



St Mary's Parish Church, Portchester

St Mary's News

No 127 May/June 2026



From the Vicar

I hinted in last month's magazine that there might be a May edition of this publication, and I was right. As much as I don't try and create extra work for myself just to appear to you as busy, yet there have been so many good things happening recently which we need to celebrate, and there is so much going on in May that I would hate any of you to miss out.

This magazine is one way of communicating. I once saw a cartoon where two men were discussing forthcoming topics in a society they belonged to. One said, "Oh, I see that next month's talk is on 'Communication'." "That's funny," said the other, "I thought it was on 'Communication'."

It might take a few moments for the penny to drop for that one. Perhaps one was deaf and had misheard, but more likely the other one was not really listening or even aware of what was happening.

Communication is important as part of a healthy church culture. People need to know what's going on. This helps create unity among us, can dispel misunderstanding and maximise support for various events.

St Mary's communicates to its members and outsiders in a variety of ways: this magazine; the weekly notice sheet; our church Facebook page, as well as other local Facebook pages; posters inside and outside; printed flyers; slides on the TV screen in the Tea Room; verbal notices at the 9.30am service, and visual ones at the 11.30am. For all that, we have a lot of members who don't really know what's going on, and who miss out on a great deal. Of course, even with all that, things will slip through the net, but a DAILY newsletter or Facebook page update would be a nightmare to produce! (And would it even be read?)

This magazine has evolved over the years. When I arrived in 2013, I began a 4-page letter called 'Keeping in Touch'. This grew over the years to a little A5 size newsletter. It wasn't a magazine as such, but just an information sheet about what was happening. It was in 2020, during the Covid outbreak, that we went on to a weekly 'St Mary's News'. With no services or meetings, it was a way of keeping our members connected during that challenging time. In 2022, 'Keeping in Touch' was disbanded and amalgamated with 'St Mary's News' and was produced in an A4 colour printed edition, such as you have now. Of course, it has grown in size: maximum 24 pages, but I like to keep it to 20. It is sent by e-mail to 400 addresses and, in addition, we print 100 paper copies. A link to it is also on the front page of the website.

To begin with, it was 'my' newsletter – my way of communicating, and I resisted the usual twee parish magazine diet of recipes, rotas, poems and gardening tips. Although it takes about a day to edit, I actually enjoy it. It allows me to be creative, and also helps remind me of the overview of the whole church. However, it seems to be evolving into more of a magazine format and particularly with other people writing articles. I'd like to encourage more people to write stuff (but please, no poems, crosswords or gardening tips!). I'd like it to become more 'our' magazine.

Of course, communication is a two-way relationship. St Mary's has a great deal to offer by way of teaching, worship, fellowship and social events, but sadly supported and attended by only a comparative small proportion of the congregation. Our people work so hard for all these events and services. We would be greatly encouraged by your support.

God is always speaking to us through nature, conscience, friends, circumstances, silence, bible, etc – but are we listening, and more importantly, are we responding?

Your friend and Vicar, Ian



‘Quiet Revival’ at St Mary’s



It may not be a ‘revival’ in the classical term of the word – multitudes being converted, the presence of God felt powerfully in services, and communities transformed – but something is happening. We’ve had more younger men join our congregation in the past two years than in any years previously. Last month, about a dozen of them sat down at the New Room to a lovely meal provided by Dee Rouse, with Samantha assisting. Mick Mellows from ‘Faith and Football’ and Steve Oliver, our Operations Manager, were also in attendance. After the meal, four or five of the men shared their testimony as to how they had come to faith – some of them from unlikely backgrounds such as drugs, excessive alcohol, promiscuity and a generally worldly secular life; but then something happened...

All felt that the evening was so special and inspiring that we are holding another on **Wednesday 27th May**, and are inviting a few more – we hope to have around 20 this time.

St Mary’s on-board HMS Prince of Wales



That evening was one of Scott Brodrick’s last occasions for a while at St Mary’s before he goes on another deployment trip to, who knows where? (These things are MOD secrets.)

However, Scott has had a real ministry on the ship and is assisting the chaplain, Rev Mark Manders. We gave him 60 copies of the booklet *Try Praying* which have been specifically printed for the military, with a foreword by Bear Grylls.



Mick Mellows also gave Scott a supply of the 'Faith and Football' gospel booklet, and also his book on discipleship, "Feed your Soul", and Scott sent Mick this message:

I've already given out five of the "Feed your Soul" books to five solid men that are buzzing to get started. Funnily enough one of the guys called Romeo from St Vincent instantly recognised "Faith and Football" as he slightly knows Linvoy through his daughter, who I believe plays football"

**55 people at church onboard today.
ABSOLUTELY UNHEARD OF!**



**HMS PRINCE OF WALES
CHAPLAINCY**

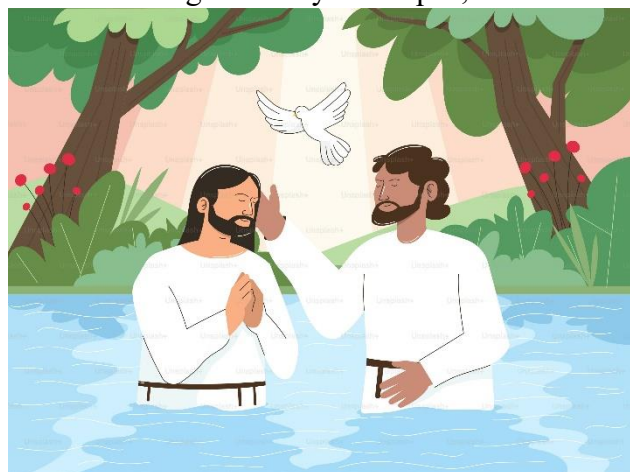
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

- Sunday:** Church Service
- Monday – Friday:**
 - Morning Prayer / Reflection
- Tuesday:** Alpha Course
- Wednesday:**
 - Stand Easy
 - Make & Mend Church with Holy Communion
- Thursday:** Building Faith and Resilience
- Saturday:** Film Night

Spiritual & Cultural Visits each PTVST
Times subject to change. Check Daily Orders.
Chapel Location: 7N. • Chaplain: 5TZ8

Recent adult baptisms

On the evening of Friday 24th April, around 30 of us gathered in the church for the baptism of Callum Wright and Samantha Fincken who have recently come to faith in Christ.



Rev Ian gave a short homily on the symbolism of water each time God is about to do something special in the lives of his people. Each gave a brief testimony of their journey, which was followed by the ancient ceremony of anointing, promises, statement of faith, baptism, then finishing with the anointing with the oil of chrism and the giving of a candle and bible. After the service, we had a little party in the Tea Room with cake and wine. It was a double celebration, as the following day was Sam's birthday, so in April she will be celebrating each year this physical birth spiritual re-birth.

The next baptism by immersion will be held sometime in October at an 11.30 service leading on to the next Confirmation at the cathedral on Saturday 14th November 5.45pm. Anyone interested in Baptism or Confirmation, please contact Rev Ian.

Reflected

By Sharon Pearse

I came out from a shop one cloudy day recently to be almost dazzled by the sun.

Then I realised I was facing north, so it couldn't possibly have been the sun. I checked behind me. Yes, this time I really was dazzled by the sun appearing through a gap in the fairly thick cloud cover. So, the 'sun' that had almost dazzled me before must have been a reflection off something else.

"As all of us reflect the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, we are becoming more like him with ever-increasing glory by the Lord's Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18



As we read God's word, the Bible. As we spend time with God in prayer - Listening to Him as well as speaking! As we allow God the Holy Spirit to point out things to us, and change us to be more like Christ. So, we are changed into the people God created us to be.

And we reflect God's glory to those around us, from unexpected directions. And people who maybe wouldn't dream of looking towards the Son see His glory reflected in us. Us at school - pupil, teacher, support staff, maintenance, Mum, Dad, Grandparent at the school gate. Us in the office - not watching the clock, or walking out with supplies? In the supermarket - stacking shelves, at the checkout, letting others go first, not running our shopping trolley over or into others as we dash round? Not carving up others on the roads, keeping to the speed limit and keeping your temper even?

Because people who wouldn't maybe dream of looking towards the Son, or even the Church, also need to see the glory of the Lord reflected in or by us. So that they too can "look to Him and be radiant".



Father thank You that we can reflect Your light to those around, from often unexpected angles and directions. Lord so shine on us, in us and through us. So reflect from us that others may see Your glory and be drawn to You - wherever we are, whatever we're doing, whenever. For Your glory. Amen.

Paintings of Three Angels

Several years ago, while refurbishing part of the church, we came across these three paintings of angels. These are copies of a painting by the 15th century Italian artist, Fra Angelico who was a Dominican Friar and specialised in religious art. The actual artist is unknown, but they were given to St Mary's by a lady in Alton, north Hampshire, in the late 19th century. They are in poor condition, but we think they are rather nice and would make a good feature. Although not a full restoration (too expensive!), we are having them repaired and set in a reasonable condition. An art shop in Gosport is prepared to do this for us at a cost of around £2,000. If anyone would like to give a donation towards this, that would be much appreciated and acknowledged for posterity. Please have a word with Rev Ian, or Steve Oliver, our Treasurer.



Portchester Lunch Club celebrates 70 years

A ministry to the community which was started 70 years ago continues to provide meals for Portchester's senior citizens. Though no longer run by the church, several of our members continue to support and attend. We particularly remember Janet Lyn who for many years was the organiser, but sadly died a few months ago.

Article by Councillor Paul Whittle



On Thursday 16th April 2026, the Portchester Luncheon Club celebrated 70 years of meetings from 1956 to 2026 with a special gathering at Portchester Parish Hall.

The Club was honoured with an official visit by the Mayor of Fareham, Councillor Louise Clubley, and Councillor Pam Bryant (past Mayor).

Also present were special guests Alderman Nick Walker and Alderman Sue Walker, trustees of the parish hall, former Portchester councillors who support the lunch club.

All four of the current Fareham Borough Councillors for Portchester were also present as guests of the club.

After a welcome by the lunch club organiser Brenda Ross, the parish vicar of St Mary's Church, Rev Canon Ian Meredith, said a prayer of thanksgiving for the lunch club, members and volunteers. A fine lunch of roast beef and trimmings followed by desserts was prepared and served by the volunteers. The weekly raffle was drawn and prizes presented.

After lunch, the Mayor gave a speech congratulating the club on the long-running success and great contribution in the community of Portchester; Councillor Clubley also gave a vote of thanks to the dedicated volunteers who cook and serve the lunches. A celebration cake was cut and shared with everyone; and a display of photographs of past lunches and the 60th anniversary lunch was on display.

The lunch club is one of the longest running and largest clubs in the area. It meets weekly to provide a social gathering and fine cooked lunch meal for senior citizen local residents - some of whom are over 100 years old and others who have attended for over 20 years - at the excellent facilities of Portchester Parish Hall.

CONTACTS:

Brenda Ross – Lunch Club Organiser : brennieboop@hotmail.com 07784564064



Unsung Heroes

This month: Steve and Dawn Traer

Sponsored by Rev Ian

Steve and Dawn are going to hate me for this, and will cringe at the thought of it, as they are two quiet self-effacing people who just get on and do things quietly without a fuss or the need for recognition. However, this month in particular, I just need to say something ...

Both of them are stepping down at this month's APCM after serving on the PCC longer than the normal or even required: Steve (7 years) and Dawn (8 years). They stayed on to help during some challenging times: issues going on a few years ago which very few knew about, but which needed a strong presence of mind to resolve.



In the past few weeks, they have tidied up the memorial stones in the Garden of Remembrance. This area had become very untidy and overgrown and had caused some distress among some people whose relatives' cremated remains lie buried there. The job is not done yet, but they are slowly working on it.

They keep that area generally free from old wreathes, dead flowers, glass jars and plastic flowers, and often have to take abuse from people who object to the removal of these items. But they respond to complaints with compassion and commonsense, often allowing these items to remain far longer than other churchyards or crematorium gardens would allow.

They supervise the rose garden at the Labyrinth, buying, planting and tending the rose bushes on behalf of relatives who purchase them to remember loved ones whose remains are buried there.

Most Fridays sees them (with Marilyn Nash when she was feeling better) cleaning the church. This is not an easy job as the dust and debris coming from the south walls of the church present an ongoing problem.

Steve and Dawn tend to the Communion linen, washing and ironing the various cloths used in the service, known by their Latin names as the corporal, purificator and lavabo towel. These are stained by wine (and lipstick!), yet are returned clean and starched. The larger altar cloths are also laundered by them.



Each week, Steve banks the church cash – some services produce bag loads of cash, all of which is carefully counted, entered and then banked.

They are not paid for any of this, and from their own money have donated several items, none of which they would want mentioned.

We wish them well in their retirement from the PCC, but know that their care for St Mary's will be continued in many ways.

There is a whole army of volunteers who work behind the scenes, and in due time we hope to acknowledge them.

Three rows to the left (after) rows to the right (before – still to be done)

Healing Ministry in America

Scott Brodrick reports on his recent visit to the USA

Scott has served in the Royal Navy for 16 years. Six years ago, he came to Christ at St Mary's and is currently discerning ordained ministry within the Church of England.



In April, I was fortunate enough to be invited to the 'Welcome Home Initiative' at Galilee Episcopal Church (Anglican) in Norfolk, Virginia. This is a healing ministry led by Rev Nigel Mumford, (*second from right*) an exceptional man, far beyond what my words can fully capture. A former Royal Marine drill instructor who saw combat during 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland, the Lord has faithfully used him for decades to bring healing to veterans suffering from PTSD and moral injury.

My chaplain, Rev Mark Mander RN, (*second from left*) had previously served in Norfolk, Virginia, and worshipped at Galilee. He was invited to the 'Welcome Home Initiative' as staff, and very kindly took me along with him.

Before travelling, I wasn't sure how I would fit in. I'm not yet a priest, and although I serve in the Armed Forces, I don't suffer from PTSD. I felt caught in a strange middle ground though in truth, I was the only one concerned about it. I was welcomed with open arms and a warmth that quickly put that fear to rest. I should have remembered to trust in the Lord's calling.

I have to admit that, before going to America, my understanding of healing ministry was fairly limited. I knew that God heals; my own testimony includes miraculous healing that I still struggle to fully comprehend, but I often viewed healing as something distant. Something that might happen... or might not. And I always associated it with the physical, rarely considering the healing of trauma, memory, and emotion. Yet Scripture is clear: "*He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds*" (Psalm 147:3). Not just physical wounds but the hidden ones, too.

I'm not ashamed to say that I cried more in those few days than I have in the past decade. Since becoming a Christian, the Lord has softened my heart, and I couldn't help but weep at the stories I heard. Tears of sorrow and tears of joy. Nigel taught us to anoint a cross on our foreheads with our tears. Even Christ wept in the garden of Gethsemane. "*Jesus wept*" (John 11:35). Our God is not distant from suffering; he enters into it.



During the initiative, I met extraordinary people. Men and women who had served their country with honour, yet carried deep, invisible wounds. People living with trauma that shapes their everyday lives. And I witnessed the Lord begin to bring healing through His presence, working through prayer, compassion, and the faithful

ministry team. *“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (Psalm 34:18).

One of the first things that struck me was Nigel’s sense of humour. “Forgive me, Father, for I have grinned,” he would often say. And it mattered. Laughter, even in the midst of pain, felt like medicine. As Scripture says, *“A cheerful heart is good medicine”* (Proverbs 17:22). It made me wonder whether, as Christians, we’ve forgotten how to laugh, even while walking through darkness.

Two aspects of the ministry particularly stood out to me: reframing trauma and prayer. Reframing trauma involved revisiting painful memories but, this time, inviting Jesus into them. Not as a distant observer, but as Emmanuel *“God with us”* (Matthew 1:23). To return to those moments and ask: Where was Christ? And to begin to see that He was not absent, but present in the suffering.

For many, trauma holds power because it feels isolated, like a moment where God was nowhere to be found. But reframing allows that lie to be challenged. When Christ is invited into the memory, something shifts. You begin to see His compassion, His nearness, His grief over what happened. He is not condemning you in that moment, he is standing with you in it.



Reframing does not erase the event. It doesn’t pretend it didn’t happen. But it transforms how it is held. The memory is no longer a place of isolation, but a place where Christ’s presence is revealed. What was once only pain can begin to hold peace.

Prayer was another area that deeply challenged me. I realised how often I pray in generalities. Safe, broad prayers that avoid the deeper wound. But the prayer I witnessed here was intentional, specific, and led by the Holy Spirit.

The team took time to understand each person’s story. They listened carefully,

because to pray effectively, we needed to identify the root, not just the symptoms. I also saw the importance of inviting Jesus not just into our present struggles, but into our past. Bringing everything into the light.

One thing the Lord placed strongly on my heart during my time there was identity. So often we define ourselves by our role, our past, our pain, or our struggles. But as Christians, our identity is not in what has happened to us, it is in Christ. *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”* (Galatians 2:20). That means we are not bound by trauma. Not defined by suffering. Not held captive by our past. There is freedom in remembering who we truly are.

I could speak about my experiences in America for hours, and they will always hold a precious place in my heart. But what I now know with certainty is this: God still heals today. As Nigel says, not everyone is cured but everyone is healed. I witnessed veterans who had suffered for years begin a journey of healing through love, compassion, prayer, anointing, blessing, and even laughter. And I truly believe we are called to be more open, more expectant, and more generous in praying for healing for ourselves and for others.

For those who want to learn more, I would strongly encourage you to explore the ministry of Nigel Mumford; his teachings, his interviews, and his work speak for themselves. His podcast with J John is fantastic.

‘Try Praying’

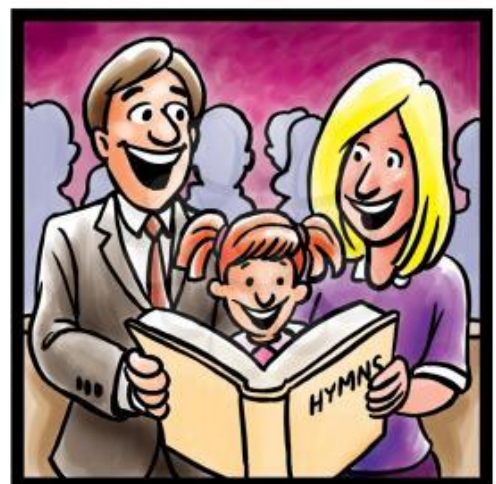
This month, we are joining in a national outreach called ‘Try Praying’. Posters will be seen on buses and other public places. The idea behind it is that, while most people might not go to church, be Christians, and some not even believe in God – almost everyone prays at some time! So, the idea of praying is not as alien to people as we may think. There is great potential here. On 17th May, we will show a short promotional video clip and will have copies of the booklet for anyone who wants one. The idea is that you use it yourself for seven days, but then think of who you could give it away to. There have been some great testimonies as to how this booklet has led people to start thinking about the Christian faith more seriously. As mentioned earlier, we have already given 60 of these for the crew of HMS Prince of Wales and a similar number to Portsmouth Sea Cadets. In addition, a special teens edition has been given to the youngsters from our ‘Youth Alpha Plus’ group, and will be given to the children of Junior Church on 17th May, which will be the theme of our ‘Third Sunday Special’ that month.



Hymns you like

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:19). Although there aren’t many references in the New Testament to the early Christians singing, we believe that song was still part of their worship. At St Mary’s, we have a wide variety of music and songs. At the 9.30am Parish Eucharist, we tend to sing more traditional hymns, but also modern ones in the ‘hymn type’ genre (*Speak O Lord as we come to you; In Christ alone; Before the throne of God above*). At the 11.30am, we sing some traditional hymns in a more contemporary style, but also newer songs as well. We think our congregations like the hymns and songs we choose.

The 9.30am hymns are chosen by the Vicar to reflect the sermon, readings or the period of the Church Year. The 11.30am songs are chosen by Pauline and Sharon Barr.



However, we would like to know if there are any particular hymns we don’t sing much which you would like us to introduce (particularly at the 9.30am service). Please either let Rev Ian or Judith, our organist, know. If we don’t hear from you, we will assume all is well and will continue with our present repertoire.

Farewell to Cathy Richardson

Cathy Richardson, a regular member of our 11.30am service, will soon be returning to Bristol to be with her sons and five sisters. The daughter of a Baptist minister, her career was in nursing. As a passionate environmentalist, she helped create a wildflower garden in the churchyard and often contributed articles on Christian stewardship of the environment for our magazine. We will miss her. At the 11.30am service on 26th April, Pauline read this appreciation and Sally prayed for her. We signed a specially made card.

Pauline writes,

“Up until last year, Cathy has been coming regularly to the 11:30am service at St Mary's, and faithfully singing in the worship music group. She joined us from the very beginning of this Late Morning Service which was in 2018, when we had only monthly services.

It has been great working with Cathy. She has always been totally committed, loyal and dependable, not only in singing beautifully, but she also used to help by choosing the songs once a month.

She has been a good friend to many of us here, but now, very sadly, she is very unwell and she has made the decision to move back to Bristol to be close to her five sisters and her own two sons, all of whom love her very much, and will give her the support she now needs.

Cathy sang in two choirs, but always prioritised practising and singing at church. She is the one who could reach the top notes that nobody else could!

She always knew when to come in at the right place, even if I didn't remember to bring her in!

Cathy didn't just sing, she would regularly do the Bible reading, and she was involved in a group taking school assemblies in the area.

We are going to miss her SO much for all that she has contributed to St Mary's but, above all, we will miss her as a lovely friend.

When we knew she was planning to leave Portchester and move to Bristol, we told her that, as a church, we would like to give her a gift, but typically she said that it was quite unnecessary, adding that she is trying to minimise her belongings, and so she wondered if the church might like instead to give a donation to charity.

We are giving her a picture of Portchester to hang on the wall in her new flat, as a reminder of her time here, and will make a donation to her chosen charity when she lets us know.

Sally's prayer:

“Dear Heavenly Father,

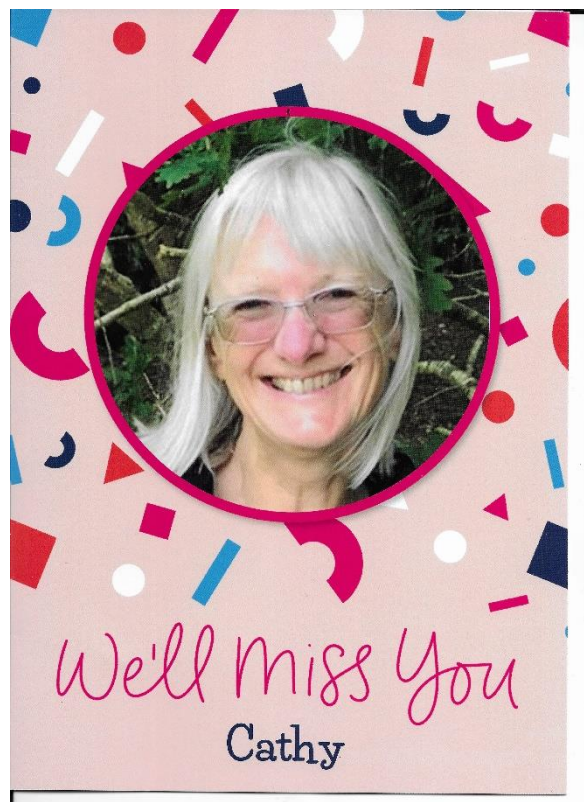
We thank You and praise You for Cathy and we feel so very blessed to have known her and thrilled that she has been a part of our Christian Family here at St Mary's.

We are so sad that she has a progressive neurological illness and so is now unable to come to Church and be with us here.

Thank You, dear LORD, for all the gifts, talents and skills you have given her: her beautiful singing voice and heart for worship, her work in our local schools and always being ready to help whenever it was needed, for being the most wonderful friend and her stunning smile!

We ask You, Lord, to bless her with the strength that she needs for each and every day. Bless her move away from Portchester back to Bristol to be close to her family.

We commit her and her every need to Your Sovereign and Perfect care. In Jesus' Mighty Name we pray. AMEN.



Children's Work Report April 2026

From Amy Sparks, Children's Worker

Easter! Children's work was full-on this year, with junior church, café church, lambs, assemblies, holiday club, and all sorts. What a great opportunity to focus on what really matters – Jesus, the gospel, and hope.

St Mary's Lambs had a very busy term, some weeks seeing 20 families! We read about Jesus and the Donkey and we heard the Easter story. The Lambs enjoyed cutting practice using palm leaves, making big Easter crafts and bunny cress seed gardens to take home. The Lambs had Real Easter Eggs and we had several Easter story books for them to take home, too. Thank you Lambs' team for your commitment through a busy term.



In March, we raised £200 for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance through donations and by having a books and toy sale. This wonderful charity has been a great support to one of our Lambs' families, so we were very glad to donate this money. Thank you so much to everyone who donated.



St Mary's Schools Team has been to all four of our local Primary Schools this Easter. We delivered different versions of our Easter assemblies for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children. There has been great participation from the children, the focus was on thinking about hope in the Easter story and how can they have hope for the world around them and in their own lives. There was, of course, much excitement for all that Easter and Springtime brings.

We visited Year R in Wicor Primary to tell the Easter story and help with Easter Bonnet making. The Year R children then came to St Mary's to give an Easter presentation for their families, parading their Easter bonnets.

Junior Church has been well attended in the last couple of months. We have had various sessions including Mother's Day, Palm Sunday and Easter. The children made some lovely floral crafts for Mother's Day, and they enjoyed making their own kitchen roll tube donkeys for Palm Sunday. On Easter Sunday, the children had fun racing eggs on the floor using only their noses to push them along! We decorated eggs with paint, shaving foam and food colouring. The children took it in turns to read the story aloud and decorated suncatcher crosses. The highlight for all of them was, of course, the chocolate Easter egg hunt!



Café Church ran for the last time before Easter and we had a great session from Leigh talking about Holy Week with a focus on Palm Sunday. The children loved making their own palm leaves and re-enacted Jesus arriving into Jerusalem on a donkey. They were shouting Hosanna! and we even had our soft toy Jesus riding down the aisle and helping to act out the different parts of the story.

Third Sunday Special ran for the first time in April – also led by Leigh! We had Lego Church, which the children loved. Leigh told the story of the road to Emmaus followed by discussion about why the disciples didn't recognise Jesus at first, how Jesus is alive now and is with us even when we don't realise it. The children then got into teams and made Lego models of different parts of the story. This was enjoyed by each age group and we saw some great designs. Thank you Leigh for the time, care and energy you put into this.



Children's Ministry – We so often hear that 'children are the future of the church'. This is true, however, children are also the church now. We are blessed at St Mary's to know a wonderful group of children each of whom are on their own faith journeys now. Each of whom are full of spirit now and can serve in their own ways now. One excellent example of this is our dear Clara aged 7. I asked some of the children if they would decorate some cards that Sue could give to members of the congregation when they were unwell at home or in hospital. Clara went above and beyond, she painted some beautiful cards, and then she painted more! Thank you Clara, the cards are beautiful and they have been made with love.

Holiday Club ran for two afternoons at the Scout hut with 14 children one afternoon and 17 another. We heard the Easter story across the two days, played games, made crafts, did an Easter trail, and the weather was nice, so the children enjoyed their outdoor time with the sports equipment. The children were fantastic and it was a pleasure to share this time with them as always. On the third day, we had a film afternoon in church to watch



The King of Kings. The children enjoyed popcorn and did some crafts while watching the film. Thank you to a fabulous team whose participation and encouragement of the children amazed me and was one of my highlights of the week.

We would love more people to join the children's ministry team, especially for Junior Church on Sundays. If this is something you have been thinking about and would like to help or lead in some capacity, please do speak with me or send me an email: childrensworker@stmary-portchester.org.uk

9.30am Junior Church

I am just updating our junior church rotas. I would like to pause the 9.30am junior church for now. We continue to only have Terry, myself, Steve and Sue to run this on the first two Sundays in the month, and numbers are between 0 and 4 children.

If at some point in the future we have more leaders, we could think about starting again. (Though, if we had more leaders, the priority would more likely be to put the vestry to use once per month for a teens/older children's 11.30am session, as that is something we are still missing.)

On the Sundays that I am in church for the 9.30am, I will continue to set up the children's area, and the clipboards will be out for the children to take to the pews too. It would be nice to have children more involved in the 9.30am services. Could they be asked if they would like to read any of the prayers or bible readings, if it fits in? Younger children could be asked if they would like to carry the collection basket. We are also thinking of re-starting our Young Servers Team. If your child might be interested, please contact Rev Ian.

New youth and children's ministries starting this month

Young Disciples – Our new group will be starting in May for three sessions initially. This is for children aged around 8-12 and will be an interactive group with activities, games, discussion and prayer. The aim is to learn about Jesus, God's word, and to grow in faith alongside friends. Please contact me with any queries or to register your child if they would like to come along.

? Where?

Portchester Parish Hall - Small Room.

🕒 When?

Thursday evenings - May 7th 14th and 21st, from 5pm - 6.30pm.

👤 Who is it for?

Anyone aged around 8-12 that would like to grow in their faith alongside their friends, learn more about Jesus and how to apply the teachings of Jesus to their everyday lives.

✝️ What will we do?

This will be a fun, interactive group with games and hands-on activities, time for discussion, learning and prayer and thinking of ways we want to serve in our church and community.

👥 Who are the team?

Leigh and Aline, Leroy and Dillon, Sharon P and myself (Amy). We can't wait to start this journey with the children!

If this sounds like something your child would like to try, please register and come along on the dates specified. If this goes well, we hope to add further dates after the half term!

🍵 *Due to the timings, if your child would like to bring their tea with them, they are welcome. We will provide additional snacks.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Amy Sparks.

Youth Alpha Plus (For teens)



and wonder if there are any others?

It is for young people aged between 13-18.

We will meet in the Parish Hall twice a month, on the 1st and 3rd Fridays from 7pm – 9pm, starting on 1st May.

Please pray for the success of this group.

St Mary's
Portchester

Portchester Parish Hall (small room)
Assheton Court, PO16 9PY

May 2026:
Thursday 7th
Thursday 14th
Thursday 21st
5-6.30pm

young
disciples

A fun, interactive discipleship
group for children aged 8-12
to grow in faith together,
learn about Jesus and how to
apply God's word to their
everyday lives

Please contact Amy for more details:
childrensworker@stmary-portchester.org.uk

High Tide Summer camp

A promotional graphic for the High Tide Summer camp. The left side features a blue background with white and red text: 'SIGN UP HERE FOR HIGH TIDE SUMMER SPECIAL 2026 NOW!', '£195pp', 'SAT 15th- WED 19th AUGUST', and 'FAIRTHORNE MANOR'. Below this is the Scripture Union logo. The right side shows a photograph of a young girl in a blue tube floating down a water slide, with other children watching. A large QR code is in the top right corner, and a circular 'HIGH TIDE' logo is in the bottom right corner of the photo area.

**SIGN UP HERE FOR
HIGH TIDE SUMMER
SPECIAL 2026 NOW!**

£195pp

SAT 15th- WED 19th AUGUST

FAIRTHORNE MANOR

Scripture Union

HIGH TIDE

It is our aim to pay for every young person from St Mary's who would like to go. This includes those who attend our new Youth Alpha Plus. Last year, we made quite a bit of money at the Fireworks Display to pay for this, but there is likely to be a shortfall.

If anyone would like to sponsor a young person, please let Rev Ian or the Treasurer, Steve Oliver, know. This could either be for a young person you know, or just a general donation.

IS IT YOU?

Ministries in the Church of England

One of the signs of the Holy Spirit working at St Mary's and the growing maturity of the discipleship of many of our members is the growing sense of a calling to ministry. The Church of England, and St Mary's in particular, is very much ahead of the game in encouraging ministry both lay and ordained.

Ministry can be at all sorts of levels including Reader, Pioneer, Youth Minister, Anna Chaplain, Evangelist, Lay Pastoral Assistant, Lay Worship Leader, Lay Preacher, or as an ordained Priest, or even as part of a religious community.

Rev Ian is leading a Preachers' Workshop this month (the list is now full), and it is hoped that from that group, some new preachers will emerge. At first, some will be giving homilies and shorter reflections at various mid-week services.

The Diocese is putting on a Roadshow on Saturday 9th May 9.30am at St Luke's Church, Southsea called **'It's Your Call'**. You will have the opportunity to meet with and chat to some of the Vocations Team and some specialists. Please speak to Rev Ian or Rev Elizabeth if you are interested.

Sermons on the Lord's Prayer

Rev Ian will be finishing his series of sermons at the 9.30am Parish Eucharist on the Lord's Prayer this month:

May 3rd – Lead us not into temptation

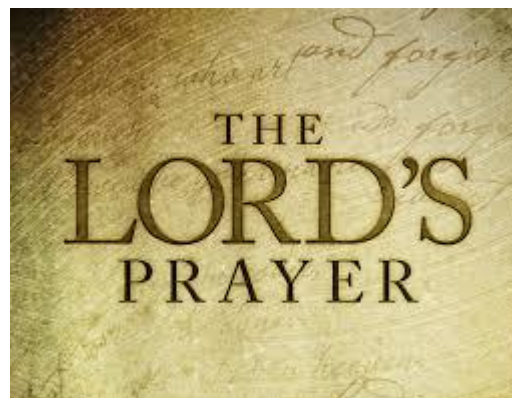
May 10th – Deliver us from evil

May 17th – Kingdom, power and glory.

These sermons can also be listened to through the church website on:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqgh9ekis0vvTRvSpVYjDWw>

It's so easy to just say these oft repeated words without really thinking what they mean. Rev Ian suggests in this series that if some people really know what these phrases meant – they would not want to say the Lord's Prayer again in case it got answered, which might be the last thing they want, but probably the main thing they need!



Sunday Evening services

This month also brings our summer series of evening services to an end with Rev Ian preaching on:

'Three Women in the New Testament':

May 3rd – Mary Magdalene 'Apostle to the Apostles'

May 10th – Lydia: the open hearted

May 17th – Dorcas: the open handed.

Evening services are held at the Parish Hall at 6pm; not every week, but as a series in the Spring/early summer and then autumn/early winter.

Ladies' Breakfast

These are held on the first Saturday of the month at 9.00am in the Parish Hall. The next one is on 2nd May to which all ladies are welcome. No need to book. We have a series of interesting speakers on practical topics. The speaker for May is Fiona Mackintosh on 'Healthy & Independent Living Support'.



Men's Breakfast

These are held on the second Saturday of the month at the church from 8am – 9.45am. The May one will be the last for this session (they recommence on 12th September). Our speaker this month is David Pearse on 'Lost churches of Portsmouth'. All welcome.



Annual Prayer Walk: Saturday 9th May

Each year at Rogationtide, we observe the traditional 'Beating the bounds of the parish'. By traversing one third of the boundary each year, we will have gone round the whole parish every three years. We use this to bless our parish and, every so often, we stop and have a time of prayer. We pray for the protection of Portchester, for its children and vulnerable, its businesses, schools, gardens and people.

This year we travel the western and northern boundaries.

Meeting at Rockingham Way, we will go round the Crematorium, up Portsdown Hill, Fort Nelson, Portchester Common, and Anson Grove, ending at the Highslopes Community Centre.

This route is the most challenging in terms of length and terrain, and you need not do all of it. Drop out when you want. Full details are on the notice board.

Ascension Day – 14th May

Today marks the end of the 40-day Easter Season when we remember Christ ascending back into heaven after completing his earthly ministry, in order to begin his heavenly reign. This used to be a very important date in the Church of England and, in living memory of some, schools were closed on that day. We will be having a Eucharist at 7.30pm, which we hope will be well attended.

Saturday 23rd May – Vision Morning with Rev Neil Smart

Parish Hall 9.30am – 1.00pm

- Are you a leader or a potential leader?
- Have you attended an Alpha course and would like to know what the next steps are?
- Are you interested in helping us develop the vision for St Mary's?
- Would you like to know how to help others on their spiritual journey?

As part of our strategy to growing disciples at St Mary's, you are invited to a Vision Morning to be led by Rev Neil Smart the Diocesan Lead for Revive. Neil led this day in February, and so enthusiastic was the response that we felt it should be opened up to the wider church.

The Rev Neil Smart's role is to help those in spiritual leadership in our diocese to have faith that is vibrant, growing, deep, and attractive. It's part of our [diocesan strategy](#) for the next five years, which aims to [Revive](#), [Revitalise](#) and [Renew](#) the Church in this area.

The conference will finish around 1.00pm with a sandwich lunch, but you are welcome to leave before that. We are hoping that a half day rather than a full day will attract more people to come.

You can sign up via the notice board, Parish Hall or let Rev Ian know. As we need to know how many to cater for, please let us know as soon as you can, but by **17th May** at the latest.





Pentecost Sunday – 24th May

Today we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the early Church in order for them to continue the ministry of Jesus. It is our tradition to encourage as many as possible to wear red on that day – the liturgical colour, representing the red flames of Pentecostal fire!

It is also the commemoration in the Church of England calendar of the conversion of John Wesley (24th May

1738) and of his brother Charles who wrote all of the hymns we will be singing at the 9.30am Parish Eucharist.

John Wesley was not the founder of the Methodist Church (as if often mistakenly claimed). Along with his brother Charles and George Whitfield they became the leaders of a renewal movement within the Church of England nicknamed ‘Methodism’. It was only after their death that many of their converts left the Church of England to form a new denomination - The Methodist Church.



Fareham Deanery Event on the evening of Pentecost Sunday: Praise, Prayer and Pizza

At 6.30pm on Pentecost Sunday, Fareham Deanery will be hosting an event which will be supported by churches from all over the Deanery – we hope that Portchester people will also come! At 6pm, we have Pizza and Fellowship, and then at 7pm we have a service of Praise and Prayer led by the team from Holy Rood, Stubbington.

APCM

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Tuesday 26th May 7.00pm at the church

This is the ‘AGM’ of the church when we give an account of our stewardship and reflect on the year 2025. Copies of the annual report and accounts will be sent to everyone on the Electoral Roll by e-mail, and there will be a few paper copies.

It is normally the accounts which raise most questions, and the Treasurer (Steve Oliver) would appreciate questions in advance of the meeting – so that he can give the correct answer.

Electoral Roll. This is the nearest we have to a church membership, and by being on it indicates your closer commitment to the church and the ability to take a greater role in its life. Forms will be made available at each service.

We also elect:

Churchwardens. These are currently Denise Simmons and Ian Parker, both of whom are willing to be re-elected, but this does not stop anyone else being put forward.

Deanery Reps – to represent St Mary's on the Deanery Synod which meets about three times each year. Currently, they are: Gerry Anderson, Peter Bradley and Steve Oliver. All have indicated their willingness to be re-elected.

Lay members of the PCC (Parochial Church Council) which meets about 9 times per year.

There will be 7 vacancies. Tanya Simpson, Steve Traer and Dawn Traer have now come off (allowing three new members). Chris Hayes, Ray Norman, Mark Woods and Elaine Johnson have served 3 years and need to be re-elected for a further 3 years.

There is nothing to stop others being nominated for Churchwardens, Deanery Reps and PCC members, in which case there would be an election by secret ballot. Nomination forms are available from Denise Simmons as Electoral Roll Officer, but must all be returned two weeks prior to the meeting (**12th May**).

The following type of people would **not enjoy** the PCC and would have resigned within the first year:

- **The Nosey.** Those who just want to know what goes on. We don't talk about people in the church, we don't share pastoral confidences, minutes are available to read at the Parish Office, and most of the business discussed ends up as articles in this magazine anyway.
- **The Enforcers.** This person comes on to the PCC in order to "sort us out". Unfortunately for them, there are also 18 other people who have opinions and we tend to agree on the way forward by consensus.
- **The Impatient.** The wheels grind slowly, and some things are still on the agenda months (or even years later!). This is because we are often slowed down by red-tape and inaction from outside bodies, committees and companies. Most of the church work is done by volunteers, and they do things at their own pace.

Seriously, some people's gifts are best used in other areas, particularly spiritual and practical ministries such as mission, pastoral care, preaching, youth work, etc. But if you think the PCC is for you, we'd be delighted if you joined us.

D-Day Memorial Service for Veterans – Sunday 31st May 2.00pm.

This service – to which you are all invited - is an annual event to honour our local war veterans. It will be conducted by Rev Ian Meredith, Rev Adam Gay and Commander Steve Shaw, and will be followed by a Tea. We have invited the Mayor, and other local dignitaries.

This will also be the first occasion when the new Portchester Volunteer Marching Band will be out on parade, so we hope that a good many of you will also stand outside and encourage and support them in this exciting new musical project for our village.

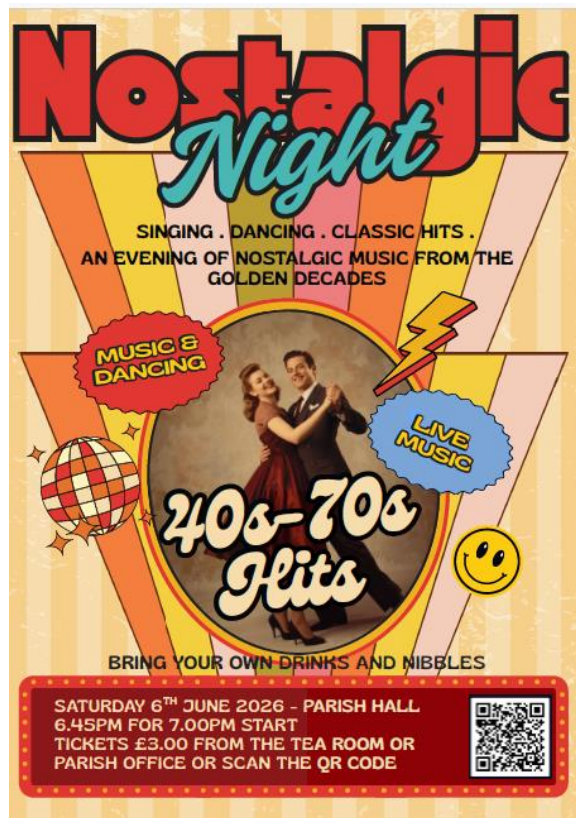
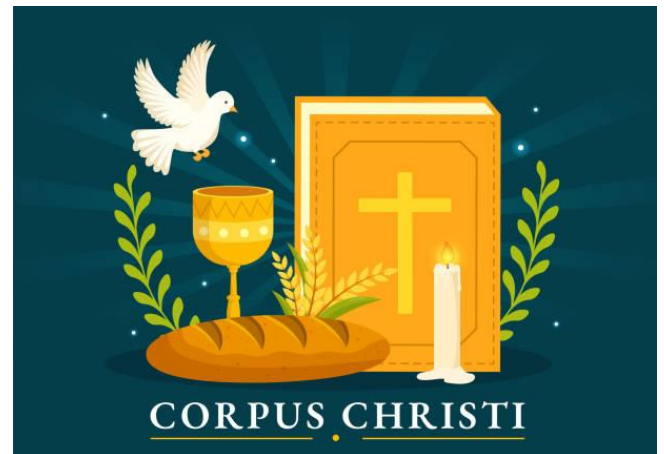


Events and Services in



The Feast of Corpus Christi – Thursday 4th June

‘Corpus Christi’ is Latin for ‘The Body of Christ’ and is the annual special service of **Thanksgiving for the Holy Communion**. It is an occasion to think particularly of what this sacrament means and to give thanks for this means of grace. The Eucharist will be at 7.30pm.



Summer Social: ‘Nostalgia Night – Music through the ages’

Saturday 6th June 7.00pm at the Parish Hall

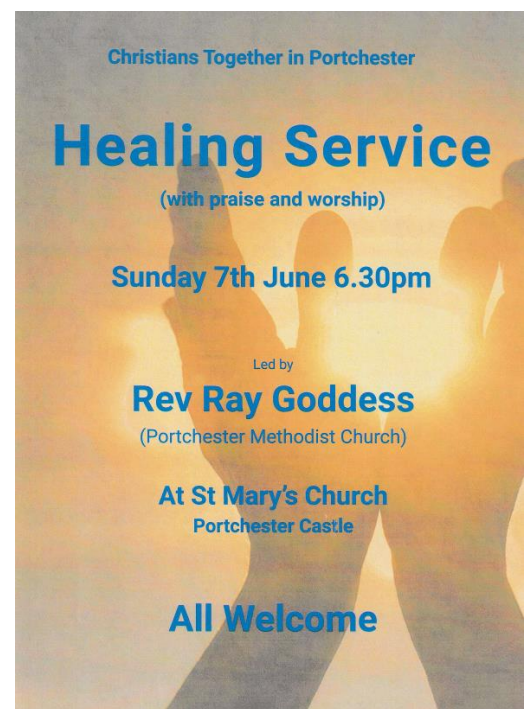
This will be our ‘summer social’ and we hope that many members of the church as well as outside friends will come along. The entertainment will be provided by Kathy Snowden who will sing songs from the 1940s – 1970s. Kathy, who plays at our 11.30am and evening services, hails from Doncaster in Yorkshire, where for many years she was a professional singer in Working Men’s Clubs and various other venues before coming down to London.

You can get up and dance if you want, or just sit and listen to the music. Bring your own drink and nibbles. We are just asking for £3 per ticket – which is a

great bargain and is just being used to cover the rent of the hall. Tickets can be got from the Tea Room, Parish Office or by using the QR code on the poster.

Healing Service – Sunday 7th June 6.30pm

Held under the auspices of ‘Christians Together in Portchester’, this will bring friends from the other churches in the village to St Mary’s. The service will be led by Rev Ray Goddess of Portchester Methodist Church, and there will be opportunities for the sick to be prayed with.





★ PARENTING COURSES ★

Parenting Course

After the successful parenting course held at the Hub on Thursday evenings and led by Rev Elizabeth, we have offered this course on Wednesdays to the parents of St Mary’s Lambs, and so this will be held after their session at 12 noon starting on Wednesday 10th June. Details and booking from Rev Elizabeth.

Portchester Gala – Saturday 13th June

The annual Gala run by the Community Association will be held in the castle and church grounds from 11am – 4pm. This is a great opportunity for St Mary’s to raise funds through our Tea Room, BBQ,

various stalls and also to meet our many friends from the community. When the weather is very warm or very wet – the church is full of people!

Seniors outing to Stansted Garden Centre

Saturday 27th June. This is organised each year by Bryan Jerrard and is an opportunity to take several of our seniors out for the day to the garden centre. This always includes a lovely cream tea. We are always looking for volunteer drivers. Please see Bryan if you can help, and to thank you, you will be given a free cream tea!



Parking

Please ensure that only cars with blue badges or those with known and obvious mobility issues (church permits can be obtained from the office). These should only be parked along the churchyard wall from the notice board to the Sea Gate. Please do not park on or along the grass. With summer visitor numbers to the castle and grounds increasing, parking will become an issue. It can sometimes cause tensions between us and the castle. There is plenty of free parking in Castle Street and surrounding areas, but again, during summer these will be at a premium.



Pastoral Visitors

The church is in urgent need of more pastoral visitors. If you have a few hours to spare during the week or at any time, please prayerfully consider helping with this valuable ministry. Please come and speak to Sue Oliver, or contact the Parish Office.

News from Fareham Deanery



Retirement of Mike and Nicky Sue Terry

Revds Mike and Nicky-Sue Terry announced today at St Mary's Warsash Annual Parochial Church Meeting that they will be moving on to pastures new. They write:

“Mike will retire, and Nicky-Sue resign, as of 13th September 2026. This month marks 12 years since the announcement of our appointment as Joint Priests in Charge of St Mary's and our leaving date will be 13 years since we first arrived here as Interim Curates. The intervening years have flown by and have brought us much joy as we have served the Lord with and among our much-loved church family in this wonderful parish. We are deeply grateful to our gracious God and to colleagues, parishioners and friends near and far for being on this journey of faith with us. We thank the Lord for his faithfulness and are full of anticipation as His plans and purposes for us all continue to unfold.”

Fareham Mayor, Cllr Louise Clubley wrote on the diocesan Facebook: “A most wonderful couple who have embraced Warsash. All the best to both of you for the future.”

Former Council Leader, Sean Woodward wrote, “Thank you for all of your ministry, help and guidance over the last 12 years. Be it as multiple mayors' chaplains, looking after my Armistice Day service at Sarisbury or for just being there so ingrained in our local community.”

Former Mayor, Mike Ford wrote, “Little more that I can say that I didn't this morning. You've both been great friends of Anne and I for all of these years. Your wonderful support as Chaplains during our 2 Mayoral years was fabulous. Thank you both personally and for all that you've done at St Mary's and for the Warsash community. Still 5 months to enjoy before your well-earned retirement.

Local Iranian Christians are praying for democracy

(From Portsmouth Diocese website)

“IT is incredibly hard to see your home country being bombed – but it might be the only way to change a brutal, corrupt regime.”

That’s the view of some Iranian Christians worshipping in churches in Portsmouth. They may have fled Iran because of its repression, but they often still have family and friends living there. They’re praying not just for peace, but for a switch to democracy in their home country.

Our churches include worshippers from a huge variety of countries, some of whom were Christians before arriving in the UK, and others who have found faith since. And differences in culture, styles of worship and experiences of God add richness to our church communities.



Bishop Jonathan St Margaret's

Behnoosh Ajdadi, 57, was among those who came to the UK from Tehran in 2022 with her twin children Rozhina, and Arshia, who are now both 19. She found a home at **St Margaret's Church in Southsea**. In fact, the church welcomes so many Iranian Christians that it displays its song lyrics and congregational responses in Farsi as well as English.

“I came here as an asylum seeker having become a Christian in Iran,” she said. “My daughter had been ill with cancer and I asked a vicar to pray for her. While he was praying in the church, Jesus touched my heart and I asked Jesus to help too. We went to hospital for her operation, and the doctor said ‘What has happened? We can’t see the cancer in her windpipe any more’. It was a miracle.

“So I started to go to a house church in secret in Iran. The government came and arrested my friends, so I ran away. I actually travelled to different cities and then through Turkey. And when I arrived in the UK, there was still a lockdown from Covid.

“I came to St Margaret’s on my 11th day here, and realised they had a community shop where they were selling second-hand clothes. I asked the vicar for clothes for my son and daughter, and he insisted on giving me some too. He invited me to his home for dinner, and we started to come each Sunday. It is great that we are able to worship in Farsi as in Iran we can’t even worship in our mother tongue.

And Marie*, 42, also found a home at St Margaret’s Church in Southsea. “I asked a university friend about church and came to St Margaret’s because other Iranians come here. It was a Wednesday night, and they were running an Alpha Course, so I joined in with that. “I started coming on Sundays, and I felt better. And we prayed for my sister, and she recovered from her injuries. I decided to get baptised in July 2025, and that was a massive change for me. I can’t put into words how I felt, but something happened in my heart, and I started to walk with Jesus. Now I’m at St Philip’s in Cosham and on the welcome team.

“Back in Iran, I had had some feelings about becoming a Christian. The Islamic regime is so brutal and corrupt that people either become Christians or atheists. I had been involved in protests in 2022 during the ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ movement. Thousands of people were arrested, tortured and killed, and I came very close to being shot in the street.

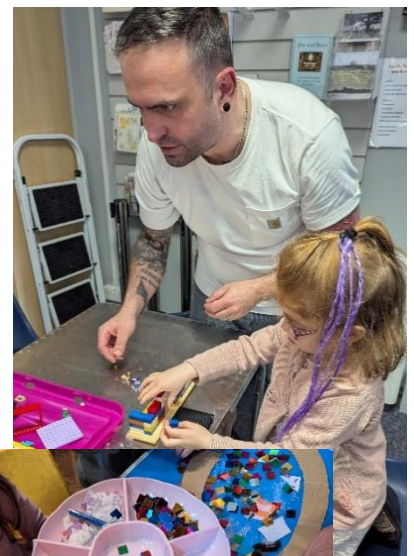
“In the most recent protests in January 2026, the situation escalated significantly, with more than 45,000 people reported to have been killed in just over two nights. Sadly, I also lost my cousin.

“It has been 47 years since the Islamic Marxist coup. Before that, Christians, Jews and Muslims used to live together peacefully in Iran under the Shah, and people experienced democracy then. But the Islamic Republic have slaughtered so many of our own people or put them in jail. And the taxes that we pay help to fund the military and terrorist groups around the world, while we get poorer.

“The regime did kill 40,000 people, and I don’t think dictators change their behaviour,” he said. “Before the bombing, I think Trump did try diplomacy, but it didn’t work. As a Christian, I do believe that war is bad and I would love there to be peace. But I would also like there to be democracy and freedom. In the UK, you have the freedom to pray and read the Bible, and I would like that for my home country.”

** names changed to protect those interviewed.*

More photos from our children’s activities



**Sunday Services: 8.00am; 9.30am & 11.30am (church in the castle)
& 6.00pm (Parish Hall)**

Wednesdays 6.30pm at the church and Fridays 10am at the Parish Hall.

Parish Office: Portchester Parish Hall, Assheton Court, Portchester, PO16 9PY

Tel: 02392 321380; E-mail: office@stmary-portchester.org.uk

Office hours: Tuesday – Thursday 9am – 4pm; Friday 9am – 1.00pm

Website: www.stmary-portchester.org.uk

Vicar: Rev Canon Dr Ian Meredith, Tel: 02392 375422; E-mail: irev@ymail.com