



WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON

Cakes and Ale Festival, 16 May 2026, Abingdon – Sally Mears

I was inspired to do a Cakes and Ale Festival in Abingdon following a talk I went to entitled 'Drunk monks and a lake of beer' - it seems that Anglo-Saxons liked ale and it was very important for marking special occasions – and a cakes and ale festival I attended based on this. I knew that God was calling me to do something similar in Abingdon as a one-off, even if I didn't quite know how to go about it. Then I made contact with Clare Calnan who wanted to promote St Edmund of Abingdon's c.850th Anniversary so I suggested we hold a festival in his honour.

St Edmund was instrumental in preventing a Civil War. He was also a celebrated son of the Church. We don't know much about what St Edmund looked like, but the emaciated bronze statue by Robert Munday at Teddy Hall shows that he definitely needed some cake and ale! He is holding a crucifix as he always did when reading and teaching. He is the Patron Saint of St Edmund's Hall, Oxford University. For further info, go to:

https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/abingdon_people/st-edmund-abingdon



I set about asking local people to help, such as:

- Debbie Garrod to make a historical recipe cake
- Loose Cannon to make a special ale
- The Gerontius Amenity Fund who were keen to do a cake stall in the Market Place
- Ros Steel, Curate at Christ Church
- The Oxfordshire House of Prayer, based in Abingdon, who led on a project called Living Waters, in St Helen's Church – a 12-foot high waterfall made out of material that could be painted with prophetic texts. I found a watery connection to our chosen Saint in Will Donaldson's book 'The Servant Heart'. As he lay dying (on 16 November 1240 in France) he was heard to repeat Isaiah 12 v.3: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' noted by his Chaplain, Eustace of Faversham, present at his bedside. These words, which reflect the depths of his faith in God and his prayer for the church, are now engraved in Latin around the well head at the centre of the medieval quad of Teddy Hall, the site of his early career as an academic.

My chosen charity for the festival was TAB (The Abingdon Bridge), supporting young people's mental health, as well as raising funds for the churches around town as my vision was to have music, dance, art and creative worship going on to draw people into sacred spaces for fun activities. The buildings used were Christ Church, St Nicolas Church, St Michael's and All Angels' Church, St Helen's Church, the Salvation Army and, of course, Our Lady and St Edmund Church. This expanded to include the Market Place, St Ethelwold's Garden and One Planet Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre.

We opened our small but beautifully formed festival with prayer at Christ Church, before setting off on a mini pilgrimage into town, led by Penny Terry playing the medieval Bladder Pipe and her friend on a drum and me blowing a shofar while people held a beautifully embroidered banner of St Edmund. We looked in on St Edmund Church and sang his hymn, read his prayer and looked at the wall plaque. When we arrived

at St Nicolas Church, we were greeted by friendly Vikings, the Ulfhrafnar reenactment group. Will Donaldson gave a talk on the life and legacy of St Edmund. Next there was a walk led by Dr Philip Kenrick on the Lost Abbey. In the afternoon, there was a historical walk from St Ethelwold's House led by Anne Dodd followed by a biodiversity walk within the beautiful gardens by John Killick.

Markus Gabriel Ecseghy gave a piano recital at St Michael's followed by the Ceilidh. There were also musicians and dancers in the Market Place, heralded by the Town Crier, including the Abingdon Morris dancers, St Nicolas bell ringers, Abingdon Music Centre's choir ACCORD, a classic jazz pianist, Nick Gill and many other groups such as the JAM band, the Pearly Gates Gospel Choir and an up-and-coming local Indie Band, Karvara. Elizabeth Mitchell led Circle Dancing on St Michael's Labyrinth and Christine Mather crocheted some fine monks! The following day, there were more art opportunities and a Choral Evensong in St Helen's Church, superbly organised by the organist, Dr Peter Foster.

There were lots of blessings, new friends right across all the churches and towns people. It was a truly unifying day that will stay with the town for a very long time... annually to have a minor celebration for ALL the town to celebrate every one of its saints and to feel proud to have an internationally famous churchman and statesman who is also a Saint. St Edmund is a historical figure who can unify across all faiths and none. These days we need it more than ever! Hundreds of people of faith and no faith were involved and enjoyed the day. Thank you if you were one of them!



WHAT'S COMING UP

Back to 35

Abingdon Baptist Church invites all to join us on the first and third Thursdays of the month with an opportunity to get to know each other with talks, interest groups and much more:

- 2 July - Life as a Judge, a talk by Anthony King
- 16 July – Summer quiz with cream scones

Doors open at 10 am and the activity is from 10.30 to 11.30 am. Tea, coffee and home-made cake available. Entry £1.

Lunchtime music hour at Abingdon Baptist Church

Abingdon Baptist Church welcomes you to spend an hour relaxing to live music from local musicians and singers on the second Monday of each month in the church sanctuary from 12.30 to 1.30 pm. You are welcome to bring a packed lunch; tea and coffee are available. Open to all. Free admission. Limited parking.



- 13 July - Pam Pratt and Linda King bring a selection of songs and music on guitar and keyboard. The retiring collection will be for the Macintyre charity.

If you are a musician and would like to give an hour freely to entertain us, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Pam Pratt on pampratt@btinternet.com or ring 01235 526344 for more details.

Hiroshima ceremony & exhibition followed by lantern floating

Abingdon Peace Group invite you to this event at St Ethelwold's House (OX14 5EB) on Thursday 6 August 2026, 7 pm onwards. The exhibition will be in the Garden Room from 7 pm. The ceremony will take place around the Peace Pole at 7.30 pm. The procession to the river (St Helen's Wharf) for candle floating will be at 8 pm. All welcome. Join us when you can.

Family Fun Morning, ABC

Come and join the fun for all the family on Saturday 15 August 2026, 10.30 am - 12.30 pm, in the grounds of Abingdon Baptist Church. Free games and activities, including Giant Jenga, table tennis, hook a boat and a bouncy castle for under 7s, and more. Tea, coffee, squash and home-made cakes for £1 as you relax listening to the JAM Band. Something for everyone. Come and join the fun.



United Prayer event, organised by CiA - Thursday 8 October 2026, 7.30 pm, Abingdon Baptist Church

Put this date in your diary. A chance for people from all the churches to come together to share what is going on in their churches and to pray for the town and all the outreach work. Further details to follow. All welcome.

Ecumenical course: Holy Ground to train for spiritual direction

This course is designed for those, whether lay or ordained, who would like to explore accompanying others on their spiritual journey. Holy Ground offers both theoretical, experiential and prayerful learning, and formation in the practice of spiritual direction. The programme includes 22 online evening sessions and 3 in-person days from October 2026 to May 2027. For more details about the course, look on our website www.spidirnetwork.org.uk or for quick access use this link www.spidirnetwork.org.uk/holy-ground. Or contact the local rep Sue Sheppy (susan.sheppy@btinternet.com).

Abingdon Community Fridge

Abingdon Community Fridge exists to prevent food waste and is open to everyone. It collects surplus food from local businesses and distributes to the community. Help to stop excess food being thrown out by coming to Hadland Road Community Centre, Abingdon OX14 3YH:

Mondays: 4 - 4.30 pm

Thursdays: 1 - 2 pm

Saturdays: 10.30 - 11.30 am

For more information, go to www.facebook.com/abingdoncommunityfridge.

Abingdon Compassionate Cafe

A comforting space for conversation, along with cake, tea, coffee, or soft drinks, at St Ethelwold's House, East St Helen Street, Abingdon, OX14 5EB. The Café takes place monthly on the first Saturday of the month, from 2 pm to 4 pm. All welcome. www.fionamaccelebrant.co.uk

NB: There is no café in July and August.

Abingdon's International Welcome – Fridays, 1 – 2.30 pm (term time), The Barn, Christ Church, Northcourt Road, OX14 1PL

International Welcome is a free and friendly language class for people of all nationalities who want to improve their English. Those who attend are helped by a qualified English teacher and local English-speaking volunteers. It is a collaborative partnership of Host Abingdon (a support group for refugees and asylum seekers) and Christ Church, along with other local groups and organisations. The sessions offer friendship, refreshments, local information and support. For further information, visit the International Welcome web page at hostabingdon.org/english-class or contact iw@hostabingdon.org.



Archway



The Archway Foundation, a locally founded registered charity 'serving those hurt by loneliness', offers a pathway of support including individual support via telephone or face-to-face, and small supportive social groups. By volunteering for an hour a fortnight as an Individual Support or once a month as a small group volunteer, or as a volunteer driver, you can make a huge difference to someone's week. We are especially keen to find volunteers to support our monthly Abingdon group. Excellent training and support is given and any travel expenses reimbursed. If you think you could help, please get in touch. An application form can be found at www.archwayfoundation.org.uk, or a hard copy is available by calling 01865 790552.

The Community Hub

The Community Hub, formerly Cafe@35, is open for tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits on Monday - Saturday 10.30 am - 12.30 pm. We offer a warm welcome with space to meet with friends. Come and see an exhibition of paintings by the children of Carswell School from their project looking at our local area.

Abingdon Baptist Church are pleased to announce that the café will be re-opening in September and it will be extending its service. We are looking for volunteers who would be interested in helping us in our mission to the community. We have vacancies for:

- Catering - preparing and serving light meals and drinks.
- Catering assistants - washing up and helping with food preparation.
- Pastoral listeners - a friendly ear for our customers.

We are happy for you to work once a month, a fortnight or weekly. All positions will receive training. Have a chat with our Day Manager for more details and application forms, or contact office@35ockst.org.uk or ring 01235 530080 during opening hours Monday - Saturday 10.30 am - 12.30 pm.

Christian cards and books

Cards covering all events, including birthdays, anniversaries, get well, thinking of you, are available for purchase from 35 Ock Street, Abingdon Baptist Church, as well as Easter cards. There is also a range of books for sale; books can also be ordered. Do come along and see what we have. Our stock is sourced from St Andrew's Christian Bookshop whose nearest outlet is Witney since they closed their shop in Oxford. We are open when the Community Hub is open: 10.30 am - 12.30 pm Monday - Saturday.

Foodbank

Do download our BanktheFood app to see quickly and easily what items Abingdon Foodbank needs, but we always need tinned meat, squash, UHT milk, custard and rice pudding, washing up liquid and surface spray. Thank you for your continuing support: we wouldn't manage without it.



For more information about Abingdon Foodbank – the history of the Foodbank and how it operates, location and opening times, food needed, where you can donate food, other ways you can help, real stories, how to download the Foodbank app – go to <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/>.

HOST ABINGDON - Be part of a positive response to local refugees and asylum seekers

The Host Abingdon team offers a warm welcome and practical help. Volunteers are needed to join our small team in providing organisation and support, as well as working directly with the women and families we help. You would play a part in welcoming, accessing services, helping people connect with ESOL teaching and community groups, and supporting people in moving on when they get good news of leave to remain. Are you practical and well organised as well as friendly and open-hearted? Personal qualities and life experience matter more than qualifications... and we will give you induction training and on-going support. Please contact us to find out more by emailing hello@hostabingdon.org.

Open Doors initiative

Open Doors runs most Mondays (except Bank Holidays) from 11 am until 2 pm at St Edmund's Parish Centre.

We welcome anyone who is on there own or would just like some company to join us for a chat and lunch or just pop in for a tea/coffee.

Open Doors sessions are informal and you are welcome to come along for all or part of the session. Lunch (a home-cooked main meal and dessert) is served around 12.15. There are usually about 20 guests at each session. Hope you can join us.

Silent Reflections

This will be held on the last Tuesday of every month (except for December) at St Michael and All Angels Church from 7.30 to 8.30 pm. Material will be available to support your prayer in the quiet of the sanctuary, and the opportunity is always available to walk the labyrinth. We begin in the church room, so please enter through the door on the south side of the church. If you park in Park Road or Crescent, come in to get a parking permit, otherwise the parking is free in the surrounding streets.

Stepping Stones Bereavement Group

A new cohort of this group started on Tuesday 10 March 2026 at 10.30 am in The Barn, Christ Church, Northcourt Road. This group is for people who have been bereaved in the past 12 months or so, all ages, all faiths or none. It will meet for nine sessions on the second Tuesday of each month with a break in August. The leaders are all volunteers - not counsellors - but all bring different experiences. If people would like to attend, or would like further info, please contact Sue Quantick (Sue.quantick@cca.uk.net) so she can plan ahead.

New Horizons group for the over 50s

This takes place every Wednesday at the Salvation Army base at 12 West St Helen Street, Abingdon. Coffee and chat from 10.30 am with a meal at 12 noon – please let us know a week ahead if you want a meal on oxford@salvationarmy.org.uk. The meal is followed by an activity: a 'sing by heart' – a dementia friendly session – once a month, and a craft activity monthly.

Moving into Stillness: Taizé circle dancing and stillness

Circle dancing to Taizé music with silent interludes takes place on the first Thursday of the month, 9.45 - 10.45 am at St Michael and All Angels Church, before the regular circle dancing session, which is held on the first and third Thursdays of the month from 11 am to 12 noon. Elizabeth Mitchell will be the teacher. No prior experience/partner needed. Tea and coffee will be provided. Contact Sue Sheppy (susan.sheppy@btinternet.com) for further information.

NB: Moving into Stillness will take place on 9 July and the second regular session on 23 July. There will be no dancing in August.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE CHURCHES: Please check church websites for up-to-date info

Abingdon Baptist Church www.abingdonbaptist.org.uk

Abingdon Vineyard Church www.abingdonvineyard.org.uk

All Saints Methodist Church www.allsaintsabingdon.org.uk

Christ Church www.cca.uk.net/ and www.longfurlongchurch.org.uk

Hope Church Abingdon (formerly Abingdon Community Church) www.hopechurchabingdon.org.

RCCG Light House Abingdon www.rccglighthouseabingdon.org

Peachcroft Christian Centre www.peachcroftcc.org/

Quakers www.abingdonquakers.org/

Salvation Army www.salvationarmy.org.uk/abingdon

Our Lady and St Edmund Roman Catholic Church www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/

St Helen's, St Michael's, St Nicolas' <https://abingdonparish.org.uk/StH> <https://abingdonparish.org.uk/StM>
<https://abingdonparish.org.uk/StN>

Trinity Church www.trinityabingdon.org.uk

The CiA News is circulated by the Church in Abingdon to member churches within Abingdon to promote church activities and groups, news and any other information that may be of interest to CiA news readers. If you would like to submit news or receive the news by email, please contact the CiA Administrator. The deadline for publication is the 15th of the month previous to publication. For more information about the Church in Abingdon, go to www.church-in-abingdon.org.uk.