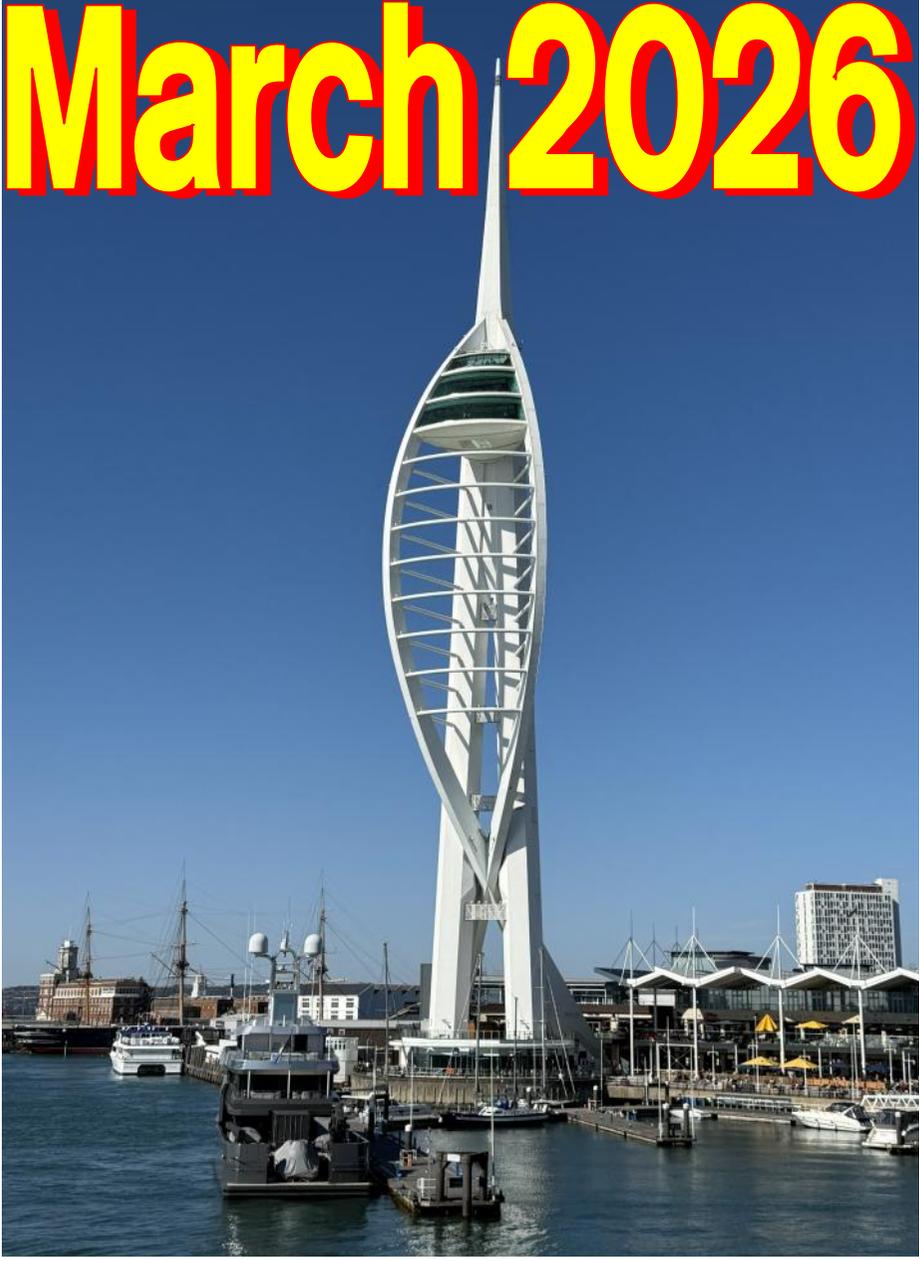


# The Link



# March 2026



Shanklin United Reformed Church [www.shanklinurc.co.uk](http://www.shanklinurc.co.uk)

# View From Number 10



## Onwards and upwards...

We've seen some encouraging signs over recent weeks with good numbers on Sundays and Tuesdays and yet more new faces appearing - signs of the growth we've been praying and working for! We must give thanks to the Lord – and also keep looking to him for guidance as we journey onwards together.

I just read again a favourite passage of mine at the beginning of Hebrews 12: *“let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”*

Disciples are, by definition, followers. We must constantly look to Jesus as we navigate our way through the challenges of modern life; keeping our eyes on him and not getting distracted by other priorities or competing attractions or questioning voices. We sang at Bible Bite – *“O let me see thy footmarks and in them plant my own.”*

We can often get weighed down by all kinds of baggage and the various burdens the world places on us. The writer says we must endeavour to cast these aside: *“let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles...”*

He goes on to urge readers not to get quickly discouraged when things get difficult – Jesus went through far worse as he suffered on the cross - *“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*



As we journey through the season of Lent, we must keep the cross in focus but at the same time remember that we serve a Risen Saviour. He now reigns in glory and, according to Paul's understanding, is even praying for us (Romans 8:34). Jesus promises to always be with his followers, and the Spirit of the risen Christ gives us new and abundant life.

So, let's keep our heads up as we press on to take hold of the prize he has won for us and *“run with perseverance the race marked out for us...”* Those who have gone before are cheering us on – and we must do



all we can to encourage each other along the way. We are not alone on the path of discipleship.

May these weeks leading up to our Easter celebrations be very fruitful and a period of real spiritual growth and development. In our community of faith at SURC, let's look out for one another so that no one gets left behind and may we always be looking outwards to draw others in.

With very best wishes from a fellow pilgrim



**Easter Special**



**Saturday  
28<sup>th</sup> March**

**15:30 – 17:30**

**Great family fun and vital story**

- no unaccompanied children please

Come and explore Easter through a Messy Church experience at Shanklin URC - 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 some delicious food.

Please let Yvonne know if you can help in any way – even with clearing up! Pick up an invite to encourage people you know.

# Prayer



## Always at the Heart of our Life

**Pray the Wight** – Sat 28<sup>th</sup> February at True Vine Church in Newport High Street – from 10:00-16:00. Do join Brian & also Mark Williams from 10:00-11:00 as we pray for the Southeast Wight area

**Monday Prayer** – a weekly meeting at **13:00 in 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 – **the next meeting is on 5<sup>th</sup> March**

**Next Sabbath of Prayer** – reflecting on *Leading Our Church into Growth*. Save the date - **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April – Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April**

An evening of praise is planned for the Friday and feedback and prayers around *Leading Our Church into Growth* on the Saturday.

# SURC March Prayer Diary

We have again included this month a prayer diary for you to use daily throughout the month, covering a wide range of topics to be prayed for as the Holy Spirit leads you.

Happy praying

Sun 1	Today's Communion service	Wed 18	Church tech team - and for the tech used
Mon 2	The Monday prayer meetings in church	Thu 19	Churches on the IoW spreading God's Word
Tue 3	Bible Bite	Fri 20	The Persecuted Church
Wed 4	The Well - volunteers, regulars and visitors	Sat 21	Organisations supporting the Persecuted Church
Thu 5	Churches in The Bay	Sun 22	Christian youth work in The Bay
Fri 6	Local schools and for outreach to them	Mon 23	Those who aren't well enough to get to church
Sat 7	All councils on the Isle of Wight, local and IoW	Tue 24	IoW Youth for Christ
Sun 8	UK Government	Wed 25	The text prayer network, & for Lou who organises it
Mon 9	European Union	Thu 26	Our church meeting, & AGM, tonight
Tue 10	United Nations	Fri 27	The NHS; staff, patients and services
Wed 11	World peace	Sat 28	Messy Church taking place today
Thu 12	Those affected by violence and conflicts around the world	Sun 29	The care homes on the Island; for the staff and residents/patients
Fri 13	Elders' Meeting	Mon 30	Our Church Elders
Sat 14	CARE	Tue 31	Everyone at church
Sun 15	The Evangelical Alliance		
Mon 16	The URC as a whole		
Tue 17	Our Tuesday Prayer meetings on Zoom		

## Our Next Church Meeting

### **Annual Church Meeting**

**26<sup>th</sup> March 2026 @ 19:30**

**Refreshments from 19:00**



All members and regular worshippers are encouraged to come along as we reflect on the last year and seek to plan ahead. This will include the election of Elders. We really want as many as possible to be involved in our church family business so please do try and get along.

Books of Reports, the Annual Accounts and Agenda will be available ahead of the meeting so we can all come prepared.

As usual, a Zoom link will be provided for those who cannot make it in person via the regular meeting space. Please tell Robin if you want to vote in the Elder's election so he can arrange that.

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

## **The Connection Quiz**

1. Which female Labour MP was one of the 'gang of four' founders of the SDP in 1981?
2. Which businesswoman has been a regular on Dragons Den since 2006?
3. What song with a girl's name was a number one hit for Shakin' Stevens (for one week) in 1982?
4. Who was Henry VIII's third wife?
5. Which alliterative song with a two word title was a hit for Donovan in 1968?
6. What is the **connection** between the answers to questions 1 - 5?
7. Where was the cover photo taken - hint, it's in England.



Answers are on [page 39](#)

## Thank you all

Since coming back to the island in July 2025, we have been made very welcome at Shanklin URC. We had a wonderful church family in Hullbridge, Essex and wondered how we would manage without them. Instead of worrying we should have just left it to the Lord as you have taken us into your wonderful church family from day one.

Peter became very weak over the following months and sadly passed away in December 2025, he is now with his Lord and Saviour, at peace, and safe in His arms.

Thank you all, you have held me up in your prayers, with friendship and support over this difficult period, I am so grateful as I couldn't have managed without it. It is amazing how you can feel the power and strength of prayer (never to be underestimated).

Thank you so much for holding up myself and the family during the services on 5<sup>th</sup> February this year.

I look forward to many more happy times spent with you all.

Praise the Lord and God bless

June

\*\*\*

Miriam and I, along with Suzanne, would like to add our thanks to you all, for support, prayers and help in so many ways during these past difficult weeks. God bless you all.

Malc, Miriam and Suzanne

## Eileen

Remembering dear Eileen Parsonage who died a year ago this March.

A wonderful knowledgeable Christian teacher.

Missed very much by her SURC family.

Pat



## Shanklin URC Bookshop

The church bookshop reopened on Wednesday 18th February. The current opening hours are....

- Mondays: 10:00 - 12:30
- Wednesdays: 10:00 - 13:00
- Thursdays: 10:30 - 13:00

It will also be open two Tuesday mornings each month as follows:

- Second Tuesday of each month: 10:00 - 13:00
- Last Tuesday of each month: 10:30 - 13:30

The bookshop stocks a range of new books and Bibles as well as some small additional items such as bookmarks. It also stocks a range of greetings cards for a variety of occasions. The greetings cards include scripture verses.

A variety of previously owned books and CDs are available at prices based on the condition of the item and what it would cost if new. There is now enough space available that we can accept small donations of Christian books, in good condition, that you no longer wish to keep.

### Leading Your Church into Growth Prayer

*God of Mission,  
Who alone brings growth to your Church,  
Send your Holy Spirit to give,  
Vision to our planning,  
Wisdom to our actions,  
Joy to our worship  
And power to our witness.  
Help our church to grow in numbers,  
In spiritual commitment to you,  
And in service to our local community,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen*



## **Annual Spring Clean working party**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March from 10:00 - 12:00**

We will end with homemade soup and bread together sometime after 12:00 – thanks to Julie C once again.

We had a great team last year – do come and join the fun. There are odd jobs for all abilities. Please bring cloths, buckets steps etc... many hands make light work!



## **Fellowship Breakfast at Viv's cooking**

in Sandown High Street



**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March at 10:00**



All are most welcome and do bring a friend along - please sign the list on the notice board... wonderful food, plus some encouraging testimony.

A donation of around £10 will bless our hosts.

## **News of our dear friends from Zimbabwe**

Rev Noma Ncube, who worshipped with us through 2023 before moving to Peterborough, was called to serve as a URC minister in NW Synod back in the autumn but had to wait for her visa to be cleared.

The family moved to Blackburn recently and Mufaro (now 11) and Munashe (nearly 7) have settled well into a new school and are making friends. Noma is to be inducted into the group pastorate on 21<sup>st</sup> March at 15:00. Bill and Julie plan to go up to support them.

Please pray for Noma and Tapiwa and the boys in this new chapter of life and ministry – praise God for the way he has led them and provided for them along a challenging path.

# ENCOUNTER

**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 Palm Sunday  
29<sup>th</sup> March**

**a great day to invite friends along**

**All Hail to the King**

**– café serving from 10:15**

**Website of the Month:**

**[urc.org.uk/](http://urc.org.uk/)**

***The website for the United Reformed Church***

# ***Shared Worship in The Bay***



**At 17:00 Each Week**

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

**A shared service on the second Sunday of each month**

***These are the next two meetings***

**8<sup>th</sup> March - Church of Good Shepherd, Lake**

**12<sup>th</sup> April - St Blasius, Shanklin**

**All other weeks - informal prayer and praise at Shanklin URC**

**All are welcome - please join us when you can**

## Good Morning SURC Shanklin

To Brian & Janet, the Elders, all my brothers and sisters, friends, family, supporters of our Church, The Mother & Baby Unit & mothers, and all those attending The Well!

It's no secret now - it was my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026, and please remember it is only a number of how many years to date that God has Blessed me and others to walk this world in his way with his guidance and blessings!. Amen!

I have to say I was totally blown away with the overwhelming outpouring of birthday wishes, blessings, visits, phone calls, WhatsApp messages, cards and gifts from my brothers and sisters at the SURC. How do I start to say **Thank You!** for what I received it seems so inadequate!. You have all truly blessed me and enriched me and inspired me in so many ways and emotions. I feel I am so privileged by God and by all my brothers and sisters in the church. It has been a very uplifting week with all of this abundance of awesomeness!

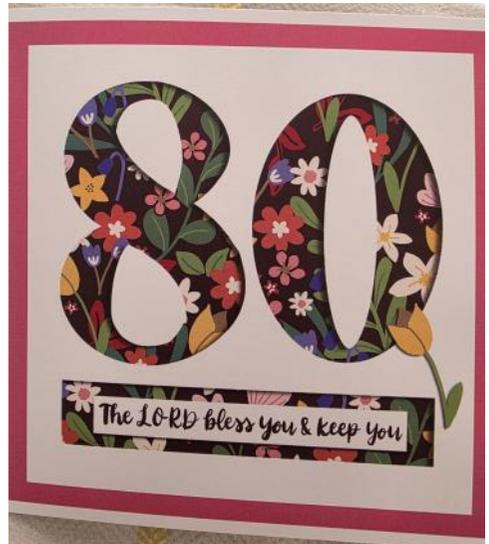
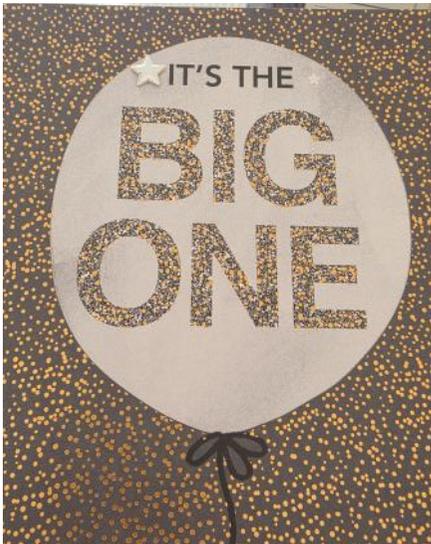
To top it all, as some already know who have prayed with me in the past regarding my family problems, out of the blue, our daughter Tracy, whom we have not seen or spoken to for many, many years, arrived for a week to celebrate my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. How is that for one of God's Blessings and answer to prayers. On top of that, while Tracy was here, I had a delivery to make to the Mother & Baby Unit with items that had been donated, so we phoned and made an appointment with Jo, which is the only way, and the correct way, to first go to the office to meet Jo and Tessa. When we arrived, with Tracy in tow, we were invited round to the Lodge, and immediately received a greeting of warmth and birthday wishes and offered tea and cake by one of the young mums. Once again, other resident mums turned up and I was blessed with warm hugs, cards and gifts. I was so truly blessed and so overwhelmed that I am lost for words! So watch this space for next month's article on our visit to the Mother & Baby Unit on my birthday!

Once again, Thank You to Brian and Janet and to the Elders and to you **all** for making my birthday so special. All praise and love be to God.

May I take this opportunity to firstly say this is only part of God's rewards for being a member of the SURC. So, to all who read this

article, I hold up my hands and arms to God and over you all and pray you focus on our Lord. May He bless you and honour you, teach you and guide you, listen to you and talk to your heart. May He bring peace, comfort and safety to your lives and heal and repair each and every one of you, whatever may be ailing your mind, body and soul. In Jesus's Holy Precious Name. **Amen.**

Love and Blessings  
Rod.



## **World Day of Prayer**

**(A Women Led, Global, Ecumenical Movement)**



### **Press Release**



## **“I will give you rest”**

### **World Day of Prayer 2026 Nigeria**

Our sisters in Nigeria invite us to join them for the World Day of Prayer on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026. The service they have prepared reflects on the theme, "I will give you rest."

The World Day of Prayer is an international, women-led, ecumenical movement that shares the hopes, concerns, and prayers of women from around the globe. Each year, women from a different country craft a service, sharing their unique spiritual journey and culture. For 2026, the women of Nigeria have created a service that speaks to our need for peace and solace, drawing on their faith and experiences in a world filled with struggles and anxieties.

The preparation for this day is extensive. The writing country and theme are chosen years in advance, and the service then travels to the international committee in New York for translation and dissemination to national committees in over 120 participating countries. From there it is adapted and shared locally, culminating in gatherings at hundreds of churches every March.

This day is a powerful demonstration of global solidarity. It begins in Samoa and moves across the world in a continuous wave of prayer, finishing 38 hours later in American Samoa. It truly is a worldwide day of prayer!

For further information and resources, including details of services in your area, please visit the World Day of Prayer website: [wwdp.org.uk](http://wwdp.org.uk)

# 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!*



*Following on from last month's news on the new Open Doors World Watch List Top 50 for 2026...*

## **Which countries are outside the World Watch List 2026 top 50?**

Believers from many other countries may not appear in your *World Watch List Top 50*, but they still keenly need our prayer. They are still part of the body of Christ – and there are times where faith must feel like an impossible battle. But we serve the God of the impossible, and the church continues to worship in these places. These are the countries at numbers 51-60 on the World Watch List..

### **51 Malaysia**

Malaysia remains at number 51 on the World Watch List, without a change in persecution score. While the violence score remains relatively low, there was a significant increase in the past year, with a particular rise in the number of churches attacked. However, this was offset by a drop in pressure in church life, reflecting a slight reduction in the number who reported being monitored, hindered in training religious leaders or in conducting youth activities.

Many Open Doors supporters will be familiar with the abduction of Pastor Raymond Koh in 2017. In the past year, the court case into his abduction finally took place – with his wife, Susanna, successful in her [lawsuit against the state](#).

### **52 Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan also hasn't changed World Watch List score or rank, remaining at number 52. Muslim families, friends and villagers exert pressure on converts, while the government imposes many restrictions on church activities. The level of surveillance is so high that Christians in Azerbaijan do not know whom to trust any more

In the past year, at least ten public Christian buildings – mainly Armenian Apostolic – were systematically closed and destroyed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the country.

### **53 Tanzania**

Tanzania has risen two places on the World Watch List, with an increase in persecution driven by rising pressure, particularly in national life. The country has entered a period where dictatorial

paranoia constrains political space, and both the mainland and Zanzibar experience pressure shaped by Islamic oppression. Converts are especially vulnerable, and are likely to be expelled from their homes and ostracised by their communities. Political expression and religion frequently overlap, creating a problem of untangling where dissent, political affiliation and faith are interpreted through the same lens.

For Christians, this convergence has narrowed their room to manoeuvre socially and institutionally, making life more difficult, even in the absence of major violent episodes.

## **54 Kenya**

Kenyan Christians have seen little change in the past year, and no change in World Watch List ranking or score.

Over the past decade, Kenya has been grappling with a relentless surge in attacks from al-Shabaab, one of Africa's most lethal jihadist groups, based in Somalia. This escalating violence has placed Christians, especially those with a Muslim background in the north east and coastal regions, under severe threat. Political unrest in the past year – characterised by protests and violence – means Christians are left even more vulnerable as the government's attention has remained elsewhere.

## **55 Vietnam**

Vietnam fell 11 places on the World Watch List, with a change in persecution score of three points. This is chiefly due to a decrease in the reported numbers of violence, with no Christians murdered for their faith or churches attacked in the past year.

While violence fell, the pressure that Christians face in other areas of life increased slightly. In particular, local authorities target non-traditional Protestants and ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands. Meanwhile the Communist government remains silent on local issues of persecution and continues to control all registered churches and religious activities through its Committee on Religious Affairs.

## **56 Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation remains at number 56, with no change in persecution score. Although the number of Christians arrested and

sentenced was higher than in the previous year, there were no killings of Christians for their faith and fewer reported church attacks.

Across the country, the government imposes restrictions on non-Russian Orthodox church activities and on those Christians opposing the war in Ukraine. In the northern Caucasus, especially, converts are targeted by their Islamic families and communities.

## **57 United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) rose three places on the World Watch List, the main reason being an increase in violence – now at the highest level in UAE for the past five years.

While migrant Christians are free to worship in private or in designated church compounds, it is illegal for them to share the gospel or pray in public. Emirati converts from Islam face the most persecution, particularly from their family and community.

## **58 Djibouti**

Djibouti fell one place on the World Watch List, though its persecution score actually increased. This is due to a rise in the number of reported incidents of violence.

Christians in the country face pressure rooted in Islamic oppression, clan structures and dictatorial paranoia. Djibouti has remained stable for many years, yet that stability has never translated into broader space for Christian life. Pressure remains high across most spheres, with daily restrictions, social scrutiny and state suspicion still the norm for believers – with converts from Islam facing the worst persecution in the country.

## **59 Indonesia**

Indonesia remains at number 59, with a slight increase in persecution. Incidents of violence rose notably, but this was partially offset by a decrease in pressure in other spheres of life.

The increase in violence score largely comes from an increase in the number of churches, other Christian properties and houses of Christians being destroyed. The decrease in all other spheres stems from a general reduction in pressure reported, with the exception of converts who continue to face the greatest challenges.

## **60 Kuwait**

Kuwait fell two places on the World Watch List, though the persecution score has not changed – the fall is explained by worsening persecution in other countries. Most Christians in Kuwait are migrants from elsewhere, and they can use designated compounds registered for worship, though these are very limited and too small for the number who wish to gather. They are also forbidden from sharing the gospel with Kuwaitis. Native Kuwaiti Christians and converts from Islam (whether from Kuwait or from other countries) face discrimination, harassment and police monitoring. Their conversion is not legally recognised.

## **Please Pray**

Lord God, we lift up our brothers and sisters who pay a high price for following You in these countries. May each persecuted believer know Your sustaining comfort and love, be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and know the joy that comes from life lived with Jesus. Amen.

Source: [Open Doors](#)

## **All Island Celebration**

On 30<sup>th</sup> January Cowes Enterprise College was packed with an estimated 550 people from across the Island (from most every denomination), with many going from Shanklin URC.

A united time with worship, prayer and an inspired message from the guest, Pete Greig.

There are several photos and two videos from the event available on the Wight Church Network website [wightchurch.net/newsletters/newsletter.htm](http://wightchurch.net/newsletters/newsletter.htm) and on YouTube

Part 1 is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5BqwLAKdd4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5BqwLAKdd4))

Part 2 is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKnqsqYSm3E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKnqsqYSm3E)

Photo from [wightchurch.net/](http://wightchurch.net/)



## **Please Pray!**

Thank you to all who pray for our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church. Do look out for the next Open Doors magazine and Prayer Diary (March/April).

Firstly, may I ask for your prayers for those in Iran who have become believers in Jesus. These are desperate times in their nation, but even in these dark days, believers are sharing the hope of Christ.

Please pray that God's Kingdom will come and His will be done, that He will strengthen and equip the underground church and individual Christians to shine with courage, no matter what the future might be and that many more will come to a saving faith in Jesus.

If you would like to know more about how God is moving mightily in Iran, do look out for the current magazine from Elam and I would be very happy to share more of how believers are being disciplined and equipped to reach others in their nation and beyond.

Secondly, Pastor suffers ordeal in India. A Christian pastor in India has suffered dehumanising brutality at the hands of a nationalist mob, who tried to force him to worship a Hindu deity.

Pastor N was dragged out of his home, in a village in India's Odisha state, forced to walk on thorns and then tied up at a Hindu temple. The attackers paraded him with a garland of footwear, tried to force him to drink water mixed with cow dung, and demanded that he chant a Hindu religious slogan. He was also beaten so badly, it has affected his hearing in one ear.

But his wife said that when she rushed to the local police station to get help she was told that she had to first provide a written report of the assault.

N was eventually taken to hospital. He and his family have since moved to an undisclosed location. The pastor said his daughters have been traumatised by the attack and have been unable to sleep or eat properly.

### **Please Pray**

- For Pastor N's physical healing and God's comfort and peace for him, his wife and daughters.
- The local authorities will take appropriate action against those

who attacked him.

- For Gospel ministry in that part of India; that many will be brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

So many to remember in prayer in the 50+ nations where Christians are persecuted. Do look out for the new World Watch List from Open Doors, or go online at [www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/) where the list is already available, and maybe pray for a nation a week. Our brothers and sisters are so grateful for every prayer.

Blessings in Jesus' Name.

Jane H

Sources: [Elam](#), [Release International](#), [Open Doors](#)

## Let's get smart!

Having come fairly recently to so-called smart technology and still getting to grips with it(!), one thing that I have found great is some of the worship songs that pop up on YouTube, with beautiful choirs, orchestras and soloists.

One such song I just discovered was called, '**Carried by hands I cannot see**' available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBMLoRX6RTk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBMLoRX6RTk)).



So moving and so appropriate for any going through difficult times, as seem to be many other songs by Josh Grogan. I had not been familiar with his ministry in song, but now look forward to hearing more.

So, if just for the opportunity to hear beautiful worship songs by this anointed artist and many others, I'm glad to have 'gone smart'!

Love in Jesus – and blessed listening,

Jane H

## Thank you

Thank you to all who supported me in prayer and to those who gave financial aid to support the recent victims of Hurricane Mellissa.

For more than half the country, life now continues as normal, but, for many in at least 5 parishes life is extremely difficult. Chiefly St Elizabeth, Westmoreland and Trelawny. Three months on, and many are still displaced and in shelters and homes without electricity.

The money given went towards a case of books for a primary school and towards rebuilding a home for a family who, apart from food, had received no official help. There is grandad of 80 years old, his daughter and 2 grand children. They are currently living in a shed with a bed frame and other bits of furniture stored under a canvas. There are many more like them and worse.

Please do continue to pray, and remember Jamaica and the other countries that have recently suffered natural disasters. Some have suffered wild fires, hurricanes, earthquakes and variety of deadly storms to name a few.

When the news report stops the heartache and suffering continues long after especially for those poorer families and communities.

Here are some photos from Jamaica showing the devastation.

Viv







## I helped Open the Book – from Julie

Every assembly we ask for a number of volunteers. Every week, a forest of hands shoot up and eager faces vie for attention. The teacher asks those who have taken part in Open the Book recently to put their hands down. Those chosen hurry to where the team is waiting with costumes. As we slip a tabard over the child's head, we explain to them what they need to do: "give this to that person", "wave your arms about to show you are talking", "I will be behind you and tell you what to do at the right time." Then: "It's time to 'Open the Book' to the Bible Story called . . ." and we're off.

The team rehearsed the story a week ago, then immediately before assembly – which is not easy when you have to imagine the child actors. For example,



here is Mary (above) getting ready to take the child Jesus to Jerusalem.

Our narrator takes photos during rehearsals and sends them to our supporters, telling them what we have done each week. He wondered whether it would be possible to take some stock photos of children to add to his e-mails. So Bill and I took a load of costumes when we went to visit two of our grandchildren. My son and his wife agreed that the photos could be used publicly. Can you guess the stories?



Afterwards, we say “Our Bible Story has come to an end.” A sigh of disappointment rings through the hall. One lad desperately puts up his hand and keeps it there until, finally, the teacher invites him to speak: he says: “In my opinion, that was great.” Then, using appropriate hand movements he continues: “but it should be bigger. . bigger. . bigger” (We guess he meant longer.) The teacher turns to us and says: “Eli is your biggest fan.”



Then the 7 five year olds who took part are given stickers. They sit down excitedly and one of them tries to work out what it says. Triumphantly, she announces to her friends “I helped Open the Book!” We hope her family will ask her about it when she gets home.

One assembly was watched by an observer we had not seen before. She smiled with delight when the Bible story was introduced and continued to so throughout the assembly. The teacher in

charge did not appear to be so engaged, but, as her class filed out, she turned back and told us that one of them had just said to her “Mrs Smith, that story was really good. I really enjoyed it”, and at last the teacher is smiling.

Do you know anyone who might help us ‘Open the Book’ – whether through praying for us, becoming a storyteller or financially? If so, please see me or email [julie.croydon@icloud.com](mailto:julie.croydon@icloud.com) We hope to

**The Link** - March 2026

present each child with a booklet telling the story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection at the end of this term.

The photographs show scenes from the Prodigal Son, the annunciation and nativity, Abraham's servant meeting Rebekah, David the shepherd boy, the magi, Daniel in the Lions' den and the boy offering his lunch for the feeding of the 5,000.







***“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)

## Choices (1 of 4)

Last time we looked at “Ignoring the Enemy and Choosing the Truth”.

Knowing who we are in Christ, focusing on who God is and having a sure and certain hope are crucial steps along **The Way**. On that way, we still face choices, and knowing how to confront them is very important.

Neil now digs deeper into temptation, accusation, conviction and our freedom to choose. Over the coming months, we will look at what he has to say ...

### The Essence Of Temptation

***“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.”*** (Hebrews 4:15)

I have found that many Christians struggle with the distinction between temptation and sin. Bombarded by tempting thoughts, they conclude that there must be something pretty sick about them. But even Jesus was “tempted in all things as we are.” But finish the verse: “Yet without sin.” As long as we are in the world, we are exposed to temptation just like Jesus was. But He didn't sin, and we don't have to sin either.

***“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”*** (1 Corinthians 10:13)

The basis for temptation is legitimate human needs. We will either look to the world, the flesh and the devil to have our needs met, or we will look to Christ, who promises to meet our needs.

***“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 4:19)

The essence of temptation is the invitation to live independently of God.

The power of temptation depends on the strength of the strongholds that have been developed in our minds, as we learned to live independently of God. If you were raised in a Christian home where magazines and television programs of questionable moral value were not allowed, the power of temptation in your life will not be as great as for someone who grew up exposed to such things. Why? Because your legitimate need to be loved and accepted was met by parents who also protected you from exposure to illegitimate means of meeting your needs. The person who grew up in an environment of immorality may experience a greater struggle with temptation simply because strongholds in the mind were well established before they were born again.

Jesus was tempted to meet His own physical needs by using His divine attributes independently of the Father to turn a rock into bread. But instead, He responded,

***“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*** (Matthew 4:4).

**We also must respond to temptation by relying on God to meet our needs.\*\***

**Dear Jesus, help me not to listen to the voice of the tempter today but to run to You as the source for meeting all my needs.**

*Neil Anderson*

***Freedom in Christ Ministries***

*Used by permission*

**\*\*Rev Nigel Cox recently gave a wonderful talk entitled “Jesus Tested” (Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February). If you missed it, you can catch up (or even rewatch it) on our YouTube channel.**

As I read Neil’s thoughts, I am reminded of one of my favourite

songs, which I have turned into a prayer:

**Father God,**

**Purify my heart, let me be as gold and precious silver  
Purify my heart, let me be as gold, pure gold**

**Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire, is to be holy, set apart for  
You**

**I choose to be holy, set apart for You Lord, ready to do Your will**

**Purify my heart, cleanse me from within and make me holy  
Purify my heart, cleanse me from my sin deep within.**

**We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our  
Lord. Amen.**

*Robin*

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## **URC Daily Devotions**

Each morning the United Reformed Church sends out a reading, reflection and short prayer which helps us to focus on our journeys of Christian discipleship. The reflections are written by over 100 people with differing perspectives and from different places. The Devotions are available by e-mail, [URC social media](#) and their website <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>.



Each Sunday they also produce a service which is sent out by e-mail and social media too.

To subscribe to the URC Daily Devotion, just go to the website address above and click on the link to sign up.

# **Daily Devotions**

**from The United Reformed Church**

# 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](http://www.goodnews-paper.org.uk/viewlatesteditionspage.htm)) has several great articles, including the headline article, 'Terrorist Turns Chaplain - Former UVF member now a man of peace and faith.'

Other contributions include:

- **Phantom Star** - Lead actress in Phantom of the Opera finds the music of the Light
- **Nicki Minaj** - Rapper rediscovers her relationship with God
- **Not So Strange** - Stranger Things actor is no stranger to faith in Jesus
- **God's Squad** - The growing number of Premier League players who share their faith
- **Clay Seal Backs Bible Story** - Inscription matches 2,700-year-old Bible events
- **Saved To Serve** - Baby saved from abortion grows up to be pastor and charity worker

## Good News... for a change



# **FOCUS**

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

## ***Two nurses acquitted of blasphemy charges in Pakistan***

*5<sup>th</sup> February 2026*

The acquittal of two nurses accused of blasphemy in Pakistan is a 'landmark ruling' amidst the discrimination and fear experienced by believers in one of the world's most dangerous places to be a Christian.

The latest reports declare that two nurses, Mariam Lal and Newosh Arooj, have been acquitted of all charges of blasphemy by a District Court in Pakistan. The ruling was finalised in November 2025, four and a half years after the believers were arrested and released on bail after five months of imprisonment. Information has only come to light recently, following almost five years of fear as the women waited for the verdict.

Pakistan is number eight on the World Watch List, making it one of the hardest places to be a Christian in the world.

The church makes up 1.9% of the population according to Open Doors research, and all believers are vulnerable, especially under the notorious blasphemy laws .

### **Before mob and court**

Mariam and Newosh were arrested at their place of work when a senior doctor at the Civic Hospital in Faisalabad accused them of 'defiling the Qur'an' when they were cleaning the walls of a ward and removed a sticker which bore a verse from the Qur'an.

As is often the case, word of the allegations against them spread like wildfire. A mob gathered at the hospital calling for the condemnation and execution of the two nurses.

Blasphemy charges are a powerful and fear-inducing tool for believers who are especially exposed, and it carries with it a

potential life sentence in prison or even a death penalty for those declared guilty. But in God's grace, the two nurses were acquitted of all accusations because the prosecution could not provide enough evidence. This astonishing result has been described by observers as a 'landmark ruling'.

### **“Unusual judicial courage”**

“The verdict is a significant and commendable step towards justice,” says an Open Doors' local partner. “It brings a sense of relief and hope to religious minorities in Pakistan who often feel vulnerable under blasphemy laws. It also provides reassurance that the legal system can still protect minorities and uphold justice.”

The verdict is also highly significant because cases of blasphemy are usually elevated to higher courts due to societal pressure on the judges. At this judicial level, acquittals are extremely rare.

“It strengthens the belief within the Christian community that justice, though delayed, can still prevail.”

### **Local partner**

“Considering the history of such cases in Pakistan, trial courts have more frequently handed down severe punishments, including death sentences, largely due to societal pressure and fear,” the partner continues. “The acquittal reflects unusual judicial courage. It is undoubtedly seen as an answer to persistent prayers for truth, fairness and mercy. It strengthens the belief within the Christian community that justice, though delayed, can still prevail, and that peaceful co-existence and equal citizenship are always attainable.”

### **A call for ongoing prayer**

Despite the positive verdict given to the two believers, concerns remain for Christians across Pakistan who are increasingly vulnerable to accusation and violence. Blasphemy laws are used as a means of settling grudges against Christians and enabling mob violence. Even when blasphemy charges are dropped, there is severe danger of violence from the community.

Believers are also increasingly vulnerable to exploitation – most belong to the supposedly untouchable caste of 'sweepers' and thus face discrimination. Some even become trapped in cycles of bonded labour, such as in brick kilns.

“The verdict reinforces the urgent need for stronger safeguards, legal reforms and effective protection for religious minorities.”

### **Local partner**

Whilst this ruling provides hope for believers and other minorities, the threats remain. “In light of the rising number of cases involving abuses in brick kilns and elsewhere, we see a trend in how attacks are being directed at Christians,” a local partner stated. “The verdict reinforces the urgent need for stronger safeguards, legal reforms and effective protection for religious minorities, so that justice is not an exception occurring in rare circumstances, but rather a consistent and guaranteed right for all citizens,” the partner said.

Please continue to stand with our brothers and sisters in Pakistan who are counting the cost of following Jesus daily..

### **Please pray**

- In thanks for the acquittal of these two sisters and their renewed freedom, and that the Lord would protect them from violence
- For believers throughout Pakistan to not give into fear, but love their enemies and be bold witnesses of Christ
- That justice would continue to be upheld for every individual, and that unfair rulings would be exposed and overturned.

\*\*\*

### **How are Christians persecuted in Pakistan?**

Most people in Pakistan are Muslims, making Christians a minority. Christians are exposed to many challenges, from the threat of deadly violence to everyday discrimination.

Increasingly, Pakistan’s notorious blasphemy laws are used to intimidate Christians and other religious minorities. Often they are used to target believers during unrelated feuds, such as disputes about land. Even an accusation can provoke mob violence against victims, as well as their family and the wider Christian community..

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



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HOME**



**REPORT ASB  
OR ANY CONCERNS**

Pop in & talk to us!

In partnership with



## Carisbrooke Priory



An Evening with

# Ruth Valerio

Environmentalist and theologian, social activist and author  
[ruthvalerio.net](http://ruthvalerio.net)

## How to Survive a World in Crisis

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

19:00 to 21:00 @ The Priory

Free entry, donations encouraged

For enquires and bookings, please email [creationmattersx@gmail.com](mailto:creationmattersx@gmail.com)

Creation Matters!

39 Whitcombe Road, NEWPORT, Isle of Wight, PO30 1YS (01983 523354)  
Carisbrooke Priory Trust Company Limited Registered Company No. 6624300 Registered Charity No. 1126024

# Shanklin Town Brass Band



is holding a...  
**Charity Concert**

*on*

***Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May***

**19:30**

**Shanklin United Reformed Church**

**Admission Free**

**Retiring Collection in aid of  
YMCA Mother & Baby Unit**



# Dates For Your Diary

Day	Date	Time	Details
Thu	5 <sup>th</sup> Mar	14:00	Pray for The Bay in Lake- see <a href="#">page 4</a>
Sun	8 <sup>th</sup> Mar	10:30 17:00	Pastor Jonathan Snell speaking Shared Worship - Church of the Good Shepherd, Lake
Fri	13 <sup>th</sup> Mar	18:00	Elders' Meeting
Sat	14 <sup>th</sup> Mar	10:00	Spring Clean
Sun	15 <sup>th</sup> Mar	10:30	Mothering Sunday, Rev Phil Dixon speaking
Sat	21 <sup>st</sup> Mar	10:00	Fellowship Breakfast at Viv's
<b>Thu</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> Mar</b>	<b>19:30</b>	<b>Church Meeting, incl AGM</b>
Sat	28 <sup>th</sup> Mar	15:30	Messy Church
Sun	29 <sup>th</sup> Mar	10:30	Palm Sunday Encounter Café Service
	17-18 Apr		Sabbath of Prayer - see <a href="#">page 4</a>
Thu	2nd Apr	19:00	Maundy Thursday Supper & Service at Ryde URC
Sun	12 <sup>th</sup> Apr	17:00	Shared Worship - St Blasius, Shanklin
Fri	1 <sup>st</sup> May	19:30	STBB Charity Concert <i>in aid of YMCA Mother &amp; Baby Unit</i>

Over a quarter of the Island's residents are over 65, and this is set to increase. Not surprisingly, admissions to care homes on the Isle of Wight are significantly higher than England's average. Research shows that older people in care homes are twice as likely to feel severely lonely as older people living at home.

That's why we're raising up an army of volunteers to spend time and build friendship with residents across the Island. We know that volunteers make a huge difference in the lives of the people they visit. Volunteers usually spend an hour a week visiting residents and do a range of activities with them, from simply chatting, to helping with IT skills, to playing games, reading aloud, accompanying a resident on a walk - the list is endless!

If you think you could make a difference to someone who is lonely, please go to [www.embracingage.org.uk/isle-of-wight.html](http://www.embracingage.org.uk/isle-of-wight.html) or e-mail Rebecca Savage, the current Isle of Wight Co-Ordinator at [rebecca@embracingage.org.uk](mailto:rebecca@embracingage.org.uk).

And if you wish to stay up to date with their work or find out how your prayers could support them, please go to [www.embracingage.org.uk/news.html#subscribe](http://www.embracingage.org.uk/news.html#subscribe).

### **Connection Quiz Answers**

1. Shirley Williams
2. Deborah Meaden.
3. Oh Julie
4. Jane Seymour
5. Jennifer Juniper.
6. Connection: they are the first 5 girls' names to be mentioned in the 1989 Beautiful South song 'Song for Whoever'.
7. This issue's cover photo is of... Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth.



# 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.

**A moderate one this month.**

**Enjoy!**

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

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			

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

9	2	4	1	3	6	5	8	7	24 Il, en anglais (2)
1	3	5	7	4	8	2	6	9	26 @ (2)
6	7	8	9	2	5	1	3	4	28 3.142 (2)
4	6	3	2	7	1	8	9	5	29 1,016 kgs or 2,240 lbs (3)
5	9	7	8	6	4	3	1	2	31 Arctic white whale (6)
8	1	2	5	9	3	7	4	6	33 Perform on stage (3)
2	4	1	6	8	7	9	5	3	34 Biggest brass instrument (4)
7	5	6	3	1	9	4	2	8	<b>Down</b>
3	8	9	4	5	2	6	7	1	1 White triumphal arch in London, designed by John Nash (6 4)
<b>Across</b>									2 6 <sup>th</sup> Book of the NT (6)
1 Port city in S France (9)									3 Ways out of a building (5)
6 Italian city with leaning tower (4)									4 Hear (6)
8 - Fleming, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang author (3)									5 Angleterre, en anglais (7)
9 Left overs (7)									6 Ambulance person who gives emergency medical care (9)
10 Blue engine, number 4, created by Rev Wilbert Awdry (6)									7 Full form of AD (4 6)
11 - Line, ferry service between Harwich and Hook of Holland (5)									12 Often worn with a suit and a shirt with a collar (3)
13 Repair something (4)									15 Tower of London Beefeater, - of the Guard (6)
14 Online site for buying handmade and craft items (4)									18 Create with needles & wool (4)
16 Not out (2)									21 Red engine, number 5, created by Rev Wilbert Awdry (5)
17 Make something last longer (3)									25 Et Cetera, <i>abbr</i> (3)
19 Bumper car (6)									27 Group, had a hit in 1975 with Tiger Feet (3)
20 Cathedral city in N Yorkshire also has a racecourse (5)									28 Public House <i>abbr</i> (3)
22 33 <sup>rd</sup> Book of 30 down (5)									30 Old Testament <i>initials</i> (2)
23 Frozen H <sub>2</sub> O (3)									32 The same as 26 across (2)

## Can You Guess The Year?

- Tony Blair became the longest serving Labour PM.
- The New Forest became England's twelfth national park.
- Ronnie Barker and George Best died.
- Harold Pinter won the Nobel Prize in Literature.
- Arsenal became the first team to win the FA Cup on penalties.
- And UK No. 1s included:
  - Westlife with 'You Raise Me Up'
  - Tony Christie with 'Amarillo'
  - James Blunt with 'You're Beautiful'
  - Elvis Presley with 'It's Now or Never'

*Answer next issue*

## General Knowledge Quiz

1. Between which two stations does the Watercress Line operate?
2. Who was "Mary, Mary, quite contrary"?
3. In what year was Steven Spielberg born?
4. What is the capital of Moldova?
5. In what country was Cliff Richard born?
6. Guildford in Surrey is a city, true or false?
7. In computer terms, what does HTML stand for?
8. Which song was used by the BBC as its theme to 'Grand Prix'?
9. Who wrote the Three Musketeers?
10. Which engine did Rev Wilbert Awdry create first?

*Answers next issue*

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

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March**

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 2012

- Last issue's crossword ↓

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

## Last Issue's General Knowledge Quiz Answers

- |                                      |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Sheffield Park and East Grinstead | 6. Kirk Douglas                                        |
| 2. Mary, Queen of Scots              | 7. World Wide Web                                      |
| 3. Warsaw Poland                     | 8. Brian                                               |
| 4. Po                                | 9. Victor Hugo                                         |
| 5. Canada                            | 10. The Railway Engine Series (Thomas the Tank Engine) |

## 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 Encounter 'café style' 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 15](#))
- 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**



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[brianharley58@gmail.com](mailto:brianharley58@gmail.com)

*Day off: Monday*

**Secretary: Robin Wightman**



[robinwightman@aol.com](mailto:robinwightman@aol.com)

**Shanklin URC is a member of the Evangelical Alliance**

[www.shanklinurc.co.uk](http://www.shanklinurc.co.uk)

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