

CHURCH CALENDAR

FEBRUARY- MARCH 2015

February

- 1st 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
8th 10 am Family Worship led by Mr Sydney Shore
15th 10 am Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
22nd 10 am Family Worship led by Revd John Whitton
23rd February—8th March *Fair Trade Fortnight* (see p14)
25th 8 pm Elders Meeting
26th 8 pm House Group at the Manse (see p4)
27th 8 pm Social Evening: Bernard Potter, 'Moments in Time' (The First 100 years of Fleet URC)



March

- 1st 10 am Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon, followed by Church Meeting and AGM, with Election of Secretary and Treasurer
6.30 pm Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
6th 10.30 am Church Crookham Baptist Church (10 am for refreshments)
7.30 pm Church of Our Lady (followed by refreshments)
8th 10 am Family Worship led by Mr Paul Murphy
15th 10 am *Mothering Sunday & Church Parade*
Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
21st Synod Meeting at Southampton
22nd 10 am Family Worship led by Mrs Maggie Bridgett
26th 8 pm House Group at the Manse (see p4)
29th 10 am *Palm Sunday*
Family Worship led by Mrs Helen Everard

Items for the April-May Newsletter should be with Christine Gibbons by
Sunday 15th March (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

February -
March 2015



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Administrator:* **Margaret Armes**, 01252 650994
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Treasurer: **John Gibbons**, 01252 614200
jmgibbons@hotmail.com

Hall Bookings: **Brian Armes**, 01252 650994
b.ames@ntlworld.com

SUNDAY WORSHIP

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

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Little Fishes:) Sundays, 10 am
Loaves and Fishes:)

House Group: Mondays, 10 am (at 35 Frere Ave, Fleet)

Toddlers Group: Tuesdays, 9.45 am; Fridays, 9.45 am

Pilots: Tuesdays, 4-5 pm

Coffee Morning: 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

It's that time of the year again, when we make New Year resolutions. Over the years I have made many, but this year I shall share mine with you. (No, not going to the gym or back to the diet!)

It is to be thankful each and every day for God's goodness.

Why be thankful? I recently read an article on 'thankfulness' and I want to share some of the writer's thoughts with you:

'Does your heart brim over with thankfulness on a daily basis? No? ...Mine neither: not every day. But that's what Paul says we should do... Whatever you are facing 'Give thanks to God in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.' It's God's will for us to be thankful for and in everything. That is quite a tough challenge, isn't it?'

Insecurity, frustration, anxiety, despair and hopelessness are rife among people of all ages, classes and races today, and it is hard to be thankful when you feel that the world and circumstances are forever oppressing you. It seems to me that Paul has indicated what the antidote might be: to be thankful to God each day for something good in your life and faith.

Maybe by cultivating an attitude of thankfulness we can learn to change our perspective and become aware of the possibilities around us.

Indeed, research has shown that being thankful boosts our feelings of wellbeing and our immune systems, makes our hearts function well, and helps us sleep better... so there are health benefits too.

Showing thankfulness can be undertaken in many ways:

- Going on a walk and being thankful to God for the world we live in.
- Speaking to someone and thanking them for their encouragement.
- Sending notes to encourage others.
- Writing poetry.
- Creating a 'thankfulness jar' or 'tree' and, daily or weekly, gathering words, pictures and names to place in the jar or stick on the tree.
- Looking at yourself in the mirror, thanking God for being with you and celebrating something you have achieved that day.

This is not an easy option for a New Year's Resolution, but I feel it is an essential and important task—being thankful to God for our life, our loves, and the world we live in.

'Give thanks to God in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.'

1 Thessalonians 5: 18

With every blessing and best wishes for 2015

Ruth



NOTICE BOARD

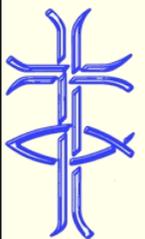


The **MANSE HOUSE GROUP** is on the fourth Thursday of every month at **8 pm:**
26th February,
26th March
 If you would like to come, you are most welcome.

ANNUAL LEAVE

Ruth will be on Annual Leave from **13th-19th February.**

AREA GATHERING



All are invited to the North East Area Gathering of the Wessex Synod at Westborough URC, Guildford on **Thursday 19th February.** It will start at **7 pm** (6.30 pm for tea/coffee).

Two topics will be discussed:

- What is the Spirit saying to the churches? Affirming the United Reformed Church's future.
- Conciliarity—in particular the role of the church meeting as one of the gifts of the United Reformed Church, both in the wider Church and in the society in which it is set.

THANK YOU

Many thanks for the generous gift I received on Christmas Day. It was a lovely surprise, and again I was humbled by your generosity.
Ruth



EVENING SERVICES AT FLEET URC

The topics for the monthly Sunday evening services this year will be Biblical characters, and what we can learn from them.

FLEET URC POSADA—JOURNEY'S END

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Posada during Advent. Mary, Joseph and Gary the donkey must have travelled many miles. They have been into lofts and to the shops, to nativity plays, cafes and the library. They have gone dancing and been hospital visiting. They have had lots of hugs, comfy places to sleep, and have been very well fed.



More importantly, the diary of the Posada shows what a journey we have been on together as a congregation. There are photographs, poems, reflections, Bible passages, thoughts, memories and stories. For many, having the Posada visit them brought pleasure, a chance to connect with others, and the opportunity to share the true meaning of Christmas.

Whilst the journey of the Posada ended on Christmas Day, our journey goes on. Whatever our journey is like, God is with us always and, like Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem, we must put our trust in Him.

The Posada Diary is available at church for you to look at. Please do, as it is well worth a read!

Grace Bagshaw



WELCOME TO OUR NEW ELDERS



We are delighted to welcome our two new elders.

On Sunday 3rd January our Minister ordained Tamyra Sherratt into the United Reformed Church. Then Tamyra and Evelyn Tyler were both inducted as elders of Fleet URC.

Congratulations and very best wishes to you both!

PILOTS

At Pilots recently we had a Lego Challenge, which was to build a marble maze. Here are the children with the mazes they built.

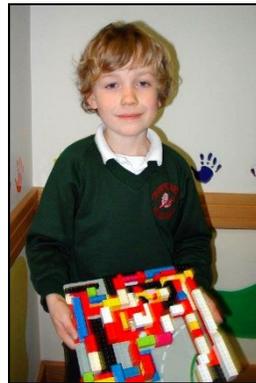
Margaret Armes



James



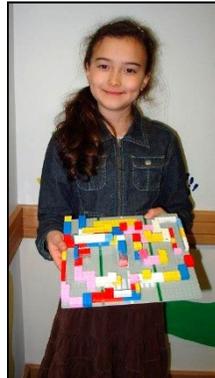
Mahima



Connor



Hannah



Melvin



William



Ethan

THE BEACON

Now light steals back through the rain clouds
Like a smile emerging through tears,
Through thoughts of impending disaster
When we see no end to our fears,

For our human life is bounded
And subject to change and chance
And so we search for a beacon,
Caught in fortune's random dance.

But how shall we choose a beacon
To guide us though time and space,
For those who choose with wisdom
Will come to their destined place?

Remember the ancient stories,
You who would choose aright:
Remember that Jesus told us
That in him we should find true light.

Sheila Durbin



'BRIGHTNESS FALLS FROM THE AIR'

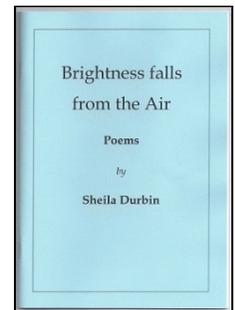
'*Brightness Falls from the Air*' is a second book of poems by Sheila Durbin. Sheila's poems are well known by regular readers of this Newsletter, but this is an entirely new collection.

I always enjoy reading Sheila's poetry, and am pleased to have played a small part, along with Bernard Potter, in bringing it to a wider audience. It is her love of words and use of language, together with her thoughts and deep faith in God, that spring from the pages. There is so much contained within so few lines that the poems always warrant re-reading—often many times.

Even if you believe that poetry is not for you, I would recommend that you read some of Sheila's work: it is thought-provoking, and sometimes leaves you with more questions than answers!

If you would like a copy of the book—or would like to share her gift with a friend or relative—then it is available priced £3.50 from myself or from Sheila.

John Gibbons (614200)



SABBATICAL UPDATE

As 2015 is now upon us, I thought it might be a good opportunity to let you have a brief outline of what I did on my sabbatical. The theme was 'Rest and Renewal'.

During September I stayed for ten days at the Carob Tree Retreat House in Nata, Cyprus. It is run by a retired Anglican priest and her friend, and they provide hospitality for ministers of all religious denominations who are seeking spiritual refreshment.

It was set high up in the hills with views north to the Troudos Mountains. Most mornings, as we were having breakfast, eagles would fly overhead, which was always a talking point.

The chapel was made of wood and was very cool and inviting in the warm September heat. The retreat gave me time to read, to pray, to reflect on my ten years of ministry, and to undertake spiritual direction given by my host.

While I was there I decided to have a daily swim in the pool. I swam one and a half miles a day (100 lengths of a ten metre pool), which meant that after ten days I swam nearly 15 miles!

I visited the new ecumenical Hospice in Paphos. It is for all people of Cyprus, and the money was found by fundraising. The youth have designed the art work in the rooms, and it was so creative (see photo)!

I am returning to Cyprus in May as I have been asked to run two one-day workshops for the local churches, while staying at the retreat house.



Ruth at the Paphos Hospice with Revd Marian Morgan and Mrs Frances Bennett, who run the Carob Tree Retreat House

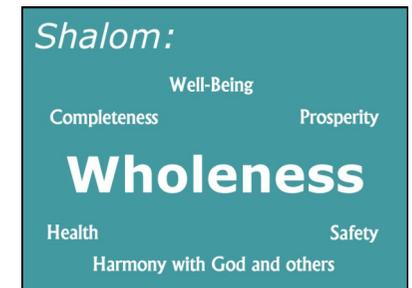


The second part of my sabbatical focussed on study, reading, and preparing a booklet on SHALOM and Inclusive Theology.

As many of you know, I am interested in Inclusivity, and wanted to root my Theology in the Biblical understanding of Inclusivity. As I read books and had conversations with other ministers and scholars, I realised that I had to re-look at the true understanding of 'Shalom' in the Old Testament. The word

SHALOM is describing a *state of mind, a presence, which constitutes wholeness and being 'at one' with God*. It does not just mean peace, but also a responsibility to attain SHALOM with God and, importantly, with God's people. It is *an overflowing abundance of God's presence in a community, so that the entire community experiences the wholeness, fullness and satisfaction of wellbeing in complete harmony with every created thing*.

I wanted to explore SHALOM in the context of three areas: people living with Mental Health issues; people who live with Learning Disabilities, and people who struggle with sexuality and body image. What does Shalom mean to people with these challenges? During this period I undertook three visits: to Broadmoor Hospital, to L'Arche Community in Bognor Regis (a Christian-focussed home for people with learning disabilities) and finally to the Gender Identity Clinic at Charing Cross Hospital, London. I spoke to patients/clients, chaplains, and health professionals, and the visits helped me understand the difficulties people have when 'church' is mentioned, the expectations, the hesitancy in acceptance. I came to the conclusion that the church as an institution can learn a great deal from those groups who feel marginalised from mainstream denominational churches, if only we would listen to them.



The Biblical verse that kept on rolling in my mind was from the Old Testament: **'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul'**, one that Jesus as a Jew would have known very well. He quoted this verse from the Torah in Matthew's Gospel, but added a bit more: **'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul... and love your neighbour as yourself'**. It strikes me that Jesus knew the difficulty of attaining SHALOM and so can understand the difficulties we have too! For SHALOM is about restoration: restoring the practice of justice, restoring brokenness, restoring peace (in its widest sense), and restoring relationships with God and God's people.



Towards the end of my sabbatical I went to stay at Gladstone Library, Hawarden in North Wales. Its tranquil setting, soft leather sofas and engaging conversations with other ministers of the URC on study leave, enabled me to begin to produce a booklet with resources for group work and Bible study. This is something I would like to complete in the near future. No doubt you will be hearing snippets in sermons over the following months, and through conversations with me.

Shalom, and God's blessings be on you all,
Ruth

PRAYER FOR FEBRUARY/MARCH



The Greek philosopher Socrates was sitting by the roadside one day, when he was approached by a traveller who was making his way towards Athens.

The traveller asked, "What sort of people live in Athens?"

So Socrates asked him, "What sort of people live in your own town?" "Awful," the traveller said, "They are horrible, lying layabouts."

And Socrates replied, "I am sorry to tell you that you will find the people of Athens to be just the same as you have found your own people."

Soon another traveller came by, who also asked, "What sort of people live in Athens?"

And Socrates replied, "What sort of people live in your own town?" "Marvellous people," the second traveller said, "kind, generous, friendly, honest people."

Socrates smiled and said, "I am pleased to tell you that you will find the people of Athens to be just the same as you have found your own people!"



And so we pray:

Lord, we come before you as we are.
We ask you to take away from us
all that makes us less than human.

Strengthen us
with the power of your Spirit
that our attitude and outlook may develop,
and our 'way of looking'
may become more like yours.

Help us to remain positive -
encouraging and appreciating
one another, looking upon people
in the same way that you do.



THE MAGIC BANK ACCOUNT

Imagine that you had won the following prize in a contest:

Each morning your bank would deposit £86,000 in your private account for your own use. However this prize has rules:

1. Everything you don't spend during the day will be taken away from you.
2. You may not simply transfer money into some other account.
3. You may only spend it.
4. Each morning when you wake the bank opens your account with another £86,000 for that day.
5. The bank can end the game without warning. At any time it can say, "Game over." It can close the account and you will not receive a new one.

What would you do? You would buy anything and everything you wanted, not only for yourself but for all the people you love and care for. Probably even for people you didn't know, because you couldn't spend it all on yourself. You would try to spend every penny and use it all because it would be replenished in the morning—correct?



Actually this game is real!

Each of us is already a winner of this prize—we just can't see it. The prize is TIME.

1. Each morning we wake to receive 86,400 seconds as a gift of life.
2. When we go to sleep at night any remaining time is not credited to us.
3. What we haven't used up that day is lost forever.
4. Yesterday is forever gone.
5. Each morning the account is refilled, but the bank can dissolve our account at any time without warning.



So what will you do with your 86,400 seconds?

Those seconds are worth more than the same amount in pounds sterling. So remember to enjoy every second of your life, because time races by so much quicker than you think.

Start spending!

(Extracted from an email received)

Bill Thomas



COMMITMENT FOR LIFE

Commitment for Life (CforL) is the United Reformed Church's main programme through which the Church carries forward its work



for justice throughout the world. It links particularly to statements 8, 9, 10 of Vision 2020, the framework for mission the URC.

It is the recommended way for local United Reformed Churches to support **Christian Aid** and **Global Justice Now** (formerly WDM). Through committed giving, prayer and solidarity, CforL supports the work of our four partner countries/regions: Bangladesh, Central America, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and Zimbabwe. We at Fleet URC have chosen **Central America** as our current focus partner region.

Money raised for CforL is divided:



35% to Christian Aid, to be divided equally between the four partner countries/regions (so allowing Christian Aid to make long-term plans for those countries), while the local church focuses and raises awareness for one particular partner;



10% to Global Justice Now (formerly WDM) for advocacy and campaigning.

15% for advocacy, administration and grants.

In addition to specific work via CforL, Fleet URC supports wider work with Christian Aid and Fairtrade fundraising, with campaigning and prayers throughout the year.

For more information, visit the CforL website: <http://www.urch.org.uk/mission/commitment-for-life.html>.

Tamyra Sherratt

(Photo credit: Christian Aid/Hannah Richards)



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FLEET AND CHURCH CROOKHAM

At a meeting of Churches Together in January the following items were discussed:

Plans for the Lent Groups were agreed. The theme is 'Praise Him', and follows the York Course, with five sessions on Wednesday evenings starting on 25th February. There is a CD which can be used to open and close the evening, leaving plenty of time for discussion. There is further information on the Notice Board to the right as you enter our church building. If you are interested and able to register on line, please use the Churches Together website: <http://www.ctfleet.org.uk/>; otherwise give your name to Jill Durbin. The last date for registering is 8th February.

On Good Friday, 3rd April there will be a walk from the Methodist Church following a Fair Trade coffee morning which will be held there. The walk will go down Fleet Road to All Saints Church and will be held in silence. At All Saints there will be a Fleet Peace Prayer Vigil.

On Easter Saturday a youth worker will coordinate a flash mob choir in the Hart Centre in the space by the lifts.

On Easter Sunday there will be a Sunrise Service on Tweseldown racecourse, after which everyone is welcome at Church Crookham Baptist Church for breakfast.

The important work of the Food Bank has grown to the point of needing a manager, which has increased the cost. It was suggested that each church might be willing to run a fund-raising event in aid of the Food Bank.

The Churches Together Cross has been handed over from the United Reformed Church to the Church Crookham Baptist Church.

Jill Durbin



**Phyllis
Tuckwell
Hospice**

THE BAND OF THE HAMPSHIRE CONSTABULARY

CHARITY CONCERT

at the Church on the Heath

Saturday, 7th February 2015, at 7.30 pm

Tickets: £12

Available from the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice shop,
or by calling 01252 683540

FAIRTRADE

The first sales of 2015 are as follows:

- Church on the Heath, **Monday 2nd February, 9 am to 12 noon.**
- An 'At home' on **Thursday 12th February, 6.30 to 9.30 pm**, continuing on **Friday, 13th February, 10 am to 4 pm.** ('A Frosty Fairtrade Friday in February')
- During the Farmers' Market on **Saturday, 14th February** I will have a Fairtrade stall in the overflow area of the Church on the Heath. (The Farmers' Market is held on the Key at Elvetham Heath, next to the church.)
- Fairtrade Fortnight is from 23rd February to 8th March 2015. I will be in the Hart Centre from **Tuesday 3rd March to Saturday 7th March.**



FAIRTRADE

Unfortunately sales in the Hart Centre continued to decline throughout 2014, so I have decided to continue in the Centre with a reduced timetable. Following Fairtrade Fortnight I will be there again in the first week of May, July and September (Tuesday to Saturday), after which I will review the situation. I also plan to do some more events with Hart District Council. Hart is now a Fairtrade District.

Thank you to everyone who supports Fairtrade in any way.

Sue Moll (sue.asvannafairtrade@yahoo.co.uk)



RECYCLING ALUMINIUM FOIL

Thank you to everyone who kindly saves their used foil for the Multiple Sclerosis Society's fundraising—it is very much appreciated. The foil is sold by weight, so a large amount is needed to make money. Every little pie dish counts!



If you were not aware of this recycling/fundraising collection, do please join us in 2015. Just two things to check:

- It needs to be clean;
- When folded, real foil stays folded and does not open up again like crisp bags.

You can give it to me at church on Sunday mornings or Thursday coffee mornings; or please contact me on 01252 687075.

Thank you.

Meg Nicholson

AND ANOTHER THING...

"Follow Every Rainbow..."

The central mountains of Ceylon? Wow! What a super place to begin life as a child. But that's just what Sheila Durbin did. I gleaned this from a book of Sheila's poems, recently published*. Lovely poems, all: '*fiery gold, fetched from his solar mines.*' I wonder, did that phrase have its origins in a childhood spent in the mountains of Ceylon?

Then, quite unexpectedly, an old favourite poem of mine recently re-emerged. This poem is called '*The Green Veil*', and describes the stealthy approach of Spring. It begins:

'It was the Willow who first wore it
Until her weaving fingers tore it..'

and concludes:

'For sale! For sale!
A green veil.'



The poem was first published at the turn of the twentieth century, author unknown, in the now extinct magazine, *Punch*.

In February 2012, with temperatures below freezing, this was published on our church website. At the time, Darrell Henderson commented, "Well done, Anon."

Almost three years later, in December 2014, a lady who happened to read it on our website, Mary Holterhoff, sent the following message:

"This is brilliant, Eric! My sister and I (we are in our eighties) discovered this poem in an old copy of *Punch* which was on display in our school library many years ago. I copied it out for that evening's English homework and got quite a good mark and an enquiry from the English teacher, who was captivated by it also. Unfortunately my old English Lit exercise book was 'tidied away' by my Mum in later years and we could never again retrieve the poem. Thank you for bringing back this beautiful poem in its entirety..." Mary

How lovely! Wouldn't it be the perfect ending if we could say that Mary's message had reached us from the central mountains of Ceylon?

Truth to tell, that's just a dream...

Eric Perry

(*'*Brightness Falls from the Air*', see page 7)

