

CHURCH CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2018—JANUARY 2019

<i>December</i>		<i>Advent and Christmas Services</i>
2nd		<i>1st 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
3rd	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
9th		<i>2nd Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Family Worship led by the Elders, followed by church Sunday lunch
10th	2 pm	Monthly Bible Study
16th		<i>3rd Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion, with baptism, led by Revd Ruth Dillon
23rd		<i>4th Sunday in Advent</i>
	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd John Mackerness
	4 pm	Carols and Christingle led by Revd Ruth Dillon
25th		<i>Christmas Day</i>
	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Ruth Dillon
30th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mrs Anna Crawford



January

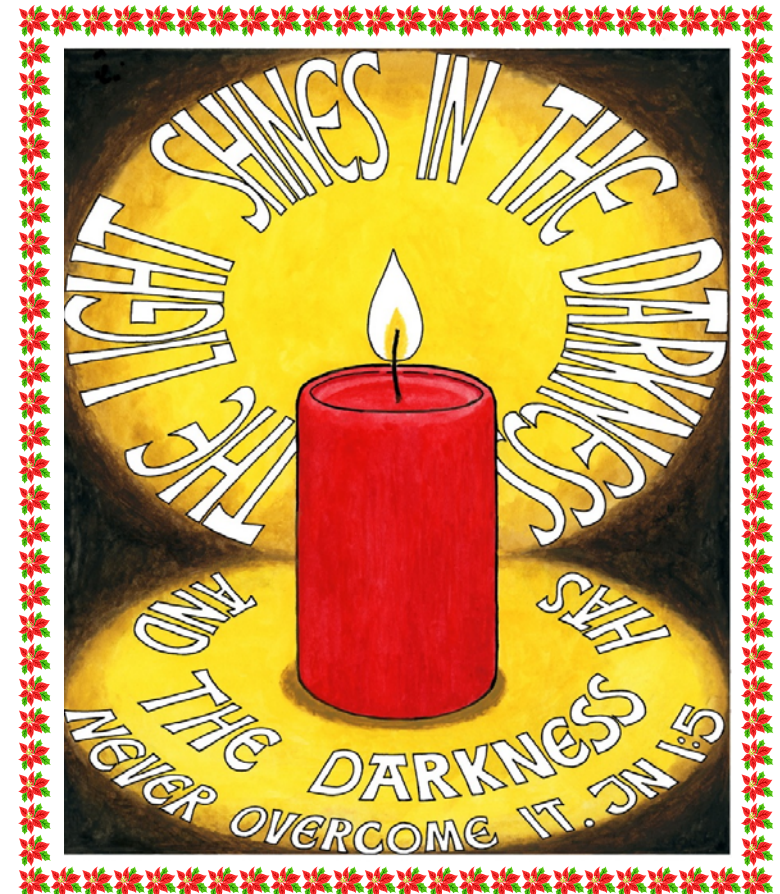
2nd	7.30 pm	Elders Meeting
6th	10 am	Family Worship: Covenant Service led by Revd Ruth Dillon, followed by Church Meeting No Evening Service
7th	12 noon	Monthly Prayer Group
13th	10 am	Family Worship led by Revd Andy Potter
14th	2 pm	Monthly Bible Study
18th—25th		<i>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity</i>
20th	10 am	Family Worship & Holy Communion led by Revd Ruth Dillon
27th	10 am	Family Worship led by Mr Paul Murphy, followed by church Sunday lunch

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).

The next issue of *In Touch* will cover the months February—April 2019. Items should be with Christine Gibbons by **Sunday 13th January 2019** (christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk).

In Touch

December 2018—January 2019



Fleet United Reformed Church



FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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CHURCH CONTACTS

Minister:	Revd Ruth Dillon , 01252 625238 revrdillon@btinternet.com
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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 ACTIVITIES

'Footsteps' Young People's Group:	Sundays, 10 am (<i>term time only</i>)
House Group:	Mondays, 10 am (at 35 Frere Ave)
Prayer Group:	See page 5 for details
Bible Study:	See page 5 for details
Coffee Morning:	Thursdays, 10–11.30 am
Toddlers Group:	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

Does this happen to you? Sometimes a song, or some poetry, pops into my head and I can't work out how or why it got there. For some unfathomable reason this traditional nursery rhyme came into my head a few days ago and wouldn't go away:

*Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat,
Please put a penny in the old man's hat.
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do,
If you haven't got a ha'penny, then God bless you!*

One Christmas I thought it would be fun to cook a goose for Christmas instead of the usual turkey. This particular goose must have grown very fat, and my cooking skills weren't equal to it. It was tasty, but goose fat was everywhere! It's been turkey ever since.

That's enough about the geese, Christmas is coming!

There remains much darkness in the world, and in the lives of many people. But Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus, brings joy and hope. The true light is coming in to the world. So much of Christmas is designed to encourage happiness. There is special food and drink. There is the coming together with family and friends to show that we are loved. Presents are given to show that love, and to enrich the variety of life, even to help with a particular need.

So what about the old man's hat? 'Christmas is coming' is also a prompt to start preparing, and to focus on the season of Advent. The foodbank in Fleet is one of our present day 'old man's hats'. How about having a 'Reverse Advent Calendar' this year? Traditional advent calendars have those little windows to open with Bible verses and pictures of Bible characters making their way towards Bethlehem. The chocolates of commercial advent calendars just don't do it, do they?

So the 'Reverse Advent Calendar' is to get a cardboard box and place a food item into it each day. It's like putting a penny into the old man's hat. You can bring the items and place them in the white box for the foodbank at Christmas and New Year.

Now both you and I know why this rhyme bubbled up from the depths of my imagination! So all that remains is to complete its last line:

God bless you!

May I wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas, and all good wishes for 2019.

Christmas blessings,

Ruth



NEW MEMBERS



(From left to right:) Pam Hudson, Margaret Tracey, and Matthew and Rebecca Dumbleton with our Minister, Ruth.

BAPTISM

During our morning service on 16th December we shall be baptising Jack William and his sister Sophia Louise, grandchildren of Fleet URC member Jenny Devis, and children of Jenny and Paul's daughter Gemma.

Please keep this date in your diary and come along to support the family on this special day.

Ruth



'FOOTSTEPS' YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUP



The young people's group would like to thank everyone who helped, supported and gave us encouraging words and feedback about our service in October. It took us many weeks to sew our banner and prepare what we wanted to say. We are now enjoying some 'regular' time in our group and, as always, appreciate the interest you show in what we do. Do pop in and see us after any service if you can!

Grace Bagshaw



MONTHLY BIBLE STUDY

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

Monday, 10th December

Monday 14th January

MONTHLY PRAYER GROUP



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

Monday, 3rd December

Monday 7th January

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



NOTICE BOARD

ANNUAL & STUDY LEAVE

Ruth, our Minister, will not be available from:

26th December—2nd January
(Annual leave)

CHRISTINGLE PREPARATIONS

Please come along if you can to help us prepare the Christingles for our Carol and Christingle Service.

We will be meeting on **Saturday 22nd December** at **10 am** in the Church Hall.



BLESSING OF THE ANGELS



A special service of blessing for this year's knitted angels will be held at Christ Church, Gally Hill, Church Crookham, on **Sunday 2nd December, at 3 pm**. Angel bombing in Fleet will take place on **Saturday 15th December**.



GIFT SERVICE FOR PARITY FOR DISABILITY

The Gift Service on **2nd 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, toiletries, massage creams and sensory items (ie things to touch and look at).

CRAFT AND GIFT FAIR 2018



A record number of people attended on Saturday 3rd November to browse the 29 stalls displaying a wide variety of different skills and crafts. Church members supporting the event helped to provide a friendly ambience, enhancing the experience for visitors.

I would like to thank everyone who helped, whether on the day or in the lead up to the event—your contributions all helped to ensure that the craft fair ran smoothly.

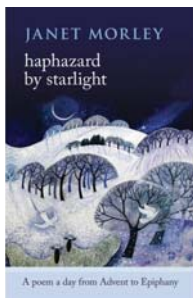
Over £600 of the amount raised will go to Daya Sadan Orphanage in Kerala, India, a charity-run home for children and adults with learning difficulties. This includes £74 from the 8th Fleet Brownies, who ran a 'Guess the Name of the Bear' competition. (For those who entered the competition, the winning name was 'Fluffy'.)

Save the date for next year's Craft Fair, on **2nd November 2018**, when hopefully we will be doing it all again!

Darrell Henderson



SUGGESTED READING FOR ADVENT



1. *Haphazard by Starlight*, Janet Morley, SPCK 2013

A poem a day through Advent.

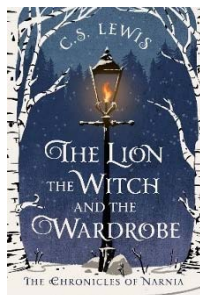
Unlike Lent, Advent is celebrated when the year is becoming darker and colder, moving into the death and dormancy of winter. Before we can greet the coming of the light we need to engage with some themes that are challenging and occasionally fearful. Like the magi who travelled a long distance to search out and adore the infant Jesus, and who took some wrong turnings on the way, we too have a journey to undertake.

2. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C S Lewis

During Advent we shall be lighting a candle on the Advent wreath each week. We shall be using words from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C S Lewis, alongside familiar Scripture readings.

If you have not read this children's classic, or it was a long time ago, then please consider reading it during the Advent season.

Ruth



HOW TO HAVE A 'GREEN' CHRISTMAS

There are so many everyday ways that we can be 'green', but at special times, like Christmas, we can be lured into buying more than we need, or making less eco-friendly choices. Here are a few handy hints that might help you have a greener Christmas.

• Use reusable rather than disposable:

Fabric napkins, rather than paper ones; ceramic plates and dishes rather than paper or plastic. Could you wrap gifts in fabric and ribbons or brown paper and decorative string, which could be kept and used again? I have recently discovered reusable Christmas crackers too—see www.keepthiscracker.com. You have to provide the fillings yourself, but even the snaps are replaceable and compostable, as they are made from paper!



• Try to use natural materials for your decorations:

Glass baubles rather than plastic; a real tree rather than an artificial tree; pine cones and evergreen foliage. Remember to use what you have first though—don't buy replacements if what you have is perfectly good!

• Plan your food shopping:

Buy what you need for the number of people you are catering for, and remember to use up or freeze your leftovers.

• Gifts:

Consider asking people what they would actually like! Think about setting a budget, or suggesting a Secret Santa to reduce the amount spent or given. Perhaps you could give something home-made or created? Many people who live a green lifestyle are happy with second-hand items. I am always perfectly happy with 'pre-loved' books, and even CDs and DVDs! 'Experiences' rather than 'things' are another useful option, eg a theatre visit, annual membership to a favourite place, or a subscription.

However you spend Christmas, I hope that these tips will give you some food for thought. Nobody can make huge changes overnight, so even if you make only one change this Christmas it is a step in the right direction! You could always make a New Year's Resolution to work towards a greener 2019!

Grace Bagshaw





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

CAROL SERVICE

at the Church on the Heath
Elvetham Heath, Fleet

**Thursday 6th December,
at 7.30 pm**

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



Christmas Concerts & Carol Services



COMMUNITY CAROL SINGING

In Gurkha Square

**Saturday 22nd December,
at 1 pm**

It is hoped that
as many people
as possible will
support this event
so that all the
churches in Fleet
are represented.



Fleet URC CAROLS AND CHRISTINGLE

Led by our Minister,
Revd Ruth Dillon

**Sunday 23rd December,
at 4 pm**

Everyone Welcome



Fleet Choral
Society



CAROL CONCERT

at Ss Philip & James,
Kings Road, Fleet

**Tuesday 4th December,
at 7.30 pm**



£5 entry on the door,
including refreshments.
All proceeds to
Christian Aid



Phyllis
Tuckwell
Hospice

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

with Hart Voices
& School Choirs

at the
Church of Our Lady,
Kings Road, Fleet



**Sunday 9th December,
at 5.30 pm**

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

PRAYER FOR THE MONTH

The Wise Men came from the lands that are to the East of Palestine. One of the main routes was called the 'Incense Road' because merchants travelled along it with expensive incense and myrrh, sometimes exchanging them for gold.

FRANKINCENSE (often simply called 'incense') is a gum that comes from a tree. When added to a flame or very hot charcoal, sweet-smelling smoke comes off and rises in the air. One of the psalms in the Bible talks of 'my prayer rising before you, Lord, like incense'. Incense is sometimes burned in church as a sign of prayer and offering. Incense is often used at funerals, reminding us in prayer that the ordinary person is also very special.



If **GOLD** stands for the special things in life, and **MYRRH** represents the sorrow and difficulties, then **INCENSE** can stand for something in between. The ordinary things of life can become special depending on my attitude and how I go about them. For instance, such ordinary things as:

Getting up; cooking; eating; clearing up after meals; housework;
going to school or work; helping someone who doesn't seem grateful

- all these 'ordinary' things of life I can transform by a positive attitude.



Let us pray:

Lord, as I offer you all that is ordinary and everyday in my life,
I ask you to give me the power of your Spirit
that I may transform each day
by living with a positive attitude,
looking for the best in people and situations.
Inspire me to live in your presence every day
so that I may share your outlook
and do the ordinary things of life
in an extraordinary way.
May this, Lord, my prayer today,
rise before you like the burning of incense.

Amen

There is a saying:

'Wise men followed Jesus. People who are wise still do.'

Ruth



MY FIRST SYNOD MEETING



It all started as a diagram on a piece of paper at a membership meeting. The church structure was outlined before me, and I thought, 'Why didn't I already know this?' I have been coming to Fleet URC for years, and have had the privilege to be christened, married, and have my own child christened here, but still I hadn't really appreciated the organisation behind the services and people.

So I took the opportunity of an open invitation, and a week later I was at my first Synod meeting. I was excited to learn more, and I wasn't disappointed.

The meeting started with worship, which was not unexpected, but certainly helped to relieve any trepidation at the thought of 'not fitting in', so by the time the main topic of discussion arose I was assured I was among friends. Although I cannot pretend to have understood all the ins and outs of the issue at hand (the change to equal Synod representation at assembly level), I was struck not only by the passion of those in discussion, but also by the understanding and patience of all those present. This, when combined with the open but ordered structure of debate, made for the fairest discussion forum I think I have ever heard. For me it showed the quality of the people in this church that no one was talked over, dismissed or silenced, either due to disagreement or to speed up proceedings. And yet it never degenerated into a forum for those with nothing to say—all those who spoke had a valid point or question, and by the end, even with the complexity of the decision reached, I had learned a lot.

The workshops provided a similar educational opportunity, and due to my personal experiences I was drawn to a talk on mental well-being. It was delivered in a humorous way and although it was only a brief introduction it gave me a lot to think about, both for my own mental health and that of those around me. I should like to learn more on the subject.

Another important topic being workshopped was becoming an 'eco-church', which I noted is being investigated by our church via Ruth and Margaret, and I look forward to action on the subject as it strikes me as an exciting prospect if it can be delivered.

After a break, when we were back together, we heard about some of the hard work going into community and youth engagement through summer activities, and this, along with the Synod Youth Executive calling for greater engagement, I found very uplifting.

Sadly there was a more negative topic for discussion in the struggles of Traidcraft plc. It seems so odd that there would even be an alternative to fair trade products in our supermarkets, let alone that those distributing them would struggle; but I can't deny that this stark reminder was probably a needed nudge to ensure that my family and I should watch what we buy. I hope there will be a happy resolution to their troubles.

During all this we discussed what we wanted from Synod in the future, and in my naivety I commented as before that it was easy to miss the developments and news from—and even the existence of—Synod in our week to week worship. I thought perhaps there should be more direct feedback from it.. In Ruth's usual logical fashion she replied, 'If you feel that way, why don't you write about it?' Well, now I have, and I would definitely encourage others to take an interest in these meetings.

I am looking forward to the opportunity to attend again with the church to whom I can now say that I officially belong.

Matthew Dumbleton

(Matthew attended the Wessex Synod Meeting that was held at the Church on the Heath on Saturday, 13th October.)



FIRE FROM HEAVEN

A day of cloud and sunshine
Like April come again
Though it was now December,
A time of mist and rain.
I glanced up at the window
As brightness drew my gaze
And saw that in one corner
Raindrops were touched by rays
As the sun, now untrammelled
By grey and weeping cloud,
Awoke in every water-drop
The fire which cried aloud
Its praise to God, creator
Who, on this lowly earth
Has lent us fire from heaven
To celebrate Christ's birth.

Sheila Durbin



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 6th 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, and it is a service that is particularly appropriate for the New Year.

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, it is more than this, for the Covenant Service is not just a one-to-one transaction between an individual 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 then 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



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FLEET AND CROOKHAM (CTFC)

Christmas Activities

The Fleet Christmas Light Switch-on is on Wednesday 28th November from 3 to 9 pm. Churches Together will be present in Gurkha Square as in previous years, with hot chocolate, biscuits, games, and simple crafts for children young and old to take home. Leaflets are being delivered to households in Fleet. All car parks will be open, except for the one in Gurkha Square.

The Christmas Day Lunch for people who are on their own is going ahead this year, with the help of Revd Carol Dunk from St Philip & St James, who is working with Fleet Town Council to coordinate it. No details are available as yet, but if you know of anyone who would appreciate a good Christmas lunch, with presents and entertainment, please let me know.

Angel Bombing

The 'bombing' of Fleet town with knitted angels will be on 15th December, and our church has part of Fleet Road to decorate. There aren't as many angels to distribute as in the last two years, but if you would like to help then meet Moray and me at our church at 7 am! As a church we have knitted 151 angels to date—please can you get all angels to me by the beginning of December.

Women's World Day of Prayer

There was a vote last year to change the title of WWDP, and it is now called World Day of Prayer. Although we voted to keep the name the same, unfortunately we lost! This year's service has been written by the women of Slovenia, who are relatively new to the WDP movement

The morning service will be at 10 am on 1st March at Christ Church, Gally Hill, Church Crookham. The evening service will be at 7.30 pm at St Philip & St James on King's Road. Both services will be followed by refreshments. There will be posters and reminders nearer the time.

Darrell Henderson, CTFC Representative

JEAN'S JOTTINGS: The Camel

Have you ever ridden a camel? If not, why not?

My young grandson announced the other day that he had not yet ridden one! I spoilt his question by raising my hand in the air and shouting, "I have!" His face said it all. He had wanted to be first in the 'race' to ride a camel. I then showed him a picture of me on a camel, but he still did not believe it.

I told him how my husband was on the camel behind me and when we walked in a long line of camels his beast kept nudging my delightful beast. I was glad to get off at the end of the ride.



He still wants to ride a camel!

Jean Schafer



A FINAL THOUGHT

1 CORINTHIANS 13—A Version for Christmas



If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of mince pies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another volunteer.

If I trim the tree with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir, but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband. Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way. Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust, but the gift of love will endure.



CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

