

CHURCH CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2014 – JANUARY 2015

December

3rd	8 pm	Elders Meeting
7th		<i>2nd Sunday in Advent</i>
	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
14th		<i>3rd Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Paul Murphy + Christmas Crafts for young people (<i>see page 5</i>), followed by Christmas lunch
18th	7.30 pm	Blue Christmas Service (<i>see page 9</i>)
20th	from 9 am	Church open for making Christingles
21st		<i>4th Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6.00 pm	Family Carols and Christingle Service led by Revd Ruth Dillon
25th		<i>Christmas Day</i>
	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
28th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Peter Pay



January

4th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
11th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd John Whitton
18th—25th		<i>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity</i>
18th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
25th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Helen Everard
28th	8 pm	Elders Meeting
29th	8 pm	Bible Study at the Manse

Items for the February—March Newsletter should be with Christine Gibbons by **Sunday 18th January** (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 2014 - January 2015



Kings Road,
Fleet, Hampshire,
GU51 3AF

tel: 01252 623629
(ansaphone)

www.fleet.urc.org.uk
email: admin@fleeturc.org.uk

find us on Facebook
 follow us on Twitter

CONTACTS

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

SUNDAY WORSHIP

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

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

<i>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>	Tuesdays, 9.45 am; Fridays, 9.45 am
<i>Pilots:</i>	Tuesdays, 4-5 pm
<i>Coffee Morning:</i>	Thursdays, 10–11.30 am

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

FROM OUR CHURCH SECRETARY

The winter nights are drawing in. The curtains get drawn, the lights go on, and the heating is turned up as we prepare for another night in front of the TV.

As Christians, our thoughts turn to Advent, the start of the Christian year, when we look forward to the arrival of the Messiah with a spirit of expectation and anticipation. This is the season of hope. Hope that Jesus will come again—the second coming.

It is also a period of prayer and preparation, for who amongst us could shake the hand of Jesus knowing our conscience was clear?

I have to record the sad passing of Robert Maclean, a member of our church for 35 years, who now joins his wife Doreen with the Lord. At the celebration for the life of Robert, Revd John Whitton very aptly described him as a dapper gentleman.

Congratulations to both Evelyn Tyler and Tamyra Sherratt on being elected to the Eldership. We look forward to you providing new ideas and energy.

I would like to welcome Ruth back, renewed and reinvigorated after her time on sabbatical. She has been missed. We can keep the church going, but we do need the spiritual lead that a Minister gives as we travel along our journey of faith together.

Christmas blessings to you all during this festive season.

Moray Henderson



BIBLICAL THEME FOR 2015

The Biblical theme for 2015 is:

**'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and mind,
and love your neighbour as yourself.'**

Matthew 22: 37-39

These words, based on verses from the Old Testament, form part of the Jewish Sheema prayer, and Jesus would have said them daily in his private worship to God.

They have also been the Biblical framework for my sabbatical.

Ruth





FLEET URC CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS CHOIR

Calling all young people from Pilots, Brownies and anywhere else!

Fleet URC want to have a children's choir for the Carols and Christingle service on **Sunday, 21st December at 6 pm.**

The children will be singing a well-known Nativity carol at the service.

There will be four rehearsals:

7th December, at 2 pm

14th December, at 2 pm

21st December, at 11.30 am and at 5 pm

Let's show the congregation at Fleet URC how well the young people can sing!

Ruth



FLEET URC POSADA

Final preparations are being made for our Advent Posada, and those of us who have signed up are being given our instructions for participating.

It will be a great privilege to host Mary and Joseph overnight on their journey to Bethlehem. While they are with us we are encouraged to take them to work, school, meetings or when visiting friends, as a sign that we are making room for Jesus in our hearts, homes and communities. The journey of the figures encourages us to think about the meaning of Christmas, and to share this message with others.

At Christmas the figures will be placed in the Nativity scene, and the journey will be complete.

Grace Bagshaw



UPDATES TO THE CHURCH DIRECTORY

Joanne and Eric Perry

New address: 25 Farnham Road, Fleet, GU51 3HZ
(Telephone no and email remain unchanged.)

Doris Weaver

New address: Derriford House, Pinewood Hill, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 3AW

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

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

We have had a brilliant 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 30 boxes! Well done, everyone!

On Sunday 23rd 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. She showed photos from her visit to Kazakhstan, and we were all moved to see the poverty there. The shoeboxes contained the first gifts some of the children had ever received. It is humbling to realise that they have so little while we have so much.

Bee Griffiths



NAME CHANGE

The Early Years Group has recently become more than just 'The Early Years' (age 0-the end of the first school year). To keep the balance of numbers and ages in proportion for both groups, two of the older children have stayed put, rather than move up to Loaves and Fishes. To reflect this change, we have decided to rename the group 'Little Fishes'.

As always, all younger children are welcome in the group for Bible stories, songs, crafts, prayers and fun!

Grace Bagshaw

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS



On **Sunday, 14th December** the children from Loaves and Fishes and the children in the Little Fishes (formerly 'The Early Years') Group will be meeting together to have a Christmas craft session, listen to a story, and sing a few carols.

The children will be in church as usual for the start of the service.

If you have any young family members who would like to join us on that day, they will be most welcome.

In fact, everyone is welcome!

Margaret Armes

WESSEX SYNOD MEETING

On Saturday, 8th November, Melvin and I spent the day at High Cross Church, Camberley, at a Synod meeting. Melvin had been invited by Ruth White and Phil Ray, the Children and Youth Development Officers (CYDOs) of the Wessex Synod to become part of a Youth Forum that the Wessex Synod want to set up.



At the present time the Synod organisation includes a Synod Youth Executive, which allows young adults to have a voice in the work of our churches. They hope that by the setting up of this Youth Forum children from 11 years old will become more involved and have a voice in the continued development of our church.

The young people and the CYDOs joined the main meeting for the opening worship and the presentation of the latest Child Friendly awards before going off for their own meeting. The Synod is keen to know more about the views of our young people. Please talk to Melvin if you would like to know details of what was discussed.

The adults continued their session listening to the financial and group reports before Claire Downing led a session entitled "Same Sex Marriage—information session and overview of the process". Should you wish to know more detail about what was discussed on this subject, please feel free to come and talk to me.

After lunch, whilst the adults continued their meeting, the young people travelled to an indoor trampoline centre for an afternoon of bouncy brilliant fun. After they were all bounced out they returned to the church to join the adults for tea and cake, before we all went home at 4.30 pm.

Margaret Armes

ROTARY CAROL CONCERT

with the **North East Hants Area Schools Band**
and the **Church Crookham Junior School Choir**,
featuring many popular carols, some brass band medleys,
and three choral pieces.



on **Thursday, 4th December at 7.30 pm**
at the Church on the Heath

Free entry, with a retiring collection and raffle
(all proceeds to local Rotary charities)



STAR IN THE EAST

Magi in their mystery,
Studying the skies,
First received the message
That a king should rise.

Many duties claimed them,
Cares of peace and war;
Far and faint the promise
Offered by a star.

Yet the wise men followed,
Taking various ways,
Trusting in the portent
Many nights and days.

So the star led onward
Till, at the due hour
There they found a baby,
Bearer of God's power.

Child of strength in weakness,
Sent at love's command,
May all people seek you,
Out of every land.

To all those who find you,
A gift beyond compare
And if our hearts are open
God's Son will enter there.

Sheila Durbin



BIBLE STUDY AT THE MANSE



Commencing January 2015, a Bible Study will be held at the manse at 8 pm on the last Thursday of every month.

An invitation is extended to anyone who would like to explore Bible readings to come along to reflect and discuss.

Please give names to Moray Henderson.

Next Bible Study is **Thursday, 29th January 2015, at 8 pm.**



THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AND SAME SEX MARRIAGE



This topic was discussed at the last General Assembly of the United Reformed church, and although a clear majority of members expressed the view that local congregations should be permitted to offer same-sex marriage, full consensus was not achieved. General Assembly was therefore unable to reach agreement.

We at Fleet URC are asked to reflect upon the facilitation group report, discuss whether or not we would wish a future meeting of the Assembly to authorise local church meetings to offer same-sex marriage services, and to feed back our views in our responses to a questionnaire.

We therefore propose to discuss this topic at Church Meeting on 1st February. In preparation for this discussion I would ask that everyone give the subject their prayerful consideration. Copies of both the report and a guidance booklet, 'One Plus One', are available; please ask if you would like to read them.

This is a topic that many are uncomfortable discussing in public. You can take your thoughts to our Minister Ruth, to myself or to any elder, and we can talk through your concerns and submit them anonymously for discussion at the Church Meeting. It is a subject that will not go away—much like the topic of sexual equality, which our church resolved many years ago.

God bless,

Moray Henderson



YET ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL CRAFT AND GIFT FAIR

Saturday 1st November arrived rather wet in the morning, but then the sun shone through all the windows creating a warm and friendly atmosphere for our annual Craft and Gift Fair.

The event was attended by many talented crafters. It always amazes me when I see all the talent that is about.

The Fair was kindly opened by Helen Everard, who welcomed everyone with a prayer.

I should like to thank everyone who volunteered and helped, and those who supported us on the day, of course.

The date for the next event is **Saturday, 7th November 2015**. Hope to see you there!

Darrell Henderson



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE



**Thursday 18th December,
at 7.30 pm, at Fleet URC**

What is a Blue Christmas?

Cries of "Merry Christmas!" and non-stop carolling contrast with the feelings of many people at this time of the year. For those suffering from the recent or impending death of loved ones, dealing with recent separation or divorce, struggling to find employment, or facing depression or family crisis, this can be a very isolated and dreary time. Every greeting and every song reminds the grief-stricken how unhappy life is at this moment.

We recognise that a lot of the Christmas celebrations do not meet everyone's needs. To fill this gap we are offering **Blue Christmas: A Service of Hope and Healing for the Holiday Season**. People who are not having a very merry Christmas, and friends who support them, are invited to come and sit with one another in a liturgy that speaks of the love of God for the grieving. There will be an opportunity for individual prayer with Ruth, our Minister, at this service.



PARENTS AND TODDLERS GROUP

URGENT—HELP NEEDED!



From January there will be a vacancy on the Parents and Toddlers Group Refreshment rota for the fourth Friday of every month. Could someone **please** volunteer to help out just once a month for this very worthwhile church outreach.

It is very enjoyable, takes only about an hour and a half, and the parents themselves are very grateful for the help.

I myself have been doing this voluntary work for several years now, having originally offered to help Gloria Edward, and I find it a rewarding opportunity to represent the church in a friendly environment.

So therefore do please contact me if you can possibly help, or if you would like to know more about what is involved.

Muir Scully (616127)



**Phyllis
Tuckwell
Hospice**

Carols by Candlelight

with Hart Voices and School Choirs
at the Catholic Church of Our Lady
Kings Road, Fleet

Sunday, 7th December, at 6.00 pm

Tickets £12 (includes a glass of wine)
Available from the Hospice Shop in Fleet Road,
or by calling 621727 or 683540
or online at www.pthshop.co.uk

Coming in 2015:

'Ae Fond Kiss', Evening Song Recital with Jenny Bacon and Siobhain O'Higgins, 16th January, Church of Our Lady;

Quiz Night with Fish and Chips, 17th January;

Band Concert, 7th February, Church on the Heath.

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



FACCTS (Fleet and Crookham Churches Together in Schools)



The FACCTS team will soon be presenting the 'real meaning of Christmas' to the Year 6 school children in Fleet. Please pray for the children, staff and the FACCTS team, that the presentations will portray a strong message to all.

If you would like to see a presentation in action, or help with a simple craft activity, please let me know and I will give you dates and venues.

Nicola Hamilton

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE



Thank you to everyone who supported the Commitment for Life Mission Service on 26th October. It was great to hear first-hand reports from Linda Mead, the Commitment for Life Programme Coordinator, and learn how lives of individuals and the world around us are transformed.

The special collection on that day raised £335 for Commitment for Life. Many thanks to you all for this magnificent response.

Tamyra Sherratt

AND ANOTHER THING...

The Gift of Christmas Unwrapped

If you run out of wrapping paper this Christmas, you can take some birthday wrapping paper and simply add 'Jesus' after Happy Birthday! Until the end of the 19th century, brown paper was generally used for wrapping Christmas presents. Then in 1917 Joyce Hall, who ran a stationery store in Kansas, ran out of brown paper at Christmas. In desperation she sold



French envelope lining paper instead, and the rest is history! The true gift of Christmas is Jesus, God's Son born in human form. But how did God gift wrap him? The wrapping he chose tells us a lot about the gift inside.

Wrapped in humanity: Christmas reminds us that God came to dwell with us in human form as a baby. For Jesus, 'who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.' (*Philippians 2: 6-7*)

Jesus was humanly gift wrapped because God wanted to enter fully into our world, to reveal the immensity of his love for us, so that we could know the eternal God personally. You have to be divinely human and earthly present to do that! This was no ordinary gift wrap because he was no ordinary baby.



Wrapped in poverty: Jesus' birth graphically illustrates how he was born in poverty. The stable or cave with its animals, smells and straw was not easy! 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.' (*2 Corinthians 8: 9*)

The poverty in which Jesus was wrapped is significant. The swaddling cloths could have been strips of cast-off clothing, or they may have been taken from linen that was carried on long journeys by travellers in case of death. This powerfully reminds us that Jesus was born to die, wrapping himself with our own sinfulness. This was not the gift wrap of a king, yet only the King of kings allowed himself to be gift wrapped in this way! Through his poverty we are rich, as he offers us forgiveness and a new relationship with God.

The envelope with French lining carries this great Christmas message. The plain exterior looks similar to any other (the humanity of God), yet the inside dazzles with colour and beauty, reflecting the glory of God himself.

Revd Paul Hardingham (@parishpump.co.uk)