

The Link



May 2026



Shanklin United Reformed Church www.shanklinurc.co.uk

View From Number 10



Good Stewards

From the very beginning, the Lord God entrusted human beings with responsibility to look after his world. *“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”* Genesis 2:15. We are stewards of all that God has given us.

The Bible makes clear that *“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”* (Psalm 24:1), so it all belongs to him really! What we have in our hands are not possessions to be held on to, but things entrusted to us to take care of and use for his glory. When King David asks for gifts to build the temple, he is overwhelmed by the response and his prayer over the offering is profound – *“who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”* (1 Chronicles 29:14).

The idea of stewardship is a strong theme in Scripture. We must hold lightly to what is in our hands and use it well. When we give to the Lord’s work we are only releasing some of what is his anyway.

At our Annual Church Meeting in March, our treasurer, Colin, presented the annual accounts and gave a snapshot of the finances over the last 10 years. He has pointed out before that, without a number of special gifts over the years, we have run at a deficit every year; expenditure exceeds regular income. Those extra blessings have kept us afloat, but we can’t count on them. We were aware of the challenge last year and had a Gift Day which brought in over £12,000 - praise God for people’s generous response to the need.

Reflecting on all this, I’m aware that if we hadn’t given away 10% of our regular income, as a tithe to support other mission work, we would have been OK. We gave away almost £7000 last year but still feel we ought to release more because of the Gift Day. One might ask *“Can we really afford to give that much away every year?”*

My response after prayerful thought is – ***“Can we afford not to?”***

The Bible constantly calls the people of God to be generous, open

handed and not tight fisted. We must be prudent of course and make sure we can meet our obligations, but we have trusted the Lord to provide over the years - and he always has, one way or another. We've even invested over £300,000 in improvements to the building and facilities. Where did all that come from, you may ask? – God's provision has been amazing; we've been so blessed.

Over the three decades I have been here, we've never had much in reserve and, at times, its felt like we were sailing very close to the wind. But the Lord has been faithful and the church family has always risen to the challenge and we've continually met our costs.

As we look at the likely budget for 2026 with the global rise in prices, we can see that we are heading towards a significant deficit again, unless regular giving increases substantially. We are thankful that we've seen an increase of over 5% in both the last two years but the total coming in is several thousand short of what goes out.

Can I encourage us all to take this to the Lord in prayer and to examine what we are able to contribute. Regular committed giving provides the backbone for our work and when Gift Aid can be applied that adds 25% to the value – thanks to the Government.

Please join me in reviewing your gifts for 2026. We all share in responsibility for the family budget. We have been blessed in so many ways over the last year; let's show our thanks to God. Its all his anyway!

With grateful thanks for all your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

PS - some good news!!

The URC has approved my application to continue in ministry for up to three years beyond the normal retirement age from November. So, I'll be around for a little while yet, as the Lord directs. We're looking forward to a fruitful time...

Prayer



Prayer - always at the heart of our life

Monday Prayer at 13:00 – a weekly meeting 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) or use the Zoom app and click on 'Join a meeting'. The Meeting ID you will need is 324 266 5584, and the Password is: 936536.

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

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

Pray for The Bay Grace Mckenzie from Christ Church hosts this gathering, normally on the first Thursday of each month, at her home in Lake at 14:00. Ask Brian for details if you are interested in going along. **Next meeting: 7th May**

Bless the Island – Pentecost Sunday 24th May 16:00

Another united prayer event for Island Christians to bless our community – look out for details soon.

We will be assembling on the sea front in small groups to pray through the series of Biblical blessings.

PS - Lake Methodist Church invite local Christians to join in a morning of prayer for The Bay area on Thursday 30th April from 10:00.



SURC May 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 Spirit leads you.

Happy praying

Fri 1	Today's concert in aid of Mother & Baby Unit	Mon 18	Church tech team - and for the tech used
Sat 2	Those affected by violence and conflicts around the world	Tue 19	Our Tuesday Prayer meetings on Zoom
Sun 3	New members welcomed today	Wed 20	The Persecuted Church
Mon 4	The Monday prayer meetings in church	Thu 21	Organisations supporting the Persecuted Church
Tue 5	Bible Bite	Fri 22	Christian youth work on the Island
Wed 6	The Well - volunteers, regulars and visitors	Sat 23	Those who aren't well enough to get to church
Thu 7	Tourists visiting IoW	Sun 24	United IoW prayer event
Fri 8	Shanklin Town Council and Isle of Wight Council	Mon 25	Text prayer network, & for Lou who organises it
Sat 9	UK Government	Tue 26	The church Property Team and their important work
Sun 10	European Union	Wed 27	Our Church Elders
Mon 11	United Nations	Thu 28	The NHS; staff, patients and services
Tue 12	World peace	Fri 29	The care homes on the Island; for the staff and residents/patients
Wed 13	Local businesses	Sat 30	Churches on the IoW spreading God's Word
Thu 14	YMCA Mother & Baby Unit	Sun 31	Today's Encounter Café service
Fri 15	The Evangelical Alliance		
Sat 16	The Christian Institute		
Sun 17	Two new Elders ordained today		

The Well

a place for

Living Well

Together

Drop in at any point

Wednesdays 11:00 – 12:30

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



And sausage rolls!



ENCOUNTER

On the last Sunday of each month at 10:30

**A café style meeting place to drop in and enjoy
time together with God**



**A relaxed time of Friendship, Fun, Food
and exploring Faith...
with craft, songs, challenges, prayers...**

EVERYONE is welcome – why not bring a friend?

**The next café service will be on 31st May – do
please invite friends to join you for this more
informal service**

– café serving from 10.15

Website of the month:

care.org.uk/

***CARE's vision is simple: they want to see politics
renewed and lives transformed***

Prayer Meeting for Leading Our Church Into Growth

At our “away day” in September in Ryde, Sue B & Pat M were inspired to suggest a regular prayer meeting for LYCIG. Since October, a group of a dozen or so of us have been meeting in the church each Monday @ 13:00 for an hour of prayer.



Over these 6 months, we have seen **wonderful** answers to prayer, which have been a great **encouragement**, have **excited** our daily walk with Jesus and brought real **joy** to all who come along! The Lord continues to be gracious and faithful to our church.

Since the New Year, He has inspired us to not only seek **numerical** growth, which we have seen, but also to ensure **spiritual** growth alongside this. And that whilst we are a **welcoming** church on the **inside**, we must replicate this on the **outside**, directly around our building, into our local community and to those we meet in our daily lives.

These have been wonderful times of mutual encouragement and growth ... do come along and join with us whenever you have a spare quarter or half an hour ... you won't regret it!

Robin

Connection Quiz

1. What is the Arctic marine mammal with tusks?
2. Which mammal comes in either Dromedary or Bactrian types?
3. Which type of figure in Greek mythology is the constellation Orion named after?
4. Which Greek mythological hero had 12 tasks to complete?
5. So, what is the **connection** between the answers to questions 1 - 4?
6. And bonus question... the cover photo was taken on the Island, but do you know where it is?



Answers are on [page 35](#)

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

The next meeting will be
10th May - Sandown Baptist Church, Station Road

From 31st May we plan to be at Rylstone Gardens
Worship in the Open Air - 19:00 at the Bandstand

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

All are welcome - please join us when you can

Thy Kingdom Come 14th – 24th May 2026



This will be the 11th edition of Thy Kingdom Come, a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians worldwide to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since it began in May 2016, God has grown TKC into a movement which unites over a million Christians in prayer (in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, across 85 different denominations and traditions), ***"So that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ."***

Every person, household and church is encouraged to pray during the 11 days of Thy Kingdom Come in their own way ~ it is hoped that everyone taking part will:

- Deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ
- Pray for 5 friends or family to come to faith in Jesus
- Pray for the empowerment of the Spirit to be effective in our witness

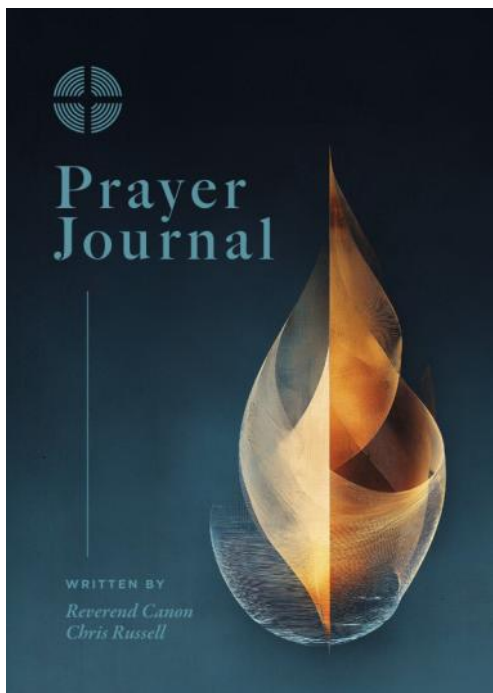
We are praying that the Spirit will inspire and equip us to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with our friends and families, our communities and our networks. It is our prayer that those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and his love for the world will hear it for themselves and respond and follow Him.

We are again invited to join this initiative to pray that God's Spirit might work in the lives of 5 people who have not responded with their 'Yes' to God's call. Whether you have joined in 'Thy Kingdom Come' before or not, please set aside time each day during this period to take part with us.

The theme for Thy Kingdom Come 2026 is...

God With Us

Both a Prayer Journal to guide you through each day and a Novena, which goes a little deeper, have been produced. Copies of these will be available in the church from Sunday 26th April ~ please do take one of each, there are enough for all! , or you can access them online at the link below.



Please do join in with this global initiative, when Christians around the world will be praying for people they know to come to Christ.

Please visit the website for information, a wide variety of resources, news of events, videos and much more...

www.thykingdomcome.global/thy-kingdom-come-2026

New Elders

At our Annual Church Meeting in March, Paul Fryatt and Carol Turner were elected to join our leadership team. With Yvonne taking a break for a year, we now have a team of eight, plus Brian – they join Robin, Malc, Lou, Ann F, Sheilagh and Alan.



They will be ordained and inducted in the service on 17th May. Please pray for them in their new role and for God's guidance and wisdom for the team in leading the church forward as the year unfolds.

New Members

We are delighted that 10 people want to join our membership, and this was agreed at the March Church Meeting. These wonderful people are Shami, Malachi, Patricia, Val, Leon, Leila, Sue, Jade, Baz and Steve.

We've heard testimonies from a couple of them in recent services and there are many more stories to hear. We look forward to welcoming them at the Communion Service on 3rd May.

Food and Fellowship coming up:

Some great opportunities to build up our common life and to invite friends to get to know us as a faith community:

Sunday 24 – Bring-and-Share Lunch around 12.30

to celebrate June Steven's 90th birthday

Breakfasts at Viv's Cooking in Sandown High Street:

Sat 30th May Ladies Breakfast

Sat 6th June Men's Breakfast

Look out for details and sign-up sheets soon...

Jesus once said to his friends – *“Come and have breakfast”*

John 21:12

Come and worship...

We had a wonderful hour of praise and prayer as part of our Sabbath or Prayer in April. We plan to have a couple more praise evenings on a Friday soon – on the weekends when we have Encounter Café as there is less sung worship on the Sunday.

Please join us for a free and open time of praise and worship on:

Friday 29th May at 19:00

Friday 26th June at 19:00

Let's all go deeper with God and get closer to Jesus.



Magazines, Prayer Diaries and More

The new CARE Prayer Diary, covering April - July, is available in church and online at care.org.uk/prayer-diary. A valuable resource to assist with daily prayers covering a wide range of subjects, such as the NHS, freedoms, children, safeguarding issues, and more.

Available soon from May will be the new Prayer Diaries and Magazines, for Open Doors and Release International. The magazines always have informative articles about the life of the Persecuted Church, which endures much suffering, and the Prayer Diaries covers many topics, such as women and children, specific countries, trends and much more. These can be accessed online at www.opendoorsuk.org/magazine/ and releaseinternational.org/magazines/ and releaseinternational.org/pray/.

Did you know that CARE also produce podcasts? Well, they do and can be watched at care.org.uk/resources/podcast. Their subjects are varied, covering items of interest to Christians that are in the news. Why not watch some of them?

The Christian Institute, which exists for the furtherance and promotion of the Christian religion in the United Kingdom, also produce podcasts of news related subjects. They, and other resources, e.g. a publication on the place of the Ten Commandments today, can be accessed at www.christian.org.uk/resources/.



“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 (Part 3 of 4)

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

Neil has looked at both **the essence of temptation** and **the Spirit’s conviction**, and now **looks at the contrast between accusation and conviction...**

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Accusation and Conviction

A graphic example of the contrast between accusation and conviction is found in the lives of Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter. Somehow Judas allowed Satan to deceive him into betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (see Luke 22:3-5). When Judas realised what he had done, he was so remorseful that he hung himself. Was his suicide the result of Satan's accusation or of God's conviction? It had to be accusation because it drove Judas to kill himself. Accusation leads to death; conviction leads to repentance and life.

Peter also failed Jesus by denying Him. It apparently began with pride as the disciples argued over who was the greatest among them. Jesus told Peter, ***“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat ”*** (Luke 22:31). That's right - Jesus allowed Satan to put Peter through the mill because Peter had given the enemy a foothold through pride. But Jesus also looked at Peter and said, ***“I have prayed for you, that***

your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers " (Luke 22:32).

Peter vowed to die with Jesus, but Jesus told him that he would deny Him three times, which he did. The remorse Peter felt was every bit as painful as that which Judas experienced. But Peter's sorrow was from conviction that led to his eventual repentance and restoration to Christ:

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’

Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’

The third time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ He said, ‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep.” (John 21:15-17)

When your feelings of remorse drive you from God, you are being accused by Satan. Resist it. But when your sorrow draws you to confront Christ and confess your wrong, you are being convicted by the Spirit. Yield to it through repentance.

Satan's continuing work is to accuse the brethren (Revelation 12:10). But the good news is that Christ's continuing work is to intercede for us as He did for Peter (Hebrews 7:25). We have a persistent adversary, but we have an even more persistent, eternal advocate who defends us before the Father based on our faith in Him.

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1&2)

I rejoice, Lord, that You are constantly defending me

against accusation before the Father.

Neil Anderson

Freedom in Christ Ministries

Used by permission

In the final part of this min-series, next time Neil addresses the crucial fact that we are... **Free to Choose.**

This means that we have the spiritual liberty, enabled by grace, to choose righteousness over sin and follow God, rather than being enslaved to selfish desires.

Lord, help us daily to remain in the freedom that Christ offers to all who follow Him.

Robin

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Church Meeting

21st May @ 19:30

Refreshments from 19:00

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

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

**Please pick up an agenda and minutes
when they are available**

Don't just go to church – be the 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.

A great resource for people to read - and then share with others!!

This month's edition (available to read online at www.goodnews-paper.org.uk/viewlatesteditionspage.htm) has several great articles, including the headline article '**Miracle at Sea** - Boy who saved his family credits God and prayer for incredible rescue'.

Other contributions include:

- **Bargain Hunter** - BBC TV antiques expert finds the greatest treasure
- **'Les Mis' Star Shines the Way** - Musicals actress wants her life to point to God
- **FA Cup 'Giantkiller'** - Macclesfield hero leads the team in Bible study
- **Doctor's Diagnosis** - Good News talks to a top GP whose book shows science leads to God
- **Richard III: Devoted Christian** - New evidence that king wasn't a villain
- **Top Biologist** - Professor says: 'The natural world is full of truths about God'
- **Cancer Battle** - Musician tells how Jesus has helped him through illness



Good News... for a change



Isle of Wight Street Pastors IoW Festival 2026

Isle of Wight Street Pastors are once again patrolling at the IoW Festival in June.

We will have teams on foot patrols inside and outside the festival site and both our safe spaces will be open and manned by Street Pastors and church volunteers.

The Safe Spaces are situated at Newport Bus Station (our regular safe space - detailed on [page 32](#)) and we will have our pop-up safe space at the festival.

Last year, our festival safe space was done by referral only by Street Pastors or any of the organisations on the wellbeing teams at the festival. This year we have been asked to move this to a public area so will be by referral again as last year, but also anyone enjoying the festival will be able to access it themselves.

This means we need more volunteers to man this as it will be open for longer times and potentially be accessed by a lot more people.

We have mainland Street Pastors and church volunteers coming over to help us, but as a result we are in need of more people to host a mainland volunteer.

If you have a spare bed and are able to host a volunteer, please get in touch with me on the contact details on the next page.

We are looking for hosts in the Newport, Gunville, Carisbrooke, Wootton areas, but we will consider other areas. This is due to volunteers having to get to and from the festival site late at night using public transport.

The volunteers from the mainland are paying for their travel to the Island themselves so we are providing accommodation for the ones not able to camp.



As you can imagine, we get through a lot of kit during this weekend, so we are looking for the following donations towards our work at the festival::

- Individually wrapped sweets and lollipops
- Small bottles of water
- Wipes, tissues, small bottles of hand sanitiser, ice packs, and paper cups
- We are also asking for money donations towards other kit that the volunteers use.

If you can host a volunteer or able to donate items, please get in touch using the details below. We can arrange for donations to be picked up.

If your able to donate money towards kit, please go to our website, Isle of Wight Street Pastors, lowstreetpastors.org.uk/ and you can donate via PayPal. Please enter a reference of the 'Festival'.

The opportunity to show the love of Jesus at the festival, where 90,000 people attend each day, is amazing.

We are the only Christian organisation that are allowed to patrol on foot on the whole site.

Thank You

Suzanne McCaffery (IoW Street Pastor Co-ordinator)

suzanne@lowstreetpastors.org.uk

07511 163632

Quizaid – Saturday 16th May

at 19:00

Ryde URC are running their annual fun quiz evening as part of Christian Aid week.



Teams of four are invited with a suggested minimum donation of £3 per head. Why not get a team or two together from Shanklin...? Good clean fun, and all for a great cause.

Please message Martin Stock if you'd like to book – it helps to know rough numbers for set up and refreshments:
martinstock741@gmail.com

Open the Book - May

Equal in God's sight.

Here are Sarah (Dawn) and Abraham (Bill) with their long-awaited son, Isaac. Shortly after Dawn first joined the Open the Book team she told us that she didn't enjoy Bible stories when she was a little girl. "They were all about boys" she said. That is what makes the resurrection



stories so powerful. The gospel writers point out that, after the disciples had fled, it was women who stayed throughout the crucifixion and followed Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb. Who went back on the Sunday morning? To whom did the angels announce the resurrection and say: "Go and tell His disciples that He is risen."?



The Greek word 'gospel' literally means 'good news' – so the first people to spread the good news, the first preachers of the gospel, were women.

In Jewish law, the word of a woman was considered virtually worthless. If anyone was going to hide the body of Jesus and falsely claim that he had come back to life, they would not have had women as witnesses. Who was the very first person to see the Risen Lord? Mary Magdalene. Although the Bible was written during times when females were considered the property of their fathers, brothers or

husbands, there are numerous instances of God honouring them. A man had to be a prophet to get a book named after him. Ruth was not just an ordinary widow; she was a foreigner. Abigail told David that her husband was a fool. 1 Samuel 25 states: 'She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings.' The only foreigner named as surviving the battle of Jericho is Rahab. Like Ruth, she was also included in the genealogy of Jesus.



Our first assembly of the new term was 'A wife for Isaac'. When Abraham's servant asked permission of her father and brother, they agreed that Rebekah



could marry Isaac. The script from the Bible Society made it clear that the final decision was Rebekah's. She was happy to go, right away!

It is true that there are far more stories about men than women in the Bible, and the apostle Paul is often blamed for the church silencing the voices

of women. But in the letter to the Galatians he wrote that, in Christ: 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, male nor female'. There is no inequality, we are all one in Christ Jesus.



Good day all - Heads Up!

Once again it's that time of year where Shanklin Town Brass Band are holding a Charity Concert to raise funds for the YMCA Mother and Baby Unit in Shanklin on Friday 1st May starting at 19:30 at Shanklin United Reformed Church.

The theme of the concert is "At The Movies" so please come and join us in an evening of joyful music, entertainment, laughter and community friendship and of course there will be delightful refreshments available.

Admission to the concert is free, with a retiring collection, and there is a beautiful green bucket just inside the church for all donations which will be greatly appreciated by our own local YMCA Mother and Baby Unit and there is also an opportunity to donate at the refreshments counter as well.

Yvonne and her team and Shanklin Town Brass Band put in a lot of hard work and dedication putting a function and catering like this together so a great **Big Thank You** to them. In addition our SURC Minister, Rev Brian Harley, will be opening the event as normal and a very big thanks to Brian and the Elders who constantly support this local charity in many ways.

For information, we have just been informed that the sale of the building has fallen through and they are now seeking a new buyer! However, the Mother and Baby Unit have been told they are safe and business is as normal.

A very big **Thank You** to all those who continue to support in many ways of giving with clothes, toys, baby equipment, nappies, creams, shampoos etc and of course food parcels for the kitchen. Special thanks to Christine W for her constant scouting and giving and always going to enormous lengths to find and deliver items to us for the YMCA Mother and Baby Unit.

They are in urgent need for a toddler bath seat and a cot bed that would ideally be one that turns into a bed suitable for a 20 month old and of course any cot/bed linen; bath towels/ nappies/ baby toiletries etc are always gratefully appreciated. Please contact Rod on 07394 044614 or Ann on 07481 596958.

We hope to see you all there at the concert.

Blessings to you all, Rod and Ann.

Chibok, Nigeria anniversary:

“Help me in prayer so that I can see my daughters”

This week is the 12-year anniversary of the Chibok kidnapping, an incident that made headlines worldwide. Whilst many of the 275 girls have since escaped or been released, around 100 remain missing, including Ruth’s daughters. Here, she shares about that fateful day, the immense toll it’s taken on their family, and how you can pray.

It’s 12 years since around 275 girls were kidnapped from their school in Chibok, northern Nigeria, and for one mother whose two children remain missing, the worst thing is the uncertainty.

“What pains me the most is I don’t know if they are still alive or if they have been killed,” says Ruth*. “Others have seen their own children. Had they died, I would have probably moved on by now. I pray to God to show me: let me see them with my own eyes if they are alive, or let me hear that they have died.

“Her name is Godiya Bitrus and the second girl is Hauwa Bitrus,” she shares. Godiya is her daughter, Hauwa her stepdaughter.

Peace gives way to pain

The girls were taken on 14th April 2014 by Boko Haram militants who arrived at the Government Girls Secondary School (GGCSS) pretending to be government soldiers sent to protect them. Instead, they kidnapped the girls.

Ruth can recall the day vividly. “We were living in peace. They came to attack after my son’s wedding. The wedding was on 13th April, and my son left the village on the 14th April, in the morning.”

These small details may seem irrelevant to many, but they’re the thread with which Ruth tries to keep the difficult memories of that day stitched together – concrete memories to hold on to as she and her family live in limbo. But as each year passes, with no news about her daughters, hope invariably gives way to disappointment.

“We started hearing sounds of gunshots before 23:00,” remembers Ruth, who lives in a village near Chibok.

“The gunshots persisted and we wondered where they were coming

from. We heard the gunshots in our village and wondered if they were from Chibok, or the market or the school. We couldn't say from where.

"When the day broke, I started walking. I walked close to Chibok, when I saw a student from the school – she was running when I called and asked her what happened. She said, 'I am the only student left in Chibok.'" It later transpired that 47 girls avoided kidnap or managed to escape shortly afterwards.

"At that moment, I started crying and ran into the bush until I found myself in the Government Girls School. I went there and discovered that fire had razed the entire building. That was when I burst into tears again.

"They burnt down the entire hostel. I couldn't even see their uniforms to carry. The building was filled with smoke. I left and, on my way out, I couldn't walk again. I had to sit down and rest a bit. I sat down and cried.

"One week later, I couldn't do anything. I was only crying and crying. I couldn't sleep nor rest. My mouth became tired from crying and my tears dried up. We struggled, but could not get them back."

A devastating toll

Over the years, Boko Haram has directed their ransom demands for the release of the Chibok girls at the Nigerian federal government. Some have been released, though the details behind their freedom remain unclear.

Around 90 are believed to be still missing and most parents, like Ruth, remain in the dark concerning their children's whereabouts.

"After some months, they asked if we could go to Lagos (the capital). Then they took us to Lagos and we spent ten days there. After ten days, they said the girls were here and that they would come out. But to this day, we have not seen them.

"I am just thinking if I will see them again or not – that's all I am thinking of right now," she says.

The stress and the waiting have taken a devastating toll on Ruth and her family. "Their father is so sick, and he can't stretch his body now. I am worried that two of my girls are taken, and until now, I haven't seen them with my eyes which is troubling me."

“My prayer request to you”

On the anniversary of the girls’ kidnap, can you renew your prayers for Ruth and other families desperate for news of their loved ones?

“My brothers and sisters in Christ, help me in prayer so that I can see my own daughters, just as others have seen theirs,” Ruth asks. “We are requesting your prayers so that we will be able to see our children with our eyes, hear their voices with our ears, and to know that they are still alive. If they are not alive, let them tell us so that we may know, and pray to God for help in this situation. This is my prayer request to you.”

Open Doors continues to advocate on behalf of the Chibok girls, as well as Leah Sharibu, who also remains missing after she was kidnapped in February 2018. We are asking the international community to urge the Nigerian President to continue his efforts to liberate the hostages held by Boko Haram, including young Christian girls, and to create a government position who will work solely as a family liaison for parents of the hostages.

**Name changed for security reasons*

Please pray

- That families, including Ruth’s, will receive news of their loved ones’ whereabouts and well-being
- That Ruth and other parents will be sustained by God’s unfailing love, and for healing of every illness
- For the safety, well-being and imminent release of the Chibok girls, Leah Sharibu and other children held captive in Nigeria.

Nigeria, which has 107.3 million Christians who make up about 45.7% of the population, is currently number 7 in the Open Doors World Watch List 2026

Paper copies of the List, with inspiring testimonies and prayer requests, are now available in church, as well as online (and has been since January) www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/.

Source: [Open Doors](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/)



From Linda Nouali, Debt Coach based in Ryde

Dear Praying Partners,

We celebrate our wonderful Saviour's resurrection, for He has triumphed gloriously!

As we move into that new life we pray for our clients to know the power of standing up, the power to know freedom from the chains that hold them captive and have kept them laying down under a burden! We pray for their complete victory in the powerful Name of Jesus!

We are now looking after 12 clients here on the Isle of Wight, for which we praise God! The Lord has been working in many ways and answering prayers.

We anticipate 2 additions to the team*, so we will soon be 3 - two wonderful women of God will be joining in this voluntary ministry.

We are reminded that in the beginning God said 'Let Us...'

We cannot do this alone, it will always be teamwork, and we value your amazing support in this work.

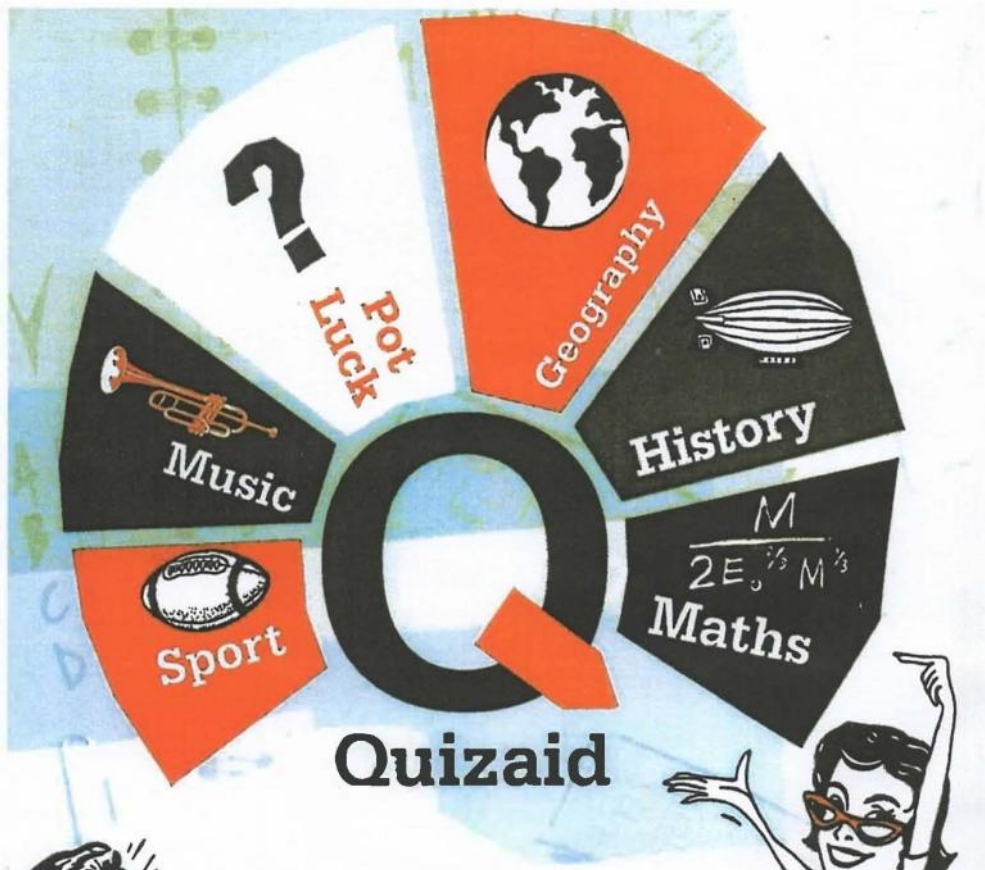
Keep praying for the enquiries which come in and grow into 'journeys of faith' Their needs are varying, but we have seen some amazing answers to prayer!

One testimony is of a client, who found a bible in the loft of the house they had inherited, the house was needing a lot of work, and so we prayed for a miracle, that the right person would buy the property, and we can say that an offer has been made, which is a miraculous answer to prayer. Our God is a Faithful, Good Father!!

Many blessings to you all as you minister to the needs of your community.

Linda, on behalf of IoW Christians Against Poverty

***Hot news** – we are in the process of appointing and training another Debt Coach, and a Service Team Leader – real answers to prayer! The formal set up for the on-going project is still being worked through so do please pray that things fall into place well.



Quizaid



Do you have what it takes to
be a smart Alec
or a brainy Brenda?

Where: Ryde United Reformed Church

When: Saturday 16th May, 19:00.

teams of 4, minimum of £3 per person, £2 for under 18s

Pre-book by Thursday 14th May.

Contact: Martin Stock. Tel. 613188,

Mob. 07789 602782 Email: martinstock741@gmail.com.



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FOCUS

on our Christian Brothers and Sisters being persecuted for their faith

“Trying to keep hope alive”: persist in prayer with the church in Iran

10 April 2026

Please pray for the church in Iran as conflict continues to impact the country and the wider region – and Christians still face persecution from within Iran.

In recent weeks, the escalation of conflict involving Iran has deeply affected daily life inside the country and the church has not been spared. In these uncertain days, please join believers in fervent prayer, for Iran and the entire region.

Communication has become one of the greatest challenges. For over 40 days, there has been little to no internet access. Contact with believers is limited, closely monitored and carefully managed. Even in conversations, Christians avoid using words such as ‘prayer’, ‘church’ or ‘fellowship’.

“What we are hearing comes from very small, careful conversations,” Mina*, a local Open Doors partner, explains.

Economic pressure continues to rise. Prices increase daily, jobs are unstable and many families no longer have reliable income. In the past, believers supported their house churches and one another, often without outside help. Now, that has become almost impossible. “There is nothing left,” Mina shares. “Even for basic needs, support from outside is now required.”

Ministry has also been heavily restricted. Travel between cities is dangerous, checkpoints are everywhere and evangelistic trips have largely stopped. At the same time, Christians face increased risk of being accused of collaborating with enemy nations.

“Believers can easily be labelled as spies,” Mina says. “This makes serving more dangerous than before.”

Church leaders are under growing pressure. With gatherings no longer safe, they meet people individually, carrying the emotional weight of others while facing their own fear, stress and trauma. “They are trying to keep hope alive,” Mina explains. “But they are also tired.”

At the same time, anxiety and confusion have increased across the country. The need for counselling and emotional support is growing, yet there are very few trained Christian counsellors and no access to outside resources. “No books, no teaching, no support,” Mina says. “It is very isolating.”

A fragile ceasefire calls for fervent prayer

The US, Israel and Iran have agreed to a two-week ceasefire after days of sharp escalation. It appears to be a temporary attempt to stop the war from widening further across the Middle East. President Trump has agreed to pause attacks on Iran, while Iran agreed to open the Strait of Hormuz. Negotiations and talks are expected to continue in Islamabad. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that a ceasefire between Iran and the US will not affect the Israeli operation in Lebanon.

A ceasefire may bring a moment of relief from violence, but for many Christians inside Iran, it does not mean the pressure has ended – it can actually quietly increase.

“History shows that after conflict, authorities often tighten control, leading to more suspicion, arrests and monitoring of believers. And yet, even in such moments, the church has often grown, not in visibility, but in depth, resilience and quiet faith,” shares an Open Doors expert on Iran. “So I pray: Lord, use even this fragile pause not only to restrain violence, but to protect Your people, to strengthen their courage and to open unseen doors for Your Kingdom. May Your presence be their peace where uncertainty remains, and may Your light continue to shine in places where fear still lingers.”

Iran has signalled that the ceasefire does not mean the war is over, warning that it could respond forcefully if fighting resumes. Just before the ceasefire deal and even after the truce, Iran launched rockets targeting countries across the Arabian Peninsula – including Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. While the missiles were intercepted, falling debris caused injuries among civilians.

Mona*, a local partner, reflects on the ceasefire: “Iranian Christians are responding to the ceasefire with cautious relief and some disappointment, yet they fear increased persecution. They pray that Iran will know the truth, and that the truth will set them free, while asking the global church for protection, especially for vulnerable children and adults, courage for new believers to grow in their faith despite uncertainty around meeting for Bible study, wisdom for parents on how to protect their children mentally and spiritually, unity for leaders in responding to the crisis, and lasting peace for the people of Iran – that, in that peace, they may see, feel, and know our God.”

Persecution from within

The dangers of war are not the only things facing Iranian Christians. In the midst of conflict, believers continue to be at risk from the Iranian authorities – and shows of religious freedom are only surface-deep. On Wednesday 8 April, an Armenian Orthodox church in Tehran was shown honouring Iran’s late Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. The observation of the 40th day after death occurs in Eastern Christian communities, as well as in several Eastern Catholic traditions. For many outside Iran, that image may look like a sign of coexistence, mutual respect or even religious freedom. However, for those who know the reality facing many Christians in Iran, the image tells a very different story.

A state-approved ceremony in a historic church is not the same thing as freedom for Christians. In Iran, Christians by birth, those from recognised communities such as Armenians and Assyrians are given a narrow, tightly controlled space under the law, but that limited recognition does not extend equally to converts from Islam.

A church building can be used for symbolism, while at the same time Christians are arrested, interrogated, charged, sentenced and imprisoned for gathering, worshipping in Persian, possessing Christian material in Persian or sharing the gospel with other Iranians. The European Union Agency for Asylum notes that evangelising is treated as a security crime in Iran. Additionally, Article18 has documented at least 139 Christian arrests in 2024, and 254 Christians arrested in 2025, with 96 Christians sentenced to a combined 263 years in prison.

What real freedom looks like

Real religious freedom is not proven by a public ceremony of this nature. It is proven when people can convert without fear, worship without surveillance, pray without arrest and speak of Christ without a prison cell waiting for them.

“The Islamic Republic seems to be attempting, on one hand, to create division among Christians, and on the other, to present an image to the world that its relationship with Christians inside the country is positive,” says Mousa*, an Open Doors partner from the diaspora, who serves Iranian Christians both inside and outside Iran. “We should pray for wisdom, discernment, and peace for Christians in these circumstances. We should also pray that the reality of ongoing persecution and oppression would be revealed clearly to the Western world, so that the truth cannot be hidden.”

He adds that the current war is seeing an increase in persecution: “Amid ongoing tensions and conflict, the Islamic Republic has intensified arrests and imposed severe sentences, including the death penalty, often seeking to place blame on its own people. Christians have already faced accusations such as being linked to Zionism or Israel. With the current conflict involving Israel and the United States, believers inside the country are at even greater risk of arrest and persecution. We must continue to pray earnestly for their protection and for the safety of their families.”

Please keep praying for Iranian Christians, as they face persecution from the authorities and their communities, as well as the dangers and anxieties of war. They need and appreciate your ongoing prayers.

**Names changed for security reasons*

Please Pray

Pray that, in the midst of isolation, hardship and uncertainty, the Lord would draw near to His people in Iran – strengthening weary leaders, providing for those in need and giving courage to believers to stand firm in quiet faith. Ask that this fragile ceasefire would not bring greater pressure, but instead become a moment of protection, wisdom and unseen opportunity, where His peace guards every heart and His church continues to grow in unity, depth and unshakable hope.

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



NEWPORT BUS STATION

SAFE SPACE



A safe place to...



**WAIT
FOR FRIENDS**



**RECEIVE
FIRST AID**



**GET ADVICE
& SUPPORT**



**HELP GETTING
HOME**



**REPORT ASB
OR ANY CONCERNS**

Pop in & talk to us!

In partnership with



Shanklin Town Brass Band



is holding a...

Charity Concert **'At the Movies'**

on

Friday 1st 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
Fri	1 st May	19:30	Shanklin Town Brass Band Concert <i>in aid of YMCA Mother & Baby Unit</i> see page 33
Sun	3 rd May	10:30	Welcome new members
Thu	7 th May	14:00	Pray for The Bay (see page 4)
Fri	8 th May	18:00	Elders' Meeting
Sun	10 th May	17:00	Shared Worship at Sandown Baptist Church
Thu	14 th May		Start of ' <i>Thy Kingdom Come</i> '
Sun	17 th May	10:30	Ordination of new Elders, Carol & Pauk
Thu	21st May	19:30	Church Meeting
Sun	24 th May	10:30 12:30 16:00	Pentecost Sunday Worship Bring-and-Share lunch Pentecost Sunday – Prayer event
Fri	29 th May	19:00	Praise Evening
Sat	30 th May	10:00	Ladies' Breakfast at Viv's
Sun	31 st May	10:30 19:00	Encounter Café service Open Air Worship at Rylstone Gardens
Sat	6 th Jun	09:00	Men's Breakfast at Viv's Cooking
Sat	20 th May	10:00	Prayer Walking in town
Fri	26 th Jun	19:00	Praise Evening



The gentlest walk, suitable for mobility aids, is led by Julie in Victorian costume. You will stroll around Ryde hearing tales of the founding families. **The Lost Crypt History walk** costs £5 per person. Payable at time of booking with the whole amount going to AspireRyde.



Monday 11th 10:00
 Tuesday 12th 15:00
 Friday 15th 10:00

A maximum of 10 people can participate in any one event so prebooking is mandatory at isleofwightwalkingfestival.co.uk

Connection Quiz Answers

1. **Walrus**
2. **Camel**
3. **Hunter**
4. **Hercules**
5. **Connection:** they are all names of past RAF aeroplanes: Supermarine Walrus, Sopwith Camel, Hawker Hunter & Lockheed C130 Hercules.
6. This issue's cover photo is of the Culver Down Monument (photo © C P Sparks).



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 fiendish one this month (allegedly).

Enjoy!

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

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												

Last month's Sudoku - how did you do?

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

Across

- 1 Parisian entertainment venue, or 2001 film (6 5)
- 5 Red Teletubby (2)
- 7 Number between 5 and 7 (3)
- 8 Tennis bat (7)
- 10 2012 Ben Affleck film (4)
- 11 Everything (3)
- 12 Very skilled at something (5)
- 13 Alternative to a bath (6)
- 14 He phoned home in 1982 *initials* (2)
- 16 Guildford shopping centre, or home of friars (6)
- 19 The curved path of a celestial object (5)
- 21 -nob, McVities oat biscuit (delicious, esp with chocolate) (3)
- 23 Ill, in poor health (6)
- 25 Big cat, two are on the

- Normandy flag (7)
- 28 Lyric poem, addressed to a particular subject (3)
- 29 Normandy seaside town, with a D-Day Museum (11)

Down

- 1 Largest stadium in Scotland (11)
- 2 Parent's brother (5)
- 3 Move in a circle round an axis (6)
- 4 2,500km Russian mountain range (5)
- 5 3.142 (2)
- 6 English 'City of Dreaming Spires' (6)
- 7 Manufacturer of British WW1 aircraft, Camel (7)
- 10 German for 'under' (5)
- 15 Work extremely hard (4)
- 17 Not outdoor (6)
- 18 Period of time that's 365 days long, usually (4)
- 20 Send someone away as an official punishment (6)
- 22 Soft French cheese (4)
- 24 Thought as to a possible course of action (4)
- 26 '*Much - About Nothing*' Shakespear play (3)
- 27, or 1975 Abba song *initials* (3)

Can You Guess The Year?

- Google was founded.
- The last working tin mine in Cornwall closes.
- Arsenal win the FA Cup, beating Newcastle United 2-0.
- DVDs are released in the UK for the first time.
- And UK No. 1s include:
 - Celine Dion with 'My Heart Will Go On'
 - Boyzone with 'All I Need'
 - Spice Girls with 'Viva Forever'
 - B*witched with 'To You I Belong'
 - Spacedust with 'Gym and Tonic'

Answer next issue

This Issue's General Knowledge Questions

1. In what year was Tower Bridge officially opened?
2. Who won the first FA Cup final at Wembley, in 1923?
3. When was the first women's football world cup?
4. What is the capital of Croatia?.
5. In what country was former F1 driver Eddie Irvine born?
6. Ely in Cambridgeshire is a city, true or false?
7. In computer terms, what does RAM stand for?
8. What is the official National Anthem of Scotland?
9. Where in Edinburgh is the annual Military Tattoo held?
10. What was the previous name of the country Chad?

Answers next issue

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

Sunday 24th May

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

surc.thelink@btinternet.com

Last Issue's Solutions

- Guess the year: it was 1964

- Last issue's crossword ↓

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

Last Issue's General Knowledge Quiz Answers

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Pont de Normandie | 6. False |
| 2. Wanderers (beating Royal Engineers 1-0) | 7. File Transfer Protocol |
| 3. Guy Hamilton | 8. Unknown |
| 4. Brasilia | 9. No lyrics - it's an instrumental |
| 5. India | 10. Upper Volta |

Sunday Service

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

Weekday Activities

Monday	13:00	Prayer Meeting in church (see page 4)
Tuesday	14:00	Bible Bite ministry in church (Refreshments from 13:30) <i>Broadcast live on YouTube</i>
	19:30	Prayer Meeting on Zoom (see page 4)
Wednesday	11:00	The Well (<i>now closes at 12:30</i>)
Friday	10:00	CatURpillars Toddler Group (<i>term time</i>)

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