

Sunday Service

Morning 10:30 Morning Worship in church
Broadcast live on YouTube

- **Holy Communion** on 1st Sunday of each month
- **All Age café service** on last Sunday of each month

Weekday Activities

Monday 10:30 Pop up Pantry

Tuesday 14:00 Bible Bite ministry in church
Broadcast live on YouTube
With refreshments & fellowship from 13:30

19:30 Prayer Meeting on Zoom

Wednesday 11:00 The Well

Friday 10:00 CatURpillars Toddler Group

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

- **inside the church**
- **on our Facebook page**
- **and on our website**

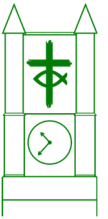
Minister: **Rev Brian Harley**
 ✉ 10 Dracaena Gardens, Shanklin PO37 7JQ
 ☎ 01983 862485
 💻 brianharley58@gmail.com
 Day off: **Monday**

Secretary: **Robin Wightman**
 💻 robinwightman@aol.com

Shanklin URC is a member of the **Evangelical Alliance**
www.shanklinurc.co.uk Registered Charity No. 1130459

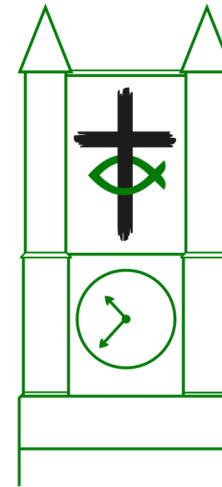
The Link

Special Edition



Shanklin United Reformed Church www.shanklinurc.co.uk

SURC
AGM
2025



Annual Reports

View From Number 10

Minister's Report

There is a short summary of Achievements and Performance incorporated in the Annual Accounts to comply with charity law. Please do read that brief overview of the information about our church life but here are my more personal reflections on the last year.

I can't quite believe that I have served here for 30 years now! Our church family has continued to be a lively presence at the heart of the town. Though many folk tend to think of church as the building, it is the people that comprise the true church, and you are an amazing bunch! We are also blessed with a great and well-positioned meeting space. The way the place has been adapted to modern use is a credit to all who have helped make the vision a reality over the last couple of decades. It's been a step-by-step process with prayerful reflection to ensure we did the right things. It is by no means perfect, but I do feel we have made the best of what's available on our rather tight site, and our facilities do get well used.



We've seen many people through our doors again this last year, especially at CatURpillars and The Well, and we are now also hosting a Pop-Up Pantry on Mondays, which is bringing in further new faces. We pray that this will be fruitful in both serving the community and in building further bridges within the townsfolk. None of this would have been possible if we hadn't removed the pews and remodelled the entrance area.

My heartfelt thanks goes out to all who serve so faithfully in our various ministries. Our little bookshop has been open several mornings a week through most of the year. Though the number of

Press Officer	Julie Croydon
Website	Christopher Sparks
Responsible Authorised Person – for Weddings	Jean Cunningham
Sunday Welcome Team	George Port
Catering Team/Kitchens	Miriam Stevens
Coffee Rota	Debbie Tamcken
The Well	Sheilagh Courtnage, Yvonne Sparks
First Aid	Yvonne Sparks
Flowers	Sue Bedwell
Pastoral Care Group Leaders	Under Review
Anna Chaplaincy	Carol Turner
Football	Steve Jones

Representatives

Christians Working Together in The Bay	Jane Hancock
YMCA Project	Rod and Ann Foster
Bible Society	Jane Hancock
Wessex URC Synod	Yvonne Sparks
Persecuted Church	Jane Hancock
Foodbank	Alan Hutton
Street Pastors	

Team Leaders & Responsibilities At SURC - March 2025

Secretary	Robin Wightman
Treasurer Assistant Treasurer	Colin Tamcken
Database and Directory	Christopher Sparks
Church Meeting Minutes	Yvonne Sparks
Property Team/Health & Safety Officer	Malcolm Stevens
Premises Coordinator/Bookings Diary	Pete Dawson
Cleaners	Andy and Irina Goodall
Garden	Terry Ockenden
Technical Team	Pete Dawson/ Malcolm Stevens
Bookshop Team	John and Joan Dunkley
Elder Responsible for Children and Youth Work	Yvonne Sparks
Children and Youth Team	Yvonne Sparks
CatURpillars	Janet Harley
Safeguarding Coordinator Deputy DBS Coordinator Additional DBS Verifiers]] under review] Yvonne Sparks, Debbie Tamcken
Prayer Ministry Team	Sue Wightman
Text Prayer Network	Lou Jupe/Jean Cunningham
Worship Music Team	
Reading Rota	Sheilagh Courtnage
Christian Copyright Licence	Christopher Sparks
Weekly News Sheet	Robin Wightman
The Link Editor	Christopher Sparks

visitors is often small we'd still like to see this open more often so that we have an open door to welcome local people and holiday visitors. Do prayerfully consider if you could help one morning a week or on a fortnightly basis.

Our services of worship continue to be quite well supported, and it's been great to have a number of visiting speakers to supplement the diet provided by me and our various in-house preachers. It has been good to see times of open prayer and people sharing testimony and prophetic words at times. Though we are short of musicians, the team has found the iSingWorship system a wonderful resource to help provide an excellent lead. The pattern of café services on the last Sunday of the month has worked well and brought in some new and some younger faces. Please be aware of our intention to make this a friendly and relaxed place for those less familiar with church - and do make an effort to invite people along.

We also continue to serve the needs of quite a few people each week via our livestream to YouTube, and I know how much this is valued by those who can't get along to services and when folk have missed a talk. I'm so grateful to our small but dedicated tech' team who serve us so faithfully and make all this possible, both on a Sunday and Tuesday. A new digital sound desk is now being fitted to enhance our capabilities.

We had a very testing period over the autumn when there were strong differences being expressed over an issue. I did my best to try to hold us in unity and had hoped we could all walk together and respect the differing views over the matter, but sadly some people chose to separate.

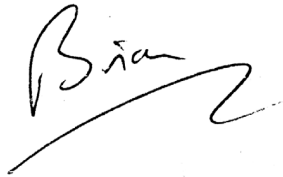
Though we are sad to have lost a few dear friends, I'm encouraged that we continue to see new faces drawn to our worshipping community, and we are about to welcome seven new members. May we continue to keep Jesus at the centre of everything and seek to be his authentic disciples in today's challenging world and in reaching out with the Good News.

It's been good to see several people engaging with the URC's Stepwise programme and over thirty of us are currently involved with Freedom in Christ courses. A few of the leadership team have attended the Leading Your Church Into Growth series sponsored by the Wessex Synod. This has provided good opportunities to reflect

The Link - 2025 AGM

on what we do well and areas where we might be more intentional and pro-active in reaching out to others. My prayer is that we can explore some of these ideas during the coming year, and some plans are being formulated.

Thank you for your on-going support and for allowing me to serve in some wider roles which do take some time away from local responsibilities. I greatly value my involvement with PRMI which keeps me in tune with how the Spirit is at work in the wider church. I also continue to serve on the Council of Evangelical Alliance which helps me understand the wider UK church context. Locally, I'm still passionate about partnering with other Christians and serving together. I do what I can to encourage joint work in The Bay as well as chairing the Wight Church team.



2024 Finance Report

The accounts for the Church for the year ending 31 December 2024 have now been completed and are currently with the auditor to be checked. A copy of the accounts will be available prior to the Church Meeting.

The General Fund is used for the day to day running of the Church and associate activities and the accounts show the offertory income (and the tax reclaimed on it) totalled £64,221 this year, which is very slightly down on last year (£64,881). The day to day running expenses have also risen again this year to £75,726 from £71,632 last year. Which means that overall, the General Fund had a deficit of almost £9,000 for the year and has a cash balance at the year-end of £10,672 (last year £19,202).

This deficit of approximately £9,000 is largely due to an increase in the costs of running the church and is concerning as it is not sustainable. Over the last couple of years our gas bill has increased by 152% and our electricity bill by 121% and last year we had to



Your Church Needs YOU!

**Volunteers are needed to help with
operating the PA and the Projection
Systems.**

**Don't worry if this sounds daunting, it isn't,
and full training will be given.**

If you are interested , please see Pete Dawson or Malc Stevens

Come to 'The Well'

a place for

Living Well Together

A safe place for friendship, support and a refreshing time – here at Shanklin URC:

Wednesdays 11:00 – 13:00

Free refreshments and craft activities

Just drop in at any point



increase the usual transfer from the General Fund to the Maintenance Fund of £2,400 to £3,720 to cover the various maintenance costs.

We are continuing to transfer £200 per month from the General Fund to the Maintenance Fund as a provision towards the ongoing maintenance of the Church. However, this may not be enough to cover the maintenance expenditure for this year.

The Maintenance Fund stands at £2,033 at the year end. (last year £463). £2,000 of this balance was a gift towards the additional work on the PA and AV systems, which together with a further grant will enable us to complete this in the coming year.

The Youth Worker Fund stands at £6,274 at the year end, down from £9,274 last year. We made a gift of £3,000 to the YFC Ryde Youth Work Project during the year

For some time, it has been the Church's policy that, funds permitting, we would make donations of at least 10% of the Offertory given to the General Fund (including any Tax Reclaimed). These donations would be made to other charities or individuals as agreed by the Church Meeting. This year the donations were £72 short of this target, and we will be aiming to make this up during 2025.

Fund-raising and donations for specific charities have continued again this year. The following gifts were made during 2024, £501 for Tear Fund and £503 for the Christmas Appeal which, this year, was for the Mother and Baby facility at the local YMCA.

I would like to thank everyone for their generosity in supporting the work of the Church over the past year and I would also ask that you:

- Pray for the church's finances and regularly review your own giving, perhaps yearly and when your circumstances change.
- If you are a taxpayer, seriously consider Gift Aiding the payments that you make to the Church if you are not already doing so. This could add 25% to any gift you make at no cost to you and last year we claimed approximately £8,000 in this way.

Colin Tamcken

The Prayer Life of the Church

Prayer is vital and central to the life of our Church family, whether it be through the prayers of individual members or the many opportunities afforded us throughout the week/year, to engage together in seeking the Lord and discerning His calling for us as people of God and in the work of his Kingdom at Shanklin United Reformed Church and beyond.



Taking an overview of each week, there are many times for prayer together, beginning on a Sunday when we gather for worship and in the afternoon at Shared Worship in the Bay Area; prayer being a very important part of these services.

Prayer ministry on a Sunday plays a very important part ~ after our main service it is a wonderful way to meet the needs of anyone wanting us to stand with them in prayer. It works very well, and confidentiality is maintained ~ please do come up and receive from the Lord whenever you feel the need ~ please don't be shy! Thanks to all those who give their time to facilitate this ministry. We would encourage anyone who feels led, to speak with Sue W and join the team!

On Tuesdays, there is prayer at **Bible Bite**, both of thanksgiving and praise for those in our church family and beyond and any situations of concern, nationally and worldwide, as well as prayer in response to the message. In the evenings, the **Zoom Prayer Meeting** (19:30) is led by our Minister Brian or other members of the fellowship and works really well ~ we are a small group at times but a faithful group uniting in the presence of God; we get through many requests and issues, praying till about 21:00. It is so powerful as The Lord leads us, and is a wonderful time of just seeking God. You are more than welcome to join in. Sometimes just connecting and listening will strengthen you in prayer! The enemy has a way of making us feel we would not be any good at praying, but prayer is one of the most powerful weapons in the kingdom! That's why the enemy tries to stop people. We pray that our church will continue to be a centre full of prayer.

books can be accommodated again.

During 2024 the proportion of bookshop income from sales in different categories was as follows:

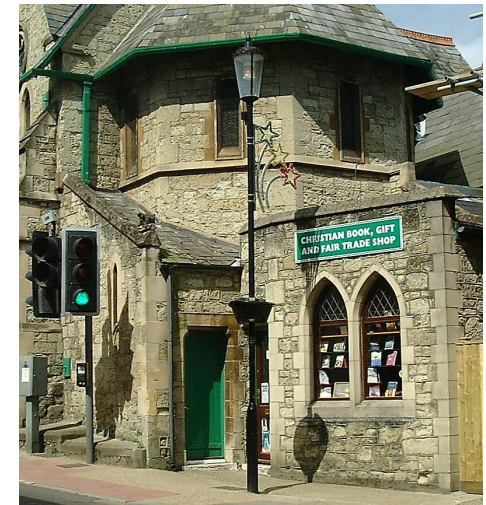
- New books 29%
- Greetings cards 24%
- Christmas & Easter items 18%
- Miscellaneous items 11%
- Previously owned books 18%

We hope that the bookshop will continue to be a blessing to all who choose to visit and that the books available will faithfully promote the Gospel of Jesus and support people in their Christian faith. Our volunteers tell us of interesting conversations with visitors to the bookshop. Some people drop into the bookshop to have a chat and it can also be an opportunity to let people know about things that are taking place in the church building throughout the week.

Once again we take this opportunity to thank everyone who serves on the bookshop team and helps to maintain this aspect of the church's ministry.

If anyone is interested in joining the bookshop team please contact us. Our email address is johndfrend@aol.com. From mid-February 2025 the bookshop will be open regularly on Wednesday mornings each week and on the second and fourth Tuesday.

John & Joan Dunkley



Church Bookshop Report for 2024

During 2024 the bookshop was open each week on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 to 13:00 and also on the second Tuesday of each month. From September it was also open from 10:30 to 13:30 on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

As always a huge 'Thank You' is due to the bookshop team. Ann F and David W have enabled the bookshop to be open regularly each week. Ruth W from St Catherine's in Ventnor moved from providing back-up cover to doing the second Tuesday of each month. Graham B continued to provide much appreciated back-up cover. In September we welcomed Christine W to the bookshop team and she covered the fourth Tuesday of the month for the remainder of the year. An extra 'thank you' is due to David W who continues to provide background banking/accounting services in addition to his regular weekly session in the bookshop.

The bookshop had a quieter year than in 2023 and at the end of the year the bookshop was able to transfer £450 to church funds. As would be expected the bookshop tends to be busier during the summer months.

Trade orders of Leprosy Mission products are no longer available direct from the Leprosy Mission. They have transferred the supply of trade orders to another supplier so we have still been able to access some of their products in addition to some other items from this different supplier. During the year the bookshop has continued to order Leprosy Mission items such as gift books and Easter cards. Only Leprosy Mission Christmas cards, which included a scripture verse were purchased (some of the cards they produced in 2024 did not include a scripture verse). Many of the Christmas cards purchased supported Tear Fund and a few supported the Trussell Trust (foodbanks) and Premier Lifeline. Some general greetings cards were also ordered from the supplier of Leprosy Mission products in addition to cards produced by Leonard Smith. The Leprosy Mission greetings cards have proved to be very popular with customers.

The bookshop has continued to sell previously owned books (in good condition) donated to the bookshop. Due to sales of these books space has been freed up so donations of small amounts of

The various church **House Groups** that meet during the week will include times of prayer, as well as at Elders and Church meetings and during the year, other special extended times being set aside, sometimes with specific areas of the Church Ministry to pray into. In February we held an **In-Person Prayer** meeting at the beginning of Lent, and in April there was a **Sabbath of Prayer** over 24 hours, encompassing three set times of prayer at the Church, including ending with the Breaking of Bread on the Saturday. In June we held an afternoon **Prayer Walk** around the community and in November 2024 and January and February this year we began a series of **In His Presence**, a time of open prayer and worship seeking our Lord ~ we plan for these to become a regular event. In 2024 **Israel Prayer** took place each Monday.

Prayer is encouraged, with '**Topics for Prayer**' listed each week on the Church Notice Sheet together with names of people in need; the sheet also lists various prayer facilities available from time to time.

The **Text Prayer Network** has worked really well over the last year; we have 28 people dedicated to praying until we see breakthrough! Texts go out quickly and there's confidence in covering. We keep confidentiality and delete requests when prayed for. Many have appreciated the prayers and felt God's covering through hard times. And that is what it is about, uniting in prayer and seeing The Lord move in people's lives. We can't wait to see more that comes from prayer. If you are interested in joining the TPN please speak to Lou J.

**We pray that His Will might be done and
that His Kingdom will come**

**May we as a Church never lose sight of those goals and
continue to be a Church with prayer at its very heart.**

Safeguarding Report for 2025 AGM

There have been no changes in post-holders since the last AGM. My thanks go to them all. Janet Harley has helped me throughout the year with advice and information; Yvonne Sparks and Debbie Tamcken have undertaken the DBS document checks we've required; and Rob Wightman has been a very active, both in keeping me up to date with changes etc and, in particular, taking on a lot of work during our review of SG policy/ procedure. I also want to record formally that the Synod office staff, and particularly Sharon Barr (our Synod SG Officer, and national lead for SG in the URC) are always very helpful and supportive.

Since the last AGM a small number of concerns have come to our attention, and where appropriate they were passed to a Statutory Authority. All are now closed.

At the time of writing (mid Feb) I am finishing off the annual report required by Synod, and over the past few weeks Rob and I have been reviewing and revising the church's SG policy. If all goes to plan you will be asked to consider adopting the amended documentation at the AGM itself. For your information we have based all of it on the resources provided by Synod in the booklet Good Practice 6 (with a few amendments that we thought made it better for us at Shanklin). The policy itself is now very much simplified but makes reference to the GP6 booklet throughout, so there will be a copy of the booklet kept in the church office alongside the policy.

It is three years since we last had a SG training session on the premises and it is hoped to arrange another during 2025. I've been in touch with Synod to "get the ball rolling". At the risk of causing groans all round, could I please gently remind everybody that there is an expectation by Synod that people fulfilling (many of) the roles within a church family should have at least a basic level of SG training. After three years it seems reasonable to have a refresh. But as has been said before, SG is everybody's responsibility, so it would be great if as many people as possible made use of the opportunity when we get the arrangements finalised. I should add that there is always online "e-training" (i.e. do it yourself) accessible for basic (Foundation) SG via the URC website and dates do crop up regularly for online seminars too. I know several people have

perhaps are watching for the first time, on an average Sunday morning there are 16 - 20 people watching 'Live', and on a Tuesday afternoon this can vary from 20+ to about 8. Work has continued on upgrading the Sound and Projection systems. Some of our older equipment is showing its age and will be updated in the coming year, this includes a new Sound Desk (being delivered as I write this) we are also looking at replacing the Lectern Mic and Hand-Held Mic as these are also causing issues. We still have some money from a grant towards the cost of this work and a generous donation given recently. Thanks to Pete, Colin, Terry Ockendon & Christopher as we help operate the equipment faithfully for each service/event.

Myself and Terry Ogier replaced two of the Main Fuse Boards last summer bringing them up to current standards as highlighted by the 5 Year Electrical Inspection.

We had the secondary glazing to the large windows to the left and right of the stage and the window in the Balcony installed, this has helped with reducing heat loss out of the building.

The lock was replaced on the Landguard Road door, a big thank you to Terry Ockendon for arranging and carrying out this task, it was complicated due to the number of key holders involved but all went smoothly, praise God.

The Disabled Access Doors had an electrical fault, the company who installed them is no longer trading and it was looking like an expensive replacement, but fortunately Terry Ockendon, with his experience of electrical components, managed to repair it for a few pounds, praise God!

A small handrail has been fitted to the right hand side of the stage, to assist those who struggle with the steps, it's not designed to be 'swung on' but is there for additional support if needed.

Finally, we can praise God that He has continued to provide financial resources and has given us willing and skilled people to carry out the work for His Glory.

Malc



Fabric Report

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

(1 Peter 4:10 NIVUK)

Where has the past year gone? We can look back and thank God that we have been able to continue His work in Shanklin, the surrounding areas and those in other countries too. We have a building that is getting on in years and parts of which are showing their age, but God has continued to bless us by providing the finance, the skills, abilities and willingness of numerous people to maintain His presence in Shanklin. All those little jobs that very often go unnoticed have been completed, on a weekly basis, and praise God we have managed to maintain the building in good order so that it can be used in so many ways, to His glory.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have worked quietly in the background doing all those little and not so little jobs. I would be good to mention a few of our wonderful team who help out on a regular basis, Graham, Terry Ockendon, Terry Ogier, Mike, Rob, Alan, Bill and Pete, with Andy & Irina keeping the place clean on a weekly basis, despite the efforts of activities like Messy Church and Encounter which generate a lot of mess sometimes! We are all working together so we have a clean, flexible, comfortable and safe place to worship. It's great that God has given us all skills and abilities and it's great to see them used for God's glory.

God has blessed us again with the all the resources needed to complete a number of the larger problems, this includes work to repair the various roof and gutter problems that seem to come up frequently. Further work was needed to redecorate the Organ Store area due to water ingress, this was completed and apart from the odd 'hiccup' of water ingress in that area, which will still need further investigation, looks a lot better. We have had a few tiles come loose and a piece of 'decorative wood' come off on the left-hand side of the church, this still needs sorting. I would also like to thank those who help sort out the chairs etc. for all the different services and events. The front garden always looks good, so thanks to those that faithfully look after it.

We are able to continue to provide the services on YouTube for those unable to attend the church in person and also those who

made use of these and others have completed SG training in respect of roles outside of SURC; thank you all, and well done.

I doubt I will be at the AGM so if you do have any questions please contact me beforehand or leave them with the elders for me to answer later.

I have advised Rob that I do not wish to continue in the role of Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator, and I understand that steps are being taken to find a replacement. I will of course help in this if required and I won't stand down until it's all resolved... so long as that's not too long!

Dave White

Children and Youth Report 2025

*'Children are a gift from the Lord, they are a reward from him' –
Psalm 127: 3*

A huge thank you to the whole Church family as I know, that you regularly pray for our children, young people and families. As part of Leading your Church into Growth, it is important to prayer into this regularly to see how we can increase the number of families in our Church.

Our numbers have continued to be small, usually only 2-4 children each week, although that number does increase on our Encounter Services. Having a small number in itself creates challenges, as it can be difficult to offer enough variety and keeping each lesson fresh and interesting. It also means we can not also offer the same groups and opportunities that larger Churches can.

We offer a children's group each week apart from All Age Service/ Encounter Service and although small in number the children we have enjoy their time downstairs.

We continue to follow a series of Bible lessons from Trueway Kids, which are free bible lessons that can be downloaded from the internet. It includes a story each week, which the children can then take home to re-read or talk over with their parents, an activity, games and a snack. Some of the activities are sent home with the child to compete at home, again this can then be talked about with parents. They have now introduced all age inclusive lessons which has been easier when have a wide age range of children.

As many know I took the decision to step back for a while from Junior Church as I was finding not being able to be part of the main service, was meaning that spiritually I was beginning to flag.

Being able to take part in the main service has been so beneficial and refreshing.

This was only able to happen by the support of Hannah, who has taken over the weekly junior church sessions each week, without her help and dedication this would not of been possible. She is being assisted each week by a group volunteers, Alan, Linda and Julie C. It has been good to see Hannah grow in confidence and leadership. It has been good to use the talents of others and for the children to have a more diverse input.

Anna Chaplaincy

Since I last wrote, things have changed with the manner that I am responding to older people who require visits.

It became apparent that there were many who have need of assistance to travel to medical appointments, require practical assistance with meal provision, provision of equipment, fitting light bulbs, fixing shelves, dealing with trades people, assistance with letter writing and form completion, assistance for family members and checking plugs for electric sockets etc (fortunately I have a very helpful and practical husband who is happy to lend a hand when needed).

During such times the individual's spiritual needs can also be addressed.

I continue to go into care homes and undertake some visits as before when time allows.

The group of Anna Chaplains on the Island has grown and there are now approximately 14 Anna Chaplains and Anna friends. We meet 4 times a year at Carisbrooke Priory.

All in all, things are going well, it would be wonderful to have others on board as there are always more people that would benefit from visits and/or practical assistance than there are hours in the day

Carol



The Link - 2025 AGM

- “This is such a lovely friendly group. All my girls and I enjoy coming every Friday”.
- “We really love the group. What about the idea of a bible study after the group for Mums? Children’s clothes exchange every few months”.
- “We love CatURpillars, always friendly, fun and a great way for little ones to socialise and mums to meet other parents”.
- “A really welcoming group – Thank you”.
- “It’s a really great set up! Brilliant for mums to meet and children to play. Thank you.”
- “We love it”
- “Would be amazing if you could run on another day during the week, not just Fridays ☐xx”.
- “Very good value for money”
- “We really enjoy CatURpillars group. We can’t always make it but love it when we can. Sometimes it’s a bit chilly in the church”.
- “A really great group wouldn’t change at all”.
- “Lovely club – excellent price and really appreciated in these difficult times”.
- “Very good value”
- “Brilliant group can’t fault it”.
- “The tent has worked really well for us!”
- We love everything about CatURpillars. Thank you for everything you all do.
- CatURpillars is a friendly and inclusive group. My daughter absolutely loves coming and it’s wonderful to see how confident and comfortable she is there

.It is a privilege to be part of this ministry of our church and again I say there is no way it would be so successful without the amazing team I have around me to run it. The bible says we are part of a body and each part has a really important contribution to make, no one is more important than another. So, again.....

Thank You Team!

Janet Harley

Having had time away I will now be rejoining the team on a monthly basis from April.

Messy Church continues to be a great outreach to many people, we are now holding a Messy Church 5 times a year, which includes the Light Alternative. Last year we held Messy Church, Easter, July, Harvest, October and Christmas. We have 6 craft tables and the children move round to each table completing a craft relating to our theme for that afternoon. We have a short story and worship time led by Brian and Janet. A hot meal and pudding is offered to the children. Parents are offered a hot drink and a snack. Numbers have generally been around 30 – 35 children, those that have attended have feedback that they have enjoyed themselves and we have had some families come that are not known to the church in any other capacity.

The helpers that come each time have had a great time as well, if you feel this could be your calling please speak to me, extra help at the craft tables is always great, all the crafts are cut out ready so it just helping the children. We have had some great conversations with the children and parents alike.

I have to say a big thank you to everyone who helps with Messy Church as without these people it would not happen and a great community outreach would be lost. A special thank you to Brian and Janet who help with all the organising and running the group as well as Debbie for her brilliant ideas for different crafts,

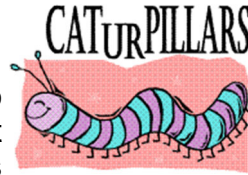
“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

‘Thank you for filling the world with children to bring joy and excitement to the world, as well as to remind us of what it was like to have faith without over-thinking everything. Lord, I lift up the kids in my life, both related to me and those who I know through church and through friends. Bless them with wisdom as they grow. Keep them safe from harm. If there is a way that I can be a blessing to the kids in my life, please reveal it to me. Show me how to be a good example for them and send them other adults to be godly lights in their lives. Guide them in the way they should go, and reveal to them Your purposes for their lives in Your timing.’

If anyone is interested in helping with Junior Church or Messy Church, please speak to me. Yvonne

Annual Report 2024/25

CatURpillars continues to flourish and I am so grateful to God for the fabulous team that make it happen. A special shout out goes to Alan who sets the furniture up and gets the toys out on a Thursday, is at every session on Fridays and is a key person in putting the toys away again.



The teams that make CatURpillars happen are:

- Alan as mentioned above who goes in on Thursday to move the furniture around ready for the toys to go out.
- Alan and Julie who put the toys out on Thursday afternoon.
- All those who help at the Friday session in various capacities. Melanie, Alan, Linda, Liz (who is our treasurer), Robert, Dave W, plus Ann F who has stepped in quite a few times over the year.
- Terry Ockendon and Rachel Waddell who come in specially to help pack away.

We generally have around 35 children each week, although sometimes we get nearly 50, plus their parents, carers and grandparents. Interestingly we rarely get any crying or squabbling and that is partly down to the fact that we encourage the parents to move around with their children rather than just letting the children get on with playing themselves, so they are on hand to sort any issues out immediately before they escalate. That way, the parents meet other parents as they move from activity to activity and some lifelong friendships have been made over the years we have been running.

We have over 230 children on our list now; thankfully they don't all come at the same time! We often have some very meaningful conversations with the parents and it is a privilege to be a listening ear anytime. One parent thanked us for always being there and "sorting her out"! One parent who has started coming regularly is a wheelchair user and it has been so lovely that our premises are totally suitable for her and her son. All those renovations we did many years ago to make it a truly accessible premises has been worth every penny, and it is great to see her and her son being able to enjoy the group.



There are a few things that happen throughout the year, other than the all the playing with toys that goes on. We mark each child's birthday by singing Happy Birthday to them, letting them blow the candles out on our everlasting birthday cake and we give them a birthday card which wishes God's blessing on them. We also have a singing time at the end of each session. Children learn so much through music including their alphabet, counting, days of the week, months of the year, what traffic lights mean, different parts of their bodies and sounds that animals make to name just a few. At the end of the summer term, we held our popular Teddy Bear's Picnic where we celebrate with those who are graduating to big school, a very special moment for the parents and often tissues have to be on hand. Again this year the weather was kind to us, so we were able to hold it up at Rylstone Gardens where the children enjoyed a nature treasure hunt, a lovely craft activity and all the fun of being outdoors. In October, one of our parents who is a professional photographer came to take portraits of the children which many used as Christmas presents. Throughout the year we raised money for Mountbatten Hospice by wearing something yellow and for Children In Need by decorating Pudsey Bear biscuits. In December the children came to Messy Church and told the Nativity story using the songs they had learnt at CatURpillars the previous weeks and at the end of term we had a lovely Christmas party and each child received a book telling the nativity story, as a present. Several parents have commented on what a lovely book they got this year, and one said how their child loves reading it even though it isn't Christmas anymore!



We did a questionnaire this year, to see if the families have any suggestions as to how we can improve what we provide. These are some of the comments we received.

- "I find it really welcoming. I like the mix of free play and song time. A lovely group to come to. Thank you for running it."
- "You are amazing".
- "I have been coming to CatURpillars since it opened, and I have always found it to be the most welcoming atmosphere. It's the best. Thank you"