good.

Michael Hodgson



THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

**ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE**

**MINISTER: THE REVD MICHAEL HODGSON
THE MANSE, ELGIN ROAD, WEYBRIDGE, SURREY KT13 8SN
TEL: 01932 841382**

Dear friends,

I am totally taken aback by your kindness and generosity; thank you so much! Thank you for a lovely retirement lunch and for inviting Janet and a few close friends to join us as well. It was such an enjoyable, relaxed time together before the Carol Service. Thank you for your kind words and for the statue. It is beautiful and is such a lovely reminder not just of you but also of Artpeace and the very special link we have with them. Jem asked if I'd let you know how I am going to spend the money you kindly gave me. It's possible that you'll not be surprised by my answer.

I am going to use half of it on my new garden which is a totally blank canvas and which I am really looking forward to creating. As you know, I love gardens and gardening and I know that I shall have so much pleasure there in the future. Currently the large back garden has nothing in it but weeds and the tiniest patio imaginable. I have great plans in my mind and can't wait to begin.

The other half I shall spend next year (2027) when I make my "trip of a lifetime" and go to Australia to visit my family there. I've never been and shall probably go for 3 months, during which my intention is to go on various excursions, possibly even hiring a campervan to drive some of the coast roads and see the scenery and the ocean, rather than just fly over everything. That portion of your gift will therefore give me a host of experiences to enjoy in the present and enduring memories to look back on in the future.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being your minister and couldn't have wished for a better pastorate. I leave with happy memories and shall think of you when I see the sculpture; when I am sitting in my new garden (when it exists) and during my Australian adventure.

With heartfelt thanks and appreciation.



Yellow icing like the sun ...

Our theme for the first Messy Church Session for the New Year was Creation Activities. It included decorating cakes with yellow icing to represent the sun - icing the cake is a necessity at Messy Church!

I unearthed a set of batteries and wires for the children to create circuits to light up the lamps. The little ones were so thrilled to see the lights when with help they touched the wires.



I wonder if the sun tastes like this...

I also brought my paraffin lamp for the children to polish, something it had been needing for some time.



You won't recognise this lamp when we've finished with it!



Wow!



The magic bottle ...



We made bird feeders by covering used toilet rolls in peanut butter and rolling them in bird seed. My experiment of a magic bottle didn't go as well as I would have liked but, hopefully with different colouring, we will have better results next month. We watched films of the creation and sang and danced to songs on the screen before having something to eat prepared by Carolyn. Phyllis also came to help, or which I was very grateful.

Anne Fitzgerald

FAREWELL LUNCH FOR MICHAEL



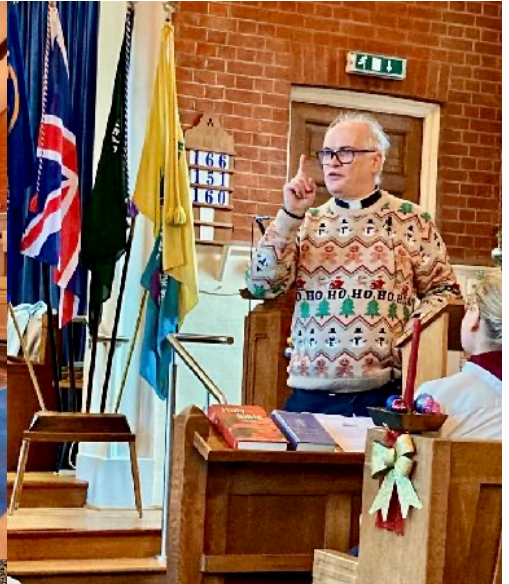
Michael's farewell lunch took place in the church hall before the carol service on 21 December. Albeit, necessarily an occasion tinged with sadness, it was an enormous success and enjoyed by all 70-odd people who attended.

Michael Hopkins, Moderator of Wessex Synod, gave a warm speech of appreciation for Michael's service, highlighting amongst other qualities his pastoral care skills, his thoughtful sermons, his empathy and love of gin, being a good friend and, not least, his wicked sense of humour, guaranteed to bring cheer to the congregation. And how very much we have all appreciated his musical talent! Anna presented Michael with an ArtPeace sculpture of The Thinker by artist Godwin Nasho and an envelope containing money collected (*see Michael's thank-you letter on page 10*). He was also given a photograph album filled with memories of his ministry at Walton and Weybridge.



Norma Reid





CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

GIFT SERVICE AND CHURCH PARADE



This was held on the second Sunday in Advent and there was a definite air of looking forward to Christmas! The church trees by the lectern and in the Gateway had been set up and decorated, with candles placed in pew ends in anticipation of the Carol Service later in the month. At the start, the full set of Colours were paraded in and then a large number of gifts of toys were brought up to the front to be given out to families by local social services.

A very well-rehearsed group representing Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Rainbows, Brownies and Guides were there to do their part. Explanations and prayers came across very clearly. It is a pleasure to be served by young people who are confident in their use of a microphone

and clear in their speech. *(I have attended these services since 1993 at either Weybridge URC or St. Andrew's and this was certainly the most clearly-delivered set of readings that I have heard in a third of a century – Jem)*



Then, it was time for the Nativity Tableau. The Wardrobe Department made a splendid job of outfitting the participants, including the use of some new outfits. Mary got a baby to hold, a senior scout took on the role of Joseph, the straw-filled manger was brought forth and the three cuddly sheep put in place. Then, to the singing of "While shepherds watched", the junior shepherds came down the aisle from the back of the church. They were accompanied by two senior shepherds; one who, despite his thinness, had *just about* managed to struggle into his costume – the other decided that pinning his outfit to his front was the only way that he could "wear" it..... and the usual angelic chorus of Rainbows. The latter took their place, twinkling, on the steps.



The Wise Men followed on, accompanied by "We Three Kings".

All in all, this was an excellent service, with hard work paying off in its planning, improvisation, willingness to participate and technical and musical input.

Thank you very much to all of those who took part, both "on stage" and "behind the scenes"!

Claire and Jem Ward



THANK YOU FROM N/E SURREY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

We have received this thank-you letter from Jo Sullivan from N/E Surrey Children's Services.

"Dear St Andrew's Congregation,

Children's Services want to thank you for your generous donation of Sainsbury's vouchers for our families this year and gifts for their children. Things are very tough for everyone and our families really appreciate been able to go themselves and buy provisions when they are in difficult circumstances. This removes so much of the stress as we have a process we have to follow which can take time.

We wish you all a very Happy and Peaceful 2026.

Kind regards

Jo
NNE Assessment Team"

SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT



December is the time of year when decorative efforts with lights pay off handsomely in the church. Having the service at 3:30 pm allows dusk to fall before the start; two Christmas trees sandwich the service between two pools of light; candles in the windows and on pew ends, plus the Advent ring, make for a slightly ethereal atmosphere, emphasising the special nature of the occasion.

Many there were replete after a good meal at the Retirement Lunch in the hall (see pages 12 and 13) and Michael was able to lead his last service with us with dignity and grace – and several musical flourishes!

The service took its traditional pattern of lessons and popular carols. There were several visitors, including some who had attended the Chitty's Memorial Service at the beginning of December.

All the readers should be congratulated for their clarity – perhaps inspired by the young people at the Gift Service! These were complemented by a series of poems: “The Annunciation” by Edwin Muir; “Travail” by June M Shulte; “A Christmas Carol” by G K Chesterton; and “A Christmas 1 Corinthians 13” by Sharon Jaynes. The music included: Bach’s Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland BWV 599 as prelude played before the start of the service and the closing voluntary was Saint-Saëns Fantaisie in E Flat major; a duet of “O Holy Night” by Michael and Zacc; and the Latin words of the chorus to “Good Christians All Rejoice”. All in all, a lovely service which set the scene for Christmas and marked a fitting end to Michael’s career.

Jem and Claire Ward



CHRISTINGLE SERVICE - CHRISTMAS EVE



This service, in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, is always fun – as well as being a little more relaxed/chaotic than the normal services. Quite a few families attended with children and grand-children, some associated with the church and others not, which was pleasing to see. The service was taken by Revd Stephen Thornton, who used a set of stage props to show that various groups in Christ's time were not interested in the message of God's Love, which was represented by the Christingles that the children were making.

Paper bags had been handed out as people entered the church, with all the components to assemble their Christingle. Some children already knew how to do this – particularly if they had attended previous Christingle Services (!) – whilst others were supported in doing so by their families. (*Recall that the orange represents the world; the ribbon is for the Love encircling it; the candle is for Christ the Light of the World; the cocktail sticks with sweets represent the four seasons and the fruits of the earth.*) When all had completed them, their candles were lit from the Peace Candle on the Communion Table and the lights were turned off, giving a memorable glow around the church.



The ArtPeace Nativity set of figurines was, once again, on display, demonstrating the level of artistic and creative talent that some of us will never achieve. Our thanks go to them for providing the central focus of this service. Add to this the enthusiasm of the children, and the lusty singing of well-known carols by the congregation and you have a service to enthuse (and hopefully tire out!) those who realise that there is 'only more one sleep till Christmas'!

There was, of course, also a short and enjoyable family service on Christmas Day taken by Anna, who revealed that **her** Christmas present was the recent arrival of a new Crawford family member: Clyde the dog!

Claire and Jem Ward



CHITTY'S CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL SERVICE



This year, for the first time, I went to the annual Christmas memorial service arranged by the funeral director, Frederick W Chitty, together with Walter D Wortt, at our church for those we have loved and lost. As in previous years, Michael took the service in a full church. Jem (*left*) cut an authoritative if amiable figure as a car park attendant. In the church garden were two donkeys and a miniature shetland pony, appreciated as a distraction by both children and adults.

The service took the form of a carol service, starting with 'Once in Royal David's City' with readings, reflections and poems in between favourite carols. Michael's address was particularly poignant and moving as he spoke of the loss of his mother just over a year ago.



At the end of the service and before the final carol, 'Hark the Herald Angels sing', those who wished were invited to light a candle in memory of their loved ones. Also, there was the Empty Chair with labels to attach to it, provided to write a prayer or a message or perhaps something you would have wished to say, but were unable to do so. With the church lights off, we had a short time to sit with our memories as we contemplated the candles burning softly at the front of the church. It was a beautiful service and I would hope to go another year.

Norma Reid

A RARE FEMALE TALENT

ArtPeace have close connections with top international sculptors which includes Letwin Mugavasi, one of the few mid-career women sculptors left in Zimbabwe. Her works are represented in private collections in Australia, the USA, Germany, and the Netherlands. She divides her time between creating her own work and teaching women how to sculpt. Like most artists, she struggles to pay her bills. A few days ago Letwin finished this piece (*right*) titled 'Lovers' in stunning lemon serpentine. Should any reader be interested in her latest creation please let me know, although a traveller may struggle a little to fit same into their luggage limit, but they always surprise me! Dimensions: H 30cms. W 16cms. Weight 1.5kg. **JS**



NOTICE: With the demise of The Grapevine would any readers who would like to be copied in on future articles please let me know verbally or by e-mail. If yes, I will add you to the e-mail distribution list where your e-address will be kept private. Please contact: jbsimpson@hotmail.co.uk

Many thanks. *Johnston Simpson*

FLOWER POWER

Teresa Bacon writes:

"Anna kindly gave me the stunning festive flower arrangement on 28 December thanking me for playing the organ at the various Christmas services. I enjoyed playing and most definitely appreciated the flowers too – thank you!"



30 November - Caroline Gardner
for her grandmother's birthday



7 December - Dorothy Rushworth
for her Wedding Anniversary



14 December - Denise Scorer
for her mother, Barbara



21 and 28 December
for the Carol Service



4 January - Norma Reid
for her mother, Ruby, with love



11 January - Beryl Brown and Rosemary Topping
for their husbands, Frank and Brian



18 January - Moira de Kok
for the church family



25 January - Anne
Fitzgerald

AND IT'S GOODBYE FROM ME ...

It was in 2008, following the retirement of the then minister, David Netherwood, that The Newsletter was in need of a new Editor. I was approached to fill the gap - "it'll probably only be for a few weeks ...". Well, 18 years later I am finally hanging up my quill.

I came late to editing. Work in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for 37 years took me all over the world. including trouble spots like Saigon with the Têt Offensive and rocket attacks and Belfast at the time of the sectarian killings. Four communist country postings including Moscow and Peking (now Beijing). Tempered with Rome and Cyprus and short-term stints all over South America. I had always fancied being an Editor so, when my arm was twisted to take it on, I was secretly pleased. I took over in 2008 following our then minister David Netherwood's retirement and with an Interim Moderator in charge; then through Romilly Micklem's term of office and, finally, that of Michael. When I started, The Newsletter was on blue A4 paper, stencilled for a Roneo machine, and run off by the faithful Marigold, stapled on the top left corner. The chance of colour came up and we changed to white paper. It was an exciting moment when we acquired a printer that would also copy and collate and reproduce in colour! For many years the cover page was the minister's Pastoral Letter. I attended a Church Editors' course at the Church Resources Exhibition. The course tutor intimated that the cover of the magazine should be attention-grabbing and to have the pastoral letter on the cover, even acknowledging its undoubted importance, could be viewed as 'boring'. Soon afterwards, I re-designed the magazine with a different colour photograph on the cover each month and a quotation that would, hopefully, inspire or bring cheer. I don't believe that the pastoral letter was viewed as any the less important for appearing on page 2! The first ever newsletter - 'The St Andrews News Letter' (*sic*) - issued in January 1947. *"This magazine will be obtainable each month and the object is to show the congregation the work done by the various branches of the Church and to announce forthcoming events."* (One of the three children listed as baptised in October 1946 was Rosslyn Margaret Watson, sister of Beryl Brown, still a regular member of our congregation.) As far as I can see from the records, it has issued on a regular basis to this day.

St Andrew's URC and Weybridge URC united to become St Andrew's URC Walton and Weybridge and the first Sunday of our united church was on 2 January 2022. The February 2022 magazine was a product of our two churches, with me as Editor and Mollie Henham, who had edited the Weybridge magazine for many years, Associate Editor. Our aim was to bring the best of both magazines together in The Grapevine. I hope you will think that we succeeded. I am extremely grateful to Mollie for all she has done to bring the two magazines together in harmony with her monthly contributions and particularly for her proof-reading skills. Thank you so much, Mollie! And for this tribute:

"It has been a privilege to work with Norma in producing the magazine. She has done a brilliant job as Editor. It is not easy to produce an interesting and innovative magazine (which people actually want to read) month after month. She has certainly earned a good retirement! Mollie"

Over the years, I have also to thank for their unwavering support, our two ministers: Romilly and Michael. My heartfelt thanks to all of you who have contributed to the magazine (albeit at times after a fair amount of chivvying from yours truly!) with local interest articles, uplifting stories and photographs and more. I think we have done ArtPeace proud and expanded our congregation. Without you there would have been no magazine.

"Feel the fear and do it anyway." That's what I did and will never regret it. I have learned new skills (not least in the realm of IT) and it has been a gift to have the opportunity to hone my creativity in ways I never thought possible. I won't forget you! I do so hope that someone will decide to give it a go and that the magazine can continue after a brief period of vacancy.

With my very best wishes and love,

Norma

What's the plan after the Grapevine?

Unfortunately, no one has come forward to take over the production of The Grapevine in its current form so the February edition will be the last one. Huge thank yous to Norma and Mollie for all the hard work that it has taken to produce this each month. Elizabeth Scharinger will be producing a 'Mini Grapevine' each week which will be attached to the Order of Service. In this will be any notices or articles that you wish to be seen. However, they can't be very long articles and the words will be a lot smaller as the production will be A5 and not A4.

If you wish to submit anything, it will be printed on a Thursday so please send your information to Elizabeth on administrator@standrewsurc.org

A HYMN AND A PRAYER

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares can destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord,
At the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord,
At the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord,
At the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord,
At the end of the day.

Jan Struther

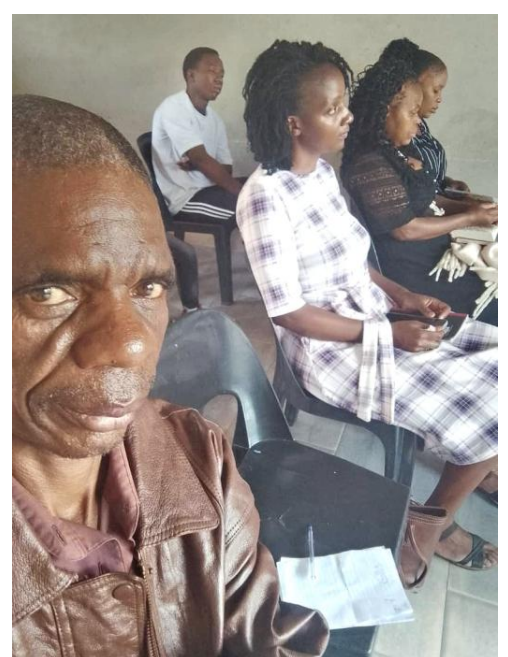
This hymn (written in 1931) with its theme of God's care throughout the day has become one of the most popular in the UK. Jan Struther was the pen name of Joyce Anstruther (later known as Joyce Maxton-Graham and Joyce Peacock) an English writer who was also noted for her character of Mrs Miniver. We sing it to the beautiful tune 'Slane' which is an Irish folk melody named after the Hill of Slane in County Meath, the site where St Patrick lit an Easter fire in defiance of the pagan King Loegaire.' *MH*

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

A CLOSE CALL! Last November all appeared to be going well after Fortune Masiyiwa's wooden shack collapsed and his few meagre possessions were stolen. Funds managed to cover new safe modest rented accommodation (one room) and enough to buy second hand clothes to sell from a trip to Mozambique to try and generate some income (covered in earlier article). Then early December, I received this message from artist Mike: **'Fortune is seriously ill and vomiting copious blood.** (I will spare readers the gory photos sent by Shingi). **Simbarashe, his younger brother, took him to a local 24 hour clinic last night who said they did not attend to such conditions and sent him home. He urgently needs to go to the municipal hospital where his records are kept but cannot afford transport. The little money they had all went towards the hired transport last night. He can't walk and condition is worsening'.** I rushed funds over which got Fortune to hospital (left) covering treatment of



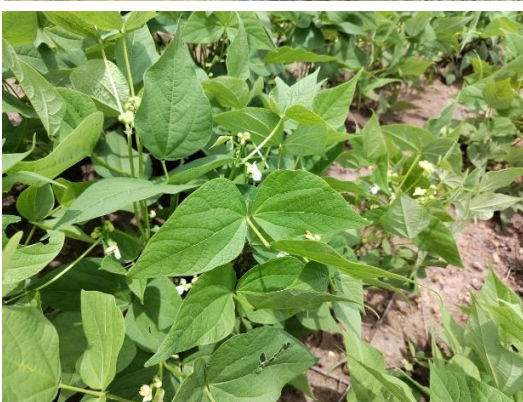
X-ray, blood transfusions and various medications. He stayed overnight and although weak managed home the next day. The bleeding was thought to stem from flu activating his HIV condition caused many years ago from torture by Mugabe's thugs. So Fortune has used up yet another of his nine lives but lives to fight another day! Above photo shows him a few weeks later with some Christmas groceries – your donations go a long way! Subsequent photos from **L to R**, show Fortune in his maize field, a church lady helping with weeding and Fortune back at church 😊.





CHRISTMAS looked bleak for Artpeace. What little funds I held were used to help Fortune but miracles do happen! A few days before Christmas, two donations arrived and were quickly sent over, enabling them to buy food and a few small presents for their children some of whom can be seen in this photo. Families were overjoyed!

CROP UPDATE: So far, so good with crops grown under the ECO pfumvudza system thriving. However, prolonged heavy rains have leached fertiliser. Sadly, AP cannot afford to buy Urea fertiliser to maximise yields. Below, Dickson by his maize field and left, his sugar bean crop.



SNIPPETS: Shingi sent this lovely photo of Zimbabwe's National Flower growing wild. The Flame Lily (*Gloriosa superba*), a vibrant climbing plant known for its fiery red and yellow flame

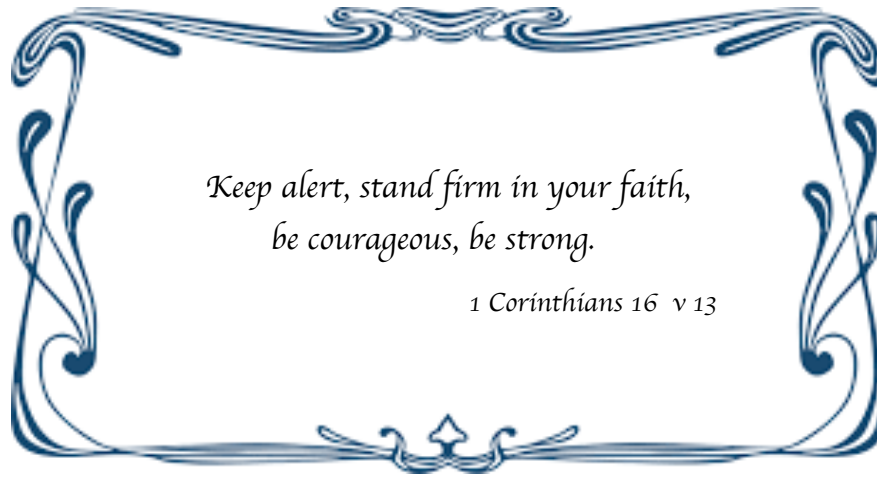


like petals, symbolises the nation's spirit and resilience. **PRESENT:** The congregation may have wondered what the sculpture contained in a box as part of our Minister's retirement present looked like. It would have been similar to 'The Thinker' by Godwin Nasho carved from Fruit Springstone, and as Michael said, will bring back many happy memories of his time at St Andrew's. It will join his 'Nativity Shepherd' fashioned in the style of Dr Livingstone which caused much mirth and will prove a talking point with visitors to his new home.

SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL'S December shop sales totalled £400 and more pieces are expected to arrive mid February.



FINALLY, a big thank you to our marvellous Editor who has been so patient with my many last minute changes to articles over the years. Her dedication, creativity and sheer hard work will be missed as the Grapevine ends due to her retirement. Readers may be surprised to learn that 40 - 50 GVs are taken from the outside holders by the passing public each month. **Johnston Simpson**



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FOR ANY ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT THE CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

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Instagram: Insta: [standrewsurcww](https://www.instagram.com/standrewsurcww)

Services start at 10.30 am.

Services are currently accessible on Zoom on the third Sunday of the month.

Anyone who wishes to take part in the Zoom service should contact the Church Administrator, who will be able to send them a link to enable easy participation.

You are all most welcome to join us!