

The Link



Dec 2025/Jan 2026

Shanklin United Reformed Church www.shanklinurc.co.uk



H**O****P****E**

in our villages, towns & cities

View From Number 10



Good News of great joy...!

Tis the season to be jolly, tra la la la la...!! We all like a bit of festive cheer. This was being discussed on local radio recently, and I heard people say that they put their lights up early in November to try and lift their spirits and counter the gathering gloom and the cold of winter. Others were protesting – it's far too early!



Truth is – many find Christmas and New Year a very difficult and lonely time... others seem to have everything and are surrounded by the perfect family... while they brace themselves for a challenging few friendless days when everything they normally do stops.

We do what we can to make a difference and provide some support to those who struggle – the Foodbank Reverse Advent Calendar is an excellent idea. Eve at the Catholic Church is doing a Christmas Lunch... and many have contributed to the Samaritan's Purse Shoebox Appeal – Operation Christmas Child.

All good stuff – and we are making Mountbatten the focus of our Christmas appeal to support their wonderful work with those suffering with terminal illnesses, and with their families.

We are bearers of the best news of all – the birth of Jesus as the promised Saviour of the World – the Messiah (Christ) the Lord. His coming, and then his death and resurrection, comprise the great hinge point of history and marked the progression from the Old Covenant promises with Israel to a New Covenant that brought home God's love to all the people of the world – to every race, tribe and tongue.



Jesus, the King of the Jews, was also the hope of all nations. The angelic message of great joy to all the people touched the lives of humble shepherds who lived on the very edge of Jewish society - and also reached the wise men who were drawn from a far-off land to come and see the newborn king and to worship him.

The inclusion of such people in the narrative gives hope to us all

when we perhaps feel unworthy of being invited in, or too far off to be included in God's family. It also gives us in the church a mandate to take the good news of Jesus to people far and wide and to let them know that he came for them too.

The roof tops are not just the domain of Santa – Jesus encouraged his followers to declare his good news openly and courageously: *“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.”* (Matthew 10:27)

May we all be a source of great joy over this whole festive season, Janet joins me in sending our love best wishes and wishing you a joy -full Christmas and a hope-filled New Year,



SURC Christmas Activities & Services

We welcome you

to celebrate the birth of Jesus with us

Saturday 13 th	19:30	Shanklin Town Brass Band Christmas Concert (see page 49)
Sunday 14 th	17:00	Light Up a Life service (see page 9)
Saturday 20 st	15:30	Messy Christmas - family fun
Sunday 21 st	10:30	Carol Service & Nativity
	17:00	Carol singing - snacks after
Christmas Eve	23:00	Carols on the Steps
	23:30	Christmas Eve Communion
Christmas Day	10:30	Christmas Day Service
Sunday 28 th	10:30	Worship for all ages – with Malc

Services are also streamed live to our [YouTube](#) channel

We invite you to make gifts in support of Mountbatten - see [page 32](#)

Prayer



Always at the Heart of our Life

New Year Prayer Breakfast - Saturday 3rd January at 09:00

Join us as we start the year as we mean to go on – in prayer. Come along around 09:30 if you don't want food.

Monday Prayer at 13:00 – a new weekly meeting began in October in the church. This is especially to pray about our priorities for us as God's people going forward and seeking kingdom growth .

Tuesday Prayer at 19:30 - Continues each week via Zoom using the same account as for other activities and groups :

[https://us04web.zoom.us/j/3242665584?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/3242665584?pwd=ZTIXZzBLWnkrWTNBY2JBK1o0K2ZXdz09)

[pwd=ZTIXZzBLWnkrWTNBY2JBK1o0K2ZXdz09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/3242665584?pwd=ZTIXZzBLWnkrWTNBY2JBK1o0K2ZXdz09)

Meeting ID: 324 266 5584 Password: 936536.

Text Prayer Network - If you have an urgent and important issue that needs immediate cover, please text Lou on **07514 766798** (or, as a back-up, Jean Cunningham on: 07854 324809) with your prayer request and she will mobilise a team of intercessors by forwarding the message to the group. Each of the team will pray and then delete the message.

If you'd like to be added to this network, please get in touch with Lou and she will brief you on the protocols.

Pray for The Bay - Grace Mckenzie from Christ Church hosts this gathering, normally on the first Thursday of each month, at her home in Lake at 14:00. Ask Brian for details if you are interested in going along. **Next meetings – 4th December and 8th January**

**Next Sabbath of Prayer – save the date:
Friday 17th April – Saturday 18th April**

God's Wonderful Creation

*I gaze around at God's creation, as I stroll in a country lane
It makes me think of our Lord Jesus, He's coming back again
I look around at the wonder of it all, and the silence is broken
by the cuckoo's call*

*Branches swaying in the breeze, buds are bursting on the
trees*

*The grass beneath my feet smells, all lovely green and bright
and somewhere across the meadow, i hear some noisy
ducks in flight*

*Now my eyes are turned towards the sky, i see a big white
cloud go sailing by*

*To unveil the sun again all big and round, sending swords of
gold to pierce the ground*

*So as i look around His wonders to behold, my eyes cannot
take it in*

It's worth more than silver and gold

*Even on a rainy day the rainbow will appear, then we
remember God's promise to us He made quite clear*

*When you see my bow in the sky, remember i will never
send the waters to destroy*

This beautiful creation it's here for you to enjoy

So as i stroll homeward again down the country lane,

*I thank you for it all Lord Jesus i know you're coming back
again*

Mary Fryatt

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Shanklin URC - Homegroups

Homegroups - sometimes called small groups or house fellowships - play a vital role in the life of the church.

While Sunday worship gathers the whole body together, homegroups provide a more intimate setting where faith can be nurtured in practical and personal ways. At Shanklin we are fortunate to have a variety of home groups available to the congregation and it is important that we try and make time in our lives to attend home group.

Homegroups offer a unique environment where believers can build deeper relationships, moving past superficial connections to form genuine friendships in which joys, struggles, and prayers are shared, truly living out the biblical instruction to “carry each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2). Here, smaller gatherings provide interactive opportunities for Bible study, allowing members to ask questions, explore meanings, and apply scripture to everyday situations. Homegroups are also places of encouragement and gentle accountability, supporting one another through challenges and helping each person remain steadfast in their faith. Many groups extend their fellowship to serve their communities together, echoing the example of the early church, where believers met in homes and shared resources to meet various needs (Acts 2:46–47). For those new to faith or unsure about attending larger services, homegroups present a welcoming and accessible way to become involved in Christian community.

In short, homegroups embody the church in miniature: worship, fellowship, discipleship, and mission lived out in everyday spaces. They remind us as Christians that faith is not just about attending services, but about walking together in Christ, sharing life, and growing as His people.

If you are not yet in a homegroup please feel free to contact me on 07531 284797 or email me at stceciliatedemusique@gmail.com and I will be happy to help you find a group.

Blessings in Christ,

Sheilagh



Safeguarding Training Foundation & Intermediate

Saturday 31st January 2026

Shanklin URC

High Street, Shanklin, PO37 6LA

10:00 - 16:00

(arrivals and registration from 09:30)

A full day's training for all individuals working with children, young people and adults at risk. Also important for Ministers and Elders of the Church. The course covers:

- **Policy and Programme**
- **Premises** (risk assessments, security, accidents and first aid, fire safety, transport)
- **People** (recruitment, working together culture, communication online & phones)
- **Protecting Children & Adults at Risk** (forms of abuse, recognising signs of abuse, responding to concern or disclosures, reporting structures)
- **Paper Trails** (forms, records, registers,)
- **Safer Church Culture**

Certificates are presented to those completing this training course.

*Refreshments are provided for coffee and tea breaks.
Please bring a packed lunch with you for the lunchtime break.*

Trainer - Ruth White, Children's & Youth Development Officer

**For more information and to book your place please contact:
development@urcwessex.org.uk / 023 8067 4513**

ENCOUNTER

**Usually on the last Sunday of each month
at 10:30**



**A café style meeting place to drop in and enjoy
some refreshments**

**A relaxed time of Friendship, Fun, Food and
exploring Faith...**

with craft, songs, challenges, prayers...

EVERYONE is welcome – do bring a friend along

The next café service will be on the 25th January

a great day to invite friends along

– café serving from 10:15

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Please remember to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters – especially at times such as Christmas and Easter, when they are particularly more vulnerable to more attacks in several parts of the world.

Light up a Life

with



Mountbatten

Join us to remember a
loved one this Christmas

Sunday 14 December 17:00

Shanklin United Reformed Church

With a guest Mountbatten

Retiring offering for their on-going work

To dedicate a light

Call **01983 217300**

Visit **mountbatten.org.uk/light**



Registered Charity No. 1039086 as a company in England no. 2929207

Church Meeting

29th January 2026 @ 19:30

Refreshments from 19:00



...or join via our regular Zoom link (see [page 4](#))

All members and regular worshippers are encouraged to come and share in this important gathering as we discuss the business and plans of the church family as we serve the Lord together.

Please pick up an agenda and minutes when they are available in the new year

Don't just go to church – be the church!

Connection Quiz

1. Where is the New Covent Garden Market in London?
2. Which is the second oldest football club in London to play at a professional level (they are currently in league one)?
3. What is the name of the ground where Surrey Cricket Club play their home games?
4. What was the name of the BBC children's television drama series that portrayed life in a fictional comprehensive secondary school?
5. Where is Karl Marx buried?
6. So, what is the **connection** between the answers to questions 1 - 5?



Answers are on [page 50](#)

Reverend Ashley Trask (Imtiaz)

I hope you have enjoyed the weekend we recently spent with our special guest, Imtiaz!

If you would like to know more about his organisation and ministry, **Caring 4 God's People...**

I receive regular updates and prayer requests from Imtiaz. If you don't already receive these but would like to, please let me know, and I'll add you to the group.



Robin



ISLAND CHURCH *Celebration*

An evening of worship & teaching
With Pete Greig - founder of 24-7 Prayer



Fri 30th January 2026 | 19:30 (doors open at 19:00)



Cowes Enterprise College, PO31 8HB

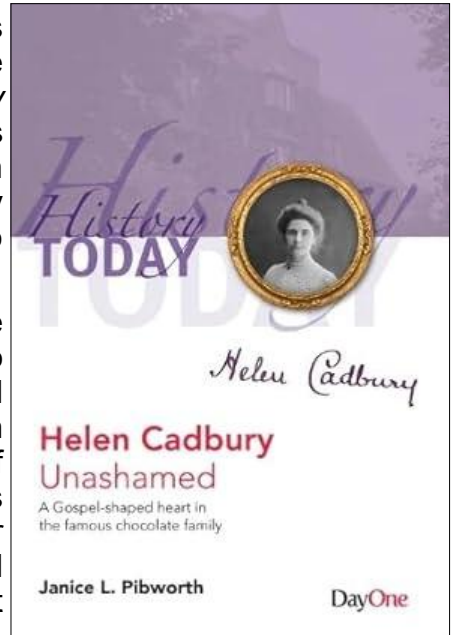


Shanklin URC Bookshop

At this time of year many children look forward to opening the windows on their Advent calendar each day... often with the bonus of a piece of chocolate. Many adults also enjoy chocolate treats over Christmas - when we used to have extended family get-togethers at Christmas time there was usually a tub of chocolates passed around while we were chatting or playing games.

A well-known brand of chocolate is Cadbury's (other brands are available!!) and '*Helen Cadbury Unashamed*' is a book which tells the story of Helen Cadbury. Helen was the daughter of Richard Cadbury who was part of the family who founded Cadbury's.

Helen became a Christian when she was a young girl and she used to carry a New Testament to school where she shared her faith with friends. She organised a group of girls at school who sewed pockets onto their dresses to make it easier to carry small New Testaments and they called themselves 'The Pocket Testament League'.



Later in her life Helen married an American evangelist and together they revived and expanded 'The Pocket Testament League' and opened an International Headquarters in London in 1914. Many New Testaments were distributed to soldiers training for the First World War. In her life she faced heartache as her only child died soon after birth and her husband later died suddenly. Although she remarried a few years later her second husband died soon afterwards. She continued to work with 'The Pocket Testament League' and often travelled between America and England. Throughout her life she lived according to verse 16 in Romans chapter 1, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*" (The book costs £9.00)

December opening hours...

The bookshop will be open up to, and including, Christmas Eve. In addition to the usual Wednesdays and some Tuesdays the bookshop will also be open on Mondays from 10:00 to 12:30 in the run up to Christmas. It may also be open on Thursdays but the times have still to be confirmed.

The bookshop will then be closed from Christmas Day until mid-February. This allows time for the annual stock-take to be carried out and gives the volunteers a break.

Special Saturday opening... on 6th December

The bookshop will be open 10:30 to 13:00 for Christmas cards, Bibles, books, greetings cards and bookmarks.

Thank you

Thank you very much for all your thoughts and prayers, for my family and the country of Jamaica due to the recent disaster, (Hurricane Melissa). Quite a few of you have been asking for updates...

Most schools in at least 4 parishes are not functioning as they are damaged/destroyed or are being used as shelters. Most are still without electricity so no online schooling. The government is working hard and aid has reached many areas but rural districts, like my mum's is, are yet to receive any proper assistance.

Mum's house was not hit, "Thank God," but many around have no roof.

I am going to Jamaica next month and would like to bring/buy some solar lighting's to distribute to the community. If you could offer some assistance please do let me know. It would be very much appreciated. It's going to be a hard road getting back to any resemblance of normal. They, including other affected countries, need your continued prayers and support.

Vivette

Silent Night: Ella and Lilly's Secret Christmas

For many children like Ella and Lilly, Christmas must be celebrated secretly.

Like so many children around the world, Ella* and Lilly* can't wait for Christmas. As light dawns on the big day, they awaken to the comforting smell of biriyani, a special meal eaten on important occasions in the part of Asia where they live. The muffled sound of carols being sung and the bustle of preparation throng the air, decorations decking every possible surface.

From this side of their four walls, the festivities of the season can be seen throughout Ella and Lilly's home. But from the outside, nothing looks out of the ordinary.

This Christmas party is a secret one.

In this country, being a Christian is extremely dangerous, and Christmas Day is just another day in the calendar. There are no homes covered with lights, no singing carols in the streets and no cheery greetings from passersby.

"It feels like we're the only ones celebrating Christmas," Lilly says. As a part of a small number of Christians in their country, the girls know this time as one of joy mingled with loneliness.

Behind closed doors

Nevertheless, they prepare to celebrate in their own way, using their school holidays to make decorations and keep the traditions of the season alive.

"Some people make Christmas trees out of paper, because decorations aren't commonly sold here," Lilly says. "In fact, we order Christmas trees from a nearby country. Most of our decorations are handmade, and we spend Christmas Eve preparing them."

The two girls are joined by their parents and other believers who meet in their home for church. Regardless of the clandestine nature of their celebrations, they arrive ready to enjoy delicious food and worship together.

"Our Christmas service is usually held on the evening of the 25th," Lilly explains. "It begins with songs from the choir, followed by Bible readings, a message and the distribution of gifts. We end with

Christmas cake and dinner, along with a thanksgiving prayer.”

Surrounded by the watchful silence of their community, this secret church stands firm, quietly and courageously.

Witnessing Christ’s miracles

Lilly and Ella long for greater freedom to celebrate Christmas with their neighbours. Ella says, “I wish we could go out in public and worship the Lord – playing the guitar and singing Christmas carols. We can’t do that here.”

More than this, they yearn to share the hope they have in Jesus with their friends, but they know what could happen if they even mention His name.

“Our parents told us we cannot tell our friends what happens in our church or that we gather at our home for church,” the girls explain. “We can’t tell others, ‘Jesus loves you,’ and we can’t hang any Bible verses on our door outside.”

But they communicate the life-changing truth of the gospel in different ways. For Lilly, this looks like showing simple kindness to her classmates.

“1 Corinthians 13:4–8 has been a guiding passage for me,” Lilly says. “In this country, we don’t have the opportunity to speak openly about Christ to everyone, but we can always show His love through our actions and behaviour. I remember a time when a student asked me, ‘Why are you being so nice to me, even though I’ve been mean to you?’ I simply replied, ‘That’s what I’ve been taught – to love you. I don’t hate you.’”

Despite their circumstances, their lives are rich with signs of God’s compassionate intervention. Ella testifies, “Since I was young, I have witnessed Christ’s miracles. Our parents always ask us to pray for everything – God has been answering our prayers.”

A legacy of faith

The girls have learnt from their parents what it means to live for Christ in the face of opposition and the threat of imprisonment. Their father, Sundar*, experienced just that after attending a prayer meeting.

“Persecution,” Lilly says, “is when we learn that we must be ready to sacrifice our lives for Christ.”

The fears of losing work and being found out pursue the family. Risks are incessant, but Sundar testifies to God's protective hand on them in difficult seasons. "Somehow, God still provided for me. I can't even explain how. I just know his hand was over my life," he says.

A family united in faith – as for many parts of the world where being a Christian is almost impossible, such a treasure is precious and must be protected.

Unwrap hope for Ella and Lilly

Amidst the pressures they face this season, Ella and Lilly continue to rejoice over the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem with their family. Like His humble dwelling, these girls celebrate Christmas in their own seemingly small ways, but with the brilliant joy of the shepherds and heavenly chorus.

Christmas should not have to be a time of isolation for children like Ella and Lilly. Their faith is vibrant, but it is fuelled by your essential support which enables them and their fellow believers to meet, encouraged by the knowledge that their brothers and sisters are standing with them.

Will you unwrap hope for Ella and Lilly this Christmas? Visit the Open Doors website www.opendoorsuk.org/ to see how you can help our persecuted brothers and sisters.

**Names changed for security reasons*

Please pray

- Lilly asks: "Pray that we will be able to live a holy life and be an example to others no matter where we are – to be a light wherever we are."
- Ella asks: "Pray for the young generation in this nation, that they will know Jesus."
- Pray for other secret believers in the world, that they will one day be able to practice their faith openly and share their love for Jesus with others.

Source: [Open Doors UK](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/)

Shared Worship in The Bay



Share Sunday evenings with friends from various local congregations across The Bay

At a recent meeting it was agreed that all our Sunday gatherings will now be at 17:00 and will follow this pattern:

Shared Worship on 2nd Sunday each month at different churches with a more informal time of worship and prayer on the other weeks – at the URC. Dates of the special meetings coming up:

14th December - Light up a Life with Mountbatten at the URC

11th January - at Christ Church, Sandown

Also, 4th January Bring-and-share Tea at the URC
- prayer & planning

Outreach Together

Ann Burnell is organising for “The Bay Band” to play again at the Sandown Christmas event on Saturday 13th December at 11:00 in the High Street.

Gift bags will again be given out to children and families. Your help and support would be much appreciated.



Saturday 20th December

15:30 - 17:30

Free fun for all the family
- no unaccompanied children please

Do come along and explore the story of Christmas through a Messy Church experience at Shanklin URC. This is a fun way of learning for all ages - in a hands-on way.

There will be several craft activities to choose from followed by a short celebration with songs, prayers and the chance to join in telling the Nativity story, and then some delicious food all together.

Come as a family; bring the grandchildren along - any combination is fine! Enjoy it together.

For more information - speak to Yvonne Sparks or Brian and Janet Harley



The Well

a place for

Living Well Together

Drop in at any point

Wednesdays 11:00 – 13:00

A safe place for friendship, a chat,
support and refreshments



And sausage rolls!





“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery”
(Galatians 5:1)

Truth: Who I Am In Christ

The Freedom in Christ course helps us to understand who we are in Christ and to accept the **Truth** of our status as **Secure, Significant** and **Accepted** members of **God’s Family**.

The passages below express our sure and certain hope in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Neil recommends reading these regularly (perhaps aloud) and contemplating God’s truth, using them to guide our steps as we walk with Christ Jesus.

“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs ~ heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” (Romans 8:14-17)

I am Secure because ...

- I am free from condemnation

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:1&2)

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ

Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” (Romans 8:31-34)

- **I cannot be separated from the love of God**

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

- **I am hidden with Christ in God**

“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:3&4)

- **I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected**

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)

- **I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self-control**

“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

- **I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me**

“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them.” (1 John 5:18)

and,

- **I am assured that all things work together for good** (Romans 8:28)
- **I have been established, anointed, sealed by God** (2 Corinthians 1:21/22)

- I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)
- I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)

I am Significant because ...

- I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:13&14)

- I am a branch of the true vine, Jesus, a channel of His life

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener’ ... ‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:1&5)

- I am a fellow worker with God

“As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

- I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms

“God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:6)

- I may approach God with freedom and confidence

“In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.” (Ephesians 3:12)

- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13)

and,

- I have been chosen and appointed by God to bear fruit (John 15:16)
- I am a personal, Spirit-empowered witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)
- I am a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
- I am God’s workmanship, created for good works (Ephesians 2:10)

I am Accepted because ...

- **I am Christ's friend**

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you'." (John 15:15)

- **I have been justified**

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

- **I have been bought with a price; I belong to God**

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

- **I have been adopted as God's child**

"He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Ephesians 1:5)

- **I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins**

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13&14)

- **I am complete in Christ**

"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority." (Colossians 2:9&10)

and,

- **I am God's child** (John 1:12)
- **I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with Him** (1 Corinthians 6:17)
- **I am a member of Christ's body** (1 Corinthians 12:27)
- **I am a saint, a holy one** (Ephesians 1:1)
- **I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 2:18)

Loving heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins so I may have eternal life. And thank You that in Christ

my need for identity, significance, security and a sense of belonging is met.

Neil Anderson

Freedom in Christ Ministries

Daily Devotionals

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In times of trouble, I find Chapter 8 of Romans particularly uplifting ~ here is a quote from the NIV Study Bible on Romans 8: 31-34 (quoted above):

“Do you ever think that because you aren’t good enough for God, He will not save you? Do you ever feel that salvation is for everyone else but not for you? Then these verses are especially for you. If God gave His son for you, He isn’t going to hold back the gift of salvation! If Christ gave His life for you, He isn’t going to turn around and condemn you. He will not withhold anything you need to live for Him. The book of Romans is more than a theological explanation of God’s redeeming grace ~ it is a letter of comfort and confidence addressed to you!”

Lord, may Your Word guide me in all things, may I immerse myself in it daily.

Thank You that You have adopted me into Your family. Help me to know each day that I am Secure, Significant and Accepted by You.

May I persevere in doing Your Will today, and in all my days to come.

I ask this in the name of Your Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

May I wish you all a blessed Christmas and a faithful New Year

Robin

All Bible verses quoted are from the NIVUK (UK): Holy Bible, New International Version® Anglicised, NIVUK® Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by [Biblica, Inc.®](#). Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Good News for All!

'Good News' is a contemporary outreach newspaper used by churches and missions to take the good news about Jesus Christ into communities across the UK.

Every month, Good News reaches thousands of readers with true stories of how God is changing the lives of those who put their trust in his Son, Jesus. Using jargon-free language, it also explains how everyone can find a personal relationship with Jesus.

This such a great resource for people to read - and then share with others!!



This month's edition (available to read online at www.goodnews-paper.org.uk/viewlatesteditionspage.htm) has several great articles, including the headline article, '**Christmas Encounter** - Baby thrown in the bin grows up to be a success after life-changing Christmas'.

Other contributions include:

- **Country Music Star** - Why Carrie Underwood will be in church this Christmas
- **Christmas Message by J John** - UK evangelist J John explains the meaning of Christmas
- **Kindness At Christmas** - The selfless faith of Chris Marriott - killed trying to help someone at Christmas 2023
- **When Christmas Is Tough** - Counsellor's advice for those missing loved ones this Christmas
- **World No. 1 Golfer** - Family and faith come first at Christmas for Scottie Scheffler

God's blessings to you for Christmas and the New Year

Do Look Out For...

Resources to enable us to pray for the suffering church:

Open Doors – current one Nov/Dec and then in the New Year Jan/Feb, both their magazine and Prayer Diary.

Release International – the current magazine Oct-Dec, if you have not seen this one, do take a copy from Church, or read/download it online at releaseinternational.org/magazines/ and particularly read the article on pages 6-11 with regard to Nigeria - to read online go to releaseinternational.org/flip-books/voice-of-the-persecuted-christians-oct-dec-2025-R132/#p=6. We may perhaps be aware of the ongoing attacks on believers and abductions of children and teachers from Christian schools.

News of the latest abductions of 315 girls and teachers from the Open Doors website can be read at www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/nigeria-kidnapping-schools/.

How can we pray?

- Pray for an end to the violence against Christians that has ravaged northern Nigeria and beyond for many years
- Pray for protection for vulnerable communities and Release International partners who risk their lives to help the persecuted
- That the bereaved and traumatised would find healing and hope as they attend workshops held by our partners
- That corrupt officials in the Government and security forces would be rooted out
- That God would convict the terrorists of their sin and open their eyes to the truth of the gospel
- For success in raising awareness and prayer for Nigerian Christians in the church in the UK and Ireland

In this same edition are many helpful articles to help us understand the cost so many believers have to pay because they have chosen to follow Jesus.

Of particular mention is a story about an Iranian young woman who became a believer and how she had to flee her homeland but also how costly this has been for her. Do pray for the underground church

in Iran – for the Lord to strengthen new believers and protect them in a nation so hostile to the Christian faith.

Release International's publication for the New Year will be available later in December, covering Jan – March 2026. Do look out for it and please keep praying – our brothers and sisters so appreciate our support in prayer and how ever else the Lord prompts us to stand with them. Look out too for the Prayer Shield leaflet – in the magazine – with a prayer for each day.

Blessings in Jesus' Name

Jane H

Nigeria - Open Doors Profile

World Watch List No. 7

Leader President Bola Tinubu

How many Christians? 106.6 million (46.5%)

Main threats are from ethno-religious hostility and Islamic oppression

Why are Christians persecuted in Nigeria?

Nigeria has greater religious freedom than other countries in the World Watch List top 10, but the biggest threat is from Islamic militants who seek to destroy Christianity and Christians in the region.

Christians living in the Sharia (Islamic law) states of northern Nigeria can also face discrimination and oppression as second-class citizens. Converts from Islam often experience rejection from their own families and pressure to renounce their new faith. They often have to flee their homes for fear of being killed.

Who is particularly vulnerable in Nigeria?

The persecution of believers is most common in the northern, Muslim-majority states. However, attacks are increasingly spreading southward, into the Middle Belt and even further south, to where the majority of Nigeria's Christians live.

Source www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/nigeria/ where you can read about Nigeria in more detail.

Sprightly Retirees



In the beginning, God created a beautiful world. He filled it with animals (can you spot the giraffe?) and lovely fruit for us to eat. Determined not to mislead the children, we made sure there were trees bearing both oranges (left) and apples (right), in addition to the one in the middle from which Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat. Unhappily, they listened to the tempter, then blamed one another and the serpent.



Although God turned them out of the garden, He promised that, one day, a woman would bear a child who would bruise the serpent's head. Hooray!

Open the Book is such good fun, both for the children and storytellers, it keeps us young. When we told the story of Peter being sent to preach to a Roman Centurion, 90-year-old Jean played the



part of a poor person who had been invited for a meal by Cornelius. Here they are responding to Peter's preaching.

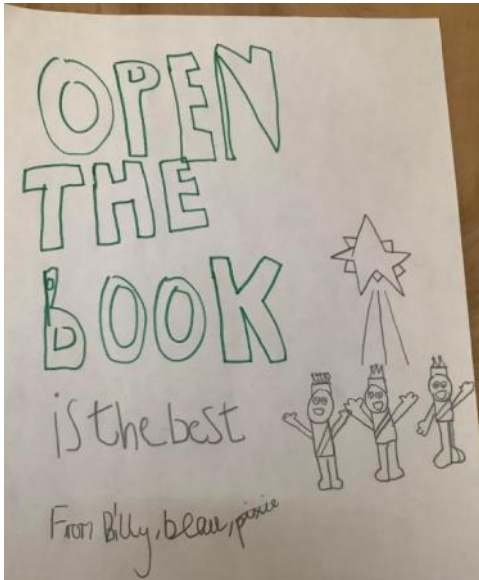
Because Jean had mobility issues, she was always given a seated part - such as John writing his gospel. The script said John was so old he had white hair. As Jean didn't, we had to give her a wig! On 5th November,

Jean went to be with the Lord at the age of 92. She had continued to serve Him weekly through Open the Book until July, and loved every minute of it.

Children learn best in the morning, so Dover Park school decided that assemblies could wait until the afternoon. However, the Head



Teacher wrote to us: 'As I truly value the teachings and enjoyment provided by OTB, OTB assemblies will be the exception and will remain on Wednesday morning.'



Haylands runs a Breakfast Club, so there are numerous children in the hall when we arrive with the props. They rush up, asking which class will be taking part and are so disappointed if it's not theirs. One morning, two lads came back a little later and presented us with this poster. A tiny girl put her arms around my legs (very sadly I could not reciprocate, only say: "that's lovely, thank you.") and another said she watches Bible stories on her tablet.

Open the Book depends heavily on retired Christians, because storytellers need to be available to take assemblies during the school day. This makes it very difficult in poorer countries where the vast majority of people have no option but to keep working until they are incapable. How blessed we are to live in a country where pensions mean we can stop working for money whilst most of us still have some energy and health – Sprightly Retirees. Do you know



A recent photo of some of the story tellers

anyone who might be willing to join us? We mime to narration so don't need to memorise or speak, just listen and respond.

The rewards for committing one morning a week to this wonderful ministry are out of this world.

Christmas Church Open House

6th December 2025 10:30 - 14:30

Help needed please, to

- **Welcome**
- **Serve refreshments**
- **Help with crafts**
- **Go out with invites**



We will be handing out invitations for people to dress up in the Nativity scene in church, and photos will be taken on their own device.

We will be offering refreshments, including soup and rolls for lunch, crafts, games, toddler corner, prayer tent and bags containing free items for children or adults.

Bring your friends, family, and anyone who needs a little Christmas joy.

Christmas Lunch at Sacred Heart Church

Eve Pollon is kindly doing a meal for people on their own or who need somewhere to go on Christmas Day at 12:30.

Offers of help or donations would be most welcome.

Please telephone her if you can help or to reserve a space – 📞
865894.

SURC Christmas Charity 2025



Mountbatten Isle of Wight's mission, vision and values

The work of Mountbatten Isle of Wight is to promote and provide good care and support for people who are living with, affected by or curious about death, dying and bereavement.

Vision

Our vision is of a world where all dying people and those close to them have access to expert, compassionate and cost-effective care of the highest quality, whatever the illness, whoever they are and wherever they happen to be.

Values

- **Mountbatten Isle of Wight cares about what we do.** We appreciate that people are different. We are kind and compassionate to our patients and families, to our local community and to each other.
- **We are experts in our field.** We are professional at all times, aspiring to be the best we can be in everything we do.
- **We are innovative and bold.** We respond quickly and creatively to the changing needs of our society within the scope of our human and financial resources.
- **We respect our community.** We exist for our local population, now and into the future. We believe we can achieve more together by working in partnership with others.

Mountbatten Isle of Wight's values, which have been defined by our staff and volunteers, are underpinned by a set of expectations and behaviours, which we have all agreed to.

Welcome to Mountbatten Isle of Wight, the Island's community and

hospice end-of-life and palliative care provider. Inspired by the work of Dame Cicely Saunders (1918-2005), founder of the hospice movement, the organisation we know as Mountbatten Isle of Wight was created in 1982. We deliver expert specialist palliative care 24/7 to both patients and their families, in their own homes and in our hospice.

We have a sister hospice in Southampton, called Mountbatten Hampshire. The two organisations share staff and expertise. However, donations to and funds raised for Mountbatten Isle of Wight stay on the Isle of Wight.

Did you know?

- Mountbatten is the **Isle of Wight's only hospice**
- Within our Island community, our **care at home team supports over 2,000 people in any one day**
- Increasing numbers of Islanders need us, with demand for community care expected to **rise by 40%** in the next few years
- Our services include **bereavement counselling** for any Islander who needs us, **rehabilitation, support, advice, equipment provision** and **symptom management**
- As well as caring for **patients in their own homes**, we operate a **16 bed inpatient unit in Newport**, offering 24-hour specialist palliative care.

How is Mountbatten Isle of Wight funded?

One-third of the funds we need come from the NHS, via commissioners. In recent years, this money has not risen in line with inflation, and it is increasingly under threat. This means it has become harder to sustain our current services and to manage the growth needed to serve the Island.

Two-thirds of our funding comes from the community, through fundraising activities including donations, grants, gifts and legacies. Money raised on and for the Isle of Wight stays on the Isle of Wight.

Who do we look after?

A registered charity and company, Mountbatten is here for around 150,000 Isle of Wight residents.

Did you know?

The Link - December 2025/January 2026

- Around 40 per cent of our patients do not have cancer
- We support Islanders of all ages, with conditions including life-limiting illnesses, dementia, old age and frailty
- Mountbatten Isle of Wight employs around 250 expert staff
- We are hugely grateful to be supported by over 500 volunteers, who give over 3,000 hours of help every week



Even on TikTok

The TikTok Vicar is giving away so many Bibles he's had to get his whole church involved. "We have Bible-packing parties every Monday," he said.

Vicars on TikTok make people laugh and in doing so make Church less distant. Rev David Sims has been up to all that for five years – he's a master TikToker – but for him it's all in the service of putting the Bible into people's hands.

"I started TikTok as a bit of a joke," he said. "I made silly videos in lockdown. But I realised people are wanting faith stuff on TikTok."

TikTok is a social video platform, increasingly popular in Britain where it has about 25 million active users. If you're not one of those 25 million, you might still have heard of it because it's often in the news.

The good news is there can be a lot of Jesus on there. Once you've seen a bit of Christian content, the TikTok algorithm will feed you more and more. So thanks to TikTok vicars and viral testimony sharers, people who have never been to church are being introduced to faith.

Thanks to David especially, they're receiving Bibles. It's very easy to find his "free Bible request" form and get a Bible sent to you just by entering your name and address.

"This has all taken off since May this year," he said. "Before that we were sending out five or ten Bibles a month, but now we've lost count. The number of people asking for Bibles has gone over 2,000.

"So every Monday morning at 11:00 for an hour and a half, 15 or 20 of us are at a big table packing up the Bibles. We put a letter in with each one saying we hope it's a blessing to them. It's a great way to get the whole church involved."

"I'm well aware that a middle aged vicar on TikTok isn't cool," he said. "I'm not trying to be one of these cool influencers. I embrace the cringe and go for it. But I'm also quite blunt with what I say. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life."

To read the article in full go to www.biblesociety.org.uk/latest/news/even-on-tiktok

Source: [Bible Society](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/latest/news/even-on-tiktok)

OtB @ 25

It all started in Bedford in 1999 as a millennium project. A gentleman called Dave Todd recognised that children didn't know Bible stories and he yearned to change that. Dave believed that if Bible stories could be brought to life for children in a way that was engaging, interactive and fun, it would make a big difference.



One evening, he gathered in his living room a group of Christians who had experience working with children and in schools. They didn't know why they were there. Dave unveiled a giant cutout of a lion that he had made, and asked the group, 'How are we going to tell the story of Daniel in the Lions' Den?'

Since then, Open the Book, as it became known, has grown beyond what anyone ever imagined. There are now in excess of 7,500 Open the Book Storytellers who form more than 2,500 teams. These teams go into over 3,000 primary schools across England and Wales. This means more than 360,000 children are currently hearing Bible stories regularly in their school assemblies. Open the Book is also growing in another 18 countries spread across Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. David was promoted to glory in February this year, having seen OtB celebrate 25 years, during which around a million children across the UK have enjoyed hearing the Word of God.



On Nov 22nd Steff Shepherd, the South East Regional

Training and Development Officer came from the mainland to Castlehold Baptist Church. Here she is cutting the Birthday Cake. 16 Members from teams covering the Island had a wonderful morning together. Here are the schools they serve:

North – Cowes, Lanesend

South – Ventnor, St Francis

East – Ryde, Dover Park & Haylands

West – Freshwater, All Saints, Shalfleet, Yarmouth & St Saviours

Central – Newport, Carisbrooke, Nineacres & Summerfields

Unhappily, a lack of volunteers meant that Wootton, Godshill, The Bay and St Blasius no longer have a team, but Steff pointed out that, proportionately, the Wight teams have served more schools (around half) than any other area. The 50 videos produced here during lockdown were also used by schools on the mainland, to the great delight of teachers and children in that difficult time.

Steff used lockdown to qualify as a Makaton tutor. Makaton is a simpler sign language than that used by the deaf community, and is used with children who have difficulty communicating. Steff pointed out that most classes today contain at least one child who has Special Educational Needs, who is often accompanied by a dedicated teaching assistant.

Most schools use Makaton to help these children understand and express themselves. When Bible stories are told with Makaton, such children are likely to repeat them, both with their TAs and their parents. Here are the signs for 'tree' and 'love'



Schools often request Open the Book to help them 'tick the boxes' checked during inspections. The Haylands team recently had someone observing an assembly who looked very severe and was making notes from the beginning. As the story progressed, they began to smile and eventually laughed out loud. We suspect that one of the boxes they ticked had to do with including children of all abilities. We were later informed that the observer 'really enjoyed your assembly and was impressed by how engaged the children

were.'

Jesus was the best storyteller, so we should not be surprised that telling stories in assembly is so loved and valued. To most children today, watching things on screen has become the norm (boring!). Having real (old!) people come into their schools to act, using props they can handle, is something novel, which captivates their interest.

The Makaton charity has now created a workshop called 'Know and Grow' to help churches use Makaton. It includes signs that are specifically Christian, such as 'trinity' and 'resurrection'. How wonderful to know that a secular organisation has recognised the importance of conveying God's Word to those with limited communication skills. Jesus told his disciples to 'suffer the little children to come unto Me'. That command is as true for you and me today as it was 2,000 years ago.

Praise God for the work of Open the Book and similar ministries.

Real Junk Food

Back at the start of this year we hosted one of Aspire's Pop-up Pantries, providing basic foodstuffs at reduced prices to anyone who registered with them. Unfortunately, just as our Pantry had become established, Aspire decided that the project was not financially viable and had to close all the Pop-up Pantries, much to our disappointment.

A different charity, the Freshwater based Real Junk Food Project collects 'surplus' food – still edible, but which would otherwise be thrown away – from several Island supermarkets. They make this available, for a donation, at various sites around the Island.

We are investigating whether it might be possible for Shanklin URC to host one of these sites, probably for a couple of hours on one day a week. No decisions have yet been made, but if you would be able to help with such a facility please talk to Bill Croydon, or e-mail him at bill.croydon@outlook.com



News of Samaritan's Purse Shoebox Appeal and Alternative Gifts

A very big **Thank You** to all who contributed to the above with boxes, individual items, money and those who did a shoebox online.

Sandra Snell was able to send 122 shoeboxes from Altitude Church and our church at Shanklin URC!

Together with boxes from other individuals/churches, the total number sent was 170, with the money contributed by ourselves and others going towards making up more boxes and transportation costs.

Many children will be blessed because of your kindness – do look out online for videos of the children receiving boxes over recent years and how the booklet, 'The Greatest Journey' has impacted their lives.

Another ministry of Samaritan's Purse is their Alternative Gifts Scheme, as mentioned in last month's copy of **The Link**.

There is still time to join in and give a meaningful gift to bless those who have so little, instead of puzzling over what to give family and friends!

We do have so much compared to other parts of the world and say giving a gift for as little as £5 (for example, providing blankets and bedding, hot meals for a child, etc.). For £20, one can help towards repairing a cleft lip, providing life-saving medical equipment and many other desperately needed items.

If you have never done this before, it can be great fun choosing with family and friends what to buy from the catalogue – and then by being part of this ministry, bringing hope and comfort to many.

There are catalogues on the table in church and if you would like any help to get you started, don't hesitate to say! Even if you are unable to take part this year, do read through the catalogue and be amazed at what can be achieved. In the meantime, may our dear Lord bless you for every loving deed which will make the lives of needy people so much better.

Loving greetings

Jane H

Jamaica Emergency Appeal

'Rebuilding Homes and Hope'

Commitment
for **Life**



Friends

Hurricane Melissa has devastated communities across Jamaica. Our partners in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI) are facing heartbreak and devastation. Homes, schools, and churches have been left in ruins. Communities that once gathered in song now stand among rubble in sorrow. Families have lost everything: their roofs, their livelihoods, their places of worship, and their sense of safety.

The General Secretary of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, Rev Dr Collin Cowan, has written of the, "tragic destruction of homes, schools and churches right across central Jamaica - from south to north." Entire neighbourhoods have been flattened. Congregations are displaced. Classrooms lie open to the sky. Yet, amid the wreckage, the people of Jamaica are clinging to faith - and to hope. "We are bruised," one church elder said, "but we are not broken."

Commitment for Life invites you to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Jamaica. Your giving today will help to:

- Provide emergency shelter and food for families left homeless.
- Rebuild schools and churches, the heart of each community.
- Restore dignity and hope where despair has taken hold.

Match Funding: The United Reformed Church has agreed to match-fund the first £12 000 raised (This figure could even increase). Please give generously...

1. Send a cheque - URC Trust (CFL Jamaica appeal)
United Reformed Church House,

86 Tavistock Place,
London,
WC1H 9RT

2. Bank Transfer - URC Trust (CFL Jamaica Appeal)
3. GoFundMe Appeal (see QR code)

Thank you!

Kevin Snyman

URC Head of World Justice



Be Prepared!

Our Daily Bread Ministries have published a really helpful booklet, **'Walking With the King'** – a journey through December from the 1st to the 25th to help prepare our hearts for this season.

This time of year can be so frantic. Why not set aside a few moments each day to go through these readings as we celebrate, **'Emmanuel... God With Us'**!

Do look out also for other great resources on the tables and trolley at church, helping us to be built up in our faith.

A new small booklet from Our Daily Bread Ministries is **'The Parables at a Glance'** containing: Wisdom Parables, Christian Living Parables, Kingdom Parables, Salvation Parables, Judgement Parables and Jesus' Return Parables

Another helpful resource is a leaflet entitled: **'The King of Christmas – knowing the Ruler who serves his people'**.

This can be put in with your Christmas cards or given to friends and neighbours and really gives us an opportunity to be pro-active in sharing the hope that is within us.

Blessings at this joyful season and may we have many openings to share **'The reason for the season'**.

Jane H

Good News from the Bible Society!

To quote:

England and Wales

*The Christian revival here at home may have gone unnoticed if it wasn't for your support as you enabled us to do the research that showed that church attendance was rising dramatically in England and Wales. Our report *The Quiet Revival* (biblesociety.org.uk/tqr) has been widely reported in the media, drawing attention to churchgoing, which is a good thing.*

As the black hole of New Atheism collapses people are looking for a light in the darkness. And you will be pointing them to Jesus in the Scriptures through going to church.

*Thanks to your support, more churches are sending more Open the Book teams into more schools. Resources such as *The Bible Course New Edition* are being provided to churches through the Gather Movement, which unites Christians in different areas to better reach out into their communities.*

Thousands of prisoners each year are hearing the gospel because you're giving them free Bibles and supporting prison chaplains. Migrants are being handed free Scriptures and welcomed into churches.

All of this, and much, much more, would not be possible without your brilliant support.

Prayers

- *Thank God that more people are attending church. Pray that they will find what they are looking for – true love, peace and hope in Jesus.*
- *Pray that Christians throughout England and Wales will be motivated to invite others to church this Christmas. Pray that those who come to church for the first time will be touched by the Holy Spirit and stay.*
- *Bless preachers and other evangelists, including Bible a Month supporters, as we invite and encourage one another to spend more time engaging with God's word.*

The Bible Society's publication **Word in Action (Winter 2025-26)** also has an article in it called, 'Revival in the UK – let's seize the day'.

Do ask me if you'd like to read this or you can read more about '**The Quiet Revival**' and download the report for free at www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival.

May we see this nation turning back to the Lord and His Name again being honoured in our midst.

Blessings in Jesus' Name

Jane H

Food for Thought

We were blessed last month to have two guest speakers:

- RL Vidal, from International Mission to Jewish People
- Imtiaz, sharing with us about his ministry, 'Caring for God's People'.

These were very blessed and challenging times. If you missed them, you can catch up online on YouTube, [Bible Bite 4th November](#) and [Sunday 23rd November](#) respectively, at www.youtube.com/@shanklinunitedreformedchur8970/streams and share the blessing. Although RL was only with us for Bible Bite, Imtiaz was with us for the weekend 22nd – 24th November.

Each ministry is concerned in sharing the message of the Gospel and loving those God brings to them, building relationships, caring both practically and spiritually. These ministries are very much 'on the frontline' in the countries God has called them to. Do pray for them, for the Lord's Protecting Hand upon them and for his anointing on all they do as they seek to be the Hands and Feet of Jesus to all they encounter.

And may we be encouraged as we seek to reach out to the 'lost and broken' in this season. May we see our dear Lord doing immeasurably more than we could ever ask or think in these days.

In His Precious Name

Jane H

FOCUS

**on our Christian Brothers and Sisters being
persecuted for their faith**

***A nation's trauma: an update on Syria through
the eyes of a believer***

17th November 2025

Juliette* reflects on the changes that have occurred in Syria over the past ten months since the fall of President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Please continue to pray for brothers and sisters in this fragmented nation.

Many Christians have experienced trauma following Syria's conflict

We hear again from Juliette*, a Christian woman from Syria whose updates we have had the privilege of receiving over the past year. She reflects on how Syria has developed amidst its crises and traumas and the needs of the church today. This article presents her perspective on her home.

It's a constant challenge to keep up with the changes in Syria. I always feel like I'm in a race that never ends. It's been ten months since Syria began this new phase of life.

I'm grateful that my city, Aleppo, has seen some improvement in services. We now have a scheduled electrical power supply for eight hours a day, which offers a sense of stability and allows us to organise our lives better. Goods are also more readily available and easier to access, and new places are always being rehabilitated around the cities.

The stubborn pace of change

However, change is a slow process, and while we hope for more improvement, many critical issues persist. The cash crisis remains unresolved, with banks still unable to provide people access to their own money. Individuals can only withdraw an equivalent of about 20 US dollars (£15) per week and you barely live with this amount of money.

There's also been a noticeable cultural revival. We now have more seminars focused on Syrian culture, and the beautiful thing about them is that there is always a section dedicated to the Christian history in this country, with participation from Christian folk groups actively helping revive heritage. It's always a beautiful sight to see.

A nation divided

The conflict between different parties – such as the Kurdish groups in the north and the Druze community in the south, and the governmental authority – remains unsolved.

In south Syria, the area around Druze majority Suwayda, the situation remains tense and unstable. The area is out of government control, remaining under Druze authority. Four months into the conflict, the road from Damascus to Suwayda is still not safe. Highway robbers or armed groups sometimes shoot at passing buses or cars, causing the road to close and leaving people anxious over losses. Consequently, a number of Christians have moved to Damascus to find safety. Last week, a bus was shot at on that highway, with two people killed and 11 wounded.

In north Syria, in areas controlled by Kurds, the Kurdish authorities had closed Christian schools and forced all others to teach the Kurdish curriculum in the Kurdish language. After extensive negotiation, the authorities allowed church schools to return to teaching the Syrian curriculum. All Christian denominations agreed and published a statement on 2nd November announcing that church schools reopened their doors for students for the academic year 2025/2026.

The statement finished with a plea: “We pray that God will inspire everyone to do what is best for people and to bring security and peace in all around Syria,” expressing a wish that all parties abide by peace agreements and that Syria may be united once again.

The situation in the south and north east leaves the people in worry; they all live with the constant alertness that any sectarian conflict could erupt suddenly.

Reopening old wounds

This fear became a reality on 6th October in Aleppo as well. A dispute flared up between the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces and the new government, leading to exchanges of gunfire and shells. For two

days, all residents were forced to stay home because the streets were no longer safe.

All work stopped and shops closed. Our local partner had to cancel a Bible competition. Just before the violence erupted, groups of teenagers and university students had travelled to Aleppo to participate in the event. All the teams had to rush back to their cities the next day, after spending a night full of fear, far from home and without their families.

Though I never left Aleppo throughout the war years, I felt I had started to forget those days of war. A small conflict like this, however, instantly brought back the hard days and memory of losing friends and family members, and the terrifying thought that we might live under siege again. I went to sleep with tears in my eyes, waiting for the morning and praying that something would change.

“We know that God holds the rudder of our lives”

During one of the Sunday masses after the recent violence, the priest said, “We in Aleppo all share a hard life experience of long war days and siege, but we are the children of faith. We know that God holds the rudder of our lives.” His words brought us a sense of peace.

Pray that all Syrians will soon live in peace and that God’s hand will always protect them, and that they find their way to build their country again in peace.

**Name changed for security reasons*

Please pray

- That believers would put their trust in God, despite the ongoing tensions and recent pressure on churches
- Give thanks for the positive developments in Syrian culture and life
- For God to bring an end to the violence and fear experienced by many Syrians.

For the latest news on our persecuted brothers and sisters please go to: www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/

Source: [Open Doors](#) - used by permission

NEWPORT BUS STATION

SAFE SPACE



A safe place to...



**WAIT
FOR FRIENDS**



**RECEIVE
FIRST AID**



**GET ADVICE
& SUPPORT**



**HELP GETTING
HOME**



**REPORT ASB
OR ANY CONCERNS**

Pop in & talk to us!

In partnership with





Dates For Your Diary

Day	Date	Time	Details
Sat	6 th Dec	10:00	Open Church - to Shine Your Light
Sat	13 th Dec	19:30	STBB annual Christmas Concert
Sun	14 th Dec	17:00	Light up a Life with Mountbatten (see page 9)
Sat	20 th Dec	15:30	Messy Church (see page 18)
Sun	21 st Dec	10:30 17:00	Carol and Nativity Carol singing in local streets
Wed	24 th Dec	23:00 23:30	Carols on the steps Christmas Communion
Thu	25 th Dec	10:30	Christmas Morning Worship for all
Sun	28 th Dec	10:30	All age service led by Malc
Sat	3 rd Jan	09:00	Prayer breakfast to start the year
Sun	4 th Jan	17:00	Bring-and-share tea with other churches
Fri	9 th Jan	18:00	Elders' Meeting
Sun	11 th Jan	10:30 17:00	Grace McKenzie speaking Shared Worship at Christ Church Sandown
Sun	18 th Jan	10:30	Sheilagh Speaking
Tue	20 th Jan	14:00	Louise Hall speaking at Bible Bite
Sun	25 th Jan	10:30	Encounter Café Service
Thu	29 th Jan	19:30	Church Meeting
Fri	30 th Jan	19:30	Island Church Celebration at Cowes
Sat	31st Jan	10:00	Safeguarding Training Day (see page 7)

No Bible Bite on 23rd and 30th December

Shanklin Town Brass Band



Christmas Concert

*A mix of festive, traditional and modern
melodies by the town's brass band*

Saturday 13th December

19:30

Shanklin United Reformed Church

Admission Free

Retiring Collection

~~~~~

[www.shanklintownbrassband.org.uk](http://www.shanklintownbrassband.org.uk)

# The Puzzle Pages

## Sudoku

*A numerical placement puzzle!*

To solve it you need to fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3 x 3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

*An easy one this month!*

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 |   | 7 | 5 | 9 |   |   |   | 8 |
| 1 | 3 | 6 | 4 |   |   | 5 |   | 9 |
|   |   | 5 |   |   |   | 3 |   | 7 |
|   |   | 9 | 6 |   | 1 | 7 | 5 | 4 |
| 4 |   |   |   |   | 2 |   |   | 6 |
| 6 |   |   |   |   |   | 1 |   |   |
|   | 6 |   | 2 |   |   | 4 |   | 5 |
|   | 9 |   |   | 6 | 7 |   |   |   |
| 7 |   |   |   | 5 |   | 9 |   |   |

**Last month's Sudoku**  
- how did you do?

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| 1 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 8 |
| 4 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 5 |
| 8 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2 |
| 5 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| 2 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| 3 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 4 |
| 6 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| 7 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 1 | 6 |



## Connection Quiz Answers

1. Nine Elms.
2. Leyton Orient.
3. The Oval.
4. Grange Hill.
5. Highgate Cemetery.
6. Connection: They are all Stations on the London Underground.



# The (annual) Christmas Trivia Quiz

1. Where did Mary & Joseph travel to?
2. Who wrote the song '*Do They Know It's Christmas*'?
3. Which cake, traditionally eaten at Christmas, originated from a city in Scotland?
4. In which modern day country was St Nicholas born?
5. Who was crowned king of England on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1066?
6. In what part of the world do children celebrate Christmas by beating a hollow log with a stick?
7. What cake is traditionally eaten in France at Epiphany?
8. Which English scientist was born on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1642?
9. Which celebration was the song '*Jingle Bells*' originally written for?
10. Some children in Italy wait not for a visit from Santa Claus, but from Befana. Who is she?
11. If Ded Moroz comes to your home for the Slavic festive season, what does he bring?
12. What is 'Happy Christmas' in Welsh?
13. In Oaxaca, Mexico, which vegetables are carved for a competition on 23<sup>rd</sup> December?
14. In '*The 12 Days of Christmas*' how many '*swans a swimming*' are there?
15. Who wrote the song '*White Christmas*'?
16. What was the UK Christmas number one in 1972?
17. In Ukraine, what is used to decorate the tree alongside tinsel?
18. Which king looked out on the feast of Stephen, according to the familiar Christmas Carol?
19. When was the first Christmas card sent?
20. In which country did tinsel originate?

# The Link - December 2025/January 2026

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  |    | 2  |    | 3  |    | 4  |    | 5  |    | 6  |    | 7  | 8  |
|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 9  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 10 |    |    | 11 |    |    |
|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 12 |    |    |    |    |    | 13 |    | 14 | 15 |    |    |    |    |
|    |    |    |    |    | 16 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 17 |    | 18 |    | 19 |    |    |    | 20 |    | 21 | 22 |    |    |
|    |    |    |    |    |    | 23 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 24 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 25 |    |
|    |    |    |    |    | 26 | 27 |    | 28 |    |    |    |    |    |
| 29 | 30 |    |    | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 32 |
|    |    |    | 33 |    |    |    |    |    | 34 |    |    | 35 |    |
| 36 |    | 37 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 38 |    |    |
| 39 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 40 |    | 41 |    |    |    |
|    |    | 42 |    |    |    | 43 |    |    |    | 44 |    |    |    |
|    |    |    |    |    | 45 |    | 46 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 47 | 48 |    |    |    |    | 49 |    |    |    |    |    | 50 |    |
|    |    |    |    |    | 51 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 52 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 53 |    |    |    |

## Across

- 1 Advent candlelit service with a symbolic orange creation (11)
- 7 The, en français *m* (2)
- 9 Two or more people coming together again (7)
- 10 '*Life for Rent*' female singer (4)
- 12 Health, en français, also means cheers! (5)
- 14 Husband of 31 down (6)
- 16 Canine (3)
- 17 What a planet does around the sun (5)
- 21 Not up (4)
- 23 Meteoroids that enter the earth's atmosphere (6)
- 24 Pumps blood around the body (5)
- 26 First 2 letters of alphabet (2)
- 28 Gathers fallen leaves with pronged tool (5)
- 29 Ferrari F1 colour (3)
- 33 Birth of Jesus Christ (8)
- 35 Personal Assistant *initials* (2)
- 37 C'est voiture, en français (3)
- 38 Element Sn (3)
- 39 - *Horses*, 1972 Osmonds hit (5)
- 42 Thanks, slang (2)
- 44 Oak, elm, ash, for example (4)
- 45 Conifer 43 across (4)
- 47 Daisy-like perennial (5)
- 49 Birthplace of William I (7)
- 52 Town where Jesus was born(9)
- 53 Element Au (4)

## Down

- 1 Patron saint of travellers (11)

- 2 Capital of Normandy, France (5)
- 3 What the sun is supposed to do (5)
- 4 Pub providing accommodation to people (3)
- 5 Jesus' Father (3)
- 6 CBBC duck puppet 1988-92 (3)
- 8 Commemoration of the coming of the Magi (8)
- 11 Poem addressed to a particular subject (3)
- 13 Wander aimlessly (4)
- 15 Not off (2)
- 18 Santa has a white one (5)
- 19 Small child (3)
- 20 Was in the sky above where Jesus was born (4)
- 21 *Little -*, Carol (6)
- 22 Either (2)
- 25 Post Script *initials* (2)
- 27 Soft French cheese (4)
- 30 For example *initials* (2)
- 31 Mother of Jesus (4)
- 32 Where baby Jesus was laid (6)
- 33 Town where Jesus grew up (8)
- 34 Sainsbury's clothing range (2)
- 35 3.142 (2)
- 36 Capital of Ghana (5)
- 37 Feline (3)
- 40 Christmas, en français (4)
- 41 Thin flexible cord (6)
- 43 Image file format (3)
- 46 Back of the neck (4)
- 48 Look with the eyes (3)
- 50 Snake like fish (3)
- 51 German internet domain (2)

## Can You Guess The Year?

- The UK's last trolleybus system, in Bradford, is closed.
- BBC children's TV programme Newsround first broadcasted.
- The Brighton Belle train made its final journey.
- The Duke of Windsor (formerly Edward VIII) died
- Leeds Utd won the men's FA Cup, beating Arsenal 1-0.
- And UK No. 1s included:
  - Royal Scots Dragoon Guards with '*Amazing Grace*'
  - T Rex with '*Telegram Sam*'
  - Donny Osmond with '*Puppy Love*'
  - Lieutenant Pigeon with '*Mouldy Old Dough*'

Answer next issue

**Musical Instruments** - *Can you unravel the anagrams to find the instruments?*

1. *smalcby*
2. *onimadln*
3. *teul*
4. *chimaroan*
5. *noylexoph*
6. *cranioa*
7. *etobronm*
8. *aubt*
9. *joanb*
10. *herzit*

Answers next issue

Please note that the **deadline** for contributions for the next magazine is:

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Contributions can be emailed at anytime up to the deadline day to the editor at:

[surc.thelink@btinternet.com](mailto:surc.thelink@btinternet.com)

# Last Issue's Solutions

- Guess the year: it was 1965

- Last issue's crossword ↓

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| L | O | C | H | N | E | S | S |   | R | O | U | E | N |   |
| E |   | A |   | U |   | A | T | L | A | S |   |   | O |   |
| H | O | L | I | D | A | Y |   |   | D |   | C |   | D |   |
| A |   | A |   | G |   |   |   | C | A | S | H | E | D |   |
| V |   | I |   | E | A | S | T | E | R |   | A |   | Y |   |
| R | O | S | E | S |   | E | A | T |   | A | T | E |   |   |
| E |   |   | G |   | W | E | B |   |   | X |   |   | D |   |
|   |   | S |   | M |   |   |   | L | U | T | E | T | I | A |
| C | A | T | N | I | P |   |   | O |   | O |   | H |   | G |
| H |   | I |   | C | I |   |   | I | C | E | B | E | R | G |
| E | L | F |   |   | S |   |   | D |   |   | B |   |   | E |
| W |   | F | A | L | A | I | S | E |   |   | C | H | E | R |

## Last Issue's 'Musical Instruments' Quiz Answers

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| 1. Piano   | 6. Oboe      |
| 2. Flute   | 7. Violin    |
| 3. Guitar  | 8. Saxophone |
| 4. Cello   | 9. Drum      |
| 5. Bassoon | 10. Clarinet |

## Sunday Service

- Morning**      **10:30 Morning Worship** in church  
*Broadcast live on YouTube*
- **Holy Communion** on 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month
- **All Age service**  
on last Sunday of each month
- Evening**      **17:00 Worship and Prayer** in church  
*Except on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month*

## Weekday Activities

- Monday**      **13:00 Prayer Meeting** in church (see [page 4](#))
- Tuesday**      **14:00 Bible Bite** ministry in church  
*Refreshments & fellowship from 13:30*
- 19:30 Prayer Meeting** on Zoom (see [page 4](#))
- Wednesday** **11:00 The Well** (see [page 19](#))
- Friday**        **10:00 CatURpillars Toddler Group** (*Term Time*)

Details of any other services/activities that we hold will be posted:

- [inside the church](#)
- [on our Facebook page](#)
- [and on our website](#)

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*Day off: Monday*

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