

CHURCH CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2015—JANUARY 2016

<i>December</i>		Advent and Christmas Services
2nd	7.30 pm	Elders Meeting
6th		<i>2nd Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Parade & Gift Service led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
7th	2.30 pm	Monthly Prayer Group (in the church)
13th		<i>3rd Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Paul Murphy
17th	7 pm	'Blue Christmas Service' led by Revd Ruth Dillon
20th		<i>4th Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6 pm	Carols and Christingle led by Revd Ruth Dillon
25th		<i>Christmas Day</i>
	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Julie Young
27th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Ian Fletcher



January

3rd	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
		No Evening Service
4th	2.30 pm	Monthly Prayer Group (in the Church)
6th	7.30 pm	Elders Meeting
10th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Howard Sharp
11th	2 pm	Bible Study (in the Church)
17th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion with Induction of Elders, led by Revd Ruth Dillon
18th—25th		<i>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity</i>
21st	8 pm	Film House Group at the Manse
24th	10 am	Family Worship led by Elders
27th	7.30 pm	Debbie Thrower: <i>Anna Chaplaincy</i> (see p 14)
31st	10 am	<i>Mission Sunday</i> : Family Worship led by Elders and John Ledger of Mission Aviation Fellowship

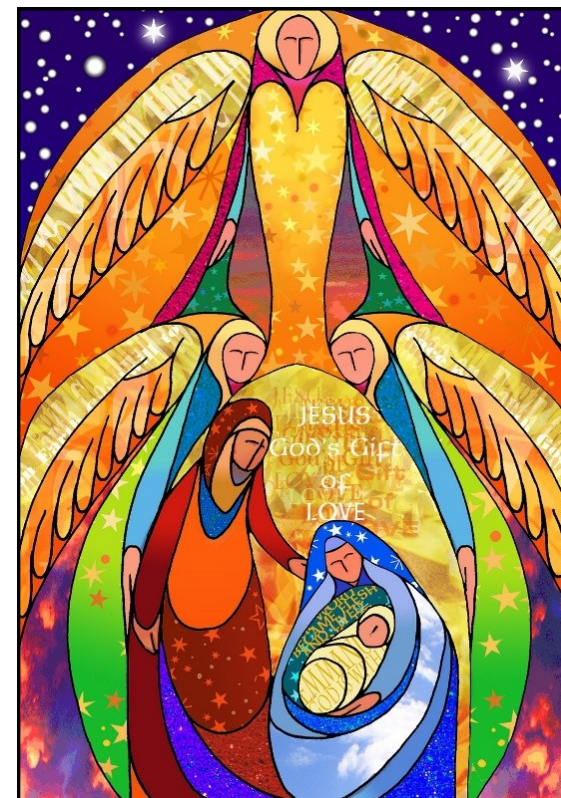
Please be aware that the dates and times of meetings and social events may change. You are advised to check beforehand on the church website, www.fleet.urc.org.uk, or with Assistant Administrator, Margaret Armes (650994).

Items for the February-March Newsletter should be with Christine Gibbons by **Sunday 17th January 2016** (christine.gibbons@building-bridges.co.uk).

Fleet United Reformed Church

"We are a community of faithful Christian people, working to spread the love of God to all."

Newsletter





December 2015—January 2016



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SUNDAY WORSHIP

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

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

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

Under the umbrella of the United Reformed Church, *Brownie* and *Rainbow Units* meet each week during school term.
Further details of all these activities are available from the Church Office, from the Church Secretary, or on our website.

FROM THE MANSE



Dear Friends

The church newsletter spans 2015 and 2016. Another year is upon us, and we automatically reflect on:

- Things we did and things we did not do.
- Things we have seen, and things we wished we had seen!

As the years continue to roll ever onward, I would like to offer three areas for reflection:

1. Every year we recall people who have died, whether they are church friends, relatives, or personal friends. There is a sense of letting go as time goes on and their death becomes 'history'. We become more conscious of generations that have gone, and for some of us it seems that we are the next in line! The Autumn and Winter seasons illustrate this, as we look outside to the deciduous trees now bare. Those we have loved have been 'borne on the shoulders of God' and carried to a different horizon, and through our sadness there is a sense of rightness.
2. Through the barrenness and changing seasons a whisper is heard; it is God's Spirit, ever near, ever present, ever guiding us to new ways of seeing the world we live in. With all the horrific events that have been happening during the end of 2015 it can be a challenge to hear this whisper. The whisper may be calling you to consider climate change, a change in habits, a change in discipleship. In other words, the whisper of God's Spirit is encouraging us to move from one place to another, not to be static.
3. The world we know and love is a 'parable' of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection. If we look we can see:
 - *Evidence of new birth* (the emergence of faith, the wonder of new ideas and creativity);
 - *Evidence of life* (the scarred roads that God's people travel and the twists, turns, rocky and steep paths that we all take);
 - *Evidence of death* (the ending of something that was good, relationships, ideas and projects);
 - *Evidence of Resurrection* (despite all the odds, flourishing occurs, new starts happen, and Hope is restored again).

This list is not exhaustive, but at the heart of it it is God speaking to us saying that we are on '**Holy Ground**'.

As I close this letter, as we are on the threshold of another year, Hannah, William and I wish you peace, happiness, and for God to restore your faith to a faith full of Promise and Hope.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty god,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9: 2,6

Blessings for the coming year,
Ruth



GIFT SERVICE FOR SEE-ABILITY

The Gift Service on **6th December** will be for See-Ability



See-Ability is a specialist registered charity enriching the lives of people who have sight loss and other disabilities, including learning and physical disabilities, mental health difficulties, acquired brain injury, and life limiting conditions.

They have requested edible gifts (sweets, biscuits etc).



NOTICE BOARD

NEW BIBLE STUDY GROUP



Commencing in January, a new monthly Bible study will be starting at **2 pm** on the second

Monday of every month.
The first meetings will be on
Monday 11th January and
Monday 8th February.

MONTHLY PRAYER GROUP

The monthly Prayer Group will meet on the following dates at **2.30 pm** in the church:

Monday, 7th December,
Monday 4th January.

Come and join us for 30 minutes of quiet meditation.

All are welcome.

ANNUAL LEAVE

Ruth will be on Annual Leave from **Monday 25th January** to **Monday 1st February.**

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be from **18th—25th January**, and the theme is '*Salt of the Earth*'.

Prayers will be said here at Fleet URC each day during the week .

Everyone is invited to come and support this event.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 12.30 pm
Wednesday at 7.30 pm



'REEL ISSUES'

There will be no Reel Issues in December. The next Film Theology evening will be on **Thursday, 21st January at 8 pm.**

The film we shall be looking at is **'Pleasantville'**



Plot: Impressed by high school student David's devotion to a 1950s family TV show, a mysterious television repairman provides him with a means to escape into the black-and-white programme with his sister Jennifer. While David initially takes to the simplistic, corny world of the show, Jennifer sets about jolting the characters with doses of reality that unexpectedly bring a little colour into their drab existence.

If you would like to come, then please let Ruth know.



INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERS

On Sunday 15th November we were delighted to receive **Glen and Audrey Price, Jean Schafer and Milly Hayward** into membership at Fleet URC.

Glen and Audrey have moved to Fleet to be nearer their son Alan and his family. They previously worshipped at Llanwenarth Baptist Church, Abergavenny, for 25 years.

Jean, a longstanding person of faith, was born in Bristol but spent much of her married life in Birmingham. After her husband Ted died she felt a need to meet new people and was drawn here to Fleet URC. She spoke of the deep friendship with God which she feels has developed in recent months.

Milly has worshipped at other churches, but has found a spiritual home here in our church. She says, "Your continued warm welcome has been much appreciated, and I cannot think of a nicer church of which to be a member. Thank you."

A very warm welcome to you all, Glen, Audrey, Jean and Milly. We are delighted to have you among us.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

We have had our best-ever response to our Shoebox Appeal this year. The whole church was involved, with our young people coordinating the efforts. With all the donations and gifts we received we managed to fill over 50 boxes. In addition, some people elected to sponsor boxes on line and we also collected £120 towards distribution costs. Well done to everyone who was involved!

On Sunday 22nd November Maureen Grew, a representative from Operation Christmas Child, came to receive the boxes and tell us about the children who will be receiving them. The boxes from our area will be going to Central Asia and to Iraq. She also played a moving video, *Love in a Box*, showing children in Papua New Guinea receiving the boxes. (This is on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1tt7cmJGkA>.)

We send the boxes in God's name as a practical way of spreading God's love around the world.

Bee Griffiths



THANK YOU

I should like to say 'Thank you' to everyone who sent cards, text messages and visited me following my recent surgery.

I am now much improved, but still in the recovery process so taking things slowly.

Nicola Hamilton

PROPOSED OVERSEAS PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIA



The Elders are considering a 'partnership' with a church in South India. We have sought guidance from Saju and Mary Mathew and Ruth has been in contact with a St Thomas Mission Church in Palani, Tamil Nadu, South India.

It is situated in a very different context from Fleet, and at the next

church meeting Ruth will be showing some slides that the Palani Church Minister, Revd John Abraham, has sent to us.



LITTLE FISHES

The Little Fishes have been looking at stories from the Old Testament this Autumn. We learned about Solomon, who could have asked God for anything he wanted, but chose wisdom in order to serve his people well. We also learned about Daniel, who was always faithful to God. God looked after him when he was put into the lion's den. We made lion masks, a lion collage and lion's head biscuits, and we thanked God for looking after us, just like he looked after Daniel.

Grace Bagshaw



LOAVES AND FISHES

I can't believe how this year has flown by, and this Autumn our Loaves and Fishes group has been as busy as ever marking the important events in the church's calendar.



At Harvest we decorated a window in the church using a tree, leaves, acorns and fruit, to illustrate what God would like to harvest from us.

We also participated in all-age services, and on Mission Sunday the young people showed off their impromptu acting skills when they acted out two stories for the FACCTS service. They did very well, as usual.

On Remembrance Sunday both groups joined the congregation for the two-minute silence. They enjoyed watching the TV link to the Cenotaph, and were so good at standing in silence.

We have also looked at various stories from the Bible using our resource, *Roots*. One

parable from Mark was the story of the rich young man who loved his money and possessions but also wanted to know how he could have eternal life. Jesus used the picture of a camel passing through the eye of a needle. Why a camel, we asked? We learned that the Aramaic word for *camel* was the same as the word for *rope*. Could that be the reason it was used in the parable? It made us think. We also talked about what possession we would find difficult to give up.

Planning for Christmas is well on its way. The Christmas card for the church is being designed. The young people will be decorating the Christmas tree in the foyer with decorations and lights. A church window is in the process of being designed as well. What a busy time!

Darrell Henderson



DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CHURCH

The Elders are exploring how Fleet URC can be 'Dementia Friendly'. Andy Knight, the Methodist Community Worker, is helping us consider whether we need to adjust some of our signs, lighting and documentation etc to meet the criteria.

The Elders have invited Andy to attend the January Church meeting and give a 20-minute talk about being a 'Dementia Friend'.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL CRAFT AND GIFT FAIR

Even though the weather was wet and windy, over 300 people visited our 9th Annual Craft and Gift Fair to enjoy the beautiful crafts on sale.

As in previous years there were many different stalls full of lovely items. It is always a joy to see the various talents on show. Many of the stall holders are old friends returning year after year, but we also had some new attendees. We hope they had a good day.

As usual, our catering team did a magnificent job, and their lovely warm homemade soup matched the warmth of good feelings within our church.



The 8th Fleet Brownies ran a very successful Tombola stall, and 'Guess the Name of the Dog' competition. They raised over £194, which they kindly offered to the church. Well done, and a big 'thank you'!

I should also like to thank everyone else who helped to make this a good day—including those who generously gave items to Bee to sell on her bric-a-brac stall (always a success). A special big thank

you to Pearl and Bill Thomas for their tenacity in distributing posers and flyers around Fleet. No one dare say 'no' to Pearl!

Please visit our church website (www.fleet.urc.org.uk) or our Face Book page to see some lovely photos.

A date for your diary: our 10th Craft and Gift Fair will be held on **Saturday 5th November 2016**.

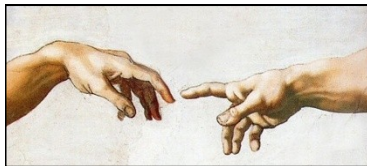
Darrell Henderson



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our Newsletter is getting a new name. From the next issue it will be called 'In Touch'.

I hope that this new name will more accurately reflect our commitment to reach out and stay 'in touch' with one another, with our community, and with important Christian issues. In doing this we take our lead from the Lord our God, who first reached out and 'touched' us.



Christine Gibbons, Editor

PS—Did you know that current and past Newsletters may now be read online on our Church website, www.fleet.urc.org.uk?

FROM MY POINT OF VIEW

There was a good response to Bill Thomas's article in the October—November Newsletter expressing his view that Church Membership is unnecessary. Two replies are printed here, with more to come in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Christine Gibbons, Editor



Church Membership is a Practical Tool

There was a lot to ponder in Bill Thomas's essay on church membership. I agree with him in believing that the first essential is to respond to Christ's command, 'Follow me.'

So church membership is not in the first rank of importance. But I think it is in the second rank—perhaps a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It is a mechanism or arrangement which can assist those who, as secretary, treasurer or elders, are responsible for serving and leading the church; and also those responsible for the administration and leadership of the denomination. For example, the list of members is used as a guide when it is decided what financial contribution should be requested from each church in order to fund the work of the denomination as a whole.

Such leadership is not easy in these days when there are fewer Christians and smaller congregations, and our elders and officers need all the help they can get.

Finally, I wonder why Bill so vehemently objects to the word 'adherent'? The main meaning of 'to adhere' is 'to stick', and surely 'stickability' is a good and valuable quality.

Sheila Durbin

It's Important to Respect Each Other's Views

I believe it is important to respect another's point of view, as each of us is guided by his or her own instincts. My instincts may differ totally from those of someone else.

On reading Bill's article one thought came back to me at once. It was a thought which I had earlier picked up in a Commentary on Matthew's Gospel, which said, 'The first of all the human instincts is the instinct to do what we like.' Here, I thought, is a prime example of someone doing what his instinct tells him. Good for him!

Moreover, I feel that formal membership of the church doesn't have to be a pre-requisite of someone responding to a call. If a person comes with

clean hands and offers his or her services in some respect, it is surely up to the Minister and officers of the church to respond.

For example, my own instinct, years ago, was to seek church membership. I *wanted* to join. The point being, that it was my own choice. I was simply responding to the first of all the human instincts—'to do what we like!'

I think Bill Thomas's choice of title, '*From My Point of View*', is entirely apt. As he says, it is his point of view. Moreover, to prepare an article describing one's fundamental beliefs takes courage. It also takes an above-average amount of thought, time and energy. To me, that indicates a clear sign of his commitment to the life of the church and to the fellowship. The last word belongs to a lovely hymn:

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road:
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.*

Eric Perry





**Phyllis
Tuckwell
Hospice**

Carols by Candlelight
with Hart Voices and School Choirs
at the Catholic Church of Our Lady
Kings Road, Fleet
Sunday, 6th December, at 6.00 pm
Tickets £12 (includes refreshments)
Available from the Hospice Shop in Fleet Road,
or by calling 684431 or 683540
or online at www.pthshop.co.uk

Hampshire Constabulary Band
at the Church on the Heath
6th February 2016
Tickets £12

More details available from **Vera Mosley** (684431)



PRAYER FOR THE MONTH

All British stamps bear the head of the Queen or King reigning at the time. Other than that, what is unique about British stamps, compared with those of all other countries?

Stamps of every country—except Britain—bear the name of the country. When stamps first appeared there was no need to include the country's name to distinguish them from stamps of other countries since only Britain was then producing stamps.

On 10th January 1840 Rowland Hill introduced a system of paying to the Post Office a penny for a stamp which would be stuck on the envelope. The penny stamp would cover costs of delivery of letters throughout the United Kingdom. Before that time it would be the person receiving a letter who had to pay.



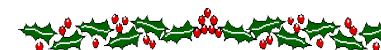
When letters were delivered, time was being wasted in waiting for people to answer the door. Another invention of Rowland Hill then was to have a slit in doors through which letters could be put—hence our letter boxes in doors.



Let us pray:

Commemorative stamps, Lord,
call to mind famous people,
sport and inventions,
and nature, art and history.
As I value what these images represent,
lead me particularly, Lord,
to value every individual person—
made as we all are in your image and likeness.
Inspire me to show appreciation
to all who are a part of my life.
May I use well all the opportunities
that come my way to make my part of the world
a better place.

Amen



FACCTS (Fleet and Crookham Churches Together in Schools)



The FACCTS team have just had a week of 'Prayer Space' at Court Moor School which went well.

We have Christmas presentations during the first two weeks of December, and we would welcome your prayers for the children and the teaching staff, as well as the FACCTS team and volunteers. If you would like to come and watch a presentation in action please let me know and I will give you dates and venues.

Nicola Hamilton

ANNA CHAPLAINCY



Debbie Thrower is best known to many people as the face of *Songs of Praise* and as a newsreader. Nowadays Debbie is also a Lay Deacon with Winchester Cathedral and involved in the *Gift of Years* Project, otherwise known as *Anna Chaplaincy*.

Anna Chaplaincy is named after the faithful older widow in Luke's gospel story of Simeon and Anna. The approach is now central to a national initiative from the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), called *The Gift of Years*—'resourcing the spiritual journey of older people.'

In a society and church increasingly made up of older people there are more and more people who feel themselves to be beyond the interest and concern of the wider community. In a society and church often focused on youth and families, being an older person can be isolating and challenging.

Anna Chaplaincy seeks to accompany older people at this stage of their life. It is an ecumenical, community-based, chaplaincy approach to promoting the spiritual welfare of older people. Anna Chaplaincy is a person-centred, non-judgemental ministry for people of strong, little or no faith at all.

It is a way of offering spiritual support to older people, especially (though not exclusively) to those living in residential and nursing homes and sheltered housing complexes, and to their relatives and the people who care for them.

Such a spiritual focus may express itself in helping people to reflect upon their life's journey—both the joys and challenges—and, where appropriate, enable the healing of memories and the celebration of life-experiences so as to foster hope and resilience.

Debbie is coming to talk at Fleet United Reformed Church on **27th January at 7.30 pm**. The Methodist Church will be joining us, and all interested people are most welcome. Please let Moray or myself know if you would like to come.

Ruth



AND ANOTHER THING ...

How Father Christmas Got Where He Is Today

One person you are bound to run into this Christmas season is Father Christmas. These days he seems to frequent shopping malls and garden centres. If he looks tired, just remember that he has been around a long time and has gone through a lot of transformations!



He began life as Nicholas, born about AD 260 in Patara in what is now Turkey. When his parents died and left him a fortune, Nicholas gave it away to the needy, the sick, the suffering. He dedicated his whole life to God's service and became Bishop of Myra, where he almost certainly suffered persecution and imprisonment at the hand of the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

Nicholas died in about AD 343, but the stories of his generosity and kindness were just beginning. One story explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas tossed three bags of gold into their home through the window—and they landed in the girls' stockings or shoes left to dry before the fire.

In the UK Nicholas became the basis for Father Christmas, who emerged in Victorian times as a jolly-faced bearded character. But it was in America that Nicholas received his first great break into real stardom, when the Revd Clement Moore, an Episcopal minister, wrote a fun poem for his children one Christmas. His '*Visit of St Nicholas*' is now universally known by its first line: '*T'was the Night Before Christmas*'.

From Clement Moore we discovered that St Nicholas is round and pink-cheeked and white-bearded, and that he travels at night with sleigh, reindeer and a sack of toys. He also revealed that he enters houses down chimneys and fills children's stockings with toys and sweets.

So how did we find out that Father Christmas wears red? That was the US Coca-Cola advertising campaign of 1931, who finally released the latest, up-to-date pictures of Father Christmas: wearing a bright red, fur-trimmed coat and a large belt.



These days it is good that Father Christmas uses reindeer and doesn't have to pay for petrol. In order to get round all the children in the world on Christmas Eve he will have to travel 221 million miles at an average speed of 1279 miles a second, 6,395 times the speed of sound. For all those of us who are exhausted just rushing around getting ready for Christmas, that is a sobering thought!

From *The Parish Pump* (www.parishpump.co.uk)

