

CHURCH CALENDAR
FEBRUARY - MARCH 2014

February

2nd	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
5th	8 pm	Elders Meeting
9th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Paula Littlewood
16th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon, followed by Church Meeting
23rd	10 am	<i>Mission Sunday</i> Family Worship led by Revd Iain Stewart
24th	2—4 pm	Faith & Development Programme - <i>'Searching the Scriptures through Different Eyes'</i>



March

1st	10.30 am—3 pm	Spring Craft and Gift Fair
2nd	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
5th	8 pm	Elders Meeting
7th		<i>Women's World Day of Prayer</i>
9th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Sydney Shore
12th	7.45 pm	Ecumenical Lent course starts (see page 12)
15th	2 pm	Bible Study
16th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon, followed by Church AGM and Election of Secretary & Treasurer + Sunday lunch
19th	7.45 pm	Ecumenical Lent course at Church on the Heath
23rd	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd John Whitton
24th	2—4 pm	Faith & Development Programme - <i>'Film Theology'</i>
26th	7.45 pm	Ecumenical Lent course at Church on the Heath
30th	10 am	<i>Mothering Sunday</i> Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon, with Church Parade

Items for the April—May Newsletter should be given to Christine Gibbons or emailed to christine.gibbons@building-bridges.co.uk by **Sunday 16 March**.

United Reformed Church, Fleet

Newsletter



February - March 2014



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<i>Hall Bookings:</i>	Brian Armes , 01252 650994 b.ames@ntlworld.com

SUNDAY WORSHIP

10 am: Family Worship
Holy Communion usually on third Sunday of month
First Sunday only: 6.30 pm Holy Communion

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

<i>Early Years Group:</i>) Sundays, 10 am
<i>Loaves and Fishes:</i>)
<i>House Group:</i>	Mondays, 10 am (at 35 Frere Ave, Fleet)
<i>Toddlers Group:</i>	Tuesdays, 9.45 am; Fridays, 9.45 am
<i>Pilots:</i>	Tuesdays, 4-5 pm
<i>Coffee Morning:</i>	Thursdays, 10–11.30 am

Under the umbrella of the United Reformed Church, *Brownie* and *Rainbow Units* meet each week during school term.

Further details of all these activities are available from the Church Office, from the Church Secretary, or on our website.

FROM THE MANSE



Dear Friends

As I write this letter, I am mindful that Christmas is behind us, and we look ahead to Lent and Easter.

However every year we reflect on what Lent means for us as Christians and as followers of Jesus. Jesus wandered in the desert, wrestling and struggling with what his future might mean for him. For Jesus—and us—it is not just about giving up things we like, but it's about taking on qualities: God's qualities.

I found this little Lenten poem in a book, and would like to share it with you:

Fast from fear; Feast on Faith
Fast from despair; Feed on hope.
Fast from depressing news; Feed on prayer.
Fast from discontent; Feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger and worry; Feast on patience.
Fast from negative thinking; Feast on positive thinking.
Fast from bitterness; Feed on love and forgiveness.
Fast from words that wound; Feast on words that heal.
Fast from gravity; Feast on joy and humour.

(adapted from *A Lenten Prayer*, by William Arthur Ward)

The poem says very simply what traits we need to 'fast' or to remove from our spiritual and emotional diet, and what qualities we need to digest and absorb.

Easier said than done... and God knows that Lent is not an easy time in the Christian calendar. It makes us feel uncomfortable; it highlights our weaknesses.

Nevertheless, it is the Mysterious, Loving and Faithful God who journeys with us, who lays before us the qualities it takes to be a true disciple, and who says to us: '**Come, follow me**'.

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Matthew 16: 24-25

Blessings to you all,

Ruth

ANNUAL LEAVE

Ruth will be on Annual leave from Thursday 6th to Thursday 13th February.

THANK YOU

Many thanks for the generous gift I received in January. It was a total surprise, and for once I was speechless!

I will let you know what 'treat' I spend it on!

Ruth

BIBLICAL THEME FOR 2014



At the beginning of each year, the church will focus on a scripture verse that will assist us in private and public worship, and in study.

The verse for 2014 is:

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

Psalms 25, v 4

This verse from the Psalms is a prayer for discernment in our discipleship, vision, and daily devotional study, that we might be open and receptive to what God would want us to do and be.

It was agreed at Elders that copies of the verse would be laminated and put into each hymn book. Please feel free to take one home if you would like it for personal use.

PROGRAMME OF FAITH AND NURTURE

REMINDER !!

The Programme of Faith and Nurture will continue in 2014, when the topics will be:



Monday 27 January & Monday 24 February:
Searching the Scriptures through different 'eyes'

Monday 31 March & Monday 28 April:
Film Theology: Looking at contemporary films to illustrate different theological themes

All sessions will be held at Fleet URC
from 2-4 pm
(Any queries, please see Ruth or one of the Elders)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUNDAY GROUPS:

LOAVES AND FISHES

I love Christmas and the excitement that is with all children for this special Festive Holiday. I love sharing the traditions that I have learned through my life (many from my mother, who was full of stories), which I have also shared with my children and grandchildren. Being one of the leaders of Loaves and Fishes allows me to share these stories with them, which opens up many a discussion about Jesus and God's work.

Leading up to Christmas we were busy. The children helped make the Christmas card you all received, and we hope that you liked the story of the 'Lights of Christmas', which we enjoyed compiling together.

We also made a mobile for the front of the church, with the Legend of the Candy Cane.

We learned of the story of the candy cane, how in the 18th Century religious persecution in parts of Europe meant that to display a cross or a Bible was forbidden.



Our children with the Christingles they made for the Christmas Christingle and Carol Service.

One old man, a candy maker by profession, was really sad about this. He loved the Lord with all his heart, and couldn't stand not to share that love with the world. His heart especially went out to the children when Christmas drew near, and no one was allowed to have a nativity scene to display in their homes.

So he prayed for God to show him some way to make Christmas gifts for the children that would teach them the story of Christ.

The answer was the candy cane:

The **white** cane reminds us that Jesus was pure and holy. He forgives our sins and makes them white as snow.

The **red** stripes represent the blood that Jesus shed for each one of us, that we remember when we take communion.

The **shape** of the candy cane is like a shepherd's crook, to show us that Jesus is our Shepherd and we are his flock.

If you turn the candy cane **upside down**, it makes a 'J', the first letter of Jesus' name.

Its **hardness** reminds us that Jesus is our 'Rock'. If we build our lives with Him, they will have a secure and lasting foundation.



The way the two colours **blend together** represents the friendship and the nearness of God's love.

The **sweetness** reminds us that God loves us and wants us to enjoy the many gifts he has given us, especially the gift of his son Jesus, who came into this world that first Christmas.

When you **break** your candy cane it reminds us of the bread we break when we take communion. And if we break and **share** it, this means we are sharing God's love.

The children love making things for the church, and I hope you enjoy looking at them.

We are busy planning our next few months, especially the ones leading up to Easter. So if you have a few moments after morning service on Sundays, pop your head around the door and see what we are doing. Loaves and Fishes would love to meet you!

Darrell Henderson



PILOTS

This year we are concentrating on working for individual Pilots Crests (Badges):

- **P**ayer Crest—Exploring different ways of praying.
- **I**nterest Crests—Such as cooking, modelling, music, caring for pets, etc.
- **L**earning Crest—Developing skills for life.
- **O**verseas Crest—Learning about the culture of a different country.
- **T**alents Crest—Choosing from arts, crafts, first aid, drama, football or other sports.
- **S**ervice Crest—Helping in the Pilots company, in church or in the community.



Some of the Crests will be studied as a group (like the Prayer and Overseas Crest), and others will be worked on individually.

We very much value our church's support and interest in all that we do at Pilots.

Bee Griffiths



Food for Thought

Some people see the church as a giant helicopter.
They are scared to get too close in case they get caught up in the rotas!

(Milton Jones)

A COVENANT WITH GOD

In the first Sunday service of the New Year we were invited by our Minister to pray the Methodist Covenant Prayer:

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Your will, not mine, be done in all things,
Wherever you may place me,
in all that I do and in all that I may endure:
when there is work for me and when there is none:
when I am troubled and when I am at peace.

Your will be done,
When I am valued, and when I am disregarded;
When I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;
When I have all things and when I have nothing;
I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you,
as and when you choose.

And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
You are mine, and I am yours.

May it be so forever.
Let this Covenant, now made on earth,
be fulfilled in Heaven.

Amen

The Covenant is a commitment to live within the loving relationship that God has already offered us. It is about surrendering to God in love and joy. It is a wonderful prayer for the start of a New Year.



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

We are delighted that Katie Green, granddaughter of Moray and Darrell Henderson, will be confirmed during morning service on 2nd February.

We are sad to report that Rev Anita West (Viv Gale's mother) died on Sunday 12 January at Woodlands Care Home. Her funeral will take place on Friday 7 February, at 11.15 am in our church, followed by committal at Aldershot Crematorium at 12.15 pm.

We send our best wishes to those who are unwell at the moment.

Please remember all these people and their families in your prayers

If you have any item you would like to be included in our Church Family News, please let me know.

Christine Gibbons



INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERS

On Sunday 15 December we were delighted to receive Margot Cooper, Tamyra Sherratt, and Alan and Evelyn Tyler into membership at Fleet URC. This is how Margot and Tamyra introduced themselves:

Margot Cooper



This church has something very special. Something I have been searching for for years. I have been to many local churches in this area, and although people were friendly and inviting, my soul felt lost, isolated and alone. I just didn't feel a sense of belonging.

The moment I walked in here I felt something. I felt the communing of souls, the desire to seek, and the love from the Lord. I felt as if I had arrived after a long and arduous journey. I feel comforted and refreshed.

Here I feel the freedom to explore my beliefs and values. I feel I can begin a new journey with you by my side.

Thank you.

Tamyra Sherratt

(Tamyra has recently taken over from Rodney Frampton as our 'Commitment for Life' link person.)

I was born into a loving Christian family in Indiana. I was baptised as a baby and confirmed as a teenager, with several generations of my family attending the same local congregation of the United Church of Christ. I only left age 23, at the time of my first marriage and move to Georgia.



After my marriage break up, life was a bit complicated. I never lost my faith, but I struggled to forgive myself initially, and I felt uncomfortable trying to find a church. Unfortunately the wonderful church upbringing I had had was impossible to replicate elsewhere.

Through work I met and married an amazing Englishman, and moved to England in 1993. For several years I went to church infrequently. I briefly attended Fleet URC, but something was not quite right for me at that stage of my life, so I tried Fleet Baptist Church and became a member there. Unfortunately recent changes forced me to a difficult decision that Fleet Baptist Church was no longer right for me, and I resigned my membership in July 2013 after nearly twelve years.

In trying Fleet URC again, it felt right this time around. I cannot really put my finger on why, although a smaller church, a more traditional format of services and organ music are all part of the reason. Also, although one should not focus on a building, I love older buildings, and was thrilled to see that the sanctuary retains the beams and bricks that make me think of an old country church. This has a wonderful 'welcome home' feel for me.

The hymn I chose for the membership service—'Come ye thankful people, come' - is one I remember from back home in Indiana, and it holds a wealth of meanings. I grew up in a rural farming community where the weather was not just an idle topic of conversation, but was crucial to the preparation of fields for planting, growth of the crops, and harvesting. The knock-on effect of a good or a bad harvest was enormous; but the farmers also had an enormous faith in the Lord's plan, no matter how it might seem to us on earth.

I also discovered a personal connection in that the hymn is sung to the tune 'St George's, Windsor', a reminder of the wonderful man I met and moved to England to be with, as we were married in Aldershot in 1993 on St George's Day.



OUR SPRING CRAFT AND GIFT FAIR

This important event in our Church's calendar is planned for **Saturday 1 March 2014 from 10.30 am – 3.00 pm.**

There will be a selection of craft and gift stalls from around Fleet and beyond, and hopefully you will be able to find that special gift for Mother's Day or Easter. The 8th Fleet Brownies will also be holding their traditional Easter Tombola.



I do need help from you as well. Apart from coming on the day, I will need people to assist with the distribution of leaflets, either door to door or for an hour (or whatever time you can spare) outside Sainsbury's in Fleet.

Please can you let me know if you are available?

Darrell Henderson



RECYCLING ALUMINIUM FOIL



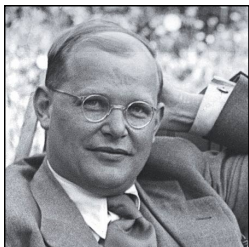
Many thanks to everybody who very generously collects foil and foil containers for me. I am sure that some of you may wonder what possible use they can be. The foil is given to the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and although I don't know exactly what it is used for, I do know that it is a much needed source of revenue for the Society. For me there is a more personal touch, as a friend of mine has an adult son with the condition.

Please remember that the foil must be clean, and is only useable if it holds its shape when flattened or squeezed (if it immediately springs back to its original shape—eg most crisp bags—it is of no use).

Anyone who wishes to contribute to the collection can contact me on 687075, or bring a bagful to church on Sunday or to Thursday coffee morning. I am usually there and it would be nice to see you.

Meg Nicholson

PRAYER FOR FEBRUARY/MARCH



February 4th 1906 was the birth date of the German theologian and Pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He became a minister in the Lutheran Church, and was outspoken about what was wrong when the Nazis first came to power. He spent two years as a minister in a church in London, but chose to return to Germany once it became clear that war would break out.

He wrote, "I will have no right to be a part of the reconstruction of Germany after the war if I do not share in this time with my people."

Like many others, he must have had great courage, intending to do whatever he could to oppose the evil being done in the name of the country. He knew the risks for himself in remaining a critic of the Nazi government and, on his return to Germany, his every move was watched.

In July 1944 a plot to kill Hitler failed. Bonhoeffer was one of many who was implicated in that threat, and he was imprisoned. Less than a month before Germany's surrender he was taken into the prison yard and hanged, aged 39.

The prison doctor said of his death: "I saw Paster Bonhoeffer kneeling on the floor in prayer. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so certain that God heard his prayer."

Dietrich wrote this short prayer about love and hatred, and we can make the prayer our own today by thinking of those people with whom we haven't got on very well over the years:



PRAYER

Lord God,
give me such love
for you and for others
that it will blot out
all hatred and bitterness.

Amen

Ruth

UPDATE TO CHURCH DIRECTORY

Mrs Tamyra Sherratt:

New email address: tlsherratt13@virginmedia.com

Phone no: 01252 629418

Please notify Margaret Armes of any revisions to the Church Directory.

FINALITY

"The last time": they're such heavy words,
Weighted with joy or woe;
The last day at the hospital,
The last time we need go.

The last day of the holidays,
The last glimpse of the sea;
The last time we shall see a friend,
The last leaf on a tree.

Christ Jesus too knew final things;
The last meal with his friends,
The last words he would speak to them
Though no one comprehends:

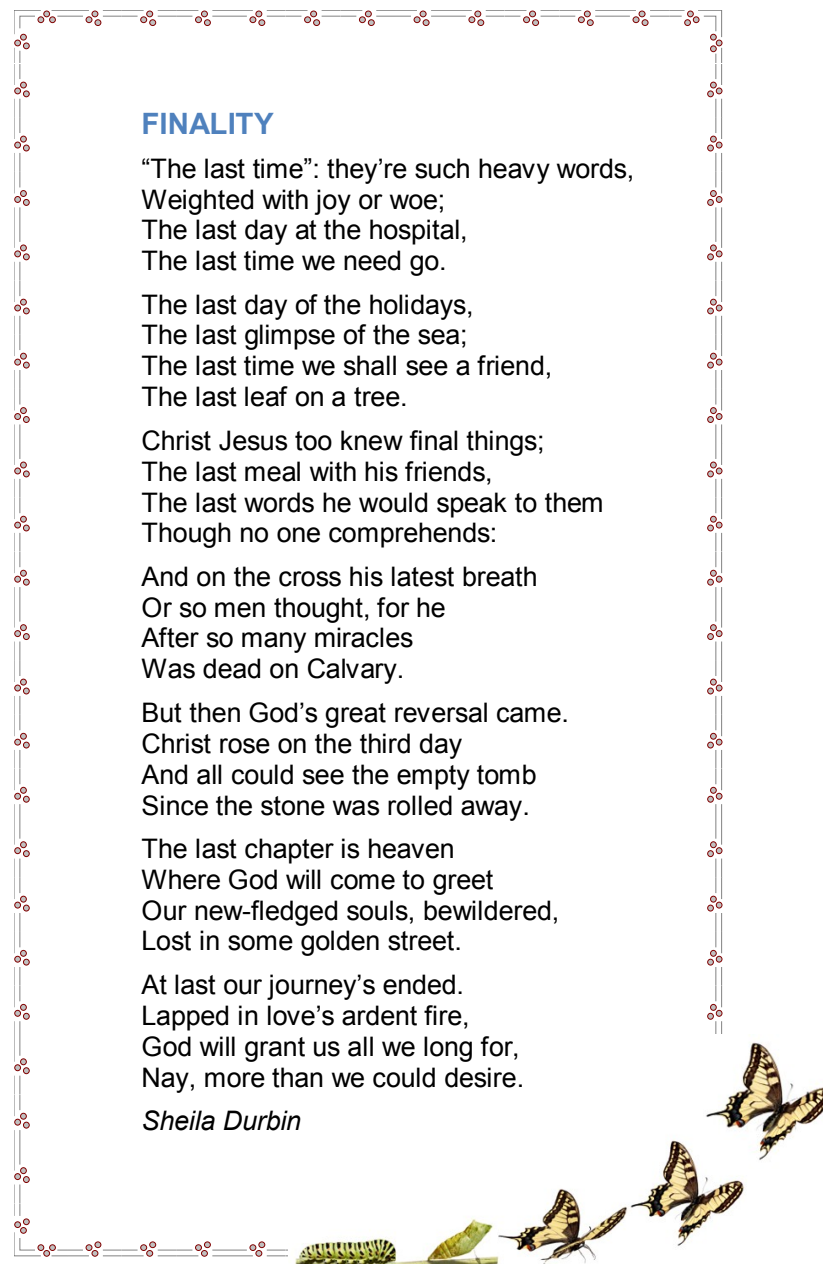
And on the cross his latest breath
Or so men thought, for he
After so many miracles
Was dead on Calvary.

But then God's great reversal came.
Christ rose on the third day
And all could see the empty tomb
Since the stone was rolled away.

The last chapter is heaven
Where God will come to greet
Our new-fledged souls, bewildered,
Lost in some golden street.

At last our journey's ended.
Lapped in love's ardent fire,
God will grant us all we long for,
Nay, more than we could desire.

Sheila Durbin





IS LENT JUST ABOUT GIVING THINGS UP?

No!! Lent is not all about giving things up. It's also about **adding** good things to our lives or to others' lives—the kind of good things that follow on what Jesus asks of us, especially things that relate to what we are giving up: Try these:

1. **Reconcile yourself to someone** you don't like, or even hate, or did something bad to, or just intentionally stayed away from.
2. **Do acts of kindness** for people, just because the opportunity is there; give them little tastes of God's love.
3. If you haven't taken the time lately to be in a **refreshing, natural spot**, do so. I love to enjoy the countryside and the opportunity for some peace and rest. Even if it is a brief stay—even a half-hour or so—try it.
4. Take some time to study **the causes of poverty**. Follow the threads as far as you can. Not only does it help you to serve Christ better, but you also add into yourself a useful education in economics, sociology and biology.
5. **Study, meditate, and pray** over one or two Bible passages for each day, through a daily lectionary (assigned Bible readings for each day).
6. Choose something ordinary that you do every day, and think about God each time you do it. Or think of a place you come to regularly, and each time you are there think **where Christ might be in that place**, what Christ might do there, or what you might be led to do for Christ.

Don't beat yourself up about Lent—enrich your life, and others'.

Ruth



LENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

'Stumbling on the Discipleship Road' is a short devotional booklet available for personal use during Lent. During each of the six weeks, a Biblical person will reflect on the difficulties and challenges facing them as disciples of Jesus. Look out for it during early March!



LENT COURSE 2014

There will be an Ecumenical Lent course at the Church on the Heath commencing Wednesday 12 March, at 7.45 pm for 8 pm start. It will be held every Wednesday evening through Lent, and the topic is 'The Impact of Conflict in God's World'. There will be speakers from the Armed Forces and other areas of Faith. Please come and support this.

WEBSITE FOR FEBRUARY/MARCH



www.freshexpressions.org.uk

Fresh Expressions encourages and resources new ways of being church, working with Christians from a broad range of denominations and traditions. A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

Fresh Expressions has three basic principles:

- to serve those outside church;
- to listen to people and enter their culture;
- to make discipleship a priority.

Remember that the incarnation happened when God became human through Jesus and immersed himself in human life. So 'incarnational mission' means being involved in the everyday lives of the people you are called to serve—involved in their context, befriending them, and walking with them in their highs and lows.

The website gives lots of stories and ideas—maybe you can read a couple and share them in the Newsletter?

Ruth



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FLEET AND CHURCH CROOKHAM

At a meeting of Churches Together on 9 January the following items were discussed:

- Hart Food Bank has grown to the point where they are seriously thinking of appointing a paid manager.
- Ecumenical Lent meetings will be held weekly at the Church on the Heath (*see page 12 for more details*).
- Fleet Angels urgently need extra help so that they can ensure that every Friday night is covered.
- Extra financial help from local churches may be necessary to support the continued growth in the work of Churches Together.

Gill Durbin



THE BAND OF THE HAMPSHIRE CONSTABULARY CHARITY CONCERT

at the Church on the Heath

Saturday, 8 February 2014, at 7.30 pm

Tickets: £10

Available from the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice shop,
or by calling 01252 683540 or 01252 612527

LE WEEKEND IN DUNKIRK, 11-13 APRIL 2014

(Organised by Wessex Synod's World Church Group)

Le Weekend is a chance to get together with friends across the Channel and share fellowship, worship, music, fun, food and much more. There are no language barriers as everything is translated, and a willingness to communicate makes up for a lack of vocabulary. We stay with host families for bed and breakfast and one evening meal—all other meals are taken together.



This will be the sixth time Le Weekend has been held. It is an opportunity for us to meet up with our friends from the Protestant Church in France. Our Synod is formally linked with the North Normandy Synod of the Protestant Church of France. This year, our hosts in Dunkirk have arranged a programme around the theme **Remembering the Coming Kingdom**, with

many varied activities both for children (with a circus theme), and for adults. There will be a musical evening with contributions from any musical participants, as well as a jazz orchestra, sightseeing, discussions and worship.

We would love more people to be involved, so do consider joining in. We welcome old friends and new, so, whether you have been before or whether you want to try something new, get in touch and come along. All details are on the Wessex Synod website in the 'Latest News' section; or for more information contact Helen Everard on 01252 516622 or helen@alexeverard.co.uk.

If getting to Dunkirk is a concern, we can probably arrange car sharing—we have done this before. At least we don't have far to travel once we get across the Channel!

Martin Waldron

Convenor, World Church Group, Wessex Synod

AND ANOTHER THING...

Knowing the Friendship of Jesus

Like many of us, I enjoy a challenge. That's why I enjoy the books by Dr Leslie D Weatherhead*: his thoughts challenge me. Take, for example, this question: "Can we really know, in the twenty-first century, the same Jesus of Nazareth who walked about in Galilee two thousand years ago... Can we really meet Him and commune with Him? If so, we ought to realise what a tremendous thing this is."



The Teacher, Laura Readdy

Whether we realise it or not, His disciples certainly realised it. They began to say things and do things they could never have done before. Observers said, "*They have been with Jesus.*" So we learn from this small band of ordinary men that His friendship is the biggest reality in life.

Can we enter into this friendship? The answer is that we can for, as Brother Lawrence said, we can 'practise the Presence of God'. "But the only way I know

of practising the presence of God," says Dr Weatherhead, "is by practising the presence of Jesus, and by accepting that transforming friendship which he offers us."

Let a story illustrate this truth. An old Scotsman lay very ill and his minister came to visit him. As the minister sat down on a chair near the bedside he noticed on the other side of the bed another chair, placed as if a visitor had just left. "Well, Donald," said the minister, pointing to the chair, "I see I am not your first visitor."

"Ah!", said Donald, "I'll tell you about that chair. Years ago I found it impossible to pray. I often fell asleep on my knees. One day I was so worried I spoke to my minister about it. He told me not to worry about kneeling down. 'Just sit down', he said, 'and put a chair opposite you. Imagine that Jesus is sitting in it, and just talk to Him as you would a friend.' You see, minister, I have been doing that ever since."

A week later Donald's daughter called at the minister's house. "Father died last night," she said. "He hadn't moved since we said goodnight, *except that his hand was on the empty chair at the side of the bed.* I wonder if you understand?"

"Thank you so very much," said the minister, "I do indeed understand."

Eric Perry

(*Dr Leslie Weatherhead MA was Minister at the City Temple in Holborn, London, and an Honorary Chaplain to the Forces.)

