

CHURCH CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2017—JANUARY 2018

<i>December</i>		Advent and Christmas Services
3rd		1st Sunday in Advent
10 am		Parade & Gift Service led by Revd Ruth Dillon
6.30 pm		Evening Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
4th	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
10th		2nd Sunday in Advent
10 am		Family Worship led by Mr Paul Murphy
11th	2 pm	Monthly Bible Study
17th		3rd Sunday in Advent
10 am		Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
4.30 pm		Carols and Christingle led by Revd Ruth Dillon
24th		4th Sunday in Advent
10 am		Family Worship led by 'Footsteps', our young people's group
25th		Christmas Day
10 am		Family Worship led by Mrs Meg Nicholson
31st	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd John Whitton



<i>January</i>		
3rd	7.30 pm	Elders Meeting
7th	10 am	Family Worship: Covenant Service led by Revd Ruth Dillon, followed by Church Meeting
		No Evening Service
8th	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
14th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd John Whitton
15th	2 pm	Monthly Bible Study
18th—25th		<i>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity</i>
21st	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Haydon Wilcox
25th	7.30 pm	Monthly House Group (see p 5)
28th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Paula Littlewood

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.urb.org.uk, or with Assistant Administrator, Margaret Ames (650994).

Items for the February—March 2018 issue of *In Touch* should be with Christine Gibbons by **Sunday 14th January 2018** (christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk).



Fleet United Reformed Church



In Touch

December 2017
- January 2018



FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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@FleetURC

CHURCH 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 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>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

It's nearly the singing season again!

Advent and Christmas means carols: that fact will all too soon be inescapable.

- We will hear carols blaring out at office parties, in competition with the noisy seasonal gaiety.
- We will hear them booming out over our heads as we shop alongside the other frantic Christmas shoppers.
- We will hear them bursting from people's bags and pockets in crowded buses and cafes, thanks to the every more powerful speakers of the modern mobile phone.



It is perhaps not quite so certain whether we will hear carols sung at our front doors by happy children, red-cheeked and lantern-lit.

These days the Christmas carol is more likely to reach us in the form of an advertising jingle, or a comedy ringtone, or the soundtrack of a 'holiday season' rom-com, but Christmas still means carols, even so.

When God hears the carols that make up our Christmas, does God hum along? One wouldn't want to rule it out.

The God who brings Peace, Joy, Hope and Love to us was never too grand to laugh or cry with us. So why shouldn't a God who laughs and dances with us... also sing?

In fact that it's not until we get to the Upper Room and the close of Mark's gospel that we hear about it:

'When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.' Mark 14: 26

Only when the Last Supper has been supped, when Judas has gone out, and as the first-century equivalent of After Eights are presumably going around, do Jesus and the disciples finally sing. But of course Jesus must have sung before, for to be human is to sing. Whether humans sing often or rarely, well or badly, whether 'loud and proud', or embarrassed and half-mumbling, inevitably they sing. Since the God we worship is a God who has become human, it is fairly certain that Jesus sang fairly often, whether in or out of tune and time.

What goes for Good Friday also goes for the first Christmas. Contrary to what 'Away in the Manger' would have us believe, the crying the little Lord Jesus made in Bethlehem was doubtless enough noise to drown out the lowing cattle (whatever lowing is). And this is why the association between Christmas and the carol is so meaningful and so precious.

All our songs begin in the crying of the newborn child. And in the end all singing is essentially 'crying out'. We cry to one another in song, and we cry to the world in general, and to the mystery who is the God we worship. And

if as an infant, Jesus cried like any other baby, as a man his cry came to God in a way that was wholly unique.

It was as a Psalm of praise the like of which was never heard before or since that the child born in Bethlehem was eventually to offer up his own life.

This is the mystery that the Christmas angels sang, giving glory to God and promising peace on earth.

May I wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas and all good wishes for 2018.

Christmas blessings

Ruth



BAPTISM



On 19th November we were delighted to welcome Nikki and Tom McGhie with their family and friends when they brought their baby daughter Thea Harper to be baptised. Thea is little sister to Charlie, JoeJack, and Amilie, and is also Jenny Devis's granddaughter. The service was conducted by our Minister, Ruth.

(left) Thea with Ruth and big brother Charlie

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

A total of 22 boxes was sent from Fleet URC this year in response to the Shoebox Appeal. The whole church was involved, and when Maureen Grew (representing Operation Christmas Child) came to morning service to receive the boxes we were able to give her a cheque for £300 as well, as a donation towards transportation costs. Maureen spoke of the joy she had personally witnessed when children received the boxes.

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

Bee Griffiths



GIFT SERVICE FOR PARITY FOR DISABILITY

The Gift Service on **3rd December** will be for Parity for Disability. Parity supports a wide range of people with multiple disabilities from 18 to 70 years of age. The following gifts would be particularly acceptable to those who use their services.

*Hand creams, massage creams and sensory items
(ie things to touch and look at).*



NOTICE BOARD



MONTHLY BIBLE STUDY

Each month we meet in the vestry to explore the Lectionary readings for the following Sunday. The next gatherings will be at **2 pm** on:

Monday, 11th December
Monday, 15th January

MONTHLY PRAYER GROUP

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

Monday, 4th December
Monday, 8th January

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



CHRISTINGLE PREPARATIONS

Volunteers are needed to help prepare the Christingles for our Carol and Christingle Service on 18th December.

We will be meeting on **Saturday 17th December** at **10 am** in the Church Hall



NEW HOUSE GROUP

A new monthly house group meets at 39 Malthouse Close at 7.30 pm on the 4th Thursday of each month.

The next meeting will be on **Thursday 25th January**

Please contact Meg Nicholson (687075) for more details.

Everyone is welcome.

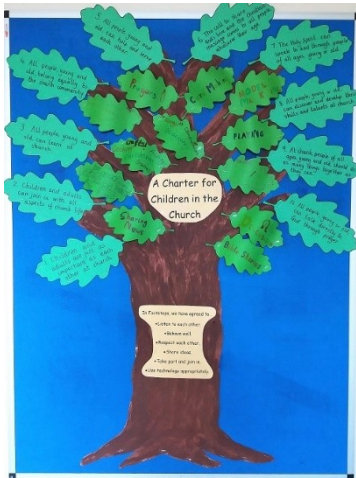
ANNUAL & STUDY LEAVE

Ruth, our Minister, will not be available on the following dates:
26th December—2nd January
(Annual leave)

19th—23rd January
(URC Youth Assembly Workshop Leader)

FOOTSTEPS—The Charter for Children in the Church

Recently the young people in Footsteps have been thinking about the Charter for Children in the Church, which sets out the URC's commitments with regards to children and young people. As a group, we felt that some of the Charter was tricky to understand, so we have been exploring the meaning behind the words and rewriting it so that we can understand it more easily. We have made a display to show our rewritten charter... do come along and have a look!

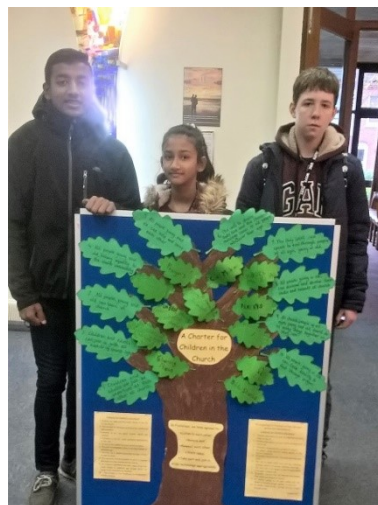


Our version of the Charter for Children in the Church:

1. Children and adults are just as important as each other at church.
2. Children and adults can join in with all aspects of church life.
3. All people, young and old, can learn at church.
4. All people, young and old, belong equally to the church community.
5. All people, young and old, can serve and help each other.
6. The call to share God's love and the Christian message comes to all people, whatever their age.
7. The Holy Spirit can speak to and through people of all ages, young and old.
8. All people, young and old, can discover and develop their skills and talents at church.
9. At church, people of all ages, young and old, should do as many things together as they can.
10. All people, young and old, can talk directly to God through prayer.

The Charter at Synod

We were asked to take our updated Children's Charter to the November meeting of Wessex Synod. When we arrived we were introduced to Sam Richards, the newly appointed head of children and young people for the whole of the URC, who is based at Church House. She loved what the young people of Fleet had done. She talked to Melvin, Mahima and William and explained that the rewriting of the Charter was to have been her first job, but that they had done it for her.



The children's work was put on display in the main meeting area, and at the Moderator's suggestion lots of photographs of it were taken so that it could be shared with the other churches in Wessex Synod.

Grace Bagshaw & Margaret Armes



CRAFT AND GIFT FAIR THANKS

Our Craft and Gift Fair on 4th November this year was a real success. The comments I have received from crafters and customers made me feel it is all worthwhile. Many of the crafters say it is one of their favourite events, and this is all thanks to everyone who helps.

The support I get—from leaflet distributing and putting posters up, to putting the Church back together for our Sunday service—means a lot to me. Thank you all.



Thanks also go to Jackie Cresswell and her 8th Fleet Brownies, who ran a very popular Tombola stall again this year. They also had a 'Guess the Name of the Polar Bear' competition, which was won by Val Cox. She correctly chose the name: 'Snowfluff'.

The Brownies raised a total of £179, which has been divided between three charities supported by our church: Parity for Disability, Step by Step, and Ocean Stars.

Save the date for next year's Craft Fair, on **3rd November 2018**, when hopefully we will be doing it all again!

God bless

Darrell Henderson





Fleet Rotary
with the NE Hants
Area Schools Band
& Church Crookham
Junior School Choir

CAROL CONCERT

at the Church on the Heath
Elvetham Heath, Fleet

**Thursday 7th December,
at 7.30 pm**

Retiring Collection, with
ALL proceeds to
local Rotary Charities
Hot drinks and mince pies



Christmas Concerts & Carol Services



Pelly Concert
Orchestra

PELLY GOES TO THE PANTO

Family Christmas Concert,
with Carols

at the Church on the Heath,
Elvetham Heath, Fleet

**Saturday 16th December,
at 7.30 pm**

Tickets in advance £12 & £6 (children)
£13 & £6 on the door
(Concessions available)
Phone: 0345 2694612
or visit www.pellyorchestra.co.uk

Fleet URC CAROLS AND CHRISTINGLE

Led by our Minister,
Revd Ruth Dillon

**Sunday 17th December,
at 4.30 pm**

Everyone Welcome



Fleet Choral Society CAROL CONCERT



at Ss Philip & James,
Kings Road, Fleet

**Tuesday 12th December,
at 7.30 pm**

£5 entry on the door,
with free coffee and mince pie
All proceeds to
Christian Aid
(matched pound
for pound by the
UK Government)



CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

with Hart Voices
& School Choirs

at the
Church of Our Lady,
Kings Road, Fleet

**Sunday 10th December,
at 5.30 pm**

Tickets £12 (includes refreshments)
Available from the Hospice Shop,
by calling 683540,
or online at www.pthshop.co.uk



COVENANT SERVICE REFLECTION

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing:

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

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On **Sunday 7th January** we shall be
having a Covenant Service. The richness of
this Methodist tradition has filtered down
within the URC, and now many URC
churches hold this service within the first
few weeks of the New Year.

It is a celebration of all that God has done and an affirmation that
we give our lives and choices to God. It is an invitation for people to
renew their covenant relationship with God.

The aim of the service is to help people hear God's offer and God's
challenge; to provide space for God to prompt and for people to
respond. Yet, more than this, for the Covenant Service is not just a
one-to-one transaction between individuals and God, it is an act of
the whole faith community. What God offers through the Covenant
is a loving relationship. It is not a business contract set up between
God and humanity for the provision of certain goods and services.
Rather, it is the means of grace by which we accept the relationship
God offers and seek to sustain it:

**The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new
covenant... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their
hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

Jeremiah 31: 31, 33 (NRSV)

These words are read out as part of the Covenant Service. The
focal point of the service is the Covenant Prayer (above). It
embraces the whole of life, in all its parts. Most people find it quite
tough to say this and really mean it. It is uncomfortable and

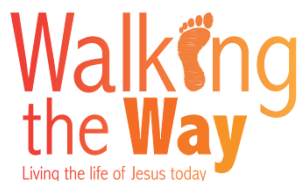
challenging. It asks questions of our faith and demands that we examine our relationship with God.

The Covenant Prayer has been compared by some to a set of New Year resolutions, but ones that emphasise the importance of doing and being as much as believing. But more than that, the prayer represents a commitment to being a disciple and putting God first in our lives and in everything about our lives: what we do, what we say and who we are. It is both a surrender to, and a trust in, God. The final few words are a gracious reminder: 'You are mine and I am yours'. We don't pray and live just in our own strength—but in God's.

Ruth



WALKING THE WAY



What is Walking the Way?

Walking the Way is the umbrella term for the United Reformed Church's exciting focus on lifelong Christian discipleship and mission. When you engage in *Walking the Way*, we hope that your own understanding of what being a Christian disciple is will deepen. You may grow beyond your dreams in living as a disciple when

you are in church and, perhaps more importantly, when you are not.

Why Walk the Way?

The Greek word for disciple is *mathetes*. Andrew Roberts, author of 'Holy Habits', says, "It is often said to mean either a follower or a learner. The literal meaning is 'one who learns as they follow'."

Walking the Way explores what it means actively to follow and learn from—and to be eventually transformed by—Christ. It's for everyone at any stage of their Christian journey—whoever you are, whatever your existing relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church is, whatever your personal circumstances. It's for you whether you have been following Jesus for five days or five decades. While there's nothing new about being a disciple of Christ, we're confident that there is something new about *Walking the Way* in its accessible approach and in the wide range of supporting resources produced and planned.

What do we do?

The URC are providing a variety of resources to help us. However at Fleet URC we have made a good start by using the Holy Habit material during our monthly services. There will be more information on each habit as the months progress. Each person as a disciple of Jesus Christ is encouraged to make an individual commitment that they will endeavour to develop each area known as the ten Holy Habits.

The URC website

The URC website already has a designated area for *Walking the Way*, and every Synod has provided resources, which together are called Seasons of Preparation. You can download and use these resources already.

Look out on the URC website and in church for more resources next year.

A Prayer for Walking the Way

God of all
as Jesus walked this earth sharing love, grace and mercy,
as he fed the hungry with the bread of life
and brought healing and hope to those he met,
Renew us through the gift of your Spirit
so that we may do likewise.

As we step out on this exciting, yet daunting journey of discipleship
we pray that we will place our footsteps in yours
and walk where you lead,
as we live out your life in our daily living.
For Jesus' sake

Amen

Ruth



PADDINGTON PILGRIMAGE

As *Walking the Way* is launched by the United Reformed Church, Phil Ray and Ruth White, the Wessex Children's and Youth Development Officers, decided that we should have a pilgrimage with a special celebrity walking the 'Wessex Way'.

Paddington Bear was therefore welcomed here at Fleet URC on 19th November to start off his marathon 'walk'. He saw the baptism of Thea Harper McGhie, and we blessed him as he started his journey. We also gave him a pendant that had a *Walking the Way* logo.

He will be visiting every church in Wessex Synod, and all his activities, with photos, will be recorded and logged on the Wessex Youth and Children's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/urcwessex.childrenandyouth>.

(For more photos of Paddington's visit to Fleet URC, visit our church website and Facebook pages.)



PRAYER FOR THE MONTH



Often shown as a film at Christmas is Charles Dickens' story, 'A Christmas Carol'. The rich and miserly Scrooge is known to be selfish and uncaring towards everyone. When asked to donate some money for the poor, he says, "I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry".

His partner in business had been Jacob Marley, but he has died and now sends three messengers to Ebenezer Scrooge.

The first is called the 'Ghost of Christmas Past'. He shows Scrooge the happiness that he could have had, if he had made different choices in his life.

The second messenger is the 'Ghost of Christmas Present'. He shows Scrooge how happy his married nephew is, despite not having his uncle's great wealth. He is also shown the family of one of his employees, Bob Cratchit, who is very poor yet has a very happy life at home. One of his children is called Tiny Tim, and is disabled. Tiny Tim says that he hopes that those who have seen him in church (with his disability) 'might recall on Christmas Day who it was who made lame beggars walk and the blind see.'

Scrooge's third visitor is the 'Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come'. He shows Scrooge that, in the future, he will sack Bob Cratchit. With no income for the family, Tiny Tim will die. The Ghost then takes Scrooge to a tomb—it is his own—and shows him that no one will mourn his passing. Yet Scrooge learns that, if he changes, life will be different and the negative things he has seen will not then take place.

The next day is Christmas Day. When he awakes Ebenezer Scrooge is a changed person. He gives a pay rise to Bob Cratchit and visits his family, meeting Tiny Tim, who says, "God bless us, every one."

Scrooge now chooses to live in a positive and cheerful way, and so discovers happiness himself.

'A Christmas Carol' is one of many books by Charles Dickens, and it was published on 17th December, 1843.

Our prayer today is simply those words of Tiny Tim. So let us pray for all whom we love and all who share our lives:

"God bless us, every one."

Ruth



DAYSRING

Have you observed the dawn-
How clouds embody light
Suffused with pink and gold?
To manifest its bright
Power over all dull things?
Without such vapour, light,
Limpid, impalpable,
Evades our searching sight.
So God, transcendent, came,
Assumed a house of clay
That mortal eyes might see
The uncreated ray.
O Dayspring from on high,
We greet your human birth,
Come down to walk with men
And ransom all the earth.

Sheila Durbin



JEAN'S JOTTINGS: Home for Christmas

I was seven years old. It was almost Christmas, and my parents and I only wanted one special present. The tree was up and decorated, the turkey was to be fetched from the butchers, and there were presents to wrap—but not the special present.

That would not be wrapped.

On the Saturday evening the three of us walked to the church hall to watch a play. I had had a dream the night before, that my brother Jim would be home the following day. "Pigs might fly!", I said to myself.

The three of us sat together, but I saved the chair next to me—you never know.

Half way through the first half I heard a voice—"Hello love, I'm home!"

Yes, you've guessed it. The unwrapped present had come home on leave, for Christmas. No need to wrap it up!

(This is a true story. My brother James was in the Navy and served at Dunkirk, among other places.)

Jean Schafer





CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FLEET AND CROOKHAM (CTFC)

As we approach the end of the year with Christmas festivities and worship in our minds, I would like to inform you of the news from Churches Together.

Sadly, Will Parker has confirmed that, after 15 years as Chair of Churches Together, he will be standing down in January. We wish him well and thank him for his commitment.

Fleet Angels are celebrating their 10th anniversary this year. On **Sunday 19th November at 3 pm** there will be a service of celebration at Ss Philip & James, to which you are all invited to support their dedication and work.

Unfortunately the Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Management Centre in Fleet will be standing down at the end of the year. During the four years of their existence they have been approached for help by 28 people.



I should like to thank everyone who helped with knitting and crocheting the angels for the Angel Bombing of Fleet. This year, thanks to you, we have 300 going from our church. Our thanks also go to Beacon Hill URC, who also donated quite a few to help with this fantastic effort.

Help is still needed, especially on **Saturday 16th December**, when we will be distributing these precious items around Fleet. If you

would like to join Moray, Pam and me we will be meeting at 6 am at the church. These angels really impacted on the town last year, resulting in happy children and adults. If you would like to join us, please let me know.

All the angels will be at a blessing ceremony held at Fleet Methodist Church on **Sunday 3rd December at 3 pm**. It would be lovely if you could join us.

On **16th December** there will also be a Christingle making workshop starting at 10 am in the Church hall. All 80 oranges need to be dressed in their Christingle ornaments. It is a fun morning, full of chat, the sweet smell of oranges, a cup of coffee, plus any broken sweets (if you are lucky to get some before the Brownies!) Please do come and join us; the task should be completed within an hour.

Christmas Lunch for people living on their own is also be going ahead. Plans and programmes for the day are well on their way. If you know anyone who would benefit from this warm and friendly day, please can you let me know.

Fleet Festivities takes place on **29th November**, and the churches' stall will be in Ghurkha Square as last year, 4—8 pm.

Jill Durbin has stepped down from being Treasurer and URC member for the Women's World Day of Prayer. She was warmly thanked for her

commitment, and warm wishes have been sent by members of Churches Together. As our church's representative I will keep you informed of future plans.

Next year's Women's World Day of Prayer services will be held on **Friday 2nd March 2018**, at Church Crookham Baptist Church (10 am) and the Church on the Heath (7.30 pm). Everyone is welcome. The service has been written by the women of Suriname, a beautiful colourful country on the north eastern coast of South America.

Would you like to enter a tree in the Ss Philip & James Festival? There are categories for children, schools and youth organisations, businesses, families or individuals. Whether you enter a tree or not, join us for the Festival and vote for your favourite trees.

They will be on display on the following dates in December: **Friday 8th** (4—7 pm); **Saturday 9th** (10 am—6.30 pm); **Sunday 10th** (1.30—5 pm). For further information please visit <http://wpapp.parishoffleet.org.uk/ctf>.

There are a lot of dates for you to take note of, but hopefully you will find the information useful and want to attend the planned events.

God bless,

Darrell Henderson, CTFC Representative



COMMITMENT FOR LIFE (CforL)

A Prayer by Tamyra Sherratt, Commitment for Life Link Person:

Dear Lord,

We pray for all those for whom Christmas and New Year are **not** a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year; those suffering from:

Loneliness	Bereavement	Financial burdens and/or constraints
Broken Families	Natural Disasters	War torn areas just trying to survive
Anger	Depression	Perceived slights & misunderstandings
Poverty	Hatred	Seeking justice, but at what cost?
Sadness	Poor Health	Pressure to create the 'perfect' dinner

Pray for the Lord's will to be shown in the lives of every person around the world. For the focus during this holiday season to be on the birth of your Son to save us from ourselves. You have given us such a precious gift. Remind each of us that when you feel far away, you are not the one who has moved. You are always with us if we will just put our faith in you.

Amen

REST, REPLENISH, RECYCLE: A Response to our Harvest Service

On 1st October Ruth led a wonderful service on the theme of 'Rest, Replenish and Recycle', including some super input from the Brownies.

This issue of our responsibility to care for God's earth, its people, animals, plants and water, is one that is very close to my heart. I have always considered myself quite environmentally friendly, but over the last year I have been on a journey that has opened my eyes to the many ways that we are spoiling our planet!



By chance, on the Internet, I came across a growing group of people who are working towards living a 'zero-waste' lifestyle. Yes, that's right, they aim to produce no rubbish or recycling... at all! That's a long way from where I am right now. However, many people who have been working on this for a while manage to fit all of their rubbish from one year into a large glass jar. Can you imagine that? Picture your rubbish bin after just one week, and you will wonder how they do it. Many of these people are fortunate enough to live in locations where they can buy from 'bulk shops', where produce is loose and you take along your own containers to fill. Maybe this

brings back memories for some older readers who remember shopping like this from butchers, bakers, grocers and greengrocers?

We can all do our bit, though, and we can start with the five Rs... Refuse, Reduce, Re-use (and Repair), Rot, Recycle.

1. Yes, start by **refusing** that carrier bag, freebie, disposable or plastic container if not needed (remember to take your own bags with you). Use natural fabric bags if you can as synthetic fibres have their own issues!
2. **Reduce** your overall consumption of 'things'. Do you wear all of those clothes in your wardrobe? Do you need another mug/cushion/knick-knack? Donate your unwanted or unloved things and give them a new and useful life elsewhere.
3. **Re-use** (and **repair**) your belongings. Don't throw it away until you have considered if it can be fixed. Darn the hole, sew on the button, stick it back together! Could a friend or neighbour help if you are not sure how to do it?
4. **Rot**—keep a caddy on your kitchen counter for vegetable and fruit scraps and peelings. Compost what you can and re-use it to fertilize your soil. Rotting food in landfills contributes a huge amount to greenhouse gas emissions. Request a green bin from the council for your garden waste.
5. **Recycle**—After you have refused, reduced, re-used (and repaired) and rotted what you can, there shouldn't be much left to recycle, but make

sure you know what can go into the recycling bin and what can't! Whilst recycling is a far better option than sending your waste to landfill, it still uses lots of energy, and plastics degrade each time they are recycled until they are unusable and can break down and pollute the environment.

And that's just the start! There are so many more ways that we can reduce our impact on the planet, and many of them require just a little thought and a switch in our habits. I hope this may give you some food for thought... What one thing can you do now to improve our world?

Grace Bagshaw



ADVENT QUIET DAY

Theme: 'Star of Wonder'

**Saturday, 2nd December,
10 am—4 pm**

Beacon Hill United Reformed Church,
Churt Road, Hindhead

A space where we can meet God and prepare
to wait for the Babe of Bethlehem

**Come and be still and enjoy a quiet
day before the rush of Christmas**

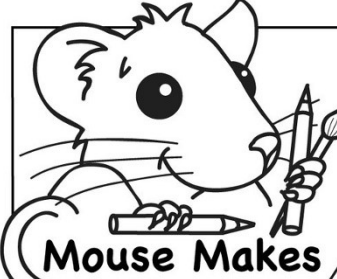
Advent Bible Study, Opportunity for Silent Prayer,
Various Activities, Reflective Worship

Cost: £10: Lunch will be provided

For more details and to book:
contact the Hub at Beacon Hill URC,
or phone 01252 625238




CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY



Mouse Makes

Colour in one star a day as you countdown to Christmas

"I bring you **good news** that will bring great **joy** to all people. The **Saviour** has been born today! ...
 Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased".
from Luke 2 vs. 10,11,14



C H R I S T M A S

B A B Y T H O L Y J U D E A R T H

B J P E A C E S O N O F L O C K P U S

R O F I E L D E G A S H E P H E R D S

I Y O N B O R N O Z E G M A R Y A A A

N M R N A T O Z O A P A A L I R I V V

G O D S C H I L D R H L N A S O S I I

L J E S U S H O N E L I G H T O E D O

O G U A R D I B E T H L E H E M Z S U

R S L S H E E P W H Y E R L O R D O R

Y N N A N G E L S B H E A V E N A M E

MARY • JOSEPH • NAZARETH • GALILEE • JUDEA • BETHLEHEM • DAVID
 HOLY • CHILD • BABY • SON • NAME • JESUS • MANGER • ROOM • INN
 SHEPHERDS • FIELD • GUARD • FLOCK • SHEEP • ANGELS • SHONE • BRING
 GOOD NEWS • JOY • SAVIOUR • BORN • CHRIST • LORD • LIGHT
 PRAISE • GLORY • GOD • PEACE • EARTH • HEAVEN • CHRISTMAS

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AND ANOTHER THING....

Where did Christmas trees come from?



Have you every wondered why we put up decorated trees at Christmas?

The evergreen fir tree has traditionally been used to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years, long before the birth of Christianity. Pagans used branches of it to decorate their homes during the winter solstice, to symbolise fertility and new life in the darkness of winter.

There are several theories and legends about how the evergreen fir tree went on to become a symbol of Christianity.

One is attributed to the English Benedictine monk Boniface, who went to Germany in the 8th century as a missionary and found people performing sacrifices in front of a mighty oak tree—oak trees being sacred to the god Thor. Boniface took an axe and felled the tree to stop the pagans worshipping a false idol. Legend has it that a fir tree grew out of the fallen oak and this became a symbol of Christ (with the triangular shape representing the Trinity), and new life.

Germany is also credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition as we now know it, when Christians in the 16th century brought decorated trees into their homes. It is a popular belief that the Protestant reformer Martin Luther (whose 500th anniversary we have recently celebrated) first added lighted candles to a tree. It is said that, walking through the forest one winter evening, he was awed by the brilliance of the stars twinkling amidst the evergreens. He went home and erected a tree for his family, wiring the branches with lighted candles. He is said to have used it as a visual aid, telling people that the candles symbolised Jesus as the light of the world, and the evergreen tree symbolised the eternal life that Jesus gives us.

The first Christmas trees came to Britain sometime in the 1830s. They became very popular in 1841 when Queen Victoria's German husband, Prince Albert, had a Christmas tree set up in Windsor Castle. In 1848 a drawing of 'The Queen's Christmas tree at Windsor Castle' was published in the Illustrated London News, and this helped to make Christmas trees more popular in the UK and USA.

Today, Christmas trees come in all different shapes and sizes, from traditional fir to artificial. The tradition of decorating a tree is embraced by millions of people worldwide of different faiths and cultures, but although it is still a symbol of Christianity for some, for most people it is simply part of the December celebrations.

