

THE VOICE

MERROW METHODIST CHURCH MAGAZINE

*Welcome to
The Rev. Paul and Mrs. Claire Tabraham*



SEPTEMBER 2026

WELCOME

This month we welcome our new Superintendent minister,
the Rev. Paul Tabraham, and his wife Claire.
Paul will also be our minister here at Merrow Methodist Church.

We have also recently welcomed Marjan and Soheil into our congregation:
originally from Iran but now settled here in Guildford.
Marjan's background as a journalist shines through her two contributions to
"The Voice" this month, the first of which begins below.

In place of a 'Message from the Manse' we have

Marjan's Testimony

A Calling Through the Trees of Merrow:

The Day I Stepped into the Church, the air had a special crispness; it was one of those days when Guildford's lush nature seemed eager to share a secret with you. The thought had been swirling in my mind for a long time. I had walked past the church neighbourhood countless times. As an immigrant, I always carried a hidden fear, a nagging preconception in the back of my mind: "How will they treat me there? Will they accept me into their community, or will the stares be heavy?" These thoughts acted like an invisible dam, holding me back from going. But that day, I finally took the plunge. I held my husband's hand tightly and said, "Today is the day; we are going to start a new, great journey."

The walk there was a revelation in itself. As we strolled down Bushy Hill Drive, a strange feeling washed over us. It felt as if nature had taken on a different form; the colour of the leaves, the rustling of the wind through the branches, and even the breeze against our faces—everything felt like the promise of a new beginning. We walked beneath the canopy of trees lining this quiet, residential street, stepping closer and closer to that peace, until finally, the Merrow Methodist Church building appeared before our eyes.

Whenever I heard the word 'church,' I always pictured massive buildings. But this building was incredibly simple, unpretentious, and intimate. Its simple architecture didn't exude an untouchable, intimidating grandeur; rather, it opened its arms like a warm, safe home, ready to embrace your exhaustion.

It was this very simplicity of the structure that made our steps firmer, making us feel that this was not a place for vanity, but a sanctuary for the soul's peace. The moment we crossed the threshold, a profound and magnificent feeling filled my entire being. Contrary to all my fears, there were no alienating stares waiting for me. We were met by a local, incredibly warm community.

Most of the people there were older, with the dust of time resting on their faces, yet their eyes were full of light, acceptance, and kindness. They welcomed us with genuine smiles and open arms, as if they had known us for years.

When the service began and the sound of worship hymns echoed through the simple yet soulful space of the church, I started singing along with them. It was in that moment that this strange feeling reached its peak. A lump formed in my throat, mingled with a sense of lightness, and I felt all those distances and fears vanish into thin air. Going there that day was all it took for my heart to become anchored to that place. It was as if a massive, unseen force had been pulling me toward this spot for a long time, and I had only just surrendered to it.

Today, as I write these words, borders have faded into colourlessness for me. The only thing that matters now is that I consider myself a member of that church and that family. Now, with every passing day, I am becoming more familiar with this community, their programs, and its kind-hearted people. Every time I walk down that same street to go to church, I no longer feel like a stranger; instead, I feel like I am coming home. I am still at the beginning of this path, learning every single day, but I have understood one thing with all my heart: the force that took my hand that day and led me to that simple building, is now flowing through every single moment of my life.

Choir

After a well-deserved summer rest, choir practices will resume every Wednesday morning at 10.30am, beginning on September 2nd.

We would always welcome new members, so if you can sing in tune, even if you do not read music, do come along and join us.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER:

REV. PAUL TABRAHAM 01483 575432
paul_tabraham@hotmail.com

MINISTER:

REV. PAUL TABRAHAM
paul_tabraham@hotmail.com
72 Collingwood Crescent, Guildford, GU1 2PF 01483 575432

CHURCH OFFICE:

Bushy Hill Drive, Guildford, GU1 2SH. 01483 537655
office@merrowmethodistchurch.org.uk

PROPERTY LETTINGS ADMINISTRATOR:

01483 537655

lettings@merrowmethodistchurch.org.uk

PRAYER SUPPORT GROUP:

This is a small group willing to put time aside for praying each day for special needs within the Church community. Your request will be passed on to other members of the group, where it will remain confidential.

The prayer contact for May will be:

ANN CARPENTER	01483 535282
PAULINE DANIELS	01483 958905
CARI RAYNER	07887 692598
DOREEN SIAME	01483 578214

EDITOR – ‘The Voice’

GILLIAN VARLEY 01483 495567
gillianbrierley13@gmail.com

**Please verify that any copy you submit for publication is
non-copyright and in the ‘public domain.’**

This applies to text and photographs.

Important: It is our practice at Merrow to publish THE VOICE on the website. This is an important source of information about the life of our church, and we want to share it with others. However, if you feel uncomfortable with a mention on our web page we will omit your name and any other personal details in any future issue if requested to do so. Please advise at the time of submitting the copy.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SEPTEMBER

Sunday 6th September - 6.00pm - Knaphill Methodist Church.

**The service to welcome Rev.Paul Tabraham
to the Wey Valley Circuit.**

Seating is limited so attendance is pre-arranged.

**However, on Sunday September 13th we will welcome
Rev. Paul Tabraham to Merrow Methodist Church
as he leads our 10.30am morning worship**

Stewards for Sunday worship:

Date	Time	Vestry Steward	Worship Leader	PA/AV	Door Stewards
Sept. 6 th HC	10.30a m	Suzanne Burnham	Doreen Siame	Cari Rayner	Julie Wallis Maggie Woolcock
Sept. 13 th	10.30a m	Joan Wells		Jane Vinall	Ruth McCulloch Glenys Magill
Sept. 13 th HC	6.30pm	Hugh Bradley		Glenys Magill	
Sept. 20 th	10.30p m	Iris Walker	Gillian Varley	Cari Rayner	Peter Walker Wendy Bradley
Sept. 27 th	10.30a m	Suzanne Burnham		Jane Vinall	Joyce Goodall Julie Wallis

Communion stewards:

	<u>Preparation:</u>	<u>Assisting:</u>
Sept 6 th 10.30am Sept 13 th 6.30pm	Doreen Siame/Glenys Magill Glenys Magill	Doreen Siame Hugh Bradley

Flower Rota:

Sept. 6th. Pauline
Sept. 13th Cari
Sept. 20th Glenys
Sept. 27th Jan Kemp

Sunday Morning Coffee Rota:

6th Sept. Joan Wells and Jan Walker.
13th Sept Hugh and Wendy Bradley
20th Sept. Ruth McCulloch and Margaret Hills.
27th Sept. Pauline Daniels and Julie Wallis

Organ Rota: Morning services: Gillian Varley

Charity:

Christian Aid /Hugh
JMA/ Hugh
Transform Trade/ Glenys
Coffee funds/ Hugh
Evening services: Hymnal+

EDITORIAL NOTE



'The Voice' for September,
As you may remember,
Will be a reflection
That my August election
To take a short rest
Was what I thought best.
The result of this mission
Is a slim-line edition!

Any items for inclusion in the October issue of "The Voice" should be sent to me by September 22nd: via email: gillianbrierley13@gmail.com by hand, or by post to: Gillian Varley - 4, Merrow Croft, Guildford. GU1 2XH

COPYRIGHT

Please do not submit any articles or photographs which are Copyright, ie. not in the Public Domain.

Church websites and magazines are closely monitored by outside 'copyright checking' agencies.

There is a heavy fine for publishing such material without permission.

Women's Fellowship

Monday 7th September 2.30 pm.

The speaker will be Rachel Nicolaou from 'Seniors helping Seniors.'
'Seniors helping Seniors' is a unique care service that matches people who need assistance and care, with seniors who want to help.

All are welcome

Church Bible Studies

All are welcome.

Morning Bible Study

at Lavender Cottage, Marlyns Drive, Burpham.
Tuesdays 8th & 22nd September at 10.45am
led by Gillian Varley

Evening Bible Study
in the church

Thursday 24th September at 7.30pm
led by Julie Wallis

Number 5 and Mulberry House

Thank you for all your generous donations for Number 5 and Mulberry house.
They are very appreciative of the support we give to them.

Weekly Coffee Morning

Thursdays from 10.30 - 11.45am

If you are free, do drop in for a drink and a chat with others from the church and local community. There is no charge.

On the 2nd Thursday each month this is usually

A Charity Coffee Morning

supporting a different charity each month
when a delicious selection of cakes will be served for you to enjoy.
Come and join us for a cuppa that changes lives

COFFEE MORNING

FOR

AL-AHLI HOSPITAL – GAZA

(The oldest and only Christian Hospital in Gaza)

Thursday 10th September

Coffee and Cakes from 10.30am
at Merrow Methodist Church

Talk by Dr Ang Swee Chai at 11.30am

A Senior Consultant at Barts Hospital. She has worked as a surgeon in both Gaza and Lebanon and has spoken at the United Nations. She is a founder member on the Board of MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians).



Please come and listen to this wonderful, courageous lady who has worked tirelessly against injustice

FUTURE DIARY DATES & NEWS

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Sunday 4th October – 10.30am

This service will be led by our new minister
the Rev. Paul Tabraham

Please bring - Harvest gifts of fruit, flowers, vegetables, groceries and pot plants in the usual way, for distribution to the housebound, homes, elderly and sick, No 5 hostel for men and Mulberry House hostel for women, which will be gratefully received at the morning service.

From the Heart of Somerset to the Alborz Mountains in Iran:

When Cheddar feels like Chalus Road

by Marjan Mirzaabdolah

As an avid traveller, I seize every opportunity to explore a new place and discover more of England's hidden corners. As an immigrant, no matter how much I travel across this country, it never feels like enough; I am constantly learning—every single day—about British culture, its people, the language, and the way people interact. I deeply believe that no matter how much I read or listen to others, nothing teaches me about life as genuinely and tangibly as travel itself.

On a recent short trip within the UK, visiting Cheddar Gorge gave me an entirely different feeling. You might think it was the pristine, mountainous nature or the famous rocky, winding road that evoked this emotion. While there is no doubt that Cheddar's landscape is breathtaking and unique, the real reason for this familiar warmth was its striking resemblance to one of my home country's most famous and nostalgic tourist destinations: Iran.

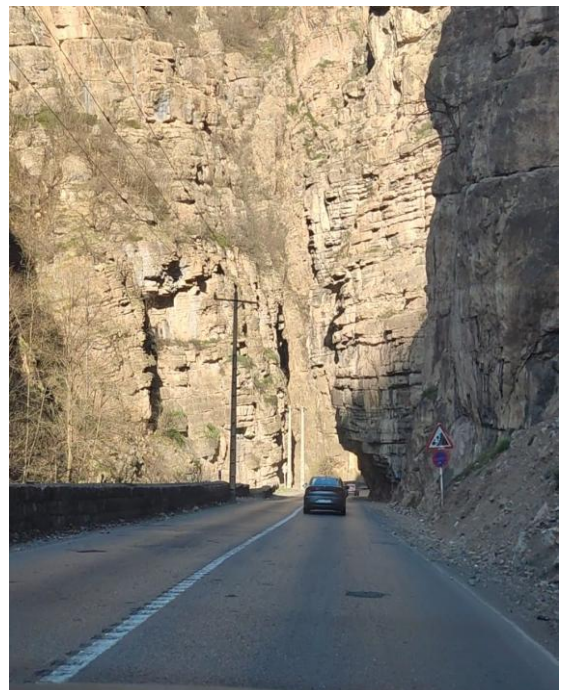
These days, beneath the dark shadow of war, many have heard the name Iran, and perhaps the Strait of Hormuz, in the news. But my country is vast, sprawling, and full of wonders. In this piece, I want to look at the world from a different angle and talk about the surprising similarities between Cheddar and "Chalus Road."

As the car navigated the narrow, winding road of Cheddar, with massive limestone cliffs towering on both sides, I suddenly found myself thousands of miles away.

That same awe-inspiring feeling of the mountains embracing a narrow road is exactly what travellers on Chalus Road experience as they reach the twists and turns of the Alborz Mountains.



Cheddar Gorge



The Chalus Road

The resemblance doesn't end with the shape of the cliffs and the curves of the road. What made Cheddar feel so much like Chalus to me was the vibrant, human, and bustling atmosphere down in the valley.

On Chalus Road, we have rest stops, like the area around the Kandovan Tunnel, packed with tiny shops and stalls selling hot AshReshteh (a traditional Iranian noodle soup), colourful sour fruit, leathers (Lavashak), and local souvenirs. Here in Cheddar, that exact same dynamic energy was flowing. Small, cosy shops lined up shoulder-to-shoulder along the road, enchanting tourists with a variety of colours and aromas.

In Cheddar, instead of the smell of Ash and kebabs, the air is filled with the scent of famous aged Cheddar cheeses and apple ciders. And instead of Lavashak, traditional sweets and local ice creams catch the eye. Yet, the soul breathing life into these shops is identical: shopkeepers greeting travellers with wide smiles and warm chatter, tourists strolling carefree along the road, hopping from one shop to another, excitedly buying souvenirs for their loved ones.

Perhaps it is because of my deep interest in culture that I am always looking for these points of cultural connection in my travels; witnessing how hospitality and the human eagerness to explore and enjoy sharing a universal language. The shopkeepers in Cheddar introduced their local products with the exact same warmth and passion as the street vendors on Chalus Road inviting road-weary travellers for a hot glass of wood-fire brewed tea.

My trip to Cheddar reminded me just how small the world is in all its vastness, and how we humans—despite all our cultural and linguistic differences in Britain or Iran—act so similarly when it comes to creating sweet memories for one another. To me, Cheddar was not just a tourist attraction in England; it was a piece of my longing and memories of home, found right in the heart of Somerset.

Editors request:

Have you enjoyed a holiday as much as Marjan enjoyed hers?

It may be somewhere new, or just a favourite place which you love re-visiting.

Please share your holiday experiences with all of us; with or without photographs.

The piece on the following page is, in this case, not a visit, but a visitor.

An unexpected newcomer - contributed by Val Carter

As a few of you will know we have a very rare and arrogant new neighbour. Instead of seeing 'pink elephants,' our new resident is a rare white peacock. He's been here for over two months and has charmed us with his antics.



"Yes, I'm Pete, surveying the scene.....think I'll go for a stroll.....
There are food bowls and water outside most of the houses.



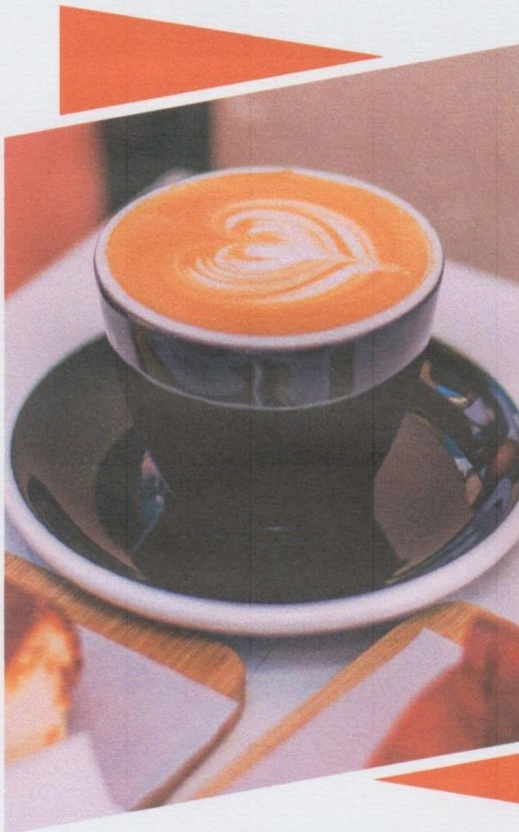
...so, whose house shall I visit today?Ah yes, this one looks promising!"

It certainly makes life more interesting. He has been named 'Pete'.
Not often you follow a peacock to get out of your drive!



Merrow
Methodist Church

Coffee Morning



JOIN US
for
coffee/tea,
homemade cakes,
and
a chat

Thursday 15 October 2026
10.30 am – 12 noon
Merrow Methodist Church

biblesociety.org.uk | Registered charity 232759 | Photo: Engin Akyurta PIXABAY

Gill's trills



A heatwave thought
My trill for September
I just can't remember.
This won't be repeated;
I'm just over-heated!!

Ken's Pen

The vicar of an old church, with valuable items inside, noticed an old man coming in every day just before noon. He asked the caretaker to keep an eye on him, "Just in case." After a week or so the vicar asked what had happened. "Well sir, the old chap said he comes every day to say a prayer, but goes quickly". "What sort of prayer?" asked the vicar. "He just says 'Jesus, it's Jim'"

Jim was involved in an accident, and went to hospital. He became popular in the ward, being cheerful and made patients feel better. When the Sister asked Jim how he managed to be happy all the time, he replied, "My visitor every day makes me happy." Sister had noticed that, at visiting times, Jim's chair was empty. He had no family. "Your visitor?" she said. "Yes, every day at twelve, he comes, stands by my bed, smiles and just says 'Jim, it's Jesus.'"

At what time of day does Jesus come to you?

.....

A little boy was saying his prayers with Mummy and Grandma, "God bless Mummy and Daddy, and please give me a good night's sleep." He then said very loudly "and please make sure I get a bike for my birthday." "There's no need to shout, son, God isn't deaf." "I know, but Grandma is" he replied.

.....

The church finances were getting low. The minister asked the congregation to be very generous that morning. "The one who is most generous may choose three hymns." When the offertory plates were being blessed, he noticed two £50 notes and asked the donor to stand up. A frail old lady at the back reluctantly stood up, and was called to the front. "Right," said the minister, "What three hymns would you like?" She looked at the congregation and shyly said "I'd like him and him and him."

With greetings from Fairway Care Home, Chippenham.

Keep smiling, Ken Mills

.....

SCAMS

Fake PayPal emails

Watch out for emails claiming to be from online payment system PayPal, saying you have bought a high value item such as an iPhone and asking you to call a specific number if you did not make the purchase.

Once dialled, it will put you through to a scammer who will try to gather your personal information.

NEVER give out any personal information or bank details to anyone you are not 100% sure about. If you think your account has been compromised, change your password and security questions.

Deepfake calls

Scam calls using artificial intelligence (AI) to create or manipulate the caller's voice are one of the most common scams. A survey commissioned by a spam call protection company, revealed that a quarter of scam calls in the UK were powered by AI.

Some of the most common included AI voices claiming they were from the police, bank staff, HMRC, DWP and Amazon.

NB: The DWP NEVER send text messages or emails requesting your bank details for winter fuel payment purposes. In most cases the payment is given automatically. The only people who need to claim are those who are of state pension age and have never received the payment before. They should contact DWP. Details of how to do that online

Fake unpaid parking fine notices

According to Which? scammers are continuing to send fake texts claiming people have been issued with a parking penalty notice (PCN) using spoofed mobile numbers and email addresses. It says that this is your final notice and that legal action could be taken against you if you don't pay.

It includes a malicious link to follow to make the payment which will lead to a website impersonating the government's official site in order to get you to type in your personal and financial information.

Fake QR codes:

Large QR codes have been placed on top of some PayByPhone signage around the borough. These take you through to a fake website (parking.sps) and asks for your bank details. Please make sure you are on the correct website or use your PayByPhone app. The Metropolitan Police are working to get these removed and identify the culprits

Prayers worth sharing



A prayer for the start of the new Connexional year

O Christ of the morning,
You who sang the stars into being,
Sing again into our hearts today.

As a new year unfolds.
we walk into the next verse of your story,
the next line of your song.

May the Spirit stir our memory.
reminding us who we are
your people, your melody,
each life a note in your unfolding hymn.

Guide us in courage,
hold us in love,
send us with hope.

In the name of the One who goes before us,
beside us, and sings within us
Christ our companion,

Amen.