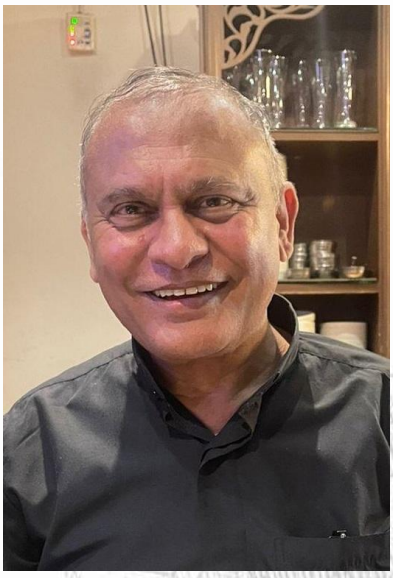
St. Andrew's Anglican Church Moscow
Autumn Newsletter 2026

A message from the Chaplain:



Dear Friends,

At the outset, I would like to say thank you to the members of the Anglican parish of St. Andrew's for your wonderful witness and testimony of faith in Moscow. I also thank all those who are praying for us and constantly encouraging us, most particularly our friends at the Russia Company for their continued support. My gratitude goes especially to Metropolitan Anthony and all our brothers and sisters in the Russian Orthodox Church, for their continuing encouragement and prayers.

Indeed, we are evolving in the face of various challenges. You have turned those challenges into an opportunity to enact your mission and ministry more robustly. I am amazed at your resilience and your generous offering of your time and talents. All these testify to your deep Christian commitment. You are a living congregation, sharing the love of Jesus beyond the four walls of your traditional church building.

You are committed to implementing mission together as lay people in the absence of a resident Chaplain. Thank you to those who have completed the Barefoot Pastoral Care programme, the Lay Worship Leaders course and to the expanded new Altar Team. The "Reading with Confidence" programme has increased the number of Bible Readers. The meetings of the Youth group and the Bible Studies in Russian every Sunday have brought new members to our Parish. The funds raised through the pub quizzes in aid of Mary's Meals, and those who are engaged in conducting online weekday morning prayer services at 8.30am reflect our commitment to mission.

I am delighted to inform you that five members from the St. Petersburg Anglican Parish have also completed the Worship Leader training course. Maria Karyakina, the warden, has held the St. Petersburg parish together for a good many years without the support of a chaplain in residence. The parish is now properly organized along formal lines, having elected treasurers in Ihecancho Michael Eziakonowa and David Whitford and a Lay Vice Chair in Taiye John Aluko. Maria is now supported by a second warden, Matias Alejandro Flores and a Safeguarding Officer, Dmitry Khudoleev. Maria, thank you for all your hard work.

At St Andrew's Moscow, our choir's commitment helps us to use liturgy more creatively. From now on at the request of the members, we will be distributing Reserved Sacrament at our 11 a.m. services every Sunday. After due discussions with parish members and our Church Council, the parish is planning a move to a more central location in Moscow. This venue will accommodate our growing congregation and will provide kitchen facilities and an extra room for Sunday School activities. I would like to thank our members for their generous contributions towards covering the rent for the venue for our services.

I take this opportunity to thank our wardens, Nicolette and Giles, our Chairman Ephraim who ensures that the technical aspects of our services run smoothly, Donald and Suresh for managing the finances, Liz, our efficient Safeguarding Officer and, of course, Kamilla for her multi-faceted involvement in holding together our Russian-speaking members, as well as being our Church Council Secretary.

I am indebted to all our members, Worship Leaders, Pastoral Care team, Altar Team and all those who work behind the scenes to help with catering and fellowship after services. Your support is much appreciated.

My dear Lay Leadership Team, members of the congregation and the extended congregation on Zoom, you are an amazing example of believers in Jesus. You are a growing and faithful congregation. It is my privilege to be your Chaplain and be part of this empowering experience of being a Church supported by majority lay involvement.

Let me share these encouraging words from James 1:2-4:
"Count it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Rev. Canon Dr. Arun John

From the churchwardens:

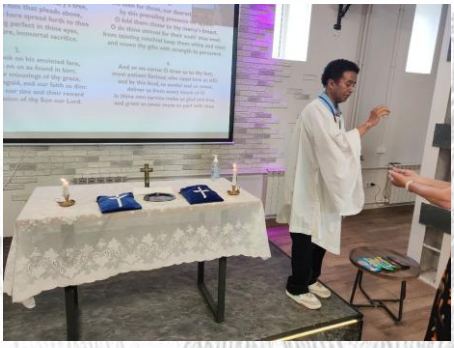


While the current situation continues to present many challenges, it is also providing the congregation with untold opportunities for growth in faith and witness. I am constantly amazed not only by the resilience shown by the congregation in the face of continued harassment from those currently occupying the building of St. Andrew's, but also by the willingness of so many to become actively involved in both our Sunday services and in our Christian outreach.

We are indebted to Fr. Arun for providing cohesion to our congregation. He is always present at our Sunday services via Zoom, and has also been leading numerous courses to train our lay members to take on greater leadership roles. Opportunities offered in recent months have led to additional people stepping up for training as lay worship leaders, as well as the first group to complete the Barefoot Pastoral Care course. We already have eight candidates who have put their names forward to start preparation for confirmation once we can schedule the dates for the bishop's next visit. There is also interest in confirmation from the St. Petersburg congregation, so we hope that the bishop will be able to complete an historical 'double' in visiting both Russian capitals.



Fr. Arun preaches at a Sunday service



The congregation's request to have Reserved Sacrament distributed every week has led to four more people being trained to support Eskedar in the distribution of the host. Thanks to Fr. Arun's work in supporting our sister congregation in St. Petersburg, we are looking forward to building closer relationships between our two congregations and plan to instigate regular visits up to the Northern capital, so that the newly authorized members of the Moscow Altar Team can share the Reserved Sacrament with our brothers and sisters, until such time as Fr. Arun is able to complete the training for St. Petersburg.



Even though we currently only have limited facilities for preparing refreshments after services, hospitality continues to be a key feature that unites us. The fellowship after the service – the tea, coffee and impromptu catering, the Bible studies, training sessions and prayer time all help to build us up and strengthen our community spirit.

Our congregation is also blessed with its wider Christian family – those who have been part of the St. Andrew's community in previous years and continue to support us with their prayers. The alumni section at the end of this newsletter gives updates on just a few of these members. The fact that so many retain warm memories of their time in Moscow, and their continuing thankfulness for the sense of community that they found at St. Andrew's, speaks to the fact that a church is not about bricks and mortar, but about the believing community that acts as Christ's body here on Earth.

Nicolette Kirk



"Preach faith until you have it; and then, because you will have it, you will preach faith."

(Peter Bohler, 1738).

I remember these words to a wretched John Wesley from History 'A' Level many years ago. They have come back to me since the doors of St Andrew's were locked, not by the authorities, but by our own rebels, on 25th January. As we moved to find somewhere for that day's service, then to keep going online and, as a properly registered group, in person, and maintained an "early Christian" presence on the grounds as long as we could, frankly, I was unsure as to how things would unfold. We knew that we faced an existential threat, and we were not certain we could survive. All we could do was our best to carry on. Thanks to the rebel example of sowing division, we knew we must stick together and encourage each other. Individuals came together as a team to make Zoom services happen. People logged on. Some even got out of bed early to worship outdoors in -20°C. As the hardy few grew in number, mockery turned to malice, and the padlock was upgraded to a heavy chain.

Despite this, the "spiteful zoomers" hurried to a place where we could all worship openly in person, with the written authority of the Ministry of Justice. In so doing, we have put what we lost into the background, and brought out what we still have. For the first time ever, I am attending church services where every single person present wants to be there. We experience this first hand when we look into each other's eyes, and shake hands or embrace, as we share the peace. We can see it in the activity of our growing numbers too: 42 of our congregation have taken an active role, such as reading a lesson or leading the prayers, since we were exiled. And so, by keeping going and trying to do what we knew we had to when we didn't know our direction of travel, we find ourselves, like Wesley, practicing and preaching faith.

And now we look back not at physical footprints in the snow but at a time when the Lord carried us on our journey of faith. As Don read for us on 26th July:

"I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor death, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord"

(Romans 8:38-39).

Giles Walker

Outreach

We may not have permanent premises to use throughout the week at present, but we continue to be active as a wider Christian community, both after church on Sundays and beyond. Bible studies, talks, informal training sessions, and the Youth Fellowship follow our weekly services, with more and more of us staying behind. Members of our congregation continue to work together to support charities, both those operating locally and global organisations.

SANT'EGIDIO

Earlier in the summer, we were pleased to encourage each other to support Victoria's efforts to raise money for the Sant'Egidio Community's work among the homeless in Moscow. Every Summer, the community invites some of their homeless friends to spend a weekend at a retreat house. These weekends — weekends of solidarity — give the homeless a chance to feel truly human again, to breathe out, and to find the strength to continue their very difficult lives.

Soon, in conjunction with the Sant'Egidio Community, we shall begin our traditional Harvest-Advent appeal to collect non-perishable food, warm clothing and toiletries to be distributed to those experiencing hardship this winter.



Pub Quizzes

Over the past four years, our regular pub quizzes in aid of Mary's Meals have have raised sufficient funds to give 350 children a nourishing school meal for a whole year. We remain indebted to Steve Conway and his team at Paddy's Irish Pub for hosting us free of charge, so that all the funds raised can go directly to help young people improve their futures by remaining in full-time education.





The victorious team celebrates their win!

In June this year, Hugo Ononiwu, a Nigerian member of our church family, was released from prison after completing a three-year term. Having lived in Russia for more than 20 years, Hugo had been planning to rebuild his life here in Moscow, but was unexpectedly told that he would be immediately transferred from prison to a deportation camp. Without family or friends to help him, he turned to his church family at St. Andrew's for help. Despite the fact that – with no regular income from the church building – funds are currently very tight, the congregation rallied to provide Hugo with financial and material support to ease his time in the deportation camp and – with the assistance of our wider alumni community – to purchase a ticket for Hugo to return home. Hugo is now back in Lagos, from where he sends his love and gratitude to all.



Learning from one another



Inspired by Fr. Arun's courses in practical spirituality, a number of members of the congregation have arranged sessions after church to help others grow in confidence, so that they can take a more active part in our services.

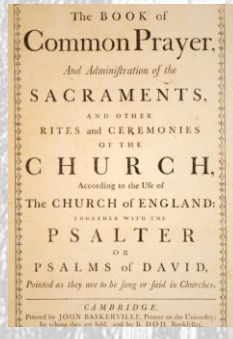


Giles has led a session on reading with confidence, designed to help those who would like to read lessons in church to ensure that they are both heard and understood, particularly if English is not their first language. Yevgenia has led a session on aspects of voice projection, giving practical exercises on breath control. Future sessions are planned on leading intercessions.

Russian-language Bible study



Our Russian-language Bible study group meets after every Sunday service.





Kamilla continues in her ministry to help the local members of our congregation learn more about Anglican traditions. She makes regular posts on our social media about the hymns we sing at our Sunday services, explaining the significance of the lyrics, giving biographies of the hymn writers and introducing the music of some of the different traditions that our choir adopts, such as hymns from the Iona Community or chants from Taizé. Along with Dmitry, she recently facilitated a session on the Book of Common Prayer.



Youth Fellowship



Our Youth Fellowship continues to go from strength to strength. Although we recently had to say a tearful farewell to Shima and Darian, we are truly blessed by the number of young people from all parts of the globe who form a key part of our church family. Several members of our Youth Fellowship have now trained as Worship Leaders and once a month our young people not only lead our 11 a.m. Service of the Word, but also read the lessons and lead the congregation in prayer.

News from St. Petersburg

The Anglican Church in St Petersburg is an historic congregation which has served our city since 1723 (with the exception of a suspension of services between 1918 and 1991). We are currently separated from our historic home and are renting a space at the German Lutheran Petrikirche on Nevsky Prospekt. While the position of Priest-in-Charge has been vacant since 2007, the church maintains a vibrant weekly Sunday service at 4 pm and has seen its average congregation grow to 20 members—a record since 2017. This growth is driven by international students from Southeast Asia and Africa, who now form the majority, alongside a smaller, long-standing European contingent. The church supplements its regular worship with joint Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services at both the German and Swedish Lutheran churches, and benefits from very low operating costs, ensuring strong financial health despite high European travel costs.



Candle-lit Christmas Eve service in conjunction with the German and Swedish Lutherans.

Despite the lack of a resident priest, the congregation is led by dedicated members of the laity, including Aluko John Taiye and Matias Flores. The community enriches its life with post-service coffee hours, a recently inaugurated Spanish club, and even public astronomical observation events organized by our members. Musically, we are supported by a dependable pianist, Tatiana, with occasional additions of flute and violin from her daughter and our member Alice respectively. While the congregation has successfully maintained worship and fellowship, a key challenge remains the need for occasional Anglican priestly leadership. The group is actively seeking remote training opportunities for its lay leaders and hopes to further engage with its beautifully restored historical home, now a concert hall, as a potential venue for future special services.

Astronomical observations





Spanish club

Matias Flores

Retreat at Lee Abbey

The long Summer holidays allow many people the opportunity to unwind and re-charge their batteries. Here Liz shares her experiences of a retreat that she undertook during her trip back to the UK.



Lee Abbey is an ecumenical Christian retreat centre on the North Devon coast in England. Set in beautiful countryside, it offers a variety of retreat programmes. This was my second visit, my first one having been in the summer of 2025. Last year, the programme was about meeting God in Creation, and was a family week It was great fun and very enriching, so this year I chose a similar theme: God's Two Books - the two books in question being the Bible and God's Creation.

Led by a group of Christians who are also leading biologists in their fields, the focus was on what we can learn from God's Creation, about God, about ourselves, our communities, and our relationship with the natural world.

The teaching was fascinating, with some interesting discussion, but the two things that will particularly stay with me are the sense of peace and rest that I felt, and the demonstration of bird-ringing, where I was struck by how gently and yet how firmly the birds were handled - there was clearly a metaphor in there!



In addition to the teaching, there was, of course, daily prayer, with some very dynamic music, a Communion service on the last evening, some walks to look at nature, an opportunity to talk to, and pray with, the two Pastoral Helpers, as well as ample time to wander around the area, encounter God, and just think about where one's life is going.

No Creation-themed retreat would be complete without a discussion of the various threats to the environment, and some of the statistics are truly shocking. Thus, my final thought is a challenge to us all: What more could we, as a community, be doing to help heal God's Creation, and try to bring it closer to what it was intended to be. A memorable comment was that in the original Greek, "God so loved the World" uses the word "Kosmos". It isn't just us humans that God loves, buti the whole of His Creation, and as Christians, we should be doing our best to look after it.

Liz Bearman

If you would like to know more about Lee Abbey, or about this particular retreat, please talk to Liz, or send an email to outreachstandrews02@gmail.com

Postcard from Rīga

I had the pleasure of returning to Rīga for a few days at the end of June and beginning of July. I worked here for a couple of months in 2012, with the Russian family who caused me to move to Moscow. Whenever I travel in Europe, I love to visit the many Anglican communities dotted about. It's always a pleasure to return to St Saviour's, Rīga. A healthy congregation of ex-pats and Latvians, led by Rev. Elisa provides a warm welcome on Sundays. They also host weekly concerts and run a soup kitchen on Saturdays. Our alumna, Michele Berdy, is now settled in Rīga, and an active councillor. Members of St Andrew's may feel slightly nostalgic for their beautiful Victorian Gothic church building, and almost jealous that it has its own street, Anglikāņu Iela!



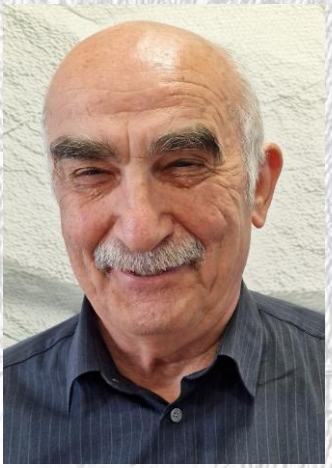
St. Saviour's are currently paying for their restored roof, thanks to the generous builder completing the work in full before they have raised all the funds to cover it. They are praying for us and our situation, and would appreciate our prayers as they finish paying for their roof.

Giles Walker

New chalices

Following on from his recent generous gift to the chaplaincy, Nick Matvienko, a gold- and silversmith and long-time member of our congregation, has now prepared a set of gilded brass chalices as a gift to Archbishop Sarah, in recognition of our chaplaincy's fidelity to the enduring principles of the Anglican faith.





A huge thank you once again to Nick for his continued faithfulness, skill and generosity.

News from St. Andrew's alumni

Over the Summer, a number of people have been able to meet up with former members of our congregation, who send their love and blessings.



Fr. Simon remains in his retirement home in Plymouth. He has been moved to a new room with a wonderful sea view, which brings him great joy. He thanks everyone for their continuing prayers and support which sustain him.



Michael Pugh has just published a truly amazing account of his final departure from Russia on horse-back. His journey, back in 2014, took him through rural Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and into Romania



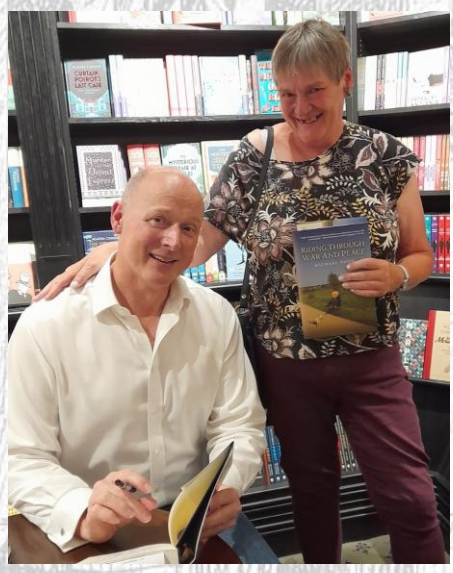
Although already in her 90s, **Jennifer Louis** is still "as sharp as a razor" and in very good form,

A number of friends of St. Andrew's were able to attend the London launch of Michael's book. "***Riding through War and Peace***" *is available from bookshops in the UK and on Amazon.*



Andrew Cobbold and Jane O'Hara

Michael and Liz





Fr. Clive is now rector of the Suffolk Heights Benefice – a group of six rural churches. Here he is with his wife **Jo**, who is currently training to be a prison warder.



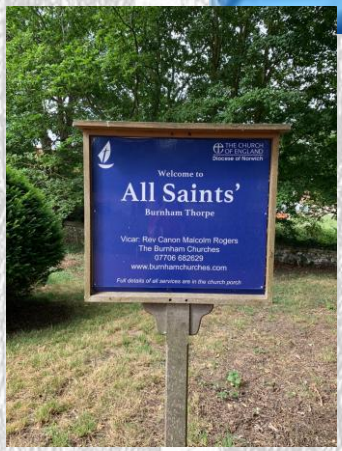
All Saints', Rede – one of the churches in the Suffolk Heights Benefice.





Glen Ruffle remains vicar of the benefice of The Lye and Stambermill. He and **Angela** welcomed their second daughter, Lucy, earlier this year.





Fr. Malcolm continues as vicar of the Burnham churches in Norfolk.





Mary Kilikidi was ordained priest in July this year at All Saints, Kingston-upon-Thames. Several members of St. Andrew's joined her for the service. Mary is now serving as curate in the parish of Merton Priory in South London.



Su Mace is enjoying an active retirement and being a busy grandmother. Earlier this year, she and her husband Peter undertook a journey of a lifetime, travelling to the US, New Zealand, Australia, Thailand and Qatar.



Olga Fabrikant-Burke manages to combine being a busy mother to her two boys, Teddy and Joey, with being a tutor in Old Testament at Ridley Hall in Cambridge.