



# Ruth Sayers

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**Location:** Britain



**What I do:** Church worker showing Christ in the community through helping people get back into work, assisting with Bible studies, pastoral care and more.

Dear friends,

## News from Devonport

The first part of the year has flown by and already Easter is upon us. Here in Devonport opportunities are arising and re-establishing themselves. The response to the cost-of-living crisis has given us a tool to reach people in our community and build relationships. We are also able to work alongside other local organisations, making this a community response. I have been encouraged and have felt God at work in my colleagues and in the activities we run. Many of our food club contacts have started attending Messy Church and the Feast of Fun activities that take place in the school holidays.



Supplies for the food club

## Devonport Food Club

We are now one year old. Food Club celebrated its first birthday in March!! The path that has been forged with this outreach has surprised us all. The demand has exceeded our expectations, unfortunately, reflecting the current cost of living crisis, especially in an area such as Devonport. The food club was started in response to the ongoing situation which has resulted in food shortages, financial hardship and an awareness of the need for community engagement in providing support. I am writing this after a week when our membership reached in excess of 160, noting that there are new members almost every week. Members join for £1 per year and are able to access food weekly at £1 for 5 items and £2 for 10 items. All fruit and vegetables are free, and members can have as much as they need. We have a regular core of members who come most weeks, but others come when they need to. The food club is not a food bank where food is given free, it is a social supermarket where food is obtained at a reduced cost.

Food is sourced from FareShare, which is a national charity that takes surplus food from supermarkets and distributes it to organisations, like the food club, to reduce waste and to supply those in need. This comes to us at a charge that covers delivery and each week there is a different selection of goods. In more recent times we have had to top up our supplies, partly to meet demand but also to supply toiletries and nappies that are not covered in the FareShare delivery. We also have a faithful member of the Devonport Baptist Church who regularly makes loaves of bread.

Our Wednesday meetings have attracted other organisations who see the food club as a way in to offer support in other ways. In addition to supplying food we are able to offer help by hosting Plymouth Energy Community who get alongside those who are struggling to meet their fuel bills. Live West, a local housing association, also visit, as well as Southwest Water. We are also able to offer benefits and job seeking advice.

**Support Ruth Sayers:**  
[churchmissionsociety.org/sayers](https://churchmissionsociety.org/sayers)

**With Jesus  
With each other  
To the edges**

We have become a one-stop shop for assistance and this has created a safe community where anyone can come for help and support. We provide tea/coffee and some come just to sit and chat.

The food club is run by volunteers from the churches in Devonport, mainly Devonport Community Baptist Church, St Aubyn's, St Michael's and Stoke Damerel. We are grateful to all of them, particularly those churches who have contributed to supporting this venture, and their financial contributions have enabled us to provide a greater amount and a more varied selection of food and sundries.

## Other news

### City College

After meeting with a member of the well-being hub of City College, I was invited to support and mentor young people. To date these have been young girls, mostly at the start of college life, who are looking for support on their journey. This has been a long-awaited opportunity for the chaplaincy to get involved with individual students in this way alongside the regular events that happen annually, including Remembrance Day. City College has had to deal with the effects of the disruption in education due to COVID and in more recent times, strike days for the teaching staff.

### Riverside School

I have been part of a group of governors and local church volunteers running an after-school club. Using the Scripture Union materials, we have been able to offer a club for years 3–6 and every week we have had up to 20 children. Refreshments and fun games are part of the programme, and we show a video with questions to take home to complete. The children are put into two teams which creates an atmosphere of competitiveness.

For me as chair of governors the challenges of running a school have been increasing. We have had a change of head teacher and a complete review of our governance. We are expecting Ofsted in the coming months or maybe weeks, so preparation is at the forefront of our focus. School is recovering from the effects of COVID, but we are still behind in our attainment targets. We are seeking to encourage children to be resilient and even more so after the disruption in education due to lockdowns.

### Stoke Damerel school

As you will see from the picture, Year 6 from Stoke Damerel Primary School visited Stoke Church for a workshop on the events of Easter. Fr Keith Robus was able to answer some very probing questions and act out for them the main events of Easter week. It was so enjoyed by everyone that the school have asked to come back next year.

Especially in the last year, mission in Devonport has felt even more “on the front line”. Please pray for wisdom in the way this continues and for the opportunities that arise.

Ruth



*Photos: Beautiful Devon; Year 6 from Stoke Damerel Primary School at Stoke Church*



## Going further with Church Mission Society

**Jesus never gives up. Neither should we.** We live in a fractured, hurting world. It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges. Find out more at [churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup](https://churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup)

Please note that opinions expressed in link letters are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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