

CHURCH CALENDAR

FEBRUARY—MARCH 2017

February

5th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
6th	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
10th	7 pm	Indian Cookery Demonstration and Meal—Saju Mathew
12th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Paul Murphy
13th	2 pm	Bible Study
19th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
22nd	7.30 pm	Elders Meeting
26th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Thelma Roberts



March

1st		Ash Wednesday
3rd		Women's World Day of Prayer
5th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon, followed by Church AGM & Election of Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer, and Accounts Examiner + Church Meeting
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
6th	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
12th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd John Whitton, followed by Church Sunday lunch
13th	2 pm	Bible Study
19th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
24th	7.30 pm	Church Social: Quiz Night
26th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Sydney Shore



Please be aware that the dates and times of meetings and social events may change. You are advised to check beforehand on the church website, www.fleet.urg.org.uk, or with Assistant Administrator, Margaret Armes (650994).

Items for the April—May issue of *In Touch* should be with Christine Gibbons by **Sunday 19th March 2017** (christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk).

In Touch



February—March 2017



Fleet United Reformed Church

“We are a community of faithful Christian people,
working to spread the love of God to all.”
Our Mission Statement



FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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www.facebook.com/fleeturc



@FleetURC

CHURCH CONTACTS

Minister:	Revd Ruth Dillon , 01252 625238 revrdillon@btinternet.com
Secretary:	Moray Henderson , 01252 659569 moray.henderson@ntlworld.com
Assistant Administrator:	Margaret Armes , 01252 650994 b.ames@ntlworld.com
Treasurer:	John Gibbons , 01252 614200 jmgibbons@hotmail.com
Hall Bookings:	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 ACTIVITIES

<i>'Footsteps' Young People's Group:</i>	Sundays, 10 am (<i>term time only</i>)
<i>House Group:</i>	Mondays, 10 am (at 35 Frere Ave)
<i>Prayer Group:</i>	See page 4 for dates and times
<i>Bible Study:</i>	See page 4 for dates and times
<i>Pilots:</i>	Tuesdays, 4-5 pm (<i>term time only</i>)
<i>Coffee Morning:</i>	Thursdays, 10–11.30 am
<i>Toddlers Group:</i>	Fridays, 10 am

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

Up to date details of all the above activities are available from the Church Office, from the Church Secretary, or on our website.

FROM THE MANSE



Dear Friends

Remember learning to drive? Even though it was well over forty years since I took my driving test, it is well ingrained in my memory: the pre-test nerves, the stupid mistakes, the mastering of a new skill, and then the delight of removing the L plates and being a fully-fledged (new) driver.

Learning is part of the Christian way too. The tests are there along the way, but it is a lifetime exercise. We do not drop our Christian L plates. We remain learners for life, disciples, followers or pupils of

Jesus, learning from our successes and mistakes, from the teaching and example of others, and the discovery of our own gifts and talents.

Two key elements of learning are:

Listening (for Christians this means listening to the words of the Bible on the one hand, and to each other and to the world on the other). Christian theologian Karl Barth states that we should *'take our Bible and take our newspaper and read both. But interpret newspapers from our Bible.'*

Practice (trying things out, putting into practice the teaching of Jesus, turning words into action).

Lent begins on Wednesday 1st March, a time in the church's life when we focus on discipleship as we move towards the great Easter celebration.

It's a time not just to give something up, but to learn new things too. In 2017 we at Fleet URC will be exploring ten areas of discipleship, called 'Holy Habits'. (For more information see page 4). It is hoped that you may feel called to explore one or more of these areas in a deeper sense.

During Lent our Sunday worship will be exploring what we believe about God. In a world where for many people God seems a delusion, we turn to some key stories in the Bible that picture God as real and living, as creative and compassionate, as mysterious and wondrous, loving and true.

There's a prayer from the Iona Community that prays for *'those who need to forget the God they do not believe in and meet the God who believes in them.'*

This is the God Jesus shows us through his story telling, his words and actions, his sacrifice on a cross and victory over death, his presence here and now. He is the good Saviour; he is also the great Teacher, pointing us in the right direction and enabling us to truly live life.

So wherever we are on the Christian journey, let's remain learners, listening and practising, growing in confidence in the One who gives and teaches us life.

Every blessing

Ruth



HOLY HABITS 2017

In one Sunday morning service a month we shall be exploring ten areas of Holy Habits. This will normally be on the first Sunday of the month.

- Biblical teaching
- Fellowship
- Breaking of bread
- Prayer
- Giving
- Service
- Eating together
- Gladness and generosity
- Worship
- Making of disciples

These ten areas will assist us in deepening our discipleship, and hopefully give us confidence to talk about our faith and understand what it means to be a follower of Christ.

ANNUAL LEAVE

Ruth, our Minister, will be on annual leave from **9th—12th March**



NOTICE BOARD



BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Each month we meet in the vestry to explore the Lectionary readings for the following Sunday. The next gathering will be at **2 pm** on:

Monday, 13th February
Monday, 13th March

MONTHLY PRAYER GROUP

The monthly Prayer Group will meet on the following dates at **12 noon** in the vestry at Fleet URC

Monday, 6th February
Monday, 6th March

Come and join us for 30 minutes of quiet meditation and prayer.

URC DAILY DEVOTIONS ON LINE

The URC is offering a series of daily readings and reflections by email. The devotions—a reflection and a short prayer—were written by a team of writers from across the URC, and are for use in our own journeys of discipleship. If you would like to subscribe, go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/URCDailyDevotions>

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

New Members

It was a wonderful start to 2017 when six of our congregation were received into membership during morning service on 15th January.

(From left to right) Carol Rayner, Grace Easton, Pauline Porter, Pam and Steve Lucas, and Chris Porter were all welcomed by our Minister Ruth.

In the same service Meg Nicholson, Liz McClune and Nicola Hamilton were inducted into the eldership for a further three years.



Baptisms



We were also delighted to have two baptismal services during Advent. On 4th December proud parents Isabel and Simon Daniel brought their baby daughter, Ava Isabella to be baptised. It was lovely to see so many of their friends and

family members come to support her on her special day.

Two weeks later we welcomed Christine Webb and Charl Hermanson who brought their baby son, Jake Peter Hermanson, for baptism. Jake was also supported by many of his family and friends.

It was wonderful to see our church full to overflowing on both occasions.

Our Minister, Ruth, conducted both baptismal services.



New Babies

Two of our church families, Darrell & Moray Henderson and Jo & Eric Perry, are celebrating the safe arrivals of new grandchildren:

Baby Fleur Lilian Henderson was born on 16th January weighing 7lb 2 oz, a daughter for James and Michelle.



Baby Alfred James Collins, 8 lb 5 oz, was born on 25th January to Jo and Eric's daughter Fran and her husband Sean, a brother for Poppy.

What lovely news—congratulations, love and very best wishes to the proud grandparents and their families!

(left) Fleur with Moray, and (right) baby Alfred



YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS

Footsteps

During Advent we worked together to make a Christmas story bunting and on our last meeting before Christmas we carried it in to church to share with the congregation.

After our Christmas break it was great to meet up again in the New Year and discover the exciting things everyone had done over the holiday period.

A New Year brings new beginnings, and in our sessions on Sundays we are exploring a new and different way of organising our group to make sure that the needs of all the different ages are fully met.

Margaret Armes

Pilots

On Saturday 7th January we travelled to 'Old Arabia' (St Philip & St James' Church Hall), where we watched the traditional tale of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves'. It was this year's pantomime production performed by our Parish youth. The show included all the usual elements of pantomime—laughter, song, fun, excitement—and the special appearance of a full-sized camel!

Profits from this show will be sent to local children's charities—Naomi House & Jackspace, and the Sebastian Trust.

Bee Griffiths



LENT: WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?



Lent is the period of 40 days which comes before Easter in the Christian calendar. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. Lent is marked by fasting, from both food and activities.

Whereas Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus after his death on the cross, Lent recalls the events leading up to and including Jesus' crucifixion by Rome. This is believed to have taken place in Roman occupied Jerusalem.

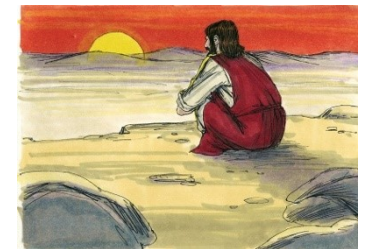
The Christian churches that observe Lent in the 21st century (and not all do significantly) use it as a time for prayer and penitence. Only a small number of people today fast for the whole of Lent, although some maintain the practice on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. It is more common these days for believers to surrender a particular vice, such as favourite foods, or smoking. Whatever the sacrifice, it is a reflection of Jesus' deprivation in the wilderness and a test of self-discipline.

Why 40 days?

Forty is a significant number in Jewish-Christian scripture:

- In Genesis, the flood which destroyed the earth was brought about by 40 days and nights of rain.
- The Hebrews spent 40 years in the wilderness before reaching the land promised to them by God.
- Moses fasted for 40 years before receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.
- Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry.

Most Christians regard Jesus' time in the wilderness as the key event for the duration of Lent.



East and West

Both the Eastern and Western churches observe Lent, but they count the 40 days differently.

The Western Church excludes Sundays (which is celebrated as the day of Christ's resurrection), whereas the Eastern Church includes them.

The churches also start Lent on different days. Western churches start Lent on the seventh Wednesday before Easter Day (called Ash Wednesday); Eastern churches start Lent on the Monday of the seventh

week before Easter and end it on the Friday nine days before Easter. Eastern churches call this period the 'Great Lent'.

The last week of Lent is called Holy Week.

May I invite you to prepare for Lent in your own way, not by just abstaining from something you enjoy, but by choosing a spiritual discipline which will enable you to journey through Lent and beyond with Jesus.

Ruth



CELEBRATING 500 YEARS OF THE REFORMATION



In 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk, was so disillusioned with Roman Catholic theology and practices that he nailed 95 'theses' on the church door at Wittenburg. These complaints against the doctrine of the Catholic Church triggered others throughout Europe to speak out against 'indulgences', which included monetary payments to the church to ensure that your soul entered heaven. This was common practice at the time.

Luther was convinced that God was a God of Love, not a God who needed to be appeased. This act of Martin Luther became the bedrock of a movement which is called *The Reformation*.

During 2017 the United Reformed Church will be remembering Martin Luther, and how his theology still impacts our worship and mission today.



PALANI MISSION

Palani Mission was founded in 1970, and is situated in Tamil Nadu, a rural province in South India.



It is linked to St Thomas' Church, and although access is remote, the church regularly has over one thousand people worshipping on a Sunday. Along with many other mission challenges, the church also supports a small hospital. At Fleet URC we are financially supporting two girls who are undertaking midwifery training. They will enable better health care in the area, and bring much needed support to the lower caste families who can live in severe poverty.

Please continue to support this partnership between Palani Mission and Fleet URC.



This morning, sun rose above banks of cloud;
Then its imprisoned brightness, bursting forth,
Could bless our eyes which long had looked for light.
Small birds began to twitter and the flowers
Opened their cups to drink life-giving rays.

God, who has made the sun and every star,
With your pure light dispel the clouds of doubt,
The fears that blind us when we seek your face;
Shed on our souls the warmth and fire of love;
In mercy grant us life — restoring grace.

Sheila Durbin



PRAYER FOR THE MONTH

March 1st is the feast of Saint David, the Patron of Wales. He lived in the southwest corner of Wales, and founded several monasteries. He died about the year 588 in his own monastery of Menevia, where he was also bishop.

After his death the village was re-named 'St Davids'. Although only a village, St Davids has a huge cathedral—technically making it a city.

We pray today for all Welsh people. Some will be wearing a daffodil, one of the national emblems of the country.

As the month of March begins, we can pause for a moment in silence to think of some of the signs that remind us that winter is past and spring is upon us—signs such as daffodils and other bulbs flowering.... *(pause)*



Let us pray:

Lord of life,
we give you thanks for the beauty of creation,
and we rejoice when we see signs of new life.
May we be as Spring to others, and never Winter.

Amen

Ruth

LETTER FROM DEVIZES

Pearl and Bill Thomas reflect on their recent move to Devizes

30.09.2016:

At last we were moving into our new home in Devizes!

This is when it became obvious that, even though we had made many visits to the council tip and to charity shops in Fleet prior to moving, we still had many more items to accommodate than we had room for. Although we have moved into a four-bed house, it is a modern house and has less storage room than we had in Fleet. Our garage has become a storage area. The previous owner had emigrated to New Zealand and left behind all his gardening tools and sprays, plus a large number of nails, screws, electric tools etc. We had brought a similar amount with us. The cupboard under the stairs is full of spare mirrors, paintings and miscellaneous ornaments waiting to go to auction or charity!



03.01.2017:

Three months later, we feel we are better organised, although we have found a home for only a small amount from the garage. Perhaps a car boot sale will be necessary when the weather improves! We feel very much at home in Devizes and have explored places around us such as Trowbridge, Melksham, Swindon, Bath, Bristol, Marlborough—and have ventured into Somerset to Clarks Shopping Village. It is all very new and exciting.



We have sorted out the main 'eating holes' in Devizes, but there are still parts of the town which require further investigation as time permits. We have a small theatre and a cinema and a plethora of pubs and hotels in the town and in the surrounding villages. We have sampled a few restaurants on the banks of the Kennet and Avon Canal, which skirts the town, and were pleased with the experience. We look forward to exploring more.

We are now part of the congregation in St Andrews URC in Devizes, and have been made very welcome and part of the community. It is lovely to be able to see our daughter and son in law more often, and to go out with them. It only takes five minutes to travel to where they live. Relations have visited us, and some have stayed for long weekends. All this enriches our lives.

We still think fondly of our previous home in Fleet, and the church and friends we made. Although we are very happy, we do miss the Fleet congregation.

We take this opportunity to wish everyone a joyful, peaceful and healthy 2017. God bless you.

Love to all

Pearl and Bill Thomas

11 Corn Croft Lane, Devizes, SN10 2FR
Tel: 01380 501573; email: bthomas10@live.com

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

A New Year brings new opportunities to show God's love through our actions. Voluntary help is much needed in all sorts of ways—and here are three suggestions for how you can make a difference. I hope that they will inspire you.

Church Rotas

Help is needed in all sorts of ways during Sunday services, whether with stewarding duties, serving coffee after morning service, Bible reading, or helping with the young people's groups. Or maybe you have a gift for arranging flowers? There are rotas for all these activities, and the more people who volunteer the less often everyone is called upon. In particular, help is urgently requested for Communion preparation.

If you feel you can help out with any of the above, or if you would like to know what the different duties entail, Margaret Armes would be delighted to hear from you.

Fleet Angels

Fleet Angels patrol the streets of Fleet on Saturday nights to be there for the vulnerable, whether they be drunk, lost, hurt or simply looking for someone to listen. This is truly demonstrating God's love through actions.

Jeremy Dunk, Project Leader of Fleet Angels, has written an inspiring account of his work which may be read here: <http://fleet.urch.org.uk/because-youre-worth-it/>. He writes:

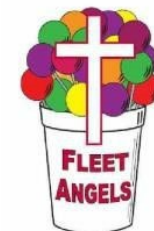
In the coming weeks we hope to begin a recruitment drive as volunteer numbers have dropped in the past few years from around 40 to about half that number.

Many reading this article may be saying, "It's not for me," or "I couldn't be out all night," but I would ask everyone to consider; as Christians we are ALL called to love God and to love one another Fleet Angels are the visible proof of God's presence on the streets of Fleet; they say 'actions speak louder than words'.

So, I would make the following, simple, 3-step challenge:

- With an open mind, seek out the Fleet Angels in your congregation;
- Talk to them. Ask them about their experiences—why they do it, and what it is like;
- Think and reflect on what you can do to help. If you would like to see what it's like, then please come out as an observer—just one night, no obligation, no expectation! If you don't feel it is for you, then perhaps you could offer to pray when the Fleet Angels are out on patrol—prayer support is vital!

If you would like to know more, please contact Jeremy on 07896 947211.



Supporting Prisons

Sarah Smith, a local prison support volunteer, has sent us the following request, saying "we are desperate for more help":

I would like to tell you a little about Coldingley Prison at Bisley. It is a modern category C prison where men are prepared for life outside and have job training. Time and again research has shown that prisoners who keep close family ties are less likely to re-offend, and this is where we can help.

The visits hall at Coldingley is bright and airy with a play area for visiting children. The children can come and play with volunteers while their parents have a few moments private conversation.



To keep the play area running we need volunteers. Play volunteers can be anyone—all you need is to enjoy children, be able to get to the prison, have a DBS check, and fill in the prison volunteer admission form. Some people join the rota with a friend and others go alone, a good chance to make new friends and have a natter when the children are all occupied.

No one is asked to go more than once a month, to cover the play area alone, or to do an afternoon where they have a prior commitment. The play area is open on Saturday afternoons, 2.15—3.45 pm, and on Thursday afternoons in school holidays, plus other special family days.

This simple act can make a real difference to prisoners, their families, and society as a whole. The children are almost all delightful, and I really enjoy my afternoons there.

For further information contact Alison Ney: ney07@btinternet.com.



HAMPSHIRE CONSTABULARY BAND

Saturday, 4th February at 7.30 pm

at the Church on the Heath

Tickets £12

3-COURSE MEAL AND ENTERTAINMENT at Al Fresco, Fleet

Tuesday, 28th March, 7.00 for 7.30 pm

Tickets £22

Tickets for both events are available from the Hospice Shop
or from Vera Mosley (684431)



**Phyllis
Tuckwell
Hospice**



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FLEET AND CROOKHAM (CTFC)

The time leading up to Christmas was busy for everyone, and there was a full calendar of Churches Together activities.

Wednesday 28th November saw us wrapped up warm at Fleet Christmas Festival. Although cold, it was thankfully dry. Churches Together had a very busy corner in Gurkha Square with crafts and gifts for all. We handed out bags with sweets, and a decorated jam jar with instructions to enjoy the sweets and to fill the jar with spare coins to donate to a charity after Christmas.

There was also a marquee with a nativity scene, where you could dress up and have photos taken.

The Angel Bombing was a great success. Over 1100 angels were knitted, and I would like to thank our congregation for their support. We donated 93 angels.

Saturday 10th December saw 28 willing volunteers meeting at Fleet Methodist Church to attach the labels to the angels in readiness for their public debut. The following Saturday Pam Hasted and I, along with volunteers from other churches, were out at 5.30 am hanging the angels wherever we could—again, we were blessed with dry weather. The comments posted on social media sites were very positive—so much so, that we are planning the event again for 2017. Knitting needles at the ready, please!



Christmas Day Lunch at the Harlington Centre went well. The food was delicious, and was followed by a mini pantomime enjoyed by all. Carol singing, the Queen's Speech, a raffle and a visit from Father Christmas, rounded off this special day. We had 41 guests and 26 very willing volunteers serving, washing up, or just making people feel at home. There was a friendly buzz that day.

A date for your diary—a musical evening with Philippa Hanna at 7.30 pm on 11th February at the Church on the Heath. Philippa Hanna is an acclaimed British singer-songwriter, and is based in Sheffield. Her music frequently draws on the Christian faith she found in 2004.

At a recent CTFC meeting there were two key appointments: Andrew Johnston (Fleet Methodist) was appointed as Secretary and John Cobb (Church on the Heath) as Treasurer.

We are now planning activities and events for Easter, which isn't that far away! I will keep you informed.

Thank you again for all your support and God bless.

Darrell Henderson, CTFC Representative

A Favourite Prayer

We probably all have our favourite prayers—words that can be relied upon to uplift or inspire us, or maybe express our deepest emotions.

Here is a favourite prayer of mine taken from 'An Orthodox Prayer Book', a book which I purchased at Livingstones Bookshop in Fleet. This prayer seems to me so extremely well composed I would never in a hundred years have imagined all those lovely 'places of green pasture and places of rest' which it mentions. I am pleased to share it with you.

Eric Perry

A Prayer for the Departed

Remember, O Lord, those who have fallen asleep
in hope of resurrection to eternal life,
our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters,
and all those who have died in piety and faith;
and pardon them every offence,
willing and unwilling,
in word or deed or thought,
by which they have offended.

Settle them in places of light,
places of green pasture,
places of rest,
from which all sorrow, grief, and sighing have fled,
where the presence of your face gives joy to all your
Saints from every age.

Grant them and us your Kingdom,
and participation in your ineffable and eternal good things,
and the enjoyment of your infinite and blessed life.

For you are the life, the resurrection, and the repose
of your servants who have fallen asleep, Christ our God,
and to you we give glory,
together with your Father who is without beginning,
and your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit,
now and for ever, and to the ages of ages.

Amen

(From 'An Orthodox Prayer Book',
Archimandrite Ephrem Lash [ed] OUP 1999)

Have you a favourite prayer you could share with others? I would like to make this a regular feature in our 2017 Newsletters and would be delighted to receive your suggestions, along with a brief explanation of why the prayer is meaningful to you. ~ Editor



Mouse Makes

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

John appeared in the desert baptising and preaching and many people confessed their sins and were baptised.

Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the river Jordan. As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, He saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you".

**HEAVENEEBOUR
GZOPLEASEDAI
OPENOTBILWJV
DNJORDANEIEE
OLWIDOPSIISR
VOICEZTUVDUK
EVDGALILEESR
TEHOLYSPIRIT
UWATEREPENTF
RJOHNAZARETH
NFORTYDAYSON
FORGIVENESS**

Can you find these words from the story in the grid above?

BAPTISE • WILDERNESS • WATER
FORTY DAYS • NAZARETH
FORGIVENESS • GALILEE • SINS
JOHN • JESUS • RIVER
JORDAN • REPENT • TURN
BELIEVE • HEAVEN • OPEN
HOLY SPIRIT • GOD • DOVE • VOICE
SON • LOVE • PLEASED • LORD



READ Mark 1: 1-13

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