



# **FLEET**

## **United Reformed Church**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2016**

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*The beginning shall remind us of the end. T.S. Elliot*

How many people have started to read a book, but never read it to the end? There have been occasions, when I have started reading a book, only to put it down when something else crops up, or have been distracted by another book, so never finishing the original one I was reading. I don't think I am alone in this experience, but maybe there is something to learn in why we only read part of the story, and not to the final chapter.

During 2016, we have heard many stories of Jesus and how the early church coped with challenges, but linking faith in today's context can be a real challenge for most people.

God desires us to flourish, and to enable that flourishing to occur, we need to look at the Gospel writers for guidance and inspiration.

Each writer begins their Gospel with a different emphasis, and the same is said for their endings, however all invite us to discipleship.

It seems fitting at as we reflect on 2016 as a church community, I would want to explore these four Gospel 'endings' in a little more detail, and how they relate to us as disciples.

### **Mark's ending: Lost or suspended?**

Mark's Gospel is dramatic, quick and some may say written in haste, and the same could be said for the ending, abrupt, short and inconclusive. However, there are many unanswered questions relating to the ending in Mark.

- Who rolled away the stone?
- Who was the mysterious man in white?
- Did the disciples actually go to Galilee and see him?

The human fear which has confronted Jesus throughout Mark's Gospel is there at the very end. No wonder we find Mark's ending disappointing. We expect him to give us facts. In other words, we expect him to do what the others writers will do, go spread the good news; but there is a hesitancy.

Our discipleship can be a little like Mark's ending, enthusiastic about hearing Jesus stories that nurture our faith, yet unsure of **'what to do next'**. We can sometimes feel suspended in our discipleship, unsure of which direction to turn and feel lost.

Mark's ending is an invitation to read and read again Mark's Gospel from the beginning. It is about perseverance and commitment and being given another chance; that discipleship is personal journey where we will not always feel lost or suspended but be found and active.

### **Matthew's ending; The Great Commission**

Matthew's Gospel is a teaching and caring Gospel and many may feel that he has rounded off the Gospel in an appropriate way, otherwise called the Great commission **'Go make disciples of all nations'**. However, if we look a little further, the disciples must travel all the way to Galilee if they want to see Jesus, it would seem that their faith needs to be tested. Matthew's Gospel has Jesus directing the disciples precisely where they should go, and even addresses the disciple's doubts.

However, there is someone else who is influencing the ending of Matthew's Gospel, and that is the figure of Moses. The Exodus story sees Moses being commissioned by God, with words **'I am, sent you'** ringing in his ears. Matthew has Jesus standing on the shore, commissioning the disciples.

Evangelising is not an easy thing to do, but God knows what are our strengths and will use us to help bring people to Christ. In a gentle non-threatening manner, the Spirit can help us engage in conversations that can bring healing, or a listening ear that can bring relief, or a smile that can break boundaries. It is an invitation for us to enter the story and Jesus gives us each a blessing **'I am with you always to the end of time'**.

### **Luke's 'loose ends'**

Luke's Gospel is well structured, and tells the story of Jesus, carefully, slowly, prayerfully and elegantly. It is a Gospel that places Jesus where it matters and that in the centre of community and relationships. The last sentence in the gospel is like a fairy tale ending, for all ends happily **'since the Messiah had entered into glory'** but what next? The disciples will arrive to earth with a big bump, and are not going to settle to domestic bliss, but are sent on a

## **8th Fleet Brownies.**

Once again another busy year for the Brownies taking part in all activities which make up their programme.

### Highlights from the year

- A joint evening with the Tuesday Rainbows to celebrate Thinking Day
- A visit from a young local female Doctor to enable them to complete Healthy Heart Badge
- Entertaining their parents with a show including a short play, dance and poetry
- In September they were visited by a local vet as part of friends to animals badge.
- November saw a visit from an Indian lady plus lots of beautiful saris which each Brownie was able to try on

Spring saw the Brownies at Fleet Hospital planting summer bedding plants and then returning again in the autumn to take them up and replace them with winter plants and bulbs.

In late October they took to the streets for their night adventure delivering leaflets for the Church Fair. At the church fare they once again ran a Tombola stall and raised £93 donated to Step by Step.

At the guiding Carol Service the Brownie Guider was awarded a 20 year service award and the Assistant Guider 5 years service award.

The year ended on a sweet note with the girls joining the ladies from the Church to assist in making Christingles for the service.

Jackie Cresswell

For the “Be Inventive Challenge”, we had a messy meeting where we created a giant badge with pieces of coloured paper.

For the “Be Strong “ challenge we had a very active meeting with lots of running and jumping.

For the “Celebrate” challenge we had a Teddy Bears tea party. The Rainbows made the sandwiches and decorated cakes and we all enjoyed eating them.

For the “Get Outside” challenge we had a treasure hunt in the woods in Oakley Park.

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In the summer term, we also went to a parade service at the church, held a sports and games meeting and celebrated Independence Day with games from the USA and by eating hot dogs and S’mores

In the autumn term the Rainbows chose challenges to complete the Seasons Roundabout badge. The activities were based on Look, Learn, Laugh and Love.

We had a paper snowball fight, we tried to build igloos with marshmallows, we made giant bubbles (outside), we found out about bats and hedgehogs and made some beautiful butterflies.

We took part in the Hampshire Scouting and Guiding “Making A Difference” challenge badge. To earn this, we collected good quality toys and clothes to be sold by Naomi House and we raised £16 for this charity through a games evening.

We made collages with natural items to decorate the windows for the church Harvest Service. In November, some of our girls took part in a district event to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of Beatrix Potter.

At Christmas, we attended the gift service at the United Reformed Church and a carol service at St Philip and St James Church where we told the congregation about the role of tree ornaments at Christmas and we showed some that we had made.

Pauline Warner.

journey and mission to spread the good news, the Gospel story, and this is where the ‘loose ends’ come in. Acts gathers those loose ends and helps us understand what it truly means to walk the talk, not just by ourselves, but with other people of faith. The one question we need to remember is that Luke is the first part of a two-part volume, the second book being Acts.

.As disciples, we need to remember that even though we are called by God as individuals, God calls us to service and community, to enrich others people and well as ourselves.

### **John: Endings and Beginnings**

John brings another dimension to the theme. The ending of his Gospel, involves a meal and commissioning, but the final scene also involves forgiveness. For Peter, who denied Jesus three times, needs to be restored before he can fulfil his task of *‘tending lambs’*. Jesus’ words to Peter show clearly that the story has not come to an end, as there will always members of the flock needing to be cared for, and disciples still to be made. For John’s Gospel the need for hospitality, community, love and forgiveness are the signs of discipleship and the flourishing of the Kingdom of God.

For John’s Gospel, his ending is not the end of the story, but the beginning.

### **Final Thoughts**

Why have I spent time on a ‘Bible study’ for my AGM letter?

The themes on the ‘endings’ of the gospel stories, all relate to Jesus’ resurrection, a time of new beginnings and new life. It is not the end, but only the beginning.

We will be reflecting on 2016 in our AGM, and as the year close we look ahead to 2017, not knowing what it will bring, but knowing that Christ is beside each one of us.

We are all in relationship with God and each other, and that relationship is constantly being challenged in the light of the changing world we inhabit. As disciples, we are all part of the Gospel story, and that story will continue until the end of time.

However, relationships are the glue that holds community together, without being in a fulfilling relationship with Christ, we are not the person we were

meant to be, however the call to be part of the 'fabric' of the gospel story stirs deep within each of us.

At Fleet URC, we have been sojourners on a discipleship road with others, not just from our church, but from other dominations, other cultures. We are all called to tend lambs, to love our neighbour, to walk the extra mile, to forgive, and to accept people who have yet to hear the good news of Christ.

May God, who is our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer journey with us, as we remember the past, encounter God in the present, and with faith, face the future.

Every Blessing .

Ruth Dillon .

## **Secretary's Annual Report 2016**

2016 saw many changes and developments in the world. War and turmoil in the middle east and Africa leading to a huge refugee situation. Economic issues in the world, and a change in political direction in the west. Much to ponder. Thank goodness, we have our faith in God to lean on in these troubled times. Our rock. As a church, we continue to develop under the leadership of our minister.

I have to record the passing of Sue Bowen and Doris Weaver in February, Norman Jackson in August and Tom Durrett in November. They will be sadly missed. Several people in our church also lost close family members and I ask that they also be remembered in our prayers.

Five faithful friends of the church moved away during the year. Mihaly Kovacs returned to Romania, whilst Bill and Pearl Thomas moved to Devizes to be nearer to their family. Deepa Jaseph has to complete her dental training and taken a placement in the north of England. We hope to see Pradeep and Deepa when this period of training is completed. We wish them all well for the future.

Our church family increased by two with the births Ava Isabella Daniel in August and Luke Graham Dumbleton in September. Congratulations to Isobel and Simon, Becky and Matthew.

Nicola Hamilton, Liz McClune and Meg Nicholson agreed to continue to serve as Elders for another period of three years and this was supported by

Some of our older Brownies planned a water games meeting for us in the Summer, and we all had a great time. They learned some valuable tips for organising a group of younger girls.

In August, we went on our Brownie Holiday! We had 3 nights away in Silchester Village Hall. The theme was 'Finding Nemo', and we had a lot of fun playing games and making things. The girls managed to complete a 3-mile hike and also took part in duties such as cleaning the toilets, cooking dinner for 24 people, and sweeping every room.

When we returned from the Summer holidays we started our 'First Aid' badge. The girls found this very interesting and are now able to put someone in the recovery position, and put a bandage on a wound.

At the end of September there was a new challenge from the Scouting and Guiding partnership. Our Brownies decided to hold a sponsored silence to raise money for our chosen charity.

In November, we took part in the Remembrance Parade. The girls feel very proud to take part in this every year as they know it is a very serious occasion.

Hayley Scott

## **8th Fleet Rainbows**

2016 was a busy year for our Rainbows.

In the winter term we found out about rainbows in other countries, the Chinese New Year, African animals, Shrove Tuesday, St David's Day and the lifestyle in India as part of the Roundabout Global Adventure badge. We also met with 8<sup>th</sup> Fleet Brownies to celebrate "Thinking Day" and we ate food from Norway and played a game as played by girls in Norway.

We finished the term with an Easter Egg hunt.

In the summer term, we played some special games to help us to get to know one another and to show how similar we are in some ways but also how different we all are and that it is good to be unique.

Throughout the term, we worked on the Mission Spectacular Challenge badge which was designed to celebrate and raise awareness of 100 years of Girl Guiding's Senior Section.

- We joined the Remembrance Parade in November, and one of our Rainbows was chosen to lay the wreath for Girl guiding Fleet. She did an excellent job.
- Our second sleepover of the year was on the theme of unicorns. The girls made gliders which they enjoyed flying over their beds, and decorated biscuits with edible glitter.
- We finished the term with the Fleet District Carol service. The theme was the Christmas Alphabet and we chose 'F' for 'Family'. The girls thought this was an important part of Christmas, and they made family trees to show in church.
- 2016 saw us enrol 10 new girls into 1<sup>st</sup> Fleet West Rainbows, and send 10 girls up to have fun with 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet URC Brownies. We also welcomed a Guide helper 'Otter', who used to be with us in 1<sup>st</sup> Fleet West Rainbows and 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet URC Brownies.

Hayley Scott

#### **4th Fleet URC Brownies**

We started 2016 by caring for our wildlife. The girls all made a birdfeeder using a recycled tin, and filled it with tasty seeds.

In February, we celebrated World Thinking Day by having a joint meeting with 1<sup>st</sup> Fleet West Rainbows, where we found out about girls in other countries.

The girls all completed their 'Designer' badge, which involved designing a ballgown, a superhero, and something that would help a disabled person to live their life more easily.

Our first residential of the year was a sleepover in April. The theme was 'Beauty and the Beast'. We made sugar roses and charm bracelets, as well as going on a hunt for the characters. The girls loved making their own pizzas!

Girl guiding's 'Senior Section' (which used to be known as Rangers) celebrated it's 100-year anniversary in 2016, and the Brownies all earned a badge for finding out Senior Section facts and trying some of their activities.

Our next venture was the 'Science Investigator' badge, where we had to find out about our senses and enjoyed some messy experiments. We also got to visit the 'Look Out Discovery Centre' in Bracknell.

Church Meeting. Eldership is a ministry to which you are called and is about serving the church in pastoral oversight and leadership with the Minister. We are thankful for their service. Do you feel called to serve?

The Elders held a meeting in September with the Minister to discuss developing the church family, where a number of actions were agreed. Most notably our minister, Ruth will be preaching on Holy Habits each month. We will continue to support the Palani Mission in India. John Gibbons is developing a Social Committee in order to organise our monthly social evenings. Please help him with ideas and support.

As a church we rely upon volunteers and many people do give freely of their time. There are always tasks to be covered and I would be happy to talk to anyone about fitting jobs into the time they have available. For those who have helped in any way, I would like to say thank you.

I would also like to say welcome to our six new members, Carol Rayner, Grace Easton, Pauline and Chris Porter, Pam and Steve Lucas. Our membership now totals 74 at the beginning of 2017

When I accepted the role of Secretary I said that I would be prepared to serve for five years, if the Church would accept me. I have been in post since September 2012 and am happy to serve for one more year if elected at the AGM. The URC advise that a secretary serve for five years in order to allow new ideas and energy to come into the role. There is a need to select a new secretary and I ask that all give this prayerful consideration.

God bless you

Moray Henderson

#### **Church Accounts Year Ending 31 December 2016**

Headline Commentary:

The 2016 opening balance was £45,856 to which the annual total income of £76,759 was added. The latter exceeded our annual expenditure of £69,213 by some £7,546 thus providing a closing balance of £53,402. Major income streams came from the coffee mornings, the premises letting and the Autumn craft fair; our thanks must go to the catering team, Brian Armes and Darrell Henderson respectively.

There is still more planned repair work in the 2017 budget and to this end a sum of £28,000 has been set aside to complete future projects agreed by Church meeting.

Our distribution of gifts totalled £9,496 and was shared amongst local and overseas organisations; in partnership with the Palani Mission church we have and will continue to fund the training of two midwives in southern India.

Our reserves remain at £25,000.

I would like to thank Gill Durbin, Gilbert Black, Brian Armes and John Johnstone for their support throughout 2016.

A separate sheet containing the detailed accounts is issued with this report.

John Gibbons  
Church Treasurer

## **Property Report—Church**

### **Grounds**

- a. Contractors have spent approximately one hour a week on site. The weather conditions at the end of the year were particularly wet but any outstanding work will be dealt with in due course. Brian Coney continues to maintain the front flower beds.
- b. The Conifer trees on the boundary with Pinewood Court have been felled by Cedardale.
- c. Flood light installed to light car park. Timers set to switch on light when it gets dark and off at midnight.
- d. Lines painted in car park.
- e. New Church street side notice board installed.

### **Hall Electrical distribution boards – power sockets**

No more spurious tripping of the power breakers since fitting of the new fuse units.

### **Fire alarm and Emergency Lights**

Fire alarm system, extinguishers and emergency lighting all tested and serviced by Hampshire Fire Services as per the contract. System tested on a routine basis between formal services.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Fleet West Rainbows**

We started the year with a badge called 'New Skills'. The Rainbows learned how to make the bed, use a knife safely, and how to tie shoelaces. We also had a meeting where we practised crossing the road safely with an adult, and how to dial 999 in an emergency.

In February, we celebrated 'World Thinking Day' by having a joint meeting with 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet URC Brownies, where we learned about girls from different countries and said our Promise by candle light.

In March, we had a sleepover. The theme was Space and we went on a hunt in the park for Planets and facts about NASA. The girls did a great job of getting dressed and making their bed in the morning, and all earned a sticker for their hard work.

We held a meeting about money, so that the girls could learn how to add coins together and how to give change when helping at an event.

In April, we started a new badge called 'I Love Adventures'. We learned about the different habitats in which an animal could live and went to find some at Fleet Pond.

We let the Rainbows choose a theme for one of our meetings in June. They decided they wanted a meeting about Pirates and Fairies where they could dress up. We also decorated some fairy statues and made pirate cakes.

To make the most of the nice weather we had a lot of outdoor meetings in the Summer term. We went to Oakley park to follow a peg trail through the woods, and we also had a garden party at the hall.

After the Summer holidays, we had 7 weeks of 'Rainbow Meetings', where each week was themed on a different colour. We also ate food that matched the colour of the meeting.

- In September, the girls chose to paint canvasses to send to a children's hospice for the Scouting and Guiding partnership. We were impressed that they put so much thought into this idea.

- In October, we had a cosy pyjama meeting with an indoor campfire where we sang songs and drank hot chocolate.

- We celebrated the 150-year anniversary of Beatrix Potter by spending an afternoon with 3 other Rainbow units. We got to make Plasticine gardens, plant cress, and go on a Tom Kitten treasure hunt.



Funding for Fleet Angels and CAP is secure for the next two years but unfortunately there is major concerns for funding for the Foodbank.

Revd Jill Thornton asked if Anna Chaplaincy would be accepted as a Churches Together project and it was unanimously accepted.

Will Parker and Patrick Butler were re-elected as Chair and Deputy Chair.

Tracey Anne Evans and Elizabeth Brightwell have both stood down as Treasurer and Secretary both have served for 3 exemplary years

Fleet Festivities on 23<sup>rd</sup> November offered a space to Churches Together We had a very busy corner in Ghurkha Square with Crafts and gifts. 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. This helped to highlight the work CT do in Fleet and Church Crookham

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December saw 28 willing volunteers meet at Fleet Methodist |Church to attach the labels to the Angels for their public debut the following Saturday. Our Church knitted 93 Angels of the 1100 which was our total. It was a positive event and will be on the agenda for 2017. If you need a pattern, wool or needles see me.

Heron on the Lake asked Carol Dunk if she could organise some Carol Singing over 4 dates which was done. In return they donated food and crackers for our Christmas Lunch.

Christmas Lunch at The Harlington Centre went well. We had over 30 guests and some very willing volunteers. Ah repeat performance as been planned for Christmas Day 2017

*Post note: The two key appointments of Secretary (Andrew Johnston – Fleet Methodist) and Treasurer (John Cobb (Church on the Heath) have been agreed*

Darrel Henderson

## **Heating Systems**

- a) Hall and church heating systems repaired and serviced by Ric Martin the local plumber as required..
- b) Domestic water heat exchanger replaced with descaled spare following fluctuating hot water temperatures.

## **Sanctuary**

- a) Various pew chairs have been dismantled, glued and re-assembled. The majority of the remaining chairs require similar attention.
- b) The carpet professionally cleaned in the summer.

## **Kitchen**

- a) The “PROTON” industrial dishwasher and water softener serviced by the manufacturer’s engineer. Water softener charged on a routine basis.
- b) Water heater serviced by supplier. Inline water softener fitted on water supply.

## **Lobby Areas and Meeting Rooms and Office**

- a) All areas prepared and painted during the summer.
- b) All carpeted areas except the office floor professionally cleaned.

## **Hall**

Routinely swept and cleaned with special cleaner as necessary

## **Sound System**

Recordings continued to be made of services and copied to CDs for use of members of the congregation. Discs containing recordings of services over 12 months old were destroyed and disposed of in compliance with copyright requirements. Approximately eleven months’ recordings have been retained.

## **Cleaning**

- a) A new cleaner Mrs Ewa Bieleu has been contracted and is proving very efficient.
- b) The outside windows on the property are cleaned on a regular basis by a window cleaner.

## **Parlour and flower preparation room**

This room still needs some renovation work. The Property Committee will progress this.

## **Shed**

Temporary repairs on the shed are still keeping most of the wet out. The base continues to subside and wooden frame is more distorted.

John R. Johnstone

## **Property Report – Manse**

During the year two large double glazing panels were replaced at the Manse and a new front door handle fitted.

Some of the boundary fence blew down again in the winter gale. The broken panel was replaced and intermediate posts inserted in the other panels to prevent them bowing and popping out in strong winds.

Brian Armes

## **Hall and Room Bookings.**

Bookings overall are slightly lower than in the previous year. They still provide a significant income stream but there are some notable gaps in the bookings calendar. We still have no takers for Tuesday morning or Thursday afternoon in the Hall. Also, the number of parties is down on previous years. NCT bookings fell off during the second half of the year because they were unable to find local teachers and when they did find teachers they required the use of the Hall rather than the Meeting Room, which was often not available at the time they required.

Tuesday and Wednesday evenings however continue to be very busy with Rainbows and Brownies followed by two large groups – in the Hall and Sanctuary. I generally restrict use of the Meeting Room at this time to avoid problems in the car park.

We have acquired a new group, Toddler Sign and Sign, which uses the Small Meeting Room on Tuesday mornings.

The income from Hall and Room lettings is anticipated to be £21,325 when all monies have been collected.

Brian Armes.

## **FACCTS Report**

In 2016 FACCTS staff led and oversaw 6 teams which went in regularly to the infant, junior and primary schools to do an “Open The Book” assembly. Each of the 5 junior schools in Fleet had a weekly FACCTS lunch club Four are led by the staff and consist of games, Bible story, prayer and craft.

At Christmas and Easter we have continued to partner with local churches to invite the whole of Yr. 6 from each of the junior schools to a half-day presentation on the real meaning of Christmas and Easter.

During 2016 we have set-up and run 3 prayer spaces in Fleet schools - secondary and primary.

We have also offered a Prayer space taster which 2 schools attended. We have begun regular twice term assemblies in Court Moor secondary school, primarily for Yr. 7-9.

We have also served coffee weekly in the 2 secondary schools.

Nicola Hamilton (on behalf of the FACCTS Team).

## **Churches Together Report.**

In September Jill Durbin, after 10 years as the URC representative for Churches Together resigned. Her long and faithful service was acknowledged with thanks and applause from the Churches Together members.

2016 started with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. URC Fleet hosted a half an hour prayer each day, culminating at 4pm at Fleet Methodist Church on 24<sup>th</sup> January.

The Easter colouring project attracted 150 children through FACCTS. Seven shops participated in the Easter Hunt.

The events received good reports.

Our William Earnshaw won the Guess the word completion well done William!

Fleet Angel's thanked and said goodbye to Nigel Pool. And welcomed Jeremy Dunk as his replacement. Jeremy took part in the Freshers Fair at Farnborough 6<sup>th</sup> Form College

## **Christian Aid.**

The house-to-house collection in May raised £508. Whilst this was considerably down on last year's result, it is still an encouraging amount, and many thanks as ever to our collectors. Some of our collectors have stepped down from their involvement and we would like to thank them for their past help and support. The Cake & Plant Sale in May was held in the parish hall at All Saints Church and raised £840, a superb result. The Methodist church hosted the Christian Aid service and Katie Roberts gave a very interesting address. The grand total for all the collections and sales in Fleet during the week was £9,324.

The annual Carol Concert in December was held at St Philip & St James Church. It raised £865 and we are very grateful to Fleet Choral Society for their continuing support. It is much appreciated.

Dates for your diaries: the Cake & Plant Sale will be held on Saturday 13 May 2017 from 10-12 noon in the parish hall at All Saints Church, Church Road. All contributions of plants and/or cakes will be very gratefully received. As yet the venue for this year's Christian Aid Service is undecided but details will be available shortly.

We are always looking for more helpers and would be very pleased to hear from you. Please contact Linda Storey or Liz McClune.

Linda Storey, Liz McClune

## **Commitment for Life**

Total raised for Commitment for Life in 2016 was £1,660 through personal donations, Commitment for Life letter fundraising drive and general fund donation.

Thank you so much for your ongoing support for Commitment for Life and the additional fundraising for their partner Christian Aid. Every penny and prayer adds up to help Commitment for Life partners and those they are supporting.

Tamyra Sherratt

## **Catering Report**

In addition to the weekly Coffee Mornings reported on separately, our Team in the kitchen provided refreshments for the following events during the year. This varied from tea and biscuits, bacon butties to homemade cakes and more.

26 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Quiz with Fish and Chip Supper
16 <sup>th</sup> March	Funeral wake for Sue Bowen
23 July	Muir Scully's birthday buffet
29 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Minister's Evening
7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Harvest Supper
5 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Church Craft Fare
18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Carol Service and Christingle.

Thanks to all who have assisted during this last year.

Moira C. Johnstone.

## **Coffee Mornings.**

Our Thursday Coffee Mornings continue to be successful.

We have made visitors welcome and some continue to attend on a regular basis.

Our grateful thanks to all who support us throughout the year, including those from the Methodist Church and the Baptist Church.

In June, we held an event to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday, providing savouries and cakes. We raised £80 for Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice.

The hall was closed for three weeks during the summer holiday due to re-decoration work. So, rather than not meet at all, it was decided to arrange alternative venues, i.e. St John's Church Hall, Hartley Wintney, Squires Garden Centre and All Saints' Church Hall. A good number turned out at each venue.

Again, a big 'thank you' to our happy band of caterers, who bake the delicious cakes enjoyed by all, and not forgetting Bee's stall, which together make the morning the success it is.

Val Cox

## **Craft & Gift Fair**

To open this year's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Craft and Gift Fair, Revd Ruth Dillon warmly welcomed the visiting Crafters with a prayer.

This year's event as per previous years was well attended by Crafters old and new. In fact, I was asked by some of the customers if they could be added to the waiting list for 2017.

Our regular Crafters always give glowing reports on the way they are looked after and welcomed by our Church.

Our Catering team supplied their delicious homemade soups and cakes. Val Cox was Super Chef where the Bacon Butties were concerned, a real regular favourite. Once they start cooking the line start forming to buy these delicacies.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Fleet Brownies supported us again with their Tombola stall Jackie Cresswell and her very willing Brownies worked very hard and donated £200. The charity they chose was "Step by Step".

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help. Thank you, Christine Gibbons, for designing the poster and flyers, for the team who cleared the Church ready for the day and for putting it all back together again. For those who welcomed our customers, to everyone who helped deliver the flyers and posters around Fleet This is an important part of the event and more help is needed please.

We had a large spread in the local paper which was lovely.

Our next Craft & Gift Fair will be held on Saturday 4th November 2017. If you would like to get involved, please let me know.

All our efforts helped to raise over £1,300.

God Bless

Darrell Henderson

## **Kitchen & Church volunteers**

We would like to say a special thank you to all the help provided by Sandra and Milly to help serve the refreshments to our families. We really appreciate all of their help and the group would not be the same without them. We are now down to only three volunteers on our kitchen rota so if there are any other volunteers within the church who would be interested in joining us please let us know.

Our volunteer Jackie has now taken over the planning of the kitchen rota.

Simone Grant-Jones

## **Reform Magazine**

During 2016 there were 10 subscribers to Reform – one fewer than last year.

If I am allowed a brief glimpse forward into 2017, six new members were recently received and two have already expressed an interest in trying Reform.

As well as features and columns, the monthly issues contain news from the URC, book and film reviews, a crossword puzzle and a popular letters section, which promotes a lively exchange of views.

Reform covers a variety of topics in articles and columns from different contributors who draw on their different experiences and interests. A recent regular feature is "Twenty Questions" in which the interviewee answers questions, most of which are serious but a few are more light hearted.

"How to Retire Well" was an article which made me (even at nearly 92) want to read it.

Forgiveness has been one of the topics given in-depth treatment recently. Another monthly series has invited members of other faiths to explain what Jesus means to them.

A rich variety indeed.

Sheila Durbin.

Anniversary cards, commemorating recent baptisms and blessings, are sent on behalf of the church each year up until the child's fifth birthday. This year, these have been sent to the following children:

Eden Rose Cheyne  
Isla Beth Chevalier  
Florence Aimée Chevalier  
Ava Rose Faulkner  
Amelie May McGhie

Helen Bailey

## **URC Toddler Group – 2016 Report for Church AGM**

### **Who runs the group?**

The URC Toddler Group is run by parent volunteers who attend with their children. We cater for 0-5 year olds and so children outgrow the group fairly quickly and we are always encouraging new parents to help facilitate sessions. We currently have a group of 5 regular parent helpers to help set up and pack away, we actively encourage parents to come early and help set up even if they are not officially a 'helper'. We are very lucky to have a retired volunteer who joins us each week to assist in the kitchen as well as meet and greet parents and play with the children.

### **Session Structure**

09:15 Set up, 10:00 Start, 10:15 Refreshments served, 11:00 Tidy up time, 11:05 Songs/story/parachute, 11:15 End and final tidy, 11:30 Lock up

### **What days do we run?**

Fridays throughout the year closing only on bank holidays and when we do not have enough parent volunteers to run the session.

### **Attendance**

The attendance numbers have been steadily increasing throughout 2016, we are now currently at an average of around 20 families.

In order to ensure we are able to cover our costs of each session we changed our entrance fee to a flat rate of £2 per family.

## **Fleet URC on the Web**

**Church Website:** [www.fleet.urch.org.uk](http://www.fleet.urch.org.uk)

The year got off to a good start when our website was one of five nominated for an iChurch 'Best Church Site' Award. Although we did not win we were complimented on the site's construction and design. 'Welcoming', 'Easy to navigate' and 'Does the church proud' were some of the feedback comments.

Later in the year we received an unsolicited email from the Communications Officer for Edinburgh Churches Together: 'The site is welcoming and accessible, with great content, and so easy to navigate'.

These testimonies show that we have a website to be proud of; one which is deserving of everyone's support and interest. For instance, under the 'News' section you can always find stories and photos about recent church events – do take a regular look to keep yourself up to date, and if you have any suggestions or comments, I am always very pleased to receive them.

**Church Facebook Page:** [www.facebook.com/fleeturch](http://www.facebook.com/fleeturch)

**Church Twitter Account:** [www.twitter.com/fleeturch](http://www.twitter.com/fleeturch)

Social media allows people to create, share or exchange information, ideas and pictures or videos in virtual communities, and therefore is ideally suited to church outreach.



I have continued to 'tweet' regularly throughout the year about our activities at Fleet URC. We have increased our number of followers to 104, which includes local URC congregations, individuals and organisations. Follow the link above to join in.



The Fleet URC Facebook page was set up in March 2014, and has proved enormously popular. It seems that many people are more likely to look at our Facebook page than our website to keep up to date with our news. Certainly, we have the potential to reach a great number of people across the globe with our stories and photos, particularly when these are

shared between friends. Many of our stories are viewed by four or five hundred people - all of whom are our church's virtual congregation.

You don't have to join Facebook to look at our page and see what's going on: Just use the above link to keep in touch.

Christine Gibbons.

## Footsteps

### (previously Little Fishes and Loaves & Fishes)

At the start of 2016, Little Fishes and Loaves and Fishes were still meeting separately, the latter using ROOTS as a basis for the sessions.

Over the course of the year, it became clear the Little Fishes was not viable as a separate group, as we were regularly having more adults than children attending. Each session still required planning and preparation even if no children turned up on the Sunday and for the Spring Term, we averaged 1.5 children each week. At the same time, Loaves and Fishes were finding that their older members wanted more support in their exploration of the topics outlined in ROOTS.

On suggestion from the members of Loaves and Fishes, instead of following ROOTS through the Summer and Autumn terms, a different activity was undertaken, exploring the people from the Old Testament.

Using the stories in the Lion Storyteller Bible by Bob Hartman, the young people designed and produced a series of posters each week concentrating on one character. They listened carefully to the story and wrote down or drew pictures of the significant parts then set about producing a poster to capture the different aspects. Members of Little Fishes joined in enthusiastically and from the success of these sessions, the decision was taken to create a new group to encompass both the existing Little Fishes and Loaves and Fishes. The new group, named Footsteps, will split into different activities during a Sunday morning but the overall theme and start and end of the sessions will be joint. The group will use the material in ROOTS as a basis for the sessions each week. It is hoped that this format will better suit the needs of the young people from the youngest to the oldest.

*We are very different people, we come from many different backgrounds but we have one thing in common, we are on the journey of Christian Faith. As we read the Bible and discuss what it really means, each one takes away a personal concept which helps to feed, inspire and encourage.*

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During the year we spent many weeks exploring the Lord's Prayer. It was generally agreed that it could become so familiar that the prayer loses its impact and potency. Therefore after each session the group said the prayer together both slowly and thoughtfully. We also studied portions both from the Old and New Testament as well as the lives of various Women in the Bible.

We still from time to time have a DIY Morning, when members bring something to share with the group.

One week a member brought **The Feedback Game**.

70 cards portray human strengths such as respectful, good tempered, discerning, diligent, responsible, etc.

Each player receives three cards.

Turns are taken to take a new card. The player decides whether to keep this card and discard one from the hand.

Any player can choose to donate a card to another player instead of discarding it but they must explain why they think the other player deserves the card.

At the end each player announces which three attributes they have chosen to describe themselves and explain why. It needed courage and honesty but was a soul searching experience shared with friends.

Bernard Potter

## Cradle Roll Report

This year, two children have been baptised by the minister and welcomed into the church. Both occurred in December 2016, on the 4th, Ava Isabella Daniel was brought by Simon and Isabel Daniel and then on December 18th it was the turn of Jake Peter Hermanson brought by Charl Hermanson and Christine Webb. It was fantastic to see so many family and friends in church to celebrate and support these newest members.

At present Liz McClune and I are sharing the flower arranging duties between us but it would be wonderful if someone else would like to try their hand and have a go to join us in this worthwhile part of Church family life. We would be very happy to offer help and advice if it is needed.

Sandra Smith

## **Organ Notes.**

Apart from one Sunday we've had an organist every week so a big thank you to Nessie, Maurice, John, David, Colin and Sheila. Thanks to their loyal service we have been very fortunate to be able to carry on; lots of churches have to rely on taped music. If you know of anyone who would be able to help out on occasion please let me know.

Liz Mc Clune.

## **House Group - Bible Study**

The Annual Report is somewhat different from previous years insofar as it was agreed members of the Group would in a few words say what the House Group/Bible Study meant to them.

*I find the Weekly House Group offers fellowship, learning, mutual support and blossoming faith.*

Monday Prayer Group is the most exciting morning of the week as the Lord's Spirit is with us all.

*Joining in discussion with a group often brings out new ideas and experiences which are very interesting and helpful.*

I look forward to Monday mornings with a small group of people learning more about the Bible, then a social hour over coffee. I always feel uplifted ready for the week ahead. Thank you all for being there.

*The Bible Study Group offers a great way to share talents and insights God has given us, as Jesus taught in one of his parables that we should.*

The Monday morning Bible study provides a spiritual start to my week. The group members share views on chosen bible studies. The discussions provide a fresh approach to the bible for me. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts with the group. I learn a great deal by listening to the knowledge and wisdom shared by the group members. The session ends with tea/coffee and biscuits and light-hearted conversation.

Other highlights during the year include Palm Sunday where the young people were involved in the church service, presenting a Donkey Drama. This was a short piece about a curious group of donkeys watching a modern-day Palm Sunday re-enactment. They all read very well, and everyone enjoyed it. As they said, "If a humble donkey can carry Christ, look how much more YOU can do!" For Easter Sunday, both groups met in the hall for a fun "messy" session with everyone enjoying a variety of different craft and other activities including egg rolling, egg and spoon races as well as an egg hunt and finishing with an Easter prayer.

During Advent, Footsteps explored the stages of the Christmas story, producing bunting which was presented to the Church during the service on the 18th December and then displayed in the foyer. The young people again designed the cover for the Church Christmas Card using the same idea of bunting but this time drawing their own thoughts about Christmas.

We end the year with 4 leaders, who take it in turns to plan the sessions with a second leader supporting, having this year said goodbye and a heartfelt thank you to Bee Griffiths for all her work with the young people. We also boast a core of regular helpers who are greatly appreciated for their ongoing assistance and talents and for giving their time on a Sunday morning; if anyone else feels they would be able to join us as a regular or occasional helper, please let us know as you would always be very welcome.

Helen Bailey

## **Pilots.**

This year was the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pilots, which is the national non-uniformed organisation for young people sponsored by the United Reformed Church. On 18<sup>th</sup> September, during the morning service our Pilots group celebrated the occasion by explaining how the organisation started and the relevance of the Pilots badge. The congregation joined the Pilots and sang a special hymn which had been composed by the Revd. Janet Lees. Everyone was invited to continue the celebrations after the service when we enjoyed a delicious cake made by Maureen Coney.

Our Fleet Pilots company is now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year. We meet every Tuesday during term time from 3.45pm to 4.45pm. A typical Pilots session includes a

mixture of games, Worship and project activities, with of course refreshments.

During 2016 we used the Pilots Overseas Voyage Materials to study the Czech Republic and Bangladesh. We were able to discover something about the history and geography of these countries and we also explored their culture, food, games and pastimes. We compared their church traditions with ours.

In Pilots one of our main objectives is to help those in the world who are not as fortunate as us. This year we have supported a number of charities:

- a. Christian Aid through our "Duck Project" – helping to combat climate change in Bangladesh. John Johnstone helped us to make origami ducks for this project – Thank you John.
- b. Samaritan's Purse – "Operation Christmas Child". 35 boxes of gifts were sent to the children of Bosnia and Iraq.
- c. "Seeability" – Harvest gifts.
- d. "Parity for Disabled" -- Christmas gifts.

We would like to thank all our church members and our families for supporting us in our charity efforts. Keep collecting your small change, it really mounts up!

Our visits this year have been:

Fleet Town - Shop Window Competition.

Church of Our Lady - "In Jesus' Steps Exhibition.

Local Parks and Picnics (Summer Term).

Farnborough Town to buy items for the Christmas boxes.

Fleet Christmas Festivities – including activities arranged by Churches Together.

Pantomime – "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" performed by the youth of St Philip & St James Church. – all proceeds were for Naomi House Hospice and Jack's Place.

Thank you to all the adults who help at Pilots sessions. Your assistance is invaluable and to all the Pilots who attend regularly and delight us with their enthusiasm and fun.

Bee Griffiths.

## Sunday Lunches.

When Katie Ellis took over the catering for our Church Lunches, ten years ago, we were having 10 Lunches a year. We now plan 4 Lunches in the year, in March, June, September and the Christmas Lunch in December.

We started with 31 on our register and now we have 18 people who are able to come regularly. Just 4 of us from Fleet URC!

The friends who join us come from other Churches in Fleet, Cove and Ash Vale. We look forward to these occasions as a majority of us live alone. It is an enjoyable time of fellowship with much chatter and laughter. We enjoy a delicious meal together, prepared and cooked for us by Katie.

This is a great 'Outreach' opportunity and we would really appreciate some support from our own Church family.

The next Sunday Lunch is on March 12th at 12:30pm. Come and join us!

Special thanks to Katie for all her hard work and to Cynthia and Jill who so willingly prepare the tables and serve.

Margaret Kemp.

## Phyllis Tuckwell Support Group

In November we held a Wine Tasting Workshop at the United Reformed Church where a full house sampled the British Wines and Cheeses under the expert Guidance of Nina Cerullo, a member of the Association of Wine Educators. We raised £2306 for the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice at Farnham, making an on-target fund of £20,000 for our year ending in March which is one day's cost for our Hospice.

Vera Mosley

## Church Flowers

We have had yet another successful year for the Flower Rota with most of the dates filled. So, let's make sure we will be successful again in 2017 with lots of names filling the rota and our Sundays filled with lovely flowers. As ever we thank our volunteers who distribute the flowers each Sunday to visiting preachers, sick or housebound members and members who have something to celebrate. We know they are always appreciated.