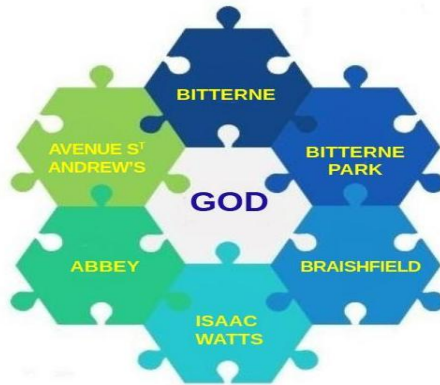


Southern Fellowship of United Reformed Churches



BITTERNE

OUTLOOK

DECEMBER 2025/JANUARY 2026



**Seasons
Greetings**

CHURCH DIARY - DECEMBER

Wed 3 rd	11.30am	Wednesday Worship
Thurs 4 th	12noon	Community Lunch
	2.00pm	Senior Citizens – Draw
Sat 6 th	10.00am – 11.30am	Christmas Tree Festival
Sun 7 th	10.30am	Revd Dr Sarah Hall
Wed 10 th	10.00am – 11.30am	Christmas Tree Festival
Thurs 11 th	2.00pm	Senior Citizens – Cup of tea/coffee & Chat
Sat 13 th	10.00am – 11.30am	Christmas Tree Festival
	2.30pm	Women's Group – New Music Makers
		concert at Hedge End Village Hall
Sun 14 th	10.30am	Nativity service + Puppets
Tues 16 th	12noon	Senior Citizens Christmas Lunch
Wed 17 th	10.00am – 11.30am	Christmas Tree Festival
	1.00pm	Carols round the Christmas tree in the Precinct
Thurs 18 th	2.00pm	Senior Citizens – Carols in Church followed by mince pies
Fri 19 th	7.30pm	Board Games
Sat 20 th	10.00 am – 11.30	Christmas Tree Festival
Sun 21 st	10.30am	Revd Mike Perrott - Carol service and Holy Communion

CHRISTMAS EVE

Wed 24 th	10.00am	Making Christingles
	4.00pm	Christingle service + Puppets

CHRISTMAS DAY

Thurs 25 th	10.00am	Dave White – Family Service
Sun 28 th	10.30am	Penny Moore

JANUARY

Sun 4 th	10.30am	James Lemanis
Sun 11 th	10.30am	40 th Anniversary Reunion
Wed 14 th	7.30pm	Bible Study House Group at Jill & Ian's home
Sat 17 th	11.30am	Women's Group – Singing for Wellbeing with Penny
Sun 18 th	10.30am	Revd Gwen Collins
Wed 21 st	7.30pm	ELDERS MEETING
Thurs 22 nd	2.00pm	Senior Citizens - Cup of tea/coffee & chat
Sun 25 th	10.30am	Revd Mike Perrott
	11.45am	CHURCH MEETING
Thurs 29 th	2.00pm	Senior Citizens – Cup of tea/coffee & chat

FEBRUARY

Sun 1 st	TBA	Joint service for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Holy Saviour Church
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MISSION STATEMENT

Bitterne United Reformed Church exists to praise and worship God, to reach out into the community in love and service so the joy of Christ Jesus may be shared.

A Message from an Elder

Happy Christmas Everyone.

As I write this letter it seems too early to wish you all a Happy Christmas, but time seems to fly so fast these days that soon it seems like it will be Easter, another very special time of the year.

Some people find it hard to cope with the festivities at Christmas that other people take for granted. This may be because they have lost a loved one, have their own physical or mental health problems, or may have lack of money.

Those who have loving families and no money problems may not realise how other people feel. They may not realise how other people struggle to be happy at Christmas and may spend a day suffering, so we need to pray for all the people who will be on their own this Christmas.

At church we will be having the Christmas Tree Festival and welcoming people into our building. We must make everyone welcome and hopefully want to come back again for a service. I have been taking the Christingle for several years and look forward to seeing the regulars every year. I sometimes wonder why they come on Christmas Eve but miss the joy of belonging to a church every Sunday. But still, I hope they go away with the joy of knowing Jesus at Christmas.

May I take this opportunity to wish you a Happy Christmas and a healthy, peaceful new year.

With Christian Love,
Jill

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT BITTERNE URC



Nativity - 14 December 2025 at 10.30 am with puppets

Carol Service - 21 December 2025 at 10.30 am

Christingle - 24 December 2025 at 4.00 pm with puppets

Christmas Day - 25 December 2025 at 10.00 am (30 minutes)

Please note we will not be holding a midnight communion service this year.

A midnight communion service is being held at Abbey URC, Romsey at 11.30 pm on 24 December 2025. All are invited.

PRAYING FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS

Dear Friends

As we approach Christmas and the New Year our thoughts turn to those who are poorly, have lost loved ones, are homeless, on their own for the first time, are in a strange place, displaced by war, or away from home.

We pray they will find solace in God's love so they know they are never forgotten. We ask God to bring peace in their hearts, strength in their days and light to their path. May the hope of God's presence ease their burdens and remind them they are deeply cherished. Amen

<u>Flower Rota</u>			<u>In Memory of</u>
December	7 th	Celia Mayo	
	14 th	Janet Gotham	
	21 st	Janet Gotham	
	28 th	Lyn Kinchenton	
January 2026	4 th	Celia Mayo	
	11 th	Maria Boys	
	18 th	Celia Mayo	Celia's mother
	25 th	Lyn Kinchenton	
February	1 st	Service at Holy Saviour Church	



Thank you to those who have arranged flowers for Sundays when there have been no special requests and for those who continue to arrange the flowers in memory of loved ones, it is much appreciated. If you would like to be included on the Flower Rota from time to time or maybe in memory of a special person or occasion, please let me know. Thank you to those who have helped with distributing the flowers, especially in my absence. If you would like to help occasionally in this way, please let me know; also, if you can help with distributing the flowers in January 2026. Janet Gotham

NOTICES

The New Music Makers Family Christmas Concerts

To be held on Saturday 13th December 7.30pm (the matinee performance has sold out!)

At Hedge End Village Hall, SO30 0BP

Book online <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/new-music-makers> Or ring 01489 781836

Prices: adults £10.00, children £6 and under 5's free



Thank you. A message from Dave - I sold all my poppies this year and twelve pounds was raised for the Poppy appeal. Thanks Dave White.

Notices continued

Lyndhurst Baptist Church is holding their **Christmas Experience** on Tuesday 2nd of December from 6pm - 8pm. Please look at their website for a video to see how wonderful it is. The whole church is converted into the Christmas story. Entrance is free, with refreshments.

The Girls and Boys Brigades are having a special Christmas carol service at 7pm on Monday 8th December. All are welcome.

Scratch Christmas Complete Appeal

We have already received a generous number of toys and books for this appeal. Thank you so much; you will be making so many children's Christmases' so much happier. The last day for this appeal is Sunday 7th December.

Community Carolling dates in December with the Salvation Army Band, times are all from 7pm to 8.30pm

Monday 8th – Douglas Crescent

Wednesday 10th - Vokes Close, Franklyn Ave, Cunningham Cres

Friday 12th – Brownlow Avenue, Monday 15th St Aubins.

Their Santa's Grotto and Tree Festival is Saturdays 6th, 13th and 20th December, 10am to 1pm, 93 North East Road, SO19 8AF.

Bitterne URC Ladies Group

This is a very new group that we have set up at the church for any ladies over the age of 18. There is no upper age limit. We have only had a few meetings which have been fun. We have tried hand bell ringing and made Christmas tree decorations for the Christmas Tree Festival. In the New Year we are having a session singing for wellbeing in January 2026 and a speaker for February.

We meet on Saturday mornings, dates are announced in the church magazine. If you wish to know more about the group, contact Philippa Matthews on 02380 442403, 07787 558432 or pipmatthews@tiscali.co.uk or one of the church Elders.

Eco page – Toilet rolls. A while ago, I was asked to review eco toilet rolls and make recommendations. Since then, many new providers have entered the market. All have much in common – the rolls come in packs of 24 or 48 and are much larger than shop rolls, so they last ages, and they arrive via post in a cardboard box. Most are wrapped individually in paper, and others arrive naked (eg Naked Paper). Absolutely NO plastic is used in the packaging. You can choose them to be unbleached and/or made from bamboo, which is more sustainable as some types of bamboo can grow 1 to 2 foot in a day! Our family has been using Who Gives a Crap since 2017. It was particularly useful during the pandemic when everyone else was panic buying, and we had our box in the shed! WGAC donates half of their profits to water related charities to enable those parts of the world without toilets and fresh water to get them.

I'm now moving to a new toilet roll venture, and have for the first time contributed to a crowdfunder. The scheme is called “**Clean Sheet**”, and they have until 4th December to raise the pledges totaling £100K needed for the scheme to commence. At the time of writing, they are 75% funded. Your monetary pledge to buy their loo roll will only be taken if it is fully funded. If successful, the business, after paying all staff a living wage, will donate all profits to 3 organisations as have no shareholders. These are Acorn – a community union bringing people together to fight for social and economic justice including housing and debt, Migrants Organise – a space where refugees, migrant workers and allies organise together for dignity and solidarity and Tipping Point UK, supporting 500+ grassroots groups taking action for climate change.

If you would like to join me in supporting this, here is the link <https://www.indiegogo.com/en/projects/cleansheet/clean-sheet-change-from-the-bottom-up>.

Christmas Shopping – Please kindly consider where you spend your money, Temu, Shein and Amazon are cheap as they exploit their workers. If you do not wish to support the genocide in Gaza, then please look online for a list of businesses to boycott.

Due to time and space restrictions, I will put the photos of the shoebox appeals and Scratch toy appeal and an update of the outcome of the UK planning bill affecting our nature, along with my thoughts on COP30 in the next issue. Happy Christmas, Maria.

JIGSAW PUZZLE FESTIVAL 2025

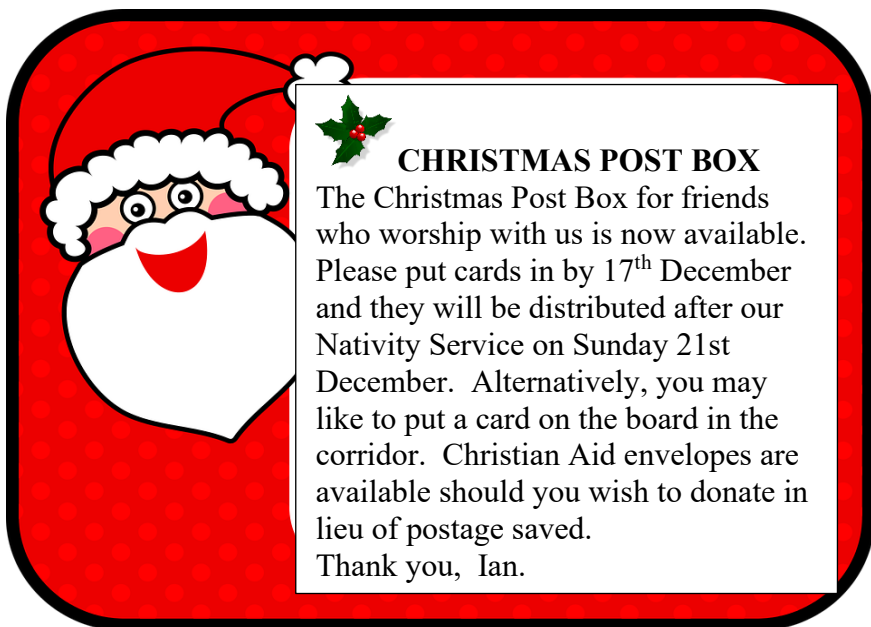
A HUGE THANK YOU to ALL who were involved with our festival this year. We couldn't have done it without YOU!

A few facts; 355 People visited

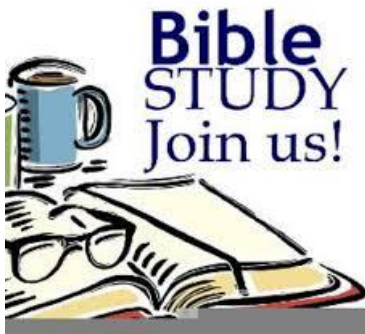
180 slices of cake were served

750+ jigsaws sold

£3760 raised for the work of the church



CAROL SINGING Do join friends from the other Bitterne Churches as Churches Together in Bitterne host carol singing round the Christmas Tree in the precinct at 1.00pm on Wednesday 17th December.



Dear Friends

Our next Bible Study will be held on:

Wednesday

**14 January 2026 at 7.30 pm at
Ian and Jill's house.**

We look forward to you welcoming you.

Volunteers needed to help with the making of our Christingles.
Please let Liz Lloyd, or Anne, know if you can come along on:

**Wednesday 24 December 2025 at
10.00 am Bitterne United Reformed
Church**



Fondly remembered We were sad to hear recently of the passing of Rev Stephen Wilkins, one time Minister of Bitterne Park and Peartree Green URC, our thoughts are with his family at this time and we give thanks for his years of service.

The Leprosy Mission. If you would like to order Christmas gifts and treats from The Leprosy Mission, Philippa Matthews can let you see their catalogue or alternatively you can view on line and let her have your order. Ordering via Philippa means there are no P&P charges and you receive a discount. Her contact numbers are 02380 442403, 07787 558432 (text or WhatsApp), email pipmatthews@tiscali.co.uk.

Link to hope A very big thank you for your contributions. Although we only had 4 shoeboxes, we had 2 bags of terrific teddies knitted by Celia, 15 beautiful blankets knitted by Mavis, and a large bag of fabulous hats and cardigans knitted by Doreen's friend Anne. These were all very gratefully received. Photos to follow!
If you have any spare double knitting wool you no longer need, then please pass it to Doreen so she can give it to Anne, to keep her knitting! Thank you.

Outlook summary Nov 2025

Hello everyone, I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Outreach Community Worker. It's been a busy and rewarding time, and I'd love to share some highlights from recent weeks!

Building Connections:

We've reached out to over 20 local organisations, schools, and charities, and held at least 13 meetings with church leaders and community groups. These partnerships are helping us make our church more inclusive and welcoming for everyone, especially those with learning disabilities. Thank you to everyone who's helped build these connections.

Embracing Technology:

Our website and social media pages have been refreshed with new photos, contact details, and event updates. Have a look and see what you think! We've secured a free Canva membership for creative projects and set up Google Analytics to help us engage better online.

Growing Together:

Training has been a big focus—having completed a course in Young Carers, and ongoing training with Children's Ministry, and Mental Health First Aid.

Behind the Scenes:

I've updated photo consent forms, reviewed compliance guidelines, and improved our hiring pages on the website. Updated leaflets for hiring, marriage, membership, about us, and christening, will be coming soon! These steps help keep our church safe, organised, and welcoming for all.

Celebrating Community:

From the light switch on to our jigsaw festival, our events have brought people together and created wonderful memories. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, attended, or helped spread the word. Looking forward to seeing you at our Christmas tree festival!

Looking Ahead:

We're developing a new sign-up form for joining the mailing list at the Christmas tree festival, aimed at attending next year's mixed

ability group, and continuing to improve accessibility. Your ideas and feedback are always welcome as we move forward together. Thank you for making our church such a vibrant, caring community. I'm honoured to be part of this journey with you! Warm wishes, Nikki, Your Outreach Community Worker
Editors note – Nikki has also been very helpful with social media for the sheep trail, for which I am very grateful.



The Big Bitterne Sheep Trail – has started and the winners will be announced at the Christmas Tree Festival on 20th December. Forms are available in the corridor if you have any grandchildren who would like to take part.

Zoom Advent Bible Study Rev Mike Perrott is holding a weekly Advent bible study on Sunday 7th, 14, and 21st December at 6.30pm. All are welcome to attend. Please email for joining details and study notes to rev.mike13@gmail.com. There is also a study on 4th January.

Delicious Sounds Choir with the Bees Knees Duo - Winter Concert – Sunday 7th December, 2.30pm at Peartree Church. Adults £10 and children free. Includes mince pie and mulled wine.

Bitterne URC 40th Anniversary celebrations

2026 sees the 40th anniversary of our moving into our present premises and we are planning a series of special events to celebrate. Watch out for details in the coming weeks and put the dates on your calendars! Best wishes Ian

Its ADVENT! If you receive the URC newsletter by email, you will have a link to Eco Congregation Scotland and their online Eco Advent calendar. There is a short video for each day of Advent, giving you a Christian and green message, or see <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/advent-2025/>



Board Games Evening on 19th December at 7.30pm. Everyone welcome



Christmas Tree Festival

★ ★ **Bitterne United Reformed
Church**

**Saturdays 6th, 13th, 20th and
Wednesdays 10th and 17th
December 2025**

10.00am to 11.30am

**Come and see all the
decorated trees**

Free Admission

On Saturdays
Father Christmas will be
here to see the children
£2.00 with present



BITTERNE LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY



*Riverside
Concert
Band*



Christmas Music

Saturday, 13 December, 2025
Bitterne United Reformed Church
at 7.00 pm

Visitors Welcome - Admission £3.00



Jamaica Emergency Appeal 'Rebuilding Homes and Hope'

Commitment
for Life



Friends

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

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

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

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

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

- 1) Send a cheque – URC Trust (CFL Jamaica appeal)
- 2) Bank Transfer – URC Trust (CFL Jamaica Appeal)
- 3) GoFundMe Appeal (see QR code)

Thank you!

KEVIN SNYMAN
URC Head of World Justice



BITTERNE URC DIRECTORY

e-mail address	bitterneurc_sec@yahoo.co.uk	
Web site address	Bitterneurc.org.uk	
Church Post Code	SO18 5EF	
Church Telephone Number		023 80421844
Minister	Revd Dr Sarah Hall	023 80768004
Minister	Revd Mike Perrott	01794 512163
Church Secretary	Anne Wood	023 80333810
Assistant Church Secretary	Janet Gotham	07790207962
Boys Brigade Contact	Maria Boys	07817154062
Catering Co-ordinator	Jill Abrahams	023 80431067
Choir Leader	David White	07491865120
Christian Aid Representative	Ian Abrahams	023 80431067
Churches Together in Bitterne	Ian Abrahams	023 80431067
Coffee Morning/Steward Rotas	Janet Gotham	023 80329719
Copyright Officer	Helen Fisher	023 80397192
Fire Safety Officer		
Flower Rota	Janet Gotham	07790207962
Girls' Brigade Captain	Rosie Mabey	07766146993
Health & Safety Advisor		
IBRA Secretary	Maria Boys	07817154062
IT Co-ordinator	Tim Fisher	07971363376
Junior Church Leader	Margaret Whale	023 80455100
Lettings Officer	Ian Abrahams	023 80431067
Mercy Collective Coordinator	Anthony Boys	
Organist	Dave White	07491865120
OUTLOOK Editor	Maria Boys	07817154062
Outreach Community Worker	Nikki Fisher	07411975937
Property Maintenance Coordinator	Tim Fisher	07971363376
Safeguarding Officer	Gail Jupp	07435563776
Senior Citizens Contact	Diane Murphy	023 80431727
Synod Representative	Janet Gotham	023 80329719
Holy Saviour Office		023 80685560
Christ the King & St Colman Priest	Father Elijah	023 80449088
Bitterne Park URC contact	Bridget Colwill	023 80477706
Peartree Green URC contact	Eileen Flanagan	07933394310

Items for February OUTLOOK need to be emailed to Maria Boys at mariaj4church@gmail.com by Sunday 18 January 2026
OUTLOOK to be photocopied Saturday 31 January 2026.

SERVICES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES AT BITTERNE URC

			<u>Times</u>
<u>SUNDAY</u>	Family Worship & Junior Church		10.30am
	Family Worship and Sacrament of Holy Communion & Junior Church (3 rd Sunday Monthly)		10.30am
	Boys & Girls Brigades		10.30am
	Parade/Mosaic Service (as announced)		
	JAFFA Puppet Team (as announced)		
<u>MONDAY</u>	Girls' Brigade	6.15pm -	7.45pm
	Boys' Brigade (term time)	6.15pm -	7.45pm
<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	Community Café & Jigsaw Drop In	10.00am -	11.30am
	Wednesday Worship (1 st Wednesday monthly)	11.30am -	12noon
	Elders Meeting (3 rd Wednesday monthly)		7.30pm
	Bible Study House Group (monthly as announced)		7.30pm
<u>THURSDAY</u>	Senior Citizens Badminton	2.00pm -	3.00pm from 6.30pm
<u>FRIDAY</u>	Choir Practice		7.00pm
<u>SATURDAY</u>	Community Cafe	10.00am -	11.30am
	Women's Group (monthly as announced)		11.30am