

# The Link



# November 2025



***They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them***

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

# View From Number 10



## Let us pray...

We often use those words to lead into a time of prayer. As we do so, it is perhaps good to pause and take in what a huge privilege it is to converse with the Holy One, the maker of heaven and earth.

In 1 Thessalonians 5 we find a short list of imperatives from the apostle, Paul. One of the shortest verses is the Bible ought to be easily memorable – “*pray continually*” (v17).

Neither the great missionary, nor the Lord himself, expect us to spend all our time on our knees with our eyes closed. The call is rather to live a life of prayer, conscious at every moment that we are in God’s presence and that all we do and say matters to him. Even on our beds we can think of God, relax in his love and remember his promises (Psalm 63:6). It is always time to pray!

This month, we have set aside another 24-hour period for a special Sabbath of Prayer. The Bible frequently reminds us that God rested on the seventh day from all his work, and he calls his people to do the same. Christians have often adopted Sunday as their sabbath because Jesus was raised from the dead on the first of the week and, on that momentous day, everything changed – a new era of faith and life began the other side of the cross.

It is good to celebrate our Jewish roots and so we are once again following the Hebrew pattern for this dedicated time of prayer. To the western mind, the day starts at sunrise, but the heritage that Jesus came out of marks the beginning of the new day at sundown.

I invite you to take a break from normal activity and to engage in a full day of prayer from 16:32 on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November. Come and share in prayer at the church at one, two or all three of the united prayer slots and to round off the “day” with breaking bread together.

These have been really special times over recent years, but we’d have loved to have seen more of the church family joining in. Please do come and spend some quality time in the presence of God and alongside your brothers and sisters. Prayer really makes a difference and has a massive effect on everything we do.

With very best wishes,

Brian



## **A Sabbath of Prayer...**

**from 18:30 on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November  
to 17:30 on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November**

**24 hours dedicated to God**

**The church will be open at these times:**

**Friday 18:30 – 20:30**

**Saturday 08:30 – for a Light Breakfast**

**09:00 – 11:00**

**15:30 – 17:30**

**Ending with Breaking of Bread at 17:00**

**There will be short devotions at the start of the three sessions.**

**These will be livestreamed on a dedicated YouTube link – please ask Robin for the details if you want to connect.**

Please join us in setting aside some quality time with the Lord. Everyone is most welcome to share in this special time, whether you join in the shared activities or simply take time out by yourself at home, or out and about.

You may like to consider fasting for all or part of the time



# Prayer



## **Always at the Heart of our Life**

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

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**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.

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**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.

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**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 6<sup>th</sup> November

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## **Next Sabbath of Prayer**

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November.**

24-hours of prayer with three gatherings at the church, as we have done on previous occasions over recent years. It will give us a special opportunity to seek God together as we discern his priorities as we consider the challenges and creative ideas from ***Leading Your Church into Growth.***

# SURC November 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

Sat 1	Prayer life of SURC	Tue 18	Our Prayer meeting on Zoom
Sun 2	Today's Communion service	Wed 19	Church tech team - and for the tech used
Mon 3	Brian and Janet Harley	Thu 20	The Elders
Tue 4	Bible Bite	Fri 21	The Persecuted Church
Wed 5	The Well - volunteers, regulars and visitors	Sat 22	Organisations supporting the Persecuted Church
Thu 6	Churches in The Bay	Sun 23	Christian youth work in The Bay
Fri 7	CatURpillars Toddler Group	Mon 24	Those who aren't well enough to get to church
Sat 8	Youth Ministry Worker interviews on 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Tue 25	IoW Youth for Christ
Sun 9	Remembrance Sunday	Wed 26	The text prayer network, and for Lou who organises it
Mon 10	Shanklin Town Council	Thu 27	Church Meeting
Tue 11	Isle of Wight Council	Fri 28	For people to discover the true meaning of Christmas
Wed 12	UK Government	Sat 29	Our Christmas activities and for those we come into contact with
Thu 13	European Union	Sun 30	Today's Encounter café service
Fri 14	United Nations		
Sat 15	World peace		
Sun 16	Today's healing service		
Mon 17	The Monday prayer meetings in church		

On a dark evening, why not try...

# *A Light Alternative*



**17:00 - 19:00**

**Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October**

## **Open House**

**Free fun for all ages in a warm safe space  
- just drop in at any time:**

**No Halloween gear please  
- under 18s must be accompanied by a  
responsible adult**

### **Youth For Christ**

As reported at Church Meeting, YFC are seeking to appoint a youth worker for the East Wight area to work alongside churches in The Bay and beyond.



Brian and Yvonne have been part of the team setting things up, and interviews will take place this month for the 20 hours a week role.

Many of you know we have had some left-over funds given in past years for previous youth workers and we hope to invest this money in the project over the next couple of years.

Please pray for the team as things progress.

# Healing Service

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November 10:30**

**led by Brian and Sheilagh**



After positive feedback from some special services during the summer, we are offering another opportunity to seek God's healing touch in our Sunday worship.

The God who loves us and made us wants us all to find wholeness. So, whatever the challenges we might face – in body, mind or spirit – or in relationships – he is yearning to come alongside to meet our needs and bring blessing and restoration.

Do please remember that the Prayer Ministry Team are on hand every Sunday to offer supportive prayer at the end of our worship. Do seek them out if you have a need of any kind.

## Christians Against Poverty

We are one of five congregations supporting this Island project. The steering group has been exploring the best way to manage this going forward so things are on a solid footing. We have approached a sixth church about joining in and are also exploring a partnership that might save us needing to establish a separate Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).



We have one volunteer worker at present – Linda Nouali, who now lives in Ryde, who has trained as a Debt Coach. She is really enjoying the role but is only able to handle one new client per month. We are looking for a couple of new volunteers - another **Debt Coach** and a **Service Team Leader** who will deal with all the planning and admin. This seems better than seeking to appoint a Debt Centre Manager covering both aspects. If anyone is interested in exploring what's involved, please speak to Brian.

A few more **Befrienders** are also required to work alongside the Debt Coaches – more men are particularly needed. We are excited that the first client has moved out of debt, so things are working!



## Church Meeting

**27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 @ 19:30**

***Refreshments from 19:00***



**...or join via our regular Zoom link**

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.

Rob's survey of people's preferences suggests that we continue with the pattern of holding evening meetings every couple of months. In the alternate months we usually have a dedicated prayer gathering of some sort (this is not a rigid pattern - the Sabbath of Prayer is a bit later due to half term, and December's equivalent event is usually held in the New Year – planned for Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> January)

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

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

## Connection Quiz

1. What type of condiment is from Dijon, in France?
2. Which UK political party has Zack Polanski as its leader?
3. In which Gerry Anderson TV program from the late 1960s would you find Captain Black, Colonel White, to name but a few?
4. Which fruit has varieties that include Victoria, Avalon, Opal, etc.?
5. Which character in the BBC sitcom 'Are You Being Served' was played by Frank Thornton?
6. So, what is the **connection** between the answers to questions 1 - 5?



**Answers are on [page 31](#)**



## Bible Bite Special – Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November

We are delighted to welcome back **Aurel Vidal** from Paris as our guest speaker at 14:00 on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

He visited us a few years ago and was truly inspirational. Aurel works as an evangelist for ***International Mission to Jewish People*** reaching out to fellow Jews in Paris with the good news of their Messiah, Jesus. God's promises have been fulfilled in him.

If you don't come regularly on Tuesdays, do make a special effort on this occasion to hear about his exciting missionary work across the channel.

*There will be an opportunity to give towards his work*

INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION TO  
JEWISH PEOPLE



## Christian Institute

Other helpful resources to look out for are the newsletters from the Christian Institute – the new one is now available in church for the autumn season.



This ministry is so vital along with others such as Christian Concern, Intercessors for Britain, CARE and the Evangelical Alliance in keeping abreast of what is happening in our nation from a Christian standpoint and how we can pray effectively.

Christian Institute have just had a Week of Prayer – thank you to all who took the leaflets and participated in it, but the great need is for us to continue to cry out to the Lord for our nation and to be informed and support these ministries who are in the 'front line' of upholding Biblical values and truths in our society.

Please visit their website on a regular basis to keep abreast of what's happening in our nation: [www.christian.org.uk/](http://www.christian.org.uk/).

Blessings

Jane H

# 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 the 30<sup>th</sup> November,  
and led by Brian**

**a great day to invite friends along**

**– café serving from 10:15**

**Website of the Month:**

[www.youtube.com/  
@shanklinunitedreformedchur8970](https://www.youtube.com/@shanklinunitedreformedchur8970)

*Our YouTube Channel*

# Shanklin URC Bookshop

There is a saying.... 'the older you get, the faster the time goes by' and it seems so true! Perhaps you remember that when you were a child it took ages and ages for Christmas to come... but now... it comes around again before you are ready! So, now that November has arrived we thought it is time to mention that the church bookshop now has Christmas card packs in stock.

All our Christmas cards include a scripture verse and support either Tearfund or the Leprosy Mission. Packs of ten cards are priced at £5.50 (except one pack at £6.00) and packs of twenty smaller cards are priced at £6.50.

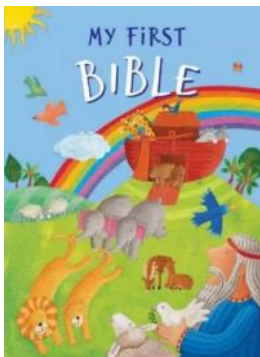
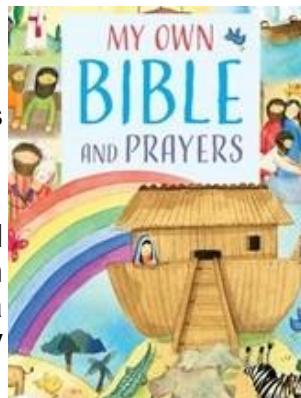
Tearfund is a Christian charity that partners with churches in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries promoting sustainable development, responding to disasters and challenging injustice.

The Leprosy Mission is a global Christian charity that works to support those suffering from Leprosy, which results in both disability and discrimination, and also works to end transmission of the disease.

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New books in stock include some children's books....

*My Own Bible and Prayers*, by Honor Ayres and Sally Ann Wright, is a very colourful padded hardback book containing more than sixty Bible stories and prayers with a presentation page and space to include family details (£9.99)



*My First Bible* and *My First Prayers* are two books by Bethan James having colourful illustrations and simpler text to appeal to younger children (ages 4-7). (£4.99 each)

The bookshop's current opening hours are Wednesday each week 10:00 to 13:00. Additionally 10:00 to 13:00 on the second Tuesday of the month and 10:30 to 13:30 on the last Tuesday of the month.

## Reverend Ashley Trask (Imtiaz)

He will be visiting Shanklin URC over the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> November. He will be speaking at several events, as follows:



**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>** ~ Joint Fellowship Breakfast @ Viv's Cooking from 10:00 ~ Imtiaz will be sharing testimony ~ please sign up on the list at the back of the church

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>** ~ Preaching @ SURC Morning Worship (10:30)

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>** ~ Speaking at The Bay Evening Shared Worship (17:00)

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup>** ~ Sharing details of his work in Pakistan over the past year @ SURC (10:30)

Imtiaz will be in Pakistan from 10<sup>th</sup> October until 15<sup>th</sup> November and asks us to pray for all the people his team will meet and,

- For healing for Miss Mehak and Miss Neelam, and their family, in mind, body and spirit, after a recent car accident.
- For safety and good health, and against anxiety and worry
- Pray against the work of the enemy
- For safe journeys in our travels
- For anointing as we minister to the broken and hurting
- For the team in this ministry

Some of you will be aware of the work of his team in Pakistan, and Imtiaz has requested that two of them be allowed to visit us with him next year. We have provided invitations, and Imtiaz will shortly be applying for the appropriate visas for Neelam and Mehak (Grace) Shahbaz. We hope to be able to welcome them in March next year. Please keep this in your prayers.



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

**Robin**

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



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

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

**Shared Worship on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday each month** at different churches with a more informal time of worship and prayer on the other weeks – at the URC, as happened over the summer months.

The meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November will be at **The Church of the Sacred Heart**

## **Outreach Together**

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

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

We plan to contribute some small Christmas puzzle books.

We are planning to do something in Shanklin on the previous Saturday - open church on 6<sup>th</sup> December. Ideas welcome..

## Shoebox Appeal 2025

Thank You to any who supported the recent coffee morning at The Well in aid of the above.

If you were unable to get to that, then there is still time to either sponsor or pack a box, or donate towards one with items or money donations towards transportation, or go online and pack one there at [samaritans-purse.org.uk/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/shoebox-online/create-a-box](https://samaritans-purse.org.uk/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/shoebox-online/create-a-box).



There are leaflets in the church and lobby or go to [occ.samaritans-purse.org.uk/](https://occ.samaritans-purse.org.uk/) for information of what to pack, and what not to pack.

The deadline (National Collection Week) for assembled boxes is 10<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November and for any individual items it is a week earlier, 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

Sandra Snell will be hosting another meal on 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 45 Alfred Road, Lake to raise funds for the appeal. Do please ask if you'd like more information about this or anything to do with the shoeboxes.

If you have completed ones, we are happy to take them to Sandra whose home is a collection point for completed boxes, as is The Entertainer in St James Square, Newport if you wish to go there yourself.

This is such a wonderful ministry, because of which countless children's lives have been transformed, so again a **Big Thank You** for any way in which you can partner with this work of God.

Blessings in Jesus' Name

Jane H

**Packing a shoebox is simple, fun and has a big impact!**

***This Christmas, you can bring joy to a child who may have never received a gift before.***



## **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*



**Shanklin Town Brass Band**

**Christmas Concert**

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December**

**at**

**Shanklin URC**

**19:30**

**\*\*\***



*Also featuring their Community and Youth Bands*

*Free admission - retiring collection*

*Refreshments during the interval*



## **On the ‘Look Out’!**

During this month there will be some more excellent resources available to look out for and take away and perhaps to share.

The new **CARE Prayer Diary** is now available and runs from 19<sup>th</sup> October 2025 to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

This excellent prayer guide features the following topics:

- God’s Mercy
- Marriage
- Faith and Integrity
- Thanksgiving
- Widows and Orphans
- Science and Technology
- Serving Humbly
- The Rule of Law
- Journeys
- Light of the World
- Restoring Nature
- Special Education Needs
- Palliative Care

If you have not yet encountered this little booklet, it is such a helpful tool in enabling us to pray into many areas of our nation’s life. You will find these booklets on the tables in the lobby and in the church, as well as online at [care.org.uk/prayer-diary](http://care.org.uk/prayer-diary).

**Open Doors** will also be available in the lobby and in the church. Their bi-monthly magazine and prayer diary (next ones November/December) will hold many accounts of what is happening to our brothers and sisters in the Suffering Church. Do please remember them in your prayers – life is getting much harder for true believers in many parts of the world.

You can go to the Open Doors’ website anytime for up-to-date

information of what is happening to our fellow believers at [www.opendoorsuk.org/blog/news/latest-news/](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/blog/news/latest-news/). There is a lot there to pray for.

As mentioned in last month's magazine, Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November is the day designated for IDoP (International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church) and has the theme of **Pastors Under Pressure**.

A recent e-mail from Release International and an item on the Open Doors website gives very disturbing news of the detention or house arrest of more than 30 pastors, ministers and Christian leaders simultaneously in China. These actions by the government is the most extensive and co-ordinated wave of persecution against urban independent house churches in China in over four decades.

- **Please pray** for those recently arrested for their health and well-being and for perseverance in their faith.
- **Please pray** for the families and friends of those currently being detained and for God's grace and comfort in their lives at this time.
- **Please pray** for the continued impact of the Gospel in China that God will bring many more Chinese citizens to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.
- **Please read** this month's Focus (on [page 30](#)), chosen by our editor, which will also give more information of the church in China and if possible, remember them not only on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, but regularly – for the believers to stand firm, even though deprived of their leaders.

The prayers of God's people throughout the world for our brothers and sisters who are going through 'trials of various kinds' are **so** appreciated – may we bless them with our love in the Lord and commitment to stand with them in prayer and support where possible.

Blessings and thanks in Jesus' Precious Name

Jane H

Source: [CARE](#) and [Release International](#)



***“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)

## Placed Into Christ

Last month, we looked at understanding who, as Christians, we are. This time, Neil looks at what changed when we were placed into Christ.

***“Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*** (Colossians 2:11/12)

All unbelievers have an old nature that is characterised by sin. Before you came to Christ you were one of those individuals. You were a sinner because it was your nature to sin. This 'natural man' cannot accept or understand the things of the Spirit

***“The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit”*** (1 Corinthians 2:14)

What happened to the old you at salvation? You died - not the physical you, of course, but that old inner self which was empowered by the old nature you inherited from Adam

***“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”*** (Colossians 3:3)

What was the method of execution? Crucifixion with Christ.

Paul announced in Galatians 2:20, ***“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”***

In Galatians 6:14, Paul disclaimed any right to boast ***“except in the***

***cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."***

At salvation, you were placed into Christ, the one who died on the cross for your sins. Being in Christ, your old self died with Him there.

Notice the remarkable difference.

- In Adam, you had an old self; **in Christ**, you have a new self!
- In Adam, you had a sinful nature ***"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins"*** (Ephesians 2:1); **in Christ**, you are a partaker of the divine nature ***"He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature"*** (2 Peter 1:4)
- In Adam, you were in the flesh; **in Christ**, you are in the Spirit ***"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ"*** (Romans 8:9).
- In Adam, you could only walk after the flesh; in Christ, you may choose to walk after the Spirit or after the flesh.

Aren't you glad to be a new creature in Christ?

**Thank You, Jesus, that You have set me free from my old sinful nature and that I can choose to walk after the Spirit today.**

*Neil Anderson*  
**Freedom in Christ Ministries**  
**Daily Devotionals**  
*Used by permission*

***"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** (John 16:33)

However you are feeling currently, **Please Remember That In Christ You Are Accepted, Significant And Secure .**

To look further into what this means, please read the pamphlet **'Who I Am In Christ'** by Rose Publishing. I have left several copies in the church. Please do take one!

Last time, I mentioned Neil's exposition on this topic, which I included in The Link magazine in October 2024. As we have had

many new folk come along since then, I have decided to reprint this in the next magazine for December 2025/January 2026. As this is a bumper edition, I will include the Bible verses in full.

***Lord, thank You for Your Saving Grace; thank You for the status You have granted us in Your Kingdom. Help us to walk every day with our Lord Jesus Christ, aware of what You have done through Him and what that means. We ask this in His precious and mighty name. Amen.***

*Robin*

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## **Can You Help Out???**

Have you got 45 minutes to spare on Tuesday lunchtimes, perhaps once a month?

As you know, we provide teas and coffees before Bible Bite from 13:30 to 14:00. At the moment, Heather & Ken Pettinger are 'serving' each week, and they need a little help to lighten the load just a bit.

Hannah both sets up the counter beforehand and clears away after Bible Bite, which she is happy to continue to do... so we need 2 or 3 folk prepared to come in at about 13:15 to be ready to serve between 13:30 and 14:00.

Currently, Heather provides cakes for those attending. If you could do so, that would be great, but if not, I can provide these...

Please do let me know if you are able to help out occasionally... you won't have to stay for the Bible Bite itself, but you might want to!



*Robin*

# 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, **'Family Walks for Nation - Aussie family treks across the outback to call their country back to Christ'**

Other contributions include:

- **Suicidal Soldier Finds Peace** - Former British Army sniper set free by the words of Jesus
- **What Katy Did** - Why Katy Perry prayed for one of her fans
- **Footballer's Joy** - Former Doncaster Rovers player is now their chaplain
- **Don't Worry, Be Happy** - Writer of the hit song finds his 'happy place' through prayer
- **Living In Freedom** - Charity founder tells how God has kept his promises
- **MP's Viral Speech** - MP tells Parliament why UK needs Jesus - and gets millions of views

## Good News... for a change



## **What is it like to go to church in Ukraine?**

Standing in a dugout, just yards away from the front line. Slipping down a flight of steps into a dimly lit basement in a bustling city. Kneeling in a magnificent neo-Byzantine church that has recently been renovated...

Meeting in a friend's house while, outside, the air-raid siren blares on, ignored. This is what going to church in Ukraine can feel like in 2025.

Most Ukrainians still consider themselves to be Christian, and the majority identify with Orthodoxy, either culturally or devotionally. A sizeable minority are Catholic, particularly in the west of the country, and smaller Protestant communities are found across the country.

While around 85 per cent of the population identify as Christian, only one in eight of those attend church weekly. However, 'going to church' is far from simple in wartime, and parish life is both pastoral and practical. Church halls are stacked with food parcels, volunteer ambulance drivers are blessed during services and chaplains move quietly between the front line and hospital wards.

Church also shapes everyday life: sermons turn to burials, feasts turn to fasting, and the Peace is exchanged with people who may have buried a son the previous month.

### **It's become (geo)political**

Going to church has also become a political act. The war has turned decisions that were once primarily theological or based on family tradition into matters of national loyalty. Due to existing political tensions in Ukraine, the Orthodox Church split into two main factions with competing claims to legitimacy shortly before the war. The split is exacerbated by the fact that Orthodox Churches around the world recognise either one or the other, giving the split global proportions.

The more recently established of the two, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, was founded in December 2018 and has a stronger patriotic focus – it makes liberal use of national Ukrainian symbols and flags in churches and conducts services in Ukrainian. For many of those attending, this church has become a way of expressing their citizenship and standing in solidarity with their country. It is the Church promoted by the Ukrainian government but is recognised



only by the several Greek Orthodox Churches – such as the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople or the Cypriot Church.

The older of the two, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, was formed as an autonomous branch of the Russian Orthodox Church after Ukraine gained independence from the Russian Empire and subsequently the USSR. For those who attend this church, it is often a matter of conscience and continuity; it is the tradition of their forebears and the one in which they were raised. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is proudly Ukrainian, yet it mostly serves the Liturgy in the old liturgical Church Slavonic language. It is also not as keen on being militaristic or nationalistic, and its priests are often caricatured in the news as Russian spies. It is recognised by most of the other Orthodox Churches worldwide.

### **Freedom of worship is under threat**

Law and policy have exacerbated this issue. In recent years, Ukraine has introduced measures aimed at curbing the activities of religious organisations with links – real or imagined – to the aggressor state.

Supporters of these measures view this as a sensible approach to national security, while critics, including UN bodies, the former Pope and the General Synod of the Church of England, argue that it goes too far and erodes religious freedom. The result is a patchwork of court cases, building disputes and administrative pressures that leave ordinary worshippers feeling exposed to forces beyond their control. This tension is palpable in many churches and in the careful choice of words by clergy.

### **Church can blend with everyday life**

To fully understand Ukrainian Christianity, it is also necessary to look west.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which is in communion with Rome but observes the Byzantine rite, has a long memory of catacombs and kitchen-table liturgies from the Soviet era. In Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and the surrounding regions, parish life is vibrant and social. The local calendar shapes rhythms and youth groups and choirs are interwoven with civic service.

The war has also intensified identity here, but the tone can be different. While Orthodoxy tends to narrate continuity with the baptism of Kievan Rus', Ukrainian Greek Catholic memory often tells

a story of remaining faithful under political pressure. Both traditions are recognisably Ukrainian and are now being asked to demonstrate their identity.

All of this can sound divisive and bleak, as if the gospel had been conscripted. In truth, the Sunday experience is more varied. People bring their whole lives to the church – their sorrows and their jokes, their rage and their resilience – and help each other carry them in a thousand small ways.

After the service, nobody leaves quickly. Someone always makes tea. Someone always knows who needs a lift, a doctor or a quiet word. Thriving churches hold the line on basic pastoral practices such as reverent prayer, trustworthy preaching and a confident sacramental life, and then turn that energy outwards into service.

### **The past matters**

It is helpful to remember that church history is not a museum label, but a living argument. Ukraine has experienced mass conversions to Christianity under Prince Vladimir and the Greeks, to Roman Catholicism under the Poles and Lithuanians, to Orthodoxy again under the Russians, and to atheism under the Communists.

The past is therefore a contested space: saints are adopted and reinterpreted, anniversaries are loaded with contemporary significance, and even architecture becomes a statement. This can be a dangerous process, but it can also be a purifying one. It reminds Christians of the fundamentals: the Church is not the state, the altar is not a parliamentary despatch box, and tradition encompasses more than the politics of the past century. When this happens, you can feel the temperature drop and the possibility of shared prayer return.

### **Church can heal**

There are signs of that possibility. Step into almost any Russian Orthodox parish in the UK and you will often find that a large proportion of the congregation (if not the majority) are Ukrainian. They stand shoulder to shoulder with Russians, Belarusians, Moldovans, Brits and others as they kiss the same icons and queue for the same chalice, despite what Patriarch Kirill might be claiming from Moscow.

While no one is naive about the underlying tensions, the liturgy has a

way of bringing people together: it teaches them to face God before they face one another. That lesson travels.

‘What is it like to go to church in Ukraine?’ It is discovering that faith can be both a wound and a balm, especially in times of war and hyper-politicisation. Ultimately, the hope of Ukrainian Christians is simple. That peace will come. That, in time, the infighting between Christian communities will cool. That the various Orthodox jurisdictions will find a way to establish the right relationships. That across the Christian traditions, the Church will rediscover her capacity for unity, reconciliation and the kind of love that transcends the politics of the day.

*George Lapshynov is a researcher at Theos, the London-based think tank that's part of Bible Society. He speaks Ukrainian and Russian, and he has family in Ukraine.*

Source: [Bible Society](#)

## **Samaritan's Purse Catalogues**

Have you seen the copies at church of the new Alternative Gift Catalogue?

It is so exciting to see how we can bless those who have so little at Christmastime and on other occasions throughout the year such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

To quote there are '39 Gift Ideas that make an eternal difference'.

From £5 upwards, there are many great ideas – do take a gift catalogue and just see how much you can achieve with one of their gift ideas for dear families, orphans and communities for whom this indeed will make a world of difference.

Should you wish to look online, please go to [www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/be-part-of-it/give/gift-catalogue](http://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/be-part-of-it/give/gift-catalogue).

Also available, in our resources at church are leaflets with Christmas cards, gift ideas, etc. to bless others!

Barnabas/Release/Love Russia are just a few in their magazines on the trolley at church.

Be blessed in giving!

Jane H

# Focus

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

***40 people detained in further house church  
raids in China***

*15<sup>th</sup> October 2025*

Our Chinese family are calling for prayer after recent days saw another series of raids on house churches. Around 40 people have been detained in a series of raids on house churches in China, as the recent crackdown on church activities in the country continues..

## **Influential network targeted**

Between 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> October, almost 30 pastors and church leaders affiliated to Zion Church – one of the most influential house church networks in China – are reported to have been detained or gone missing. As of 13<sup>th</sup> October, 16 have been released, but the status of the others is unclear.

The families of several detainees have been given official criminal detention notices by the Yinhai Branch of Beihai Public Security Bureau in Guangxi Province. These documents confirm that Pastor Jin Mingri (founder of Zion Church), Pastor Gao Yingjia, Pastor Yin Huibin, Sister Yang Lijun and Pastor Wang Cong have been formally charged with ‘illegally using internet information’. The charges could be linked to the recently implemented ‘Online Code of Conduct for Religious Professionals’, which was released by the National Religious Affairs Bureau in September 2025.

Zion Church – founded in Beijing in 2007 and with a presence in over 40 cities – is known for its engagement in writing, education, family building, community care and church planting. In recent years, the church has developed a significant online ministry.

## **Raided during sermon**

On 12 October, a house church belonging to Xuncheng Reformed

Church in the northern city of Taiyuan was gathered for a worship service when it was raided by the authorities, with 11 people detained.

According to eyewitnesses, Minister An Yankui was nearing the end of his sermon when some 30 plainclothes officers and more than ten uniformed police abruptly entered the church and forcibly detained him. All believers were ordered to surrender their phones and provide personal information.

Four full-time church staff members were also taken, as were nine other believers who strongly protested the raid. This includes two mothers along with their two children. One of the mothers was later sent home with her child, while the other remained in custody and their husband was called to take home their crying child.

The following day, another member was released, while the remaining 11 individuals are facing 15 days of administrative detention and are expected to be released on 28<sup>th</sup> October. Families of the detained did not receive formal detention notices until the day after the raid.

The hotel operator who had rented space to the church was also detained on 12<sup>th</sup> October and released the following day.

Xuncheng Reformed Church has faced ongoing pressure from the government for its refusal to join the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and its commitment to the separation of church and state.

## **Uniting in prayer**

House churches in China have faced mounting pressure in recent months. The authorities deem them 'illegal' because they are not part of the two state-approved groups – the TSPM and CPA (Catholic Patriotic Association) – which enables them to exercise control over church activities to ensure they align with 'Communist values'. Last month, more [than 70 people](#) were detained in a major crackdown on house churches in east China.

Following the recent incident involving Zion Church, believers and churches from the wider house church community in China are calling for united prayer, with several influential house churches issuing public statements online expressing their support for Zion Church.

“In our hearts, there is fear, anger, tears and confusion,” says Christian Chinese economist Dr Zhao Xiao in a letter posted online to encourage Chinese believers. “This dark night feels especially long... But we also know that night is not eternal. As Scripture says, ‘The night is nearly over; the day is almost here’ (Romans 12:13).”

Please unite in prayer with our family in China as they experience yet another wave of pressure and persecution. The country is [15<sup>th</sup> on the World Watch List](#) – a rise of four places on the previous year because of intensifying hostility.

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

Unregistered churches, even those once tolerated, are considered illegal and increasingly put under pressure, as authorities seek to enforce regulations and tighten policies. State-approved churches come under strong ideological pressure, and smaller congregations are often forced to merge to make a larger church that is easier for the state to control.

Children under 18 are forbidden from attending church. Officially registered churches are carefully regulated to make sure nothing they promote falls outside guidelines set by the Chinese Communist Party.

Christian leaders are targeted in China and face intense surveillance. They may be imprisoned if their outlawed religious activities are discovered.

### **Please pray**

- For protection, peace and strength for those detained, for wisdom as they deal with the authorities, and comfort and healing for their families
- That truth and justice will prevail, for this crackdown to end, and that the gospel will spread even more during this time
- That the church in China will remain steadfast and united as they face immense pressures.

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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

# 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!*







## Dates For Your Diary

Day	Date	Time	Details
Tue	4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	14:00	Bible Bite guest speaker – Aurel Vidal from Paris – International Mission to Jewish People
	7-8 Nov		Sabbath of Prayer - see page 3
Sun	9 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10:30 17:00	Remembrance Sunday – Sheilagh speaking Shared Worship - Church of the Sacred Heart
Fri	14 <sup>th</sup> Nov	18:00	Elders' Meeting
Sat	15 <sup>th</sup> Nov	19:00	Big Quiz for Tearfund
Sun	16 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10:30	Healing Service led by Brian and Sheilagh
Sat	22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	10:00	Breakfast at Viv's with Imtiaz
Sun	23 <sup>rd</sup> Nov	10:30	Guest Speaker Imtiaz
Mon	24 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10:00	Prayer for Persecuted Church
<b>Thu</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	<b>19:30</b>	<b>Church Meeting</b>
Sat	6 <sup>th</sup> Dec	10:00	Open Church - to <b>Shine Your Light</b>
Sat	13 <sup>th</sup> Dec	19:30	Shanklin Town Brass Band's annual Christmas Concert
Sun	14 <sup>th</sup> Dec	17:00	Light up a Life with Mountbatten
Sat	20 <sup>th</sup> Dec	15:30	Messy Church
Sun	21 <sup>st</sup> Dec	10:30	Carol and Nativity



**Saturday**  
**15<sup>th</sup> November 2025**  
**19:00**

**For an evening of fun and entertainment**

*Teams of no more than four*

### **Connection Quiz Answers**

1. **Mustard**
2. The **Greens**
3. Captain **Scarlet** and the Mysterons
4. **Plum**
5. Captain **Peacock**.
6. Connection: they are **characters in the board game Cluedo**, i.e. Colonel Mustard, Rev Green, Miss Scarlet, Professor Plum and Mrs Peacock.



This issue's cover photo is of the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Bayeux, Normandie, France.

The Puzzle Pages

Sudoku

A numerical placement puzzle!

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

An easy one this month.  
Enjoy!

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

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?

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

### Across

- 1 Largest Scottish Loch by volume (4 4)  
 6 Normandy city (5)  
 9 Book of Maps (5)  
 10 Period of leisure spent away from home (7)  
 12 Exchanged a cheque for cash (6)  
 13 Christian festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus (6)  
 16 Dozen red ones in Feb? (5)  
 18 To consume food (3)  
 19 Past tense of 18 across (3)  
 20 A spider weaves one(3)  
 24 Roman name for Paris (7)  
 27 Aromatic herb that attracts and excites felines (6)  
 29 101 in Roman numerals (2)  
 30 It sunk the Titanic (7)

- 32 On a shelf? (3)  
 33 Birthplace of William I (7)  
 34 Sonny's singing partner (4)

### Down

- 1 Northern French Port (2 5)  
 2 Another N French port (6)  
 3 Gentle and non-coercive suggestions (6)  
 4 Speak (3)  
 5 Street or saint *abbr* (2)  
 6 System to detect objects (5)  
 7 Ordnance Survey *initials* (2)  
 8 Enid Blyton character (5)  
 11 Talk informally (4)  
 12 Time zone in e.g. France or Germany *initials* (3)  
 14 Notice with your eyes (3)  
 15 Newspapers smaller than broadsheets (8)  
 17 For example in Latin *initials* (2)  
 19 Chopping tool (3)  
 21 Is this a - I see before me (6)  
 22 Firm and hard to bend (5)  
 23 Microphone abbreviated (3)  
 25 1 of 5 on a foot (3)  
 26 Le ou la, en anglais (3)  
 27 Eat with your teeth (4)  
 28 Has a leaning tower (4)  
 31 Broadcaster *initials* (3)

## **Can You Guess The Year?**

- Ronnie and Reggie Kray, 31, were arrested
- Sir Winston Churchill passed away.
- Stanley Matthews played his final 1<sup>st</sup> division game, age 50.
- Pizza Express opened its first restaurant in London
- Liverpool won the men's FA Cup, beating Leeds Utd 2-1.
- And UK No. 1s included:
  - Moody Blues with 'Go Now'
  - The Beatles with 'Ticket to Ride' (or was it Ryde?)
  - The Hollies with 'I'm Alive'
  - The Seekers with 'The Carnival is Over'

*Answer next issue*

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

1. *apoin*
2. *teluf*
3. *utigra*
4. *loecl*
5. *onosabs*
6. *eboo*
7. *novili*
8. *pensoxaho*
9. *rdmu*
10. *naltecir*

*Answers next issue*

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

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November**

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 1970
- Last issue's crossword ↓

H	A	V	E	N	S	T	R	E	E	T			S	
U		E			T		O		Q	U	I	E	T	
D	U	N	D	E	E		U		U				R	
D		I			N		G	I	A	N	T		A	
E		C	O	O	T		E	E	L		H	A	Y	
R	E	E	F			O					E		I	
S				P		N		B	E	R	L	I	N	
F	A	L	A	I	S	E		U			I		G	
I		E			U			F			N			
E	V	E	N			G	A	R	F	U	N	K	E	L
L		D		T	A	N				U				E
D	E	S	C	A	R	T	E	S			T	R	E	S

## Last Issue's 'Name the Sweets' Quiz Answers

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Moonlight     | 6. Yorkie          |
| 2. Jelly Tots    | 7. All Gold        |
| 3. Wispa         | 8. Turkish Delight |
| 4. Double Decker | 9. Lion Bar        |
| 5. Twirl         | 10. Polo           |

## 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 29](#))
- Friday**        **10:00 CatURpillars Toddler Group**

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

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

### **Minister:**    **Rev Brian Harley**



10 Dracaena Gardens, Shanklin PO37 7JQ



01983 862485



[brianharley58@gmail.com](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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