

# **FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

## **ANNUAL REPORTS 2021**

### **1. Secretary's Report**

Having read last year's annual report for 2020, it seems to me that very little had changed in the first half of 2021.

For me personally the first 6 months were a difficult time, and I am very grateful to everyone for taking over to ensure that our Sunday worship continued.

Sadly, just like people all over the world we at Fleet have lost members and friends. Looking on the brighter side we have also gained new friends, six of whom now worship regularly with us and who we hope will in the future become members.

Our membership now stands at 52.

Early in the year we were told by Ruth that she would be taking early retirement on health grounds. We were of course all very sorry to hear the sad news, but I do not think any of us were very surprised. Since having covid in early 2020 and then finding herself with long covid it was becoming more and more difficult for her to carry on. A farewell service was held on Zoom at the end of June and Ruth moved early July to her new home near Exmouth to be close to her family.

Our church opened for Sunday worship the first Sunday in August. Wearing masks, social distancing and doing a LFT became part of a new normal!

Pam succeeded in filling the pulpit until the end of the year despite there being a shortage of Minister and lay preachers. A Carol and Christingle service was planned and led by Footsteps our young people supported by Helen and Grace the group leaders

The uniformed organisations returned to our building and joined us for the Harvest Festival service in October and again in December for the Gift service when we again supported Parity and were joined by Owen Durrett to update us on the work of Parity.

The other groups that use our building slowly started returning,

The weekly Thursday coffee morning became a Weekly Wednesday coffee morning, with new faces in the kitchen. Thank you to all those involved in making that coffee morning such a success.

A curry evening and concert to raise money for Palani was very well attended. Our thanks to John, Sajju and family for arranging it.

The very successful Church Autumn Fayre returned. The same fayre, but a new organiser Carol Raynor had taken over from Darrell. Thank you, Darrell, for all the past church fayres. Well done carol, it was good to see the familiar faces back again

Towards the end of the year we started to think about the way forward for Fleet URC. We had no Minister and were not sure whether Synod would allow us to declare a vacancy. At the beginning of December our prayers were answered, and the elders were asked to produce a pastoral profile and the Revd Michael Hodgson was appointed our interim Moderator which is the first step along the road to calling a new minister for Fleet URC.

*Margaret Armes*

*Church Secretary*

## **2. Treasurer's Report**

### **Financial Accounts for 2021 - Commentary**

In 2021 COVID19 continued to dominate our lives and that of our church. The outlook seemed very bleak for 2021 but I am glad to say that many of our members reviewed their regular giving, gave generous one-off payments and most significantly chose to set up regular standing orders. Our affiliated groups continued to play their part especially our Rainbows, Brownies and new Guide groups who gave generously, desperate to meet at the church whenever possible. On behalf of the Church, I thank all who have given and continue to give so generously.

Our church further benefitted from the Government grant scheme administered through Hart District Council to encourage organisations to re-open. The grant was deposited into our account in late 2020 and an additional tranche was given in 2021 when UK regeneration faltered again. With the consolidation of these grants into our accounts, the 2021 opening bank balance increased to £49,608.

A radical first was our decision to offer Takeaway curry meals, first designed in 2020 followed by an improved version in March 2021; the £1,366 income was shared between Palani Mission and our church funds. Another curry night in early November saw eighty diners enjoy a meal followed by a concert by Lianna Haynes; this raised a further £2,200 for our mission work in India. Grateful thanks are extended to Saju, Mary, Melvin and Mahima supported by Christine Gibbons, Elizabeth and Steve English for their hard work.

With the easing of Covid19 restrictions in May 2021, a new catering team was forged and coffee mornings thereafter have been held on every Wednesday throughout 2021, except for August, when excursions were arranged to Elvetham Hall Hotel, Squires at Badshot Lea, Conkers at Little Basing and St. Johns church, Hartley Wintney. They continue to be enthusiastically supported and have raised £2,906. I express my thanks to Bee Griffiths, Carol Woods and Steve English together with the cake bakers who give so freely of their time and ingredients.

With the return to using the church premises, we have been able to increase the letting of the hall and meeting room and the receipts have grown to £10,214. The prospect for 2022 is improving and a return to a normal letting income of more than £20,000 per annum cannot come a minute too soon.

The net result is that the decline in our reserves has been slowed and we hope that in 2022 we can return to a more balanced position between income and expenditure.

However, expenditure has shown no sign of reduction with all the expense of additional cleaning, materials and the supply of PPE still ongoing. Energy costs have seen alarming increases as the year progressed, culminating in our gas supplier, CNG going into administration in November 2021. The government has moved our supplier to Pozitive Energy and their base rate is 180% more than previously charged; business users do not enjoy a cost cap!

We are liaising with UCR consultants to secure a long-term energy deal; however, surveying the market, it is likely that our energy charges for 2022 will approach or even exceed a five-figure sum per annum. We must therefore budget for an additional £4000 per annum for heating and lighting.

Turning to the 2021 headline figures, the annual income was £62,782 and the annual expenditure was £71,851 resulting in a net reduction of reserves of £9,069 leaving £40,599 residing in the bank at the start of 2022. The distribution of charitable giving was £7,164 of which over £5,000 was raised by special collections. Exceptional expenditure of £3,373 comprised two elements, the purchase of hardware and consumables for Covid19 purposes and the purchase of a Hymnal for use when we cannot find an organist.

The challenge for 2022 remains, we must find an additional £13,000 of income to break even.

Finally, I express my thanks to Colin Sherratt, our independent accounts examiner for his diligent work.

*J Gibbons*  
Fleet URC Treasurer

February 2022

### **3. Property Report**

#### **1) Covid-19 Security**

- a) Most of the year Covid – 19 lockdown procedures were in force and the property was shut down.
- b) Regular checks carried out as per the previous lists in and around the property and recorded.
- c) Arrangements still in place for sanitizing property, local distance keeping and “fogging” areas for use during period when access was permitted.

#### **2) Heating systems**

- a) GL Services Ltd attended to carry out a service of the gas boilers in the church and the hall heating systems.
- b) Radiators for the three hall heating units opened and cleared of dust and debris.

#### **3) Fire Safety**

- a) Inhouse weekly/monthly safety checks carried out and recorded.
- b) Annual service carried out by Hampshire Fire Services. Repairs and renewals carried out as required and recorded on fire extinguishers, smoke, fire and heat detectors, emergency lighting and exit doors

#### **4) Kitchen**

- a) Sink drains cleared.
- b) Drain from water heater remade to allow correct draining.
- c) Water heater controls failed. Due to age of the unit a replacement purchased and fitted.

#### **5) Sanctuary**

- a) Considerable work done on the sound and recording system as well as the purchase and commissioning of the Hymnal. Many thanks to the Dumbleton Team for all their expertise and commitment to establish and maintain the systems.
- b) Regular inspections carried out in this area for insects. So far, non found.

#### **6) Cleaning and housekeeping**

- a) This continues on a routine basis.
- b) Window cleaner attended regularly.

#### **7) Grounds**

- a) Hedge trimming. grass cutting carried out by Ridley Gardens Ltd. They also assist with the litter picking of debris blown in off the main road.
- b) Front flower bed cared for by the Coney family.

John Johnstone  
19 February 2022

#### 4. Fleet URC On-Line

During the first half of 2021, when Fleet URC remained closed for in-person worship due to the pandemic, our digital platforms continued to play an important part in keeping us worshipping together. Our Sunday services were broadcast live on Zoom on Sunday mornings, and recorded and uploaded to all our digital platforms so that others could watch them at a time and in a way that suited them.

Although we returned to Sunday worship in our church building in August, our church website remains an important focus for our communication and information. Recognising this, the URC continues to give iChurch local websites good support, with two consultants, Dan Morrell and Reuben Watt, delivering regular ongoing training and advice. During 2021 I attended two online training courses: one in February giving practical website training, and one in October offering advice on making a church's online presence an effective tool for ministry and mission.

I am committed to ensuring that our website conveys a Christian message that is up to date and relevant. News items are posted regularly, and a current 'What's On' section is maintained. You can also find links to most of our church publications and handouts, including the church magazine and weekly newssheets. It is important to have ready access to all this information; however more than this, I hope that our website speaks of our living faith, our passion for mission and outreach, providing support for our prayer life and pointers for those wishing to explore the Christian faith. We cannot know who might be looking at our site at any time and anywhere across the globe. What an opportunity to share our faith!

Also essential to our outreach are our church Facebook pages, where we have many followers outside our church community. Our posts are regularly viewed and shared by upwards of 100 people. By connecting with others through social media we are faithful to our God, who reaches out and desires communication with us.

Please help in this important work. You can help to keep Fleet URC high in the digital rankings by checking in regularly and by joining in the conversation. Or if you use Twitter, would you consider keeping our Church Twitter account up to date? Your help would be gratefully received.

Finally, here are those crucial addresses you need to engage with our church digitally:

**Fleet URC Website:** [www.fleeturc.org.uk](http://www.fleeturc.org.uk)

**Fleet URC Facebook Pages:** [www.facebook.com/fleeturc](https://www.facebook.com/fleeturc)  
[www.facebook.com/friendsofpalanimission](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofpalanimission)

**Fleet URC Twitter Account:** [www.twitter.com/fleeturc](https://www.twitter.com/fleeturc)

**YouTube Account:** Fleet and Beacon Hill United Reformed Churches

**Christine Gibbons**