

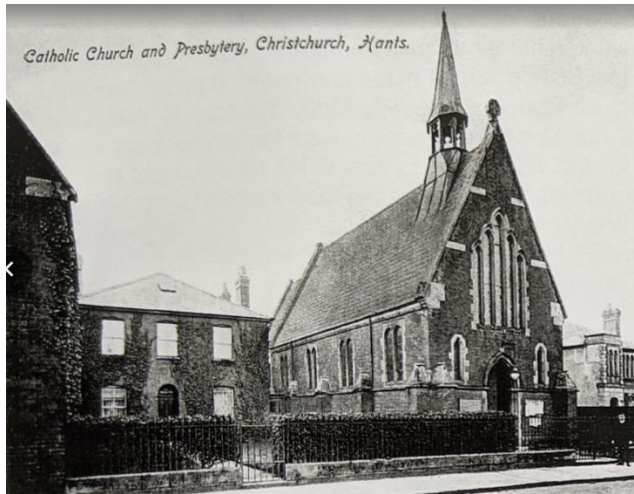
**Parish of the Immaculate Conception & St Joseph
(often known as “St Joseph’s”)**

Purewell, Christchurch BH23 1EH

160 years (1866 – 2026)

Parish Showcase

1866



2026



A message from our Parish Priest

Dear Friends

Firstly welcome to St Joseph's Showcase, where we can see and be thankful for the excellent work of so many stewards to the community as they work with dedication, love and personal generosity, which in turn allows us to celebrate the Holy Mass and so much more. They really are so very often the unsung heroes of any Parish and here at St Joseph's we have an unwavering group of volunteers whose invaluable contribution to Parish life continues to inspire.

For St Joseph's to continue to flourish and grow we are always looking for others to help out with the many indispensable ministries that help us enjoy everything that is St Joseph's - it really is such a blessing to us all. Is there anything you think you could help with, maybe reach out and ask for more information, you will always be supported.

Lastly but most certainly not least, I want to thank each and every one of you, whether you are coming to see what happens or to see if there is anything you could be involved with, it really is a great way of supporting me personally and the Parish community as a whole, whilst at the same time making friends.

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" Matthew 9:37

Please be assured of my prayers and I ask you to keep me in yours

With warm regards

Fr Paul

A brief history: how St Joseph's came to be...

After the Reformation, it was illegal for many years for Catholics to celebrate Mass, build schools or hold public office. During this time, Masses were said secretly locally in Sopley and Avon. Christchurch fishermen smuggled priests, children, books, etc. to and from France.

Eventually, Acts of Parliament 1778-1829 restored religious freedom to Catholics. Many Catholics were fleeing to England because of the French Revolution. The Catholic Relief Act (1791) granted English Catholics freedom of worship, the right to build schools, and entry into certain junior public offices.

A Catholic Mission was established locally at Burton Green in 1802, and a chapel built there in 1803 (where the United Reformed Church now stands).

In 1864 Fr Bernard Van Reeth, a Belgian priest, came to Burton and almost immediately began planning to build a new church in Christchurch. He personally raised funds in Belgium by walking from 9am until 6pm "that the blood ran in my shoes"! He bought three old cottages in Purewell, one with a large orchard, and planned to replace these with a church and priest's house.

The quoted cost was £625 for the church (capacity 100 people) and £300 for the house - but the actual cost was much less: a wealthy Mudeford lady supplied/transported sand; many bricks from the old cottages were re-used; parishioners did much of the work themselves and bought/transported bricks; items from the cottages were sold.

After much sacrifice and effort, the church was completed in 1866 and in December of that year, the priest moved in and the church opened.

St Joseph's Parish was born and since then parishioners have continued to make personal sacrifices of time, energy and money to build God's kingdom in their own time and place, bringing people to know and love Jesus Christ.

Now it's our time - let us praise God and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, wisdom, inspiration and courage to play our part.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Showcase of Parish Activities and Groups

Liturgy & worship



Altar serving

Altar serving involves performing various tasks to assist the priest and deacon during the Mass and dates back to the early days of the Church. Being an altar server is a very rewarding responsibility, helping to strengthen your love of God as you are fully involved in the Mass and serving the parish community. To become an altar server, you must attend Mass regularly and have made your First Holy Communion, after which there is no age limit.

Children's Liturgy

Children's Liturgy offers age-appropriate exploration of the Sunday Gospel, where volunteers guide children through interactive discussions and crafts, before the children return to their families for the second half of Mass. This ministry focuses on making the Gospel simple and fun, allowing children to develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

Communion to the Sick and Housebound

For parish community members who are sick, housebound, or temporarily unable to attend church, lay volunteers can arrange home visits with Holy Communion. A small group of commissioned Eucharistic Ministers visits parishioners in their own homes or nursing facilities, offering both long-term and short-term spiritual support. Requests for visits are managed through the parish office or parish clergy, who then passes the details to the coordinator to schedule a volunteer.

Eucharistic Ministers

Our team assists Father with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass. This vital ministry is open to any parishioner who has received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Additionally, a number of our ministers bring Holy Communion to sick and housebound parishioners. This is a deeply rewarding ministry, and the visits are immensely valued by those who receive them.

Holy Hour & Morning Prayer

Held every Tuesday from 9:30 am to 10:30 am in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Holy Hour offers a sacred time of quiet stillness before the Lord during Eucharistic Adoration. To conclude this time of reflection, Morning Prayer is led at 10:15 am. This 15-minute service utilizes the set prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours, connecting our community with the universal Church praying throughout the world. Adoration is also held on Wednesdays 9.30 am to 9.55 am and Thursdays 6 pm to 7 pm.

Introducers/ Announcers

Our team of Welcomers offer a warm welcome to all in Church and those watching online, especially any visitors. They also read the Bidding Prayers and towards the end of Mass highlight a few of the key notices from the weekly Newsletter.

Music Ministry

Our Music Ministry brings uplifting, joyful, and deeply meaningful music to our parish Masses. If you can sing or play a musical instrument, we invite you to join our team for a wonderfully rewarding and fun way to serve.

Readers

Readers proclaim the Scriptures and often lead the Congregation in praying the Psalms. Our Readers come from a wide age group and we welcome anyone who has made their First Holy Communion. It is expected that Readers will spend a short period of time in preparation for reading to ensure the Word is proclaimed clearly and reverently.

Rosary Group

Started in 2013, the Rosary Group meets most Mondays at 11:00 am (excluding Bank Holidays and August). Together, members pray the Joyful Mysteries alongside the Luminous, Sorrowful, or Glorious Mysteries depending on the liturgical season. The group offers up personal intentions while praying for the entire parish community and the wider world, warmly welcoming anyone to join them either as a regular or a one-off visitor. No experience necessary.

Stewards/Welcomers

Our Stewards are often the first people parishioners and visitors meet when they arrive at our church. The welcome they offer says so much about our parish community. Before Mass, they ensure all safety exits are clear. During Mass, they organise the collection and guide the orderly movement of the congregation to receive Holy Communion. Additionally, they would lead a safe evacuation of the church in the event of an emergency.

Welcome to Worship

Held a few times each year, these popular themed evenings of song, Scripture, and silence feature contemporary music led by our own worship band. The sessions include a short Scripture reflection alongside diverse opportunities for quiet prayer at various interactive prayer stations. If you play a musical instrument or enjoy creating prayer resources and spiritual ideas, we would love to welcome you to the team.

**** NEXT PAGE: FAITH FORMATION ****

Faith formation



Alpha

Alpha is a great way to explore the basic Christian message, either for the first time or as a refresher, and to meet new people in a relaxed, informal, friendly, welcoming, safe and non-judgemental atmosphere over 10 weeks. A small-group team helps the guests each week.

Confirmation

The Confirmation Programme is run periodically for young people in Year 8 and above and usually takes place over eight weeks. Through discussion, reflection and activities, we encourage candidates to explore and deepen their faith as they prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. We would love to hear from parishioners who enjoy working with young people and would be interested in helping to facilitate small-group discussions and support our candidates on their faith journey.

Evangelisation & Accompaniment

St Joseph's has an active faith formation group, and we are very proactive in welcoming new members. We follow the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) Open Door programme for the Catholic Church. We joyfully walk alongside individuals exploring the Catholic faith. This includes the wonderful privilege of preparing old and young and their families for the Sacrament of Baptism.

First Holy Communion

The First Holy Communion Programme at St Joseph's Church prepares baptised children in Year 3 (aged 7–8 years) and above to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation for the first time. This year, the programme started in April, with weekly sessions taking place on Sundays after Mass for both children and parents, encouraging families to grow together in their Catholic faith and relationship with Jesus.

Formation & Catechesis

We organise weekly meetings in our Parish Centre during certain liturgical seasons, e.g. Lent & Advent. They include reflections on Scripture, discussion and prayer. The gatherings are relaxed and informal and deeply appreciated. They also serve to bring our community closer together.

Grandparents' Prayer Group

We meet every fourth Wednesday of the month following the 10:00 am Mass. We gather in the parish centre for a cup of tea or coffee, followed by a time of prayer. Our prayer includes the Rosary and intercessions for our children and grandchildren, whose names are placed in a special casket. Sessions normally last about an hour, and all are warmly welcome to join us.

Men's Prayer Group

The Men's Prayer Group provides a safe, non-judgmental, and supportive space for men to strengthen their faith together while facing shared life challenges and pressures. Meetings include both formal and informal prayer for families, friends, and global issues, alongside the study of Scripture, sermons, or spiritual books to better understand God's purpose. The group currently meets in St. Joseph's Parish Centre on the first and third Monday of each month from 7.15 pm to 9.30 pm.

**** NEXT PAGE: COMMUNITY & OUTREACH ****



Community & Outreach

Becky's Café

Inspired by a special parishioner, Becky's Café is held every Thursday from 11:00 to 12:30 at the Parish Centre. It offers a joyful, relaxed, and friendly space where parishioners and local people of all ages can enjoy home-made sandwiches, delicious cake, hot drinks, and conversation. The cafe provides toys for children and daily newspapers for adults. Whether you'd like to come as a guest or a volunteer, you will be very welcome.

Bereavement

The Bereavement Group provides essential care and comfort to individuals and families navigating the loss of a loved one. Volunteers assist families in planning funeral service liturgies, helping them organize readings, prayers, music, and eulogies. The group also offers compassionate, confidential bereavement support on a one-to-one basis or within small group settings.

The Parish holds an annual Remembrance Mass in November.

Outside our Parish Centre is an area devoted to the memory of babies who have died either during pregnancy or soon after birth. People write an initial or a name on a stone and add it to the memorial and prayers are offered there by many people.

CAFOD

We actively promote the work of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development within our parish through education, fundraising and campaigning to make the world a better place for all.

Caritas

The word Caritas means "love" or "charity." Guided by the Diocesan team, we try to reach out to those in need in our local community through awareness-raising, prayer, and practical support. Critical local issues include poverty, homelessness, isolation, and the needs of migrants and refugees.

Lunch Group

The St. Joseph's Lunch Group brings together around 30 local ladies and gentlemen, on the second Wednesday of every month to share a delicious two-course lunch. Dedicated volunteers cook and serve a wonderful lunch, complete with tea, coffee, and a slice of cake for guests to take home. It is all done with a lot of love, and for many guests who live alone, this is their favourite day of the month—a chance to share a meal and enjoy each other's company.

Red Box Scheme (Missio)

The Red Box scheme is a simple, powerful way to support Catholic missionary work worldwide. Started in 1936, this joint initiative by Missio and the Mill Hill Missionaries raised an incredible £2,258,451 across England and Wales during 2025-26. Every small donation collected in these iconic red boxes directly helps build churches, train priests, and support vulnerable children and communities across 157 countries.

**** NEXT PAGE: PARISH LIFE & OPERATIONS ****

Parish life & Operations



Altar Linen

Our altar linen team needs your help! A flexible group of five volunteers currently rotates the vital task of washing and ironing our sacred linens each week. We would love to welcome new volunteers to this essential ministry.

Building and Maintenance Committee

The Building and Maintenance Committee is looking for new members to join their 6-person team in caring for our Church, Parish Centre, Presbytery, and grounds. The group meets formally every five weeks to oversee contractor-led projects and gathers informally for light odd jobs around the property. No special qualifications or technical skills are required to join, making this a rewarding way to keep our parish spaces safe, beautiful, and welcoming for everyone.

Cleaning

The church is maintained by two dedicated cleaning teams that ensure the building remains clean, welcoming, and well-organised throughout the week. To Hoover, mop and polish usually takes less than two hours and the teams are scheduled once every four weeks. You would be warmly welcomed onto this team.

Finance

The parish finance committee includes the Parish Priest, five appointed parishioners, and the finance secretary. This team ensures the parish has enough funds for daily operations and future commitments, while also overseeing the costly care and maintenance of all parish buildings. Because regular weekly income does not fully cover running costs, the parish relies on generous legacies to clear debt, bridge the financial shortfall, and fund essential projects like new boilers and windows. The committee actively welcomes new ideas to help boost parish income.

Flowers

We aim to have fresh flowers in church each week. This will normally be a simple vase or two of flowers, there is no need to do an elaborate arrangement. The parish will reimburse you on production of a receipt. At Easter, Christmas, and sometimes special parish events, we aim to do one or two large pedestal arrangements, for which your help would be very welcome. If you like flowers and could occasionally or regularly help with this, we would be very grateful.

Social Committee

The Social Committee organises key annual events like race nights, barn dances, and summer bazaars to bring parishioners and the wider community together. These welcoming gatherings foster a strong sense of belonging while raising vital funds for the church's daily running costs, upkeep, and pastoral needs. At its heart, the committee is dedicated to nurturing community spirit and ensuring the parish thrives for future generations.

St. Joseph's Bric-a-Brac Shop

Staffed by a small team of dedicated volunteers, the shop sells a variety of good quality, pre-owned items at very reasonable prices. All proceeds go directly to support our parish. We are looking for more volunteers to join our team, which would enable the shop to extend its daily opening hours.

Tea & Coffee after Mass

While simple in practice, gathering for tea, coffee, and a chat after the 9 a.m Mass on Sundays, plays a vital role in our parish life. These relaxed gatherings provide a wonderful opportunity for parishioners to connect, build friendships, and welcome newcomers into our parish community. Come and serve your community with us, make some hot drinks and have fun doing so!

The Repository (Parish Shop)

The repository is our small parish shop selling a selection of religious cards and Catholic gifts, including rosaries and devotional ornaments. The shop is open after every Saturday and Sunday Mass, with all profits going directly to support the parish. If you can spare one hour a week, one hour a month, or simply want to help out occasionally, there is a place for you on this team.

Tech Team (3 areas)

1. TV Slides and Livestreaming

These roles enable people in church and at home to participate fully in the services. Although part of the Tech Team, if you have a smartphone or computer and buy things online then you are probably over-qualified technically!

We are a small group of dedicated parishioners, both male and female, including some teenagers, that make the words appear on the TV screens at Mass and some also operate the computer to do the online streaming on a Sunday.

We urgently need more volunteers to help out.

Come and see the TV setup in operation and have a go yourself!

We also need more people to learn to set up the slides and to prepare the livestream each week.

2. Sound Technology

Our church has a 16-channel digital sound desk, but no-one who really knows how to use it well! A few of us do our best to ensure sound quality is ok for our singers and musicians, both in church and on our livestream, but we could do with people who understand more and perhaps have some experience in this area, or who are at least willing to learn.

3. Website

Our Parish website (www.avonstour.co.uk/parishes/icsj) is currently managed by just two people and is in need of a complete relocation and overhaul. We need two types of person: those who have technical knowledge or ability to help develop and manage the website; and those who have vision and ideas for developing the website in a way that is appropriate, engaging and helpful both for existing churchgoers and also for those just exploring.

There are also opportunities to have input into developing the website for our new Pastoral Area (www.bccatholics.uk).

Weekly Collection Counters

Volunteers meet in pairs to count the cash from the two weekend Masses, as well as any occasional special collections. The task typically takes less than an hour to complete. If you can count, you would be warmly welcomed onto this team!

What is missing...?



There are various areas where we would love to have an activity taking place, but currently have no-one to lead or help make this happen. If you are willing to get involved in any of the following areas, or have ideas of your own that are not yet included, please do get in touch with the Parish Office.

Youth Groups

We used to have active and popular youth groups for both younger and older young people, but these no longer run due to shortage of leaders and helpers. Our young people are so important to us – could you help to get this going again...?

Toddler Group

It would be so good to host a Toddler Group at St Joseph's, where parents/grandparents could bring their little ones to play and learn together, while the adults connect both with each other and with our Parish community. Could you help to run this...?

Brass Cleaning

Our candlesticks, incense burner (thurible) and other brass items are in need of regular cleaning, but no-one currently takes on that task for us. Might you be willing to take a turn doing this...?

Contacts

Parish Office email: office@icsj.org.uk

Parish Office phone: 01202 483340

Parish website: www.avonstour.co.uk/parishes/icsj

Prayer for our Parish

Father, pour out your Spirit on us and on our Parish.
Grant us a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
a new faithfulness to your word
and a new consecration to your service,
that your love may grow among us
and your kingdom come,
through Christ, our Lord.

AMEN

