

## CHURCH CALENDAR

### AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2016

#### August

6th	2-8 pm	Open House at the Manse
7th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
8th	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
14th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Diana Middleditch
15th	2 pm	Monthly Bible Study
21st	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
24th	7.30 pm	Elders Meeting
28th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Helen Everard



#### September

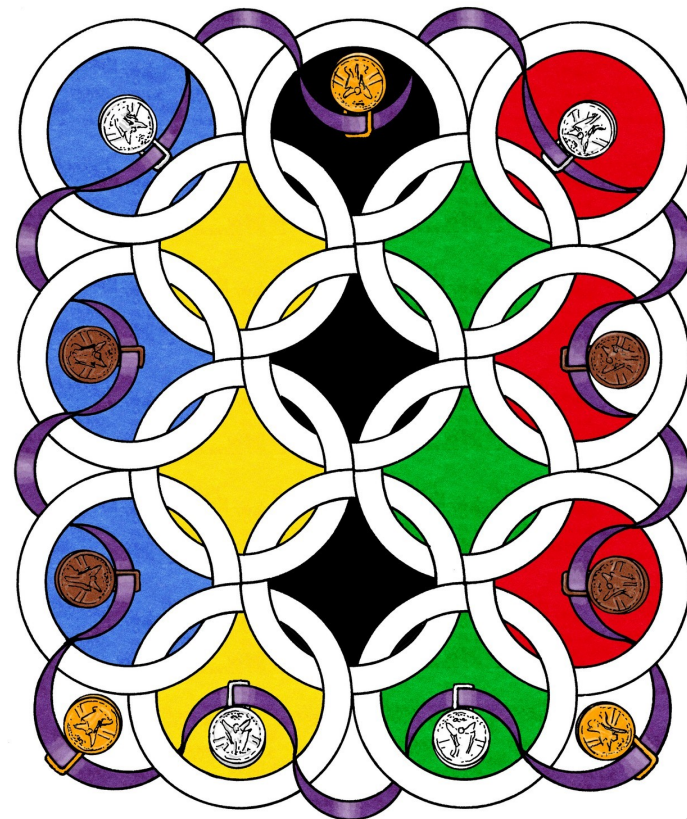
4th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon, followed by Church Meeting
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
5th	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
11th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Paula Littlewood (Children's groups reconvene)
13th	4-5 pm	Pilots group reconvenes
17th		Synod Quiet Day at Fareham URC
18th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
19th	2 pm	Monthly Bible Study
22nd	7.30 pm	'Walking with Paul', talk by Revd Ruth Dillon
24th		Elders Away Day
25th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr John Simson
30th	7.30 pm	Elders Meeting

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.urc.org.uk](http://www.fleet.urc.org.uk), or with Assistant Administrator, Margaret Armes (650994).

Items for the October-November issue of *In Touch* should be with Christine Gibbons by **Sunday 18th September** ([christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk](mailto:christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk)—Please note new email address).

# In Touch

"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12: 1



August-September 2016

## 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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@FleetURC

### CHURCH CONTACTS

<i>Minister:</i>	<b>Revd Ruth Dillon</b> , 01252 625238 <a href="mailto:revrdillon@btinternet.com">revrdillon@btinternet.com</a>
<i>Secretary:</i>	<b>Moray Henderson</b> , 01252 659569 <a href="mailto:moray.henderson@ntlworld.com">moray.henderson@ntlworld.com</a>
<i>Assistant Administrator:</i>	<b>Margaret Armes</b> , 01252 650994 <a href="mailto:b.ames@ntlworld.com">b.ames@ntlworld.com</a>
<i>Treasurer:</i>	<b>John Gibbons</b> , 01252 614200 <a href="mailto:jmgibbons@hotmail.com">jmgibbons@hotmail.com</a>
<i>Hall Bookings:</i>	<b>Brian Armes</b> , 01252 650994 <a href="mailto:b.ames@ntlworld.com">b.ames@ntlworld.com</a>

### 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 5 for dates and times
<i>Bible Study:</i>	See page 5 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*

As I write this pastoral letter, my thoughts are still with General Assembly, having recently returned from Southport, where representatives of the United Reformed Church met for their biennial gathering.

Having reflected on the experience, I once again feel privileged to be part of a denomination that includes committee members regardless of age, gender or race, and both lay and ordained. In fact the bulk of people who attended were not ordained ministers, but ordinary church members from churches throughout England, Wales and Scotland.

The theme for the Assembly was *'Walking the Way'*, and during the daily Bible Studies we reflected on various aspects of this theme.

There were many discussions, and the floor of Assembly echoed people's considered thoughts on a variety of matters, including:

- New URC policy on environmental issues;
- Trident and nuclear disarmament;
- Voting on the same sex marriage debate (92% in favour);
- Watching and discussing a short film about Constance Coltman, the first woman to be ordained to Word and Sacrament in the Congregational church in 1917;
- The Church's response in light of the Brexit referendum result;
- Expectations of ministers in light of declining ministerial numbers;
- The new *'Walking the Way'* discipleship programme to be launched in Summer 2017;
- Statement on Palestine and Israel relationships;
- Authorisation of Elders/Lay preachers at Communion;
- The launch of the Churches' Mutual Credit Union;
- The 'wider fold' of the URC, which includes people associated with the URC who work overseas, serve in the armed forces, reside in nursing homes, and retired ministers who worship in another denomination.
- The winners and runners up in the Community Awards.

One question that arched over all our conversations at Assembly was *'What is the Spirit saying to us?'*; and last year Fleet URC took part in a wider conversation about this question. In light of the responses from that national conversation, the URC has developed a *'Walking the Way'* discipleship programme, to encourage members and friends to feel more confident and supported in their personal faith journey.

We heard reports from Education and Learning, Finance, Children and



Youth Work, Equalities, Mission, Faith and Order, Mission Council, and Communications and Editorials, and the incoming Moderators also gave a joint address to Assembly.

This year their theme is 'Coffee'. In fact, the longer title was, 'I like espressos, small but incredibly potent... tell your people to stop trying to be like cappuccinos and try to be more like espressos'. The report encouraged churches to find their identity in being 'United' with our ecumenical partners, in being 'Reformed', and open to where God's Spirit is leading us.

The Moderators concluded, 'We may be tempted to scrap the church, but we are 'reformed and united', so although we are small in numbers, let us 'give out', and in giving of ourselves God may not have given up on us, and may use us in surprising ways'.

Having been refreshed at General Assembly, I feel the United Reformed Church is an exciting church, a church that dares to live on the edge, to reach out into God's world in a way that the other denominations do not, or cannot do in the same way.

We should be proud of our heritage, of being dissenters and reformed. We will have the opportunity to show and inform other people of this heritage as 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of a key starting point for the Reformation, the nailing of Martin Luther's 95 theses to the church door in Wittenburg.

This in turn led to the formation of Reformed churches, and during Assembly we were reminded of our roots and past.

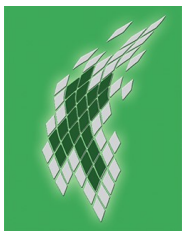
General Assembly, with its representatives and structure, continues to shape how the United Reformed Church will look in the future. It is an exciting future, and change will come as our society and culture changes.

I leave you with words from one of the convenors at Assembly: 'Change is an essential part of faith. Only the dead don't change... change brings life'.

Every blessing

Ruth

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016



General Assembly is the biennial assembly of the United Reformed Church, meeting every two years to celebrate, discuss, and make decisions on, the life and work of the denomination.

General Assembly met in Mersey Synod at the Southport Convention Centre from 8th to 11th July 2016.

If you would like to read a brief 'news round up' of General Assembly, then please visit the Wessex Synod website: <http://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/general-assembly-8-11-july-2016/>

## CHURCH MEMBERSHIP SESSIONS

Our annual membership sessions will be starting again in September. If you are interested in becoming a member of Fleet United Reformed Church, then please speak to Ruth or to one of the Elders before the end of August.

The membership service always takes place within a communion service. Therefore individuals will be received into membership during Sunday morning service on **18th December**.



## NOTICE BOARD

### BIBLE STUDY GROUP



The monthly Bible Study in the vestry will continue at **2 pm** on the following dates:

**Monday, 15th August**  
**Monday, 19th September**

### 'WALKING WITH PAUL'

The next Bible 'conversation' will be on **Thursday, 22nd September** at **7.30 pm** at Fleet URC. All are welcome



### MONTHLY PRAYER GROUP

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

**Monday, 8th August**  
**Monday, 5th September**

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

### ANNUAL LEAVE/ STUDY LEAVE

Ruth, our Minister, will not be available from:

**Monday 25th July—**  
**Friday 5th August** (Annual Leave)

**Tuesday 6th—**  
**Tuesday 13th September**  
(Study Leave followed by visit to the Protestant Church in France at Dieppe)

### SYNOD QUIET DAY

On **Saturday 17th September**, led by Revd Brenda Russell at Fareham United Reformed Church.  
Theme: 'Light Shines.. Hope Blossoms'  
Arrivals from 10 am for 10.30 am start. Finish 4 pm.  
Bring your own lunch—drinks will be provided.  
Cost: £5 per person





## YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS

### 'Loaves and Fishes' and 'Little Fishes'



As a result of the changing age profile and needs of our young people, the group leaders have been thinking about how to arrange the groups to make best use of available space, leaders and resources. After much discussion, we have decided to join *Little Fishes* and *Loaves and Fishes* together into a new venture called '*Footsteps*': a name chosen to reflect that we are each following our journey growing up in the church family.

In the new year we expect to be using *Roots*, the Churches Together lectionary resource (<http://www.rootsontheweb.com>) as the basis of each Sunday's session, with different types of activities—craft, stories, shared discussion—to explore the themes in different ways and at various levels to ensure that there is always something appropriate for everyone from toddler through to teenager. On Sundays when All Age and Parade services are taking place there will not be a separate *Footsteps* session. However crèche facilities will still be available for those who would like to make use of them.

In the meantime we will be continuing with the project mentioned in the last Newsletter, which we hope to complete and present to the church later this year. Watch this space!

*Helen Bailey* (on behalf of Young People's Group Leaders)



## WESSEX URC YOUTH CAMP 2016

*This year's Wessex Summer Camp took place at Ferny Crofts Activity Centre in the New Forest, from 15-17 July. Melvin and William went along from Fleet URC, and have written this report.*



When we arrived at camp we were welcomed and given doughnuts. After that we were set a task to put our tent up. This took us a long time and, before we knew it, it was time to watch our late night film, which was '*Inside Out*'. After the film it was so dark that we could not find our tent, but thanks to Ruth White we found it

and got to sleep. The theme for the camp was 'RE:fresh'.

On the second day of camp we were woken up to be told to have our breakfast, which was egg, bacon butty, baked beans and toast, which was very delicious. After our breakfast we were put into different 'RE:fresh' groups where we would discuss our daily Bible Learning. Our first lesson

was about the Ten Commandments. We had to learn and discuss in groups about each one.

When we finished we had lunch, which was quiche, ham, cheese, bread, crisps and salad, with a dessert of chocolate mousse and yoghurt. When we had finished we were split into two different groups to do our activities, which was either Capture the Flag, Wildlife Park, or Canoeing, which were all really fun. At the end of the day we had a delicious banquet, where our theme was '*Around the World*'. We had different types of barbecue food, and our favourite was the kebabs.

We thank the whole of the church for allowing us to have the opportunity to go and have this wonderful time at camp.

*Melvin Mathew and William Earnshaw*



## WESSEX SYNOD NEWS



### New URC Logo

The URC Communications Team have produced a refreshed URC logo, which came into use on 1st June for all new URC materials. This is how they introduced the new logo:

"For the past six months the URC design team has been working to make the denomination's visual identity more positive, striking and adaptable.

"The previous logo was composed of 14 different elements, and the typography was similarly intricate. The brief was to take the essence of the existing logo and to simplify it.

"The refreshed design works equally well with online and print media. It is flexible enough to be used on solid objects, and to be etched on to glass."

### Synod Children's Day

At the March Synod the Moderator explained that the children present at Synod were exploring the idea of church by visiting other churches and completing a booklet, including various questions. They then visited many different denominations in Winchester, looking at the worship space, and considering the following questions:

- What do you think makes a good church?
- What could we change to make church better?
- What difference (if any) does church make to your life?

The Moderator then invited Synod representatives to discuss these same questions.

What would your answers be?

## WORSHIPPING AS AN EXPAT

### Part 1: Brunei

When we returned from Japan in 1986 I quickly settled back into church life, realising how much I had missed both the spiritual and social life of the church. I became Junior Church Superintendent, which was hard work but very fulfilling. In 1994 Colin came home to announce that the opportunity had arisen for him to go to work in Brunei.

Brunei, or to give it its full name, Brunei Darussalam (which means Brunei Abode of Peace) is a sultanate on the island of Borneo. It is about the same size as Norfolk, with a population of about half a million. Its economy



*Sultan's Palace, with his cars*

is dominated by oil and gas exports. On a per capita basis it is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The population receives free medical care, free education, and many other benefits. However, there are many excesses. The Sultan's palace is the biggest in the world, with 1,788 rooms, which includes 257 bathrooms, a banquet hall

that can be expanded to accommodate up to 5,000 guests, and a mosque accommodating 1,500 people. The palace also includes a 110-car garage, an air conditioned stable for the Sultan's 200 polo ponies, and five swimming pools. Islam is the state religion of Brunei. The right to practise privately is given to many other religions, including Christianity. Also, some non-Islamic holidays, such as Christmas, are recognized. However, these rights are limited: religious education is controlled, even in private schools, and any non-Islamic religious materials being distributed are subject to confiscation. During my time in Brunei I joined a group of other expat ladies who met once a week in someone's house for Bible study and fellowship. There were many different nationalities present, bringing different views of Christianity, some of which I found easier to accept than others. I looked forward to overseas trips, when I could attend church services, including at home in Fleet during the holidays. One memorable occasion was when we attended a Christmas Eve service in a small church in South Australia.

Although an Islamic country, life in Brunei was not as restrictive as in many other Islamic countries. I was able to drive, the Shell club had a swimming pool and other facilities, and we were able to travel freely round the



*Large Mosque*

country. Alcohol was only available if you held a licence. Luckily, Shell was able to obtain licences for its workers! Once a week I helped out with a small group of local children with physical and learning disabilities. Although they could not speak English, we were able to make ourselves understood. It was good fun and very fulfilling. We even had a surprise visit from Kevin Keegan, who was manager of Newcastle United at the time—and I have the photograph to prove it.



*Hornbill*

Being in the tropics, we had a wide range of flora and fauna. Monkeys, large monitor lizards and snakes were regular visitors to our garden. One evening we had a large black scorpion tapping at the patio window! In the mid 1990s Gurkhas were stationed near our house in Church Crookham. By coincidence there was a brigade of Gurkhas stationed near where we lived in Brunei as part of the support given to Brunei by the British Army. Retired Gurkhas stayed on in Brunei as part of the Sultan's security forces. During a visit to the national museum we saw one standing guard and looking suitably fierce. Colin asked him if he had ever been to Church Crookham. A broad smile appeared on his face! It is a small world.

After four years in Brunei, Colin asked if I would like to go to Oman to live. 'Here we go again', I thought. I will tell you what happened in Oman next time.

*Liz McClune*

## GATEWAYS

My life is in my eyes whenever I look on beauty  
On this sunny, shady labyrinth of things:  
My life is in my ears whenever I listen to music  
And hear the harmony of voice and strings.  
My life is in my touch when I hold out my hand  
to a neighbour,  
Or sense caresses of the wind and sun;  
But the sense of smell to me is dim and muted,  
Bringing me little news, or sometimes none.  
The sense of taste is humble but deeply rooted  
In God, who created these gateways to the soul.

*Sheila Durbin*



## PRAYER FOR THE MONTH



Two years running, Tom Hanks received the Oscar for 'Best Actor' — in 1993, for his role in 'Philadelphia', and in 1994 for 'Forrest Gump'. A line that he repeats as Forrest Gump is, "Life is like a box for chocolates".

I can focus on 'Quality Street' chocolates as I think of my own character:

The **green triangle** of chocolate. On the seashore we never see any pebbles of this shape because, of course, any



sharp edges are knocked off by other pebbles in the sea. Do I have any sharp edges to my character? Do I get at people, annoy them? Do I make fun of others? Yet still there is good in the person that this might represent. This is good solid chocolate, but I need to knock off some of my sharp edges.

Those edges—the negative things—tend to be knocked off when I really share my life with others, as we see in the round **toffee cup**. I become more **WHOLE** as a person, more rounded in character, keeping life in balance, living life peacefully one day at a time.

**Fudge**: the paper comes off quietly, so this is the one to take if you are trying to sneak an extra one out of the box when no one's looking! As there is a lot of sugar in fudge, so this individual has great richness within—a lot to offer others. People are the richer for having been with this person—the one who always smiles and forgives; the person who often speaks a word of encouragement and support; the one who is generous in doing something they'd rather not do. These people will make the world a better place for having walked in it.

The **purple hazelnut in caramel**: a little showy, flashy on the outside. I have two wrappings—maybe to protect or hide my real self. Maybe I don't want anyone to know what I am really like deep inside, because—deep within—here is a nut!



The **green coconut**: 10 minutes after eating this, you find little bits of coconut between your teeth—something to chew over. Maybe I am like this coconut—a challenging person because I leave things for others to think about, to 'chew over'. These people leave a little of themselves wherever they go: that compliment that really encourages someone; passing the joy of a contagious smile to another.



**Strawberry cream**: I might appear quite firm on the outside, perhaps giving the impression that I am a little difficult to know at first, maybe rather shy. Inside there's something very special: a quiet person who gets on with life peacefully; a gentle character, happy with who I am; a person who quietly brings support and healing to those who are hurt; one who shows others how special they are.

**Orange cream**: This melts in your mouth if you let it, but some people find dark chocolate a little sickly. But why am I saying 'BUT'? If I set out to look for negative things in others, I will find them. If I look for the good—the quality—in other people, then I will come to see so much good around me. That 'way of looking' (which should mark out a Christian school), that 'way of seeing' will affect my whole life. Setting out each morning to look for the good in others will bring peace in my heart and a smile on my face throughout the day.



The **brown caramel**: This is the one you find in your pocket a week after putting it there! It's been squashed a bit, but it doesn't go 'goopy' in the pocket. It is firm: a solid character, faithful, trusting, accepting others for who they are, a true friend through good times and bad. It is a great compliment to be told that you are a friend on whom others can rely.



Maybe I am one of these **yellow caramels**—normally left to the last in our house. Do I sometimes feel a bit left out of things, feel that I am not as popular as others? The last one to be chosen for something? And yet Jesus said that the way of his Kingdom is that "the first will be last"; that the 'insignificant ones' are the important ones—the sparrows, the sinner, the lost coin, and Zacchaeus (the tax-collector whom people thought little but who was great, and walked tall in God's eyes). And even if I don't think too much of myself, there is One who tells me that he "has written my name on the palm of his hands", as though I am the only one who exists.

Quality Street chocolates are all different: they would not be Quality Street if they were all the same. And when I come to meet the Maker of all this **QUALITY**, he will not ask me, "Why weren't you Mother Theresa?" He will be asking me if I have grown as the person he called me to be.

In schools, we are not called to try to make people into something that they are not, but to invite people to be and to grow as who they already are.

So let us be people of quality! Let us do the ordinary things of life in an extraordinary way! We hope to see a street-cleaner collecting rubbish in the same committed way that Shakespeare wrote poetry! Let us make extraordinary use of our ordinary talents, because we are all called to be **FULLY ALIVE**, to be saints of God.



### Let us pray:

Thank you, Lord, for making us people of quality.  
We pray that we may use our gifts well  
and not keep them unused, unwrapped,  
because a gift is no good unless it is shared.  
We thank you that we are people of quality  
whom your hands have made.  
May you be blessed forever!

*Amen*

*Ruth Dillon*



## FOR DOG LOVERS (and anyone else who needs a smile)

An older, tired-looking dog wandered into my yard. I could tell from his collar and well-fed belly that he had a home and was well taken care of. He calmly came over to me. I gave him a few pats on his head; he then followed me into my house, slowly walked down the hall, curled up in the corner and fell asleep.

An hour later, he went to the door, and I let him out.



The next day he was back, greeted me in my yard, walked inside and resumed his spot in the hall, and again slept for about an hour. This continued on and off for several weeks.

Curious, I pinned a note to his collar: 'I would like to find out who the owner of this wonderful sweet

dog is and ask if you are aware that almost every afternoon your dog comes to my house for a nap.'

The next day he arrived for his nap, with a different note pinned to his collar: 'He lives in a home with six children, two under the age of three. He is trying to catch up on is sleep. Can I come with him tomorrow?'

*Story from the Internet*

## RECYCLING USED STAMPS FOR CHARITY

Have you seen the stamp collecting box in our church foyer? Did you know that by placing your used stamps in the box you are helping to raise much-needed funds for local charities?

The stamps are collected by Mike Hayward (Milly's husband), who sorts and trims them, then takes most of them to Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice; some also go to our local branch of *Scope*. Charities can raise hundreds of pounds by selling the stamps to dealers. (The stamps are usually sold by weight.)

It doesn't matter whether the stamps are new or used, British or overseas—they all raise funds. You can help Mike by cutting or tearing the stamps off the envelopes, leaving about one centimetre of paper around each stamp, before putting them in the box.

So before you throw away that old envelope—keep the stamp!



## BIBLE PUZZLER

**Here is a challenge to ponder as you while away the summer days! There are 30 books of the Bible within these paragraphs. Can you find them all?**



This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an aeroplane seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours.

He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his boat with his brother, John. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving she brews a pot of tea to help her nerves.

There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalised.



Truthfully, from answers we get we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in the paragraphs.

During a recent fund-raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Adelphi lemonade booth set a new sales record.

The local paper, 'The Chronicle', surveyed over fifty customers who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, 'the books are right here in plain view, hidden from sight'. Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown.

One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you to compete really well against those who claim to know the answers.

Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus; there really are thirty books of the Bible lurking somewhere in these paragraphs, waiting to be found!

*(For those who are really stuck, the answers are at the bottom of page 19!)*



## MISSION COUNCIL REPORT (Part 2)

The URC Mission Council is the executive body of the General Assembly and meets twice a year to discuss issues that affect us all. Their most recent meeting was at Swanwick, from 9th—11th March. The following is the second part of Graham Hoslett's summary report. (The first part was published in the May-July issue of *In Touch*.)

### Safeguarding Advisory Group—Past Case Review

The Advisory Group reported that the read through of all ministers' files is now drawing to a close, and the second phase in the review is being planned. It will be a six-month period of open consultation for anyone who believes they have been inappropriately dealt with by the church. Once this is ready to start, all URC communications channels, including the website, press releases, *Reform* magazine, and messages to be read in church congregations, will be used to publicise this second phase of the review.

### Update on Development Plans for Church House



The URC Trust reported on progress made towards the redevelopment of Church House in London. Mission Council had previously rejected the options of relocating outside London or of adding extra floors to the existing building by way of paying for refurbishment.

We asked for a clear statement to be developed to communicate the need and vision for the redevelopment to local churches, and asked the next finance committee mailing to local churches to refer to the funds available for churches to access in regard to mission projects and building projects. But after much discussion we approved a budget of up to £2.5 million from central Church reserves for the redevelopment.

### A Discussion Regarding the Future Shape of General Assembly.

We met in groups at Mission Council to talk together about General Assembly, what we believe is its primary purpose, what we value about it, what we would like to change, and what we would like to keep. We were asked to feed back on such questions as frequency, length of Assembly, the benefits of consensus decision making.



Such matters will not be for Mission Council to decide, but it was a very good conversation.

### Other Bits and Bobs

- We commissioned Grace Pengelly, recently appointed Secretary for Church and Society. Amongst other things, Grace will help us to have a prophetic voice in the public square.

- URC Greenbelt initiative: this year the URC has become a sponsor of the Festival. Please have a look at the Greenbelt website and see the range of activities on offer.
- There have been national church censuses in Britain in 1979, 1989, 1998, and 2005. A Scottish church census was planned for May 2016, which the Scottish Synod had decided to support, and Wales Synod will make their own decision about the census there. But John Proctor, General Secretary, suggested that because of pressure of work the involvement of our central church staff in the English church census could not be supported, and with heaviness of heart Mission Council agreed.
- *Reform* magazine distributor guide: leaflets are available to encourage and enable anyone wishing to advocate the take up of *Reform* in local churches.

Your Mission Council representatives are the Moderator, Susan Brown, Rosie Martin and Graham Hoslett. Please do contact them with any questions, comments or concerns— Wessex Synod: tel : 023 8067 8570 <http://wessexsynod.urc.org.uk>.



### COMMITMENT FOR LIFE

Thank you to everyone who already joins me in praying for *Stories for Change* and *Prayer Partner* issues. If anyone else would like to be added to monthly distribution via email or hard copy, please

let me know. (They are also available for download on our church website.) Thank you.

Tamyra Sherratt, Commitment for Life Link Person



Phyllis  
Tuckwell  
Hospice

### HART MALE VOICE CHOIR

in concert with

**Salesian College Schola Choir &  
Farnborough Hill Senior Choir**

at **Farnborough Hill School**

on **23rd September, at 7.30 pm**

Tickets: £12 (£6 for under 18s)

(including Refreshments during Interval)

Available from the Hospice shop  
or from Bee Griffith or Vera Mosley



## FROM MY POINT OF VIEW (CONCLUSION)

I have been heartened that my article in the October-November 2015 Newsletter generated discussion in subsequent articles and in conversation. In the article I explained my reasons for believing that formally signing up to be a member of the URC churches should not be necessary and that, as Jesus said to his disciples, "Follow me" is sufficient, without the formality. In my view the formality is for administrative convenience and has no relevance to being a Christian.



One of the replies suggested that membership formality 'is not in the first rank of importance, but is in the second rank—perhaps a means to an end'. This is a tacit acknowledgement that this is for administrative purposes, since I believe that there is no second rank of importance in Christianity—it is all important.

Administration is important in any organisation in order to operate, but in church it should be distinguishable from a Christian congregation responding to a call. Other churches I have attended have not found it necessary to go through this formality in order to accept Christians into membership.

Another view expressed was that formal signing to be a member of a church should not become a prerequisite for being involved in the whole range of activities in the church, including voting at church meetings where important decisions are made.

Others did not agree with me but respected my right to hold my views.

I made a passing remark in the original article on the title 'adherent' and was admonished on the basis that the derivation of this word makes it appropriate for a non-member. As an ex language student I am aware of this derivation, but I am also aware that language is an evolving thing where the nuances of the primary meaning change due to everyday usage. 'Adherent' can also mean 'supporter', a title which seems much more acceptable in relation to a human being than 'adherent', which brings to mind superglue! However this was not the main thrust of my article.

Finally I must make it clear that I have been warmly welcomed into Fleet URC and have thoroughly enjoyed being in the congregation. My views do not imply any criticism of this church.

Bill Thomas



# Elvetham Mysteries

*A unique experience... in an historic setting*

Elvetham Park, the historic estate in the quiet North Hampshire countryside, 35 miles from London, is to be the setting for a production of the Lincoln Cycle of Mystery Plays – the mediaeval religious plays which span the whole of human life from the Creation to Doomsday.

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To be seen will be the glory of God on high, the miracle of the Creation of the world, mankind and everything in it, the birth of Christ, the Passion and Crucifixion, the Resurrection . . .

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All according to the Bible, conceived and written down by deeply religious men when the faith was second nature to mediaeval Englishmen. The Mystery Plays, a precious treasure of English literature, grew from the dramatic presentation of events in the life of Christ which were part of the Church Liturgy.

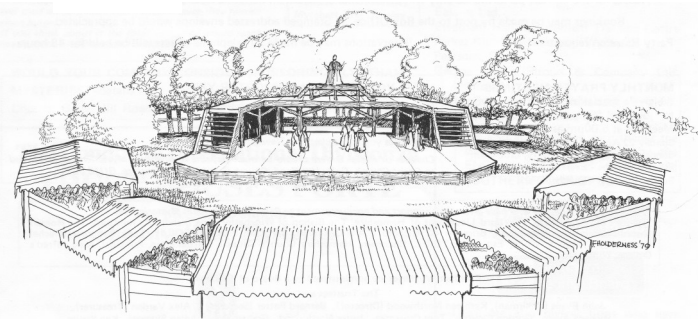
As realism and humour were added, they grew longer and were presented outside the churches by the Trade Guilds, until finally they were given on wheeled stages and repeated in different parts of the town. To view a Cycle meant a whole day out !

The Elvetham version translated by Martial Rose from the middle English tongue runs for three hours.

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The Park at Elvetham 'the Place of the Swans', dates from 1403 and as the home of the Seymour family for 200 years was associated with two Queens – Jane Seymour and Queen Elizabeth I. The present owner and Lord of the Manor, Sir Richard Calthorpe is head of the family of Gough-Calthorpe which has lived there for over 230 years.

*This was one of the original leaflets produced to advertise the event.*

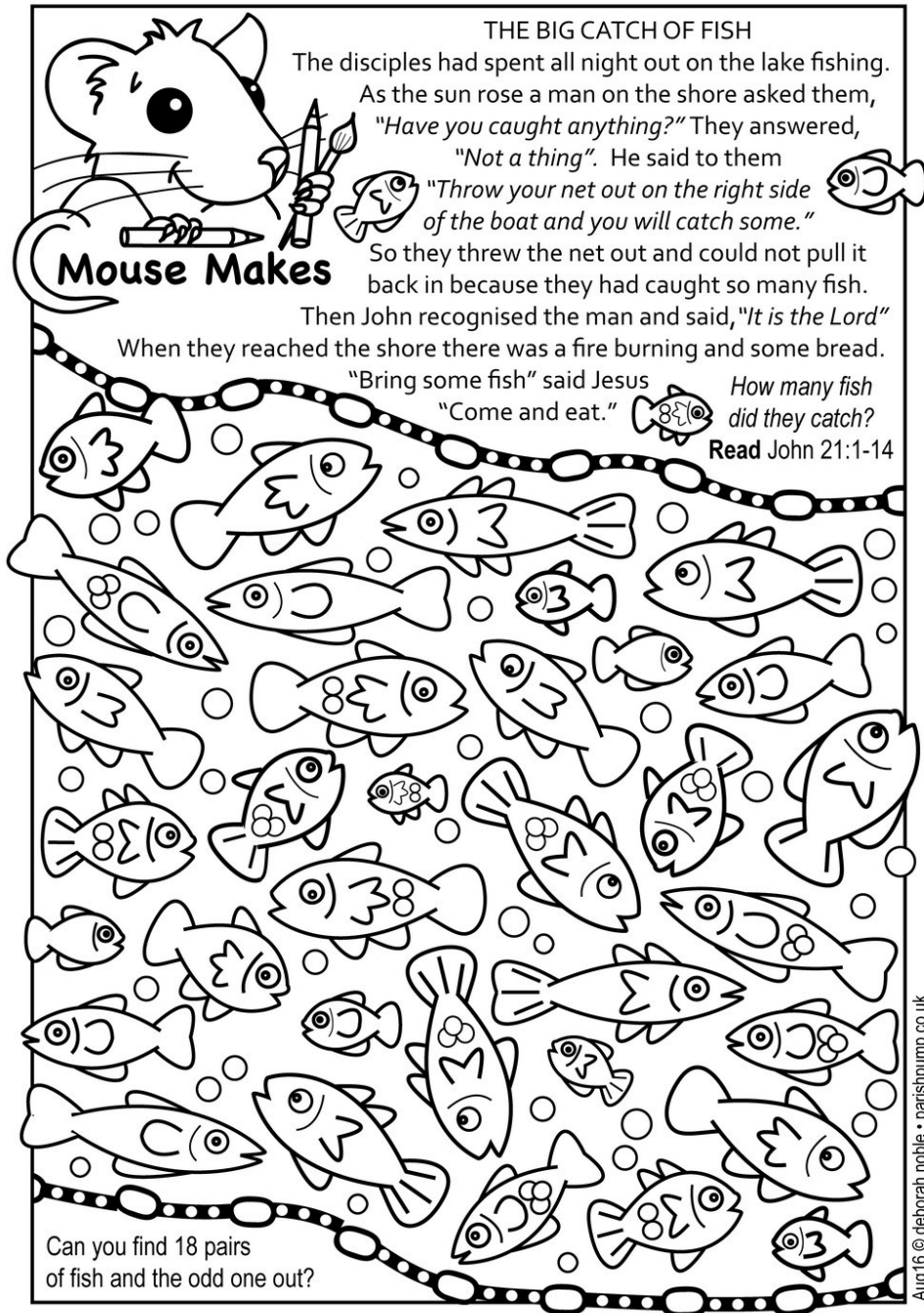


*Organised by Churches Together in Fleet & Crookham*

**ELVETHAM PARK**  
Hartley Wintney, Hampshire  
**27 July – 5 August 1979**

**An Exhibition of the above event, 37 years ago,  
will be on display throughout August and September  
in the Heritage Zone, Fleet Library**

Photographs and Memorabilia previously unseen  
by the general public will be on display



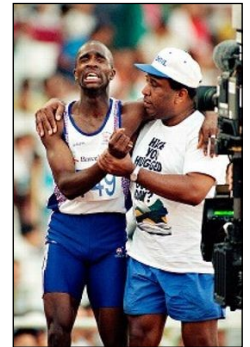
Going for Gold



This month sees the start of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, as the eyes of the world focus on the games. A number of New Testament letters make reference to Olympic sport, including Hebrews: 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith' (Hebrews 12: 1-2).

The Christian life is compared to a race, but although we face struggles and obstacles, there is a great cloud of witnesses cheering us on. We have a heavenly Father who loves us, and a Saviour who has run the race before us. If we keep our eyes fixed on him, he will ensure we finish the race.

During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, the British athlete Derek Redmond was running in the semi-finals of the 400 metres. About 250 metres from the finish his hamstring tore. He fell to the ground in pain and stretcher bearers came over to him. However Redmond wanted to finish the race, and so he started hopping toward the finishing line.



Suddenly Jim Redmond, Derek's father, ran out of the stands towards him. "You don't have to do this," he told his son. "Yes, I do," said Derek, to which his father said, "We're going to finish this together." They completed the lap with Derek leaning on his father's shoulder. As they crossed the finish line the spectators rose to give Derek a standing ovation. Although he didn't win an Olympic medal, Derek Redmond finished the race with his father at his side. Let's not forget the encouragement we have to finish the race!

Revd Paul Hardingham, 'The Parish Pump'

ANSWERS TO BIBLE PUZZLE (from page 13)

You still have to search for the answers in the puzzle, but these are the books you are looking for, in the order that they appear:

Amos, Mark, Luke, John, Joel, Judges, Job, Hebrews, Esther, Acts, James, Ruth, Romans, Titus, Matthew, Genesis, Philimon, Chronicles, Daniel, Nahum, Hosea, Lamentations, Revelation, Timothy, Samuel, Numbers, Malachi, Peter, Exodus, Kings