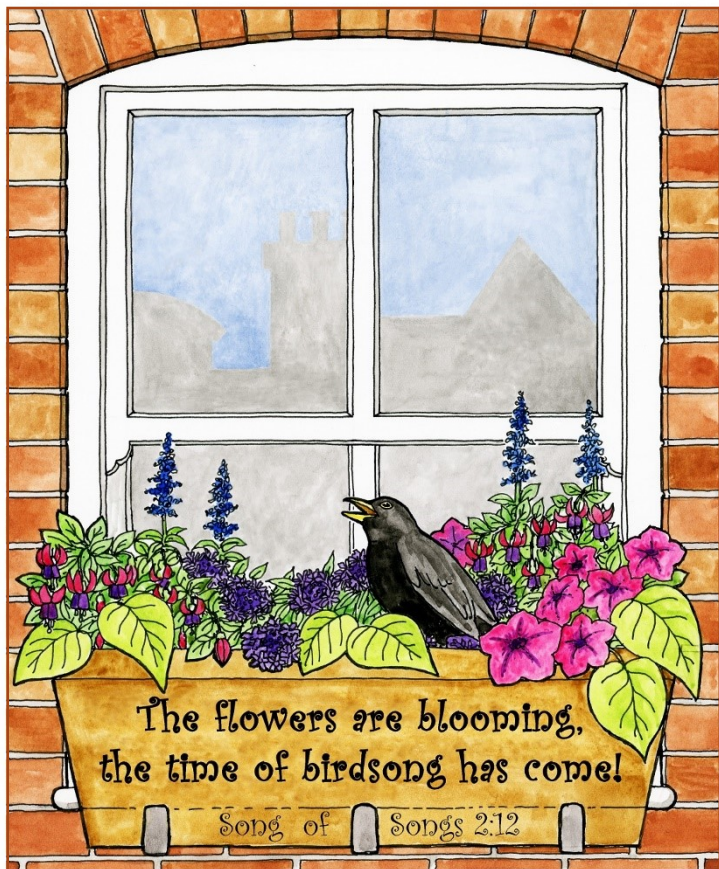


# InTouch

Summer 2022



The magazine of  
Fleet and Beacon Hill  
United Reformed Churches

# FLEET URC & BEACON HILL URC

Both churches are currently without a Minister



## FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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@FleetURC



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

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## BEACON HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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## GREETINGS FROM THE REVD STEPHEN THORNTON



In the Middle Ages, and now, more in the rest of Europe than here, countries celebrated a host of Saints Days which were public Holy Days. Indeed, they were the only days people had off work, apart from Sundays. On these Holy Days citizens were called to consider the saint who was remembered that day, their calling and how they witnessed to the Gospel in their lives. Then the people were asked to think about their own lives; how they were doing in their relationship with God, and how they were

using their talents to serve God's purposes, as did the saints.

These were indeed Holy Days. It may seem somewhat onerous to have to do that in time off, but it was understood that to live in fellowship with God, and serving God's purposes is the best way to live life to the full and have real peace of mind. Such times of contemplation were indeed well spent. So, Holy Days: time for deep reflection, and time to cease doing some things and replace them with others.

Such ideas are long gone for many in our land, and Holy Days have become holidays: Bank Holidays and family holidays, lasting much longer than the occasional day. However the main message from the past is as true as ever, that time off is a good time to review our relationship with God, and how we are using our God-given talents in God's service in the church and the world.

Therefore, this summer, if you are fortunate enough to be able to go away for a holiday, it is good to spend some time thinking about God and God's place in your life, and how you are to spend the future when you are back home, using your talents to build God's kingdom of love, justice, righteousness and truth. My goodness, the suffering world sorely needs our input. And if you are staying at home, the challenge is just the same—make some time to have truly Holy Days, so that, when things start up again in September, you will be set up to go, serving the God whom we adore with all our might, in the Church and in the world. Then we can indeed have hope that things will improve, and the Risen Christ goes with us in all our endeavours to help us do things we never thought possible.

Have good Holy Days, and all good wishes,

*The Revd Stephen M Thornton*



## JUBILEE TEA AT BEACON HILL URC



Beacon Hill are hosting a celebration tea to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on **Saturday 2nd July at 3 pm** in the church garden. They warmly welcome anyone from Fleet URC who would like to join them. For catering purposes please let Karen know by **Thursday 30th June** if you intend to come.

(e: [kpmsmith@hotmail.com](mailto:kpmsmith@hotmail.com); t: 07742 669341)



## NOTICE BOARD

Please note that contributions for the Summer issue of *InTouch* should be with the editor, Christine Gibbons, by **31st August** ([christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk](mailto:christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk))



## 'NURTURING OUR FAITH' THROUGH BIBLE STUDY JOINT GROUP

We will meet on Zoom **at 11 am** on the following Mondays:

**18th July; 19th September;  
17th October**

**(Please note that there will be no meeting in August)**



## JOINT PRAYER GROUP

Our monthly Prayer Group will meet at 11 am on Zoom on the following Mondays:

**11th July; 12th September; 10th October**

**(Please note that there will be no meeting in August)**

Come and join us for 30 minutes of quiet meditation.

## SONGS OF PRAISE SERVICE (FLEET URC)

We will be having a Songs of Praise service at Fleet on **Sunday morning, 7th August**. Members of the congregation are invited to choose their favourite hymn and/or Bible passage for inclusion in the service. Organiser Carol Rayner would like to receive all suggestions by **Sunday 3rd July** please. It would be appreciated if you would give a brief reason for your choice.





## ‘STAND BY ME’

Thank you again to everyone who is so enthusiastically supporting our sponsorship of three children via *Stand by Me*. We have received some initial information from the charity about each of the children, so we would like to introduce them to you.



Going from youngest to eldest, we have 6-year-old Pau Sian Muang who is from Myanmar (Burma); Arsema, aged 8, from Ethiopia; and Laurith from Colombia, who is 9 years old and will turn 10 in August.



*Pau Sian Muang*

Pau Sian Muang lives in Kalamayo in the northwest of Myanmar, an area which has little infrastructure, high unemployment, and levels of extreme poverty. He attends the Lois School, which has been adopted by *Stand by Me*, and when he joined in nursery class he couldn't say any words. He is catching up quickly and now can share with his parents his likes and dislikes.

Arsema shares her one room rented home with her parents, three brothers and one sister in Bekoji, which is in central Ethiopia. Her parents couldn't afford to send her to school, but thanks to *Stand by Me* she now has a place at their sponsored school, Bethany School, which was originally founded in 2002 to educate the poorest children in the area. There are now 500 children at the school, which Arsema loves going to. She thinks she would like to be a good teacher when she grows up, with Maths being her favourite subject.



*Arsema*



*Laurith*

Laurith enjoys riding her bike, playing with dolls, going to the river, watching TV and playing hide and seek. Laurith goes to the river because her house has no running water, so they have to collect it. After school each day she attends the Emmanuel Care Centre, established by *Stand by Me*. The Care Centre gives the children a nutritious meal and support and guidance to help with their school assignments, as well as emotional support.

In future *InTouch* editions we thought we might provide a more in-depth introduction to each of the children,

including their background and their community, and how our support is helping them. In the meantime, if you want to find out more about *Stand by Me* or the children we are sponsoring, please talk to one of our *Footsteps* group or have a look at the display in the foyer of Fleet URC, where you can see the letters that they send to us. Also, if you would like to be involved in writing back, please let us know.

*Helen Bailey, on behalf of Footsteps, Fleet URC*



## 14 WAYS TO LIVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

A recent service at Fleet URC led by lay preacher Paul Murphy focussed on sustainable living. Acknowledging that everything we do in our day-to-day life has an impact on the planet, Paul suggested that, even though we might feel helpless to affect the bigger issues, small changes to our lifestyle can make a big difference. To encourage us in our thinking and suggest ways we can take practical action, Paul has prepared a booklet, '*14 Ways to Live a More Sustainable Lifestyle*', which he distributed to the congregation. Copies can be downloaded from our church website at: <https://fleet.urc.org.uk/living-a-more-sustainable-life/>. (When printing, ensure that you set your printer options to 'Print both sides, flip pages on short edges'.) With God's help, if we act now we may protect our beautiful planet for future generations.

*[Image: Anncapictures from Pixabay]*



## FOOTSTEPS—TREE OF LIFE

Footsteps spent some time in May looking at readings from Revelations. We thought about images of heaven, and what will be revealed to us there. Our display shows the tree of life, the leaves of which bring healing to the world. The cut out leaves on our display contain our thoughts about all sorts of situations where healing may be needed.

*Grace Bagshaw, Fleet URC*

## FOOTSTEPS—GRASSHEADS

One of our recent sessions in Footsteps looked at Luke 13: 1-9 and the parable of the fig tree that doesn't bear fruit, whose owner is all set to chop it down and plant something else. I think most of us who have a garden can understand that sentiment! The gardener who tends the fig tree proposes to the owner to 'give it one more year' to prove itself, but also says that he will feed it and nurture it in order to have the best possible chance of success.

In our Footsteps session we talked about change, and what we need for us to grow and thrive as individuals, and what might prevent that happening; and also about how sometimes those changes can take a long time to come to fruition, even with the right conditions. The grassheads we made, to remind us that God is with us through these changes, have had various levels of success, but they were great fun to make and watch over the following weeks.

*Helen Bailey, Fleet URC*



*Starting out— the original grassheads*



*After 2 weeks*



*After 3 weeks*



*After 4 weeks—before and after a haircut*



## HOLY WEEK & EASTER 2022 AT BEACON HILL URC

Fellowship was very much at the heart of our preparations in the celebration of Easter this year. Throughout Holy Week the empty cross in the worship area was gradually decorated with symbols of the events in Jerusalem from the Gospels.

On Maundy Thursday we met to commemorate the Last Supper following the ancient format of a Tenebrae service, with readings and increasing darkness as the day ended. It was good to see Moray and Darrell from Fleet, who joined us for Communion and the Service of Shadows.



On Good Friday a number of us joined with the churches in the village in a reflective service at the Anglican church, St Alban's. We also joined the Walk of Witness through the village, pausing to hear readings by members of the three denominations represented. The Walk ended at the URC, where everyone gathered in the church for a final prayer before sharing a time of fellowship with hot cross buns and hot drinks.



As Easter morning dawned—*alleluia!*—we gathered early for a time of prayers and a wonderful Agape breakfast supplied by Hugh. And then we were ready to celebrate Easter worship together. This year the congregation were able to fill the empty wire Easter cross with a wonderful array of flowers as we sang *All things bright and beautiful*, one of the hymns chosen for the service by members of the church.

The empty cross started off secured to the communion table; then, when filled, was tied to the church railings after morning worship to celebrate the resurrection with everyone passing by. We had also prepared a new garden area by the Nursery entrance with representations of the tomb and some resurrection narratives.



*Bridget Mitchell, Beacon Hill URC*







## PALANI MISSION UPDATE

Our May fundraising Curry Evening proved to be another great success, thanks to Saju and his family. What a wonderful evening, with abundant good food and fellowship! The money raised has provided the funds we need to continue the sponsorship of our community nurses in training, and to expand the roof replacement project.

Sheeba John has sent us photos (below) of the latest homes to have been repaired:

The lady on the left is a widow, whose husband died a few months ago. She has no children. As soon as she got this house she happily opened it for conducting Sunday School in the area.

The photo on the right shows Mr Raja, who has had a stroke, and his wife, who also has health issues. Although he was unable to go to work, with much difficulty Mr Raja used to travel a long distance in an autorickshaw to attend church services. Now they have opened their home so they can hold regular cottage meetings there.



*Good food and good fellowship  
at the recent Curry Evening*



The next meeting of the Friends of Palani Mission will be held at **7.30 pm on Tuesday 12th July** at the home of Christine & John Gibbons. Everyone is welcome to come along, whether or not you have been involved before. We look forward to seeing you there.

*John Gibbons, Fleet URC*



## HART FOOD BANK

Christine Siddall, the Hart Foodbank manager, has sent the following update:

*We would like to encourage church members to continue donating food and other items. Demand has gone up, but donations of food have decreased, which means the Foodbank has needed to buy in food to meet that demand. Customers of Morrisons and Waitrose can support us at the donation points in those supermarkets. There is also a donation point at Nationwide Building Society on Fleet Road, and a blue bin by the side entrance to Fleet Methodist Church.*

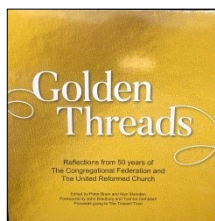
*Thank you for your support.*

[Reminder: there is also a collection bin in our church foyer.]

Current food shortages are published on the Hart Foodbank Facebook page each month, <https://www.facebook.com/hartfoodbank>. They usually include staples such as tins of baked beans, fruit, soup and tomatoes, as well as coffee, juice, UHT milk, sponge puddings, and toiletries.



## GOLDEN THREADS



*'Golden Threads—Reflections from 50 years of The Congregational Federation and the United Reformed Church'* is a new book to mark the 50th anniversaries of both denominations. It is published jointly by the URC and the Congregational Federation, with forewords from the General Secretaries of each church, Yvonne Campbell and John Bradbury,

Proceeds from the sale of the book go to the Trussell Trust, the organisation working to stop UK hunger and poverty, whose network of foodbanks provides emergency food and support to people in crisis.

*Golden Threads* is available from the URC bookshop, [www.urcshop.co.uk/50](http://www.urcshop.co.uk/50), or call 020 7916 8629.





## GOLDEN JOTTINGS NO 6: VISITORS FROM ZAMBIA

*Bernard and Mavis Potter look back at 50 years of membership at Fleet URC.*

In October 2004, as part of a three week fact-finding mission, Zambian Ministers and Church Workers spent a weekend being entertained by members and friends of Fleet URC. After attending the Wessex Synod in Basingstoke on Saturday, they were guests at the Harvest Supper in Fleet before being welcomed into various members' homes.

On Sunday they requested the opportunity to worship at The Church on the Heath, a newly formed LEP (Local Ecumenical Project). In the afternoon the group shared with Westborough URC, by nature a more charismatic worshipping



community. Tea was shared before the group visited Guildford Cathedral for Evensong. After the service the group were invited to the Deanery for a time of fellowship together. Light refreshments were served and discussion and questions followed, which were appreciated not only by the visitors, but their hosts as well.

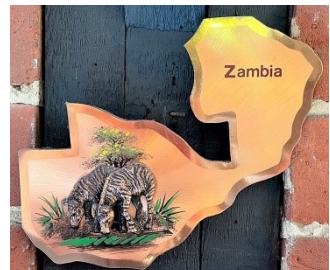
The group were made very welcome at the various churches visited throughout the day.

On Monday, the visitors spent time in Windsor, followed later by a visit and tour of the Houses of Parliament, including a visit to the chapel in the crypt, led by our local MP.



After leaving Fleet, Synod arranged further visits, which included Lymington, Oxford, Southampton and Salisbury.

To celebrate their visit to Fleet the group presented a plaque to the church, which is now displayed on the wall in the sanctuary, and reads 'This plaque commemorates the visit of eight members of the United Church of Zambia in October, 2004'.



The church felt honoured to be asked to be part of this fact-finding mission.

*Bernard and Mavis Potter, Fleet URC*

[The two portraits in the article are of members of the delegation.]

## PASSIONSSPIELE: THE OBERAMMERGAU EXPERIENCE

I have wanted to go to Oberammergau for as long as I can remember, so you can imagine my excitement when I set off for Germany on the recent trip Revd Dr Michael Hopkins organised. There were 51 people in our URC group, giving each of us the opportunity to meet new people, as well as renewing friendships with those not seen for some time.



*Our hotel in the Austrian Tyrol*

We spent a lovely few days in the mountains of the Austrian Tyrol, walked miles and explored cities, castles and churches. It seemed right that on the final day we went to the Passionsspiele in Oberammergau. It was very special.

*So why is there a play at all?*

During the 17th century, the story goes that when the plague was sweeping Europe, the inhabitants of the small village of Oberammergau made a promise to God that if their village was spared, then they would perform a passion play every ten years. Legend has it that after the vow was made there were no more cases of the plague. The first play was performed in 1634, and it has been performed ever since in years ending with a zero, with the exception of 1940 due to the Second World War; 1984, when it was performed for the 350th anniversary, and 2020, when the play had to be postponed to 2022 due to the coronavirus pandemic. To be a part of the Passion Play a cast member, whether actor, singer or musician, has to have been born in Oberammergau, or have lived there for at least 20 years.

*What happens in the play?*

The play opens with the entry into Jerusalem, with the theatre resonating to the sound of an enormous crowd of people of all ages calling out 'Hosanna!' And Jesus arrived on a donkey, the first of many animals on stage at different points in the production. It's not only about the events of Holy Week—the teachings in the Gospels during Jesus's ministry are brought into each scene as part of the story. The common thread through the play is the debate between Nicodemus, supporting Jesus, and Caiaphas, seeking to find a way to remove Jesus and curb the influence his teaching is having. Links are made to the Old Testament through tableaux and the soaring, beautiful music of a magnificent choir and orchestra.



We know the climax of the play, when Jesus dies on the cross. But the play didn't end there. The final scene is filled with hope and light, as Mary Magdalene celebrates the resurrection, taking a light from a bowl as the cast each lit a taper from another person's light. The light of the world was brilliant on the stage.



It was very special and moving; it is true worship. Don't take my word for it—if you have the opportunity to see the play, experience it for yourself. Be blessed.

*Karen Smith, Beacon Hill URC*



## CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2022, FLEET

The annual cake and plant sale in aid of Christian Aid was held in the car park of St Philip and St James. This was the second time it has been held in the car park, and it proved to be very popular. Unlike last year, the weather was kind and the sun rather fierce. My task on the day was to look after the competition, *Guess the name of the chocolate caterpillar cake*, so I was very fortunate in that I was able to sit in the shade (for the well-being of the cake, obviously!) All the potential names began with the letter 'C', and one person guessed 'Chelsea' for his football team, but he was unsuccessful, 'Cutie' being the winner.

A grand total of £1455.37 was raised at the sale. It was a very sociable event and we all indulged in a lot of chatting. Being out in the fresh air gave it the air of an outside market.

As we no longer do the street-by-street collection in our church, this year we distributed envelopes in church at the beginning of the week and an amazing £195 was raised. Thank you all for your continued support, with donations of cakes and plants as well as your purchases. A good team effort!

*Linda Storey, Fleet URC*

## GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD—SOIL

Soil... Some call it dirt, which to me makes it sound impure or even soiled, but whatever you call it, we all depend on this complex mixture.

To me, soil holds history in its texture and in its smell. Scoop up a handful and sniff: metal and rocks smell tangy and dusty; wet and mossy soil from a forest floor smells musty like mushrooms, full of the treads of our fungus friends; while a handful of organic soil smells sweet. If your soil is full of matter, such as shredded leaves and composted material which you have lovingly added, it has a healthy smell which to gardeners sends messages to the brain that say, *'this is good!'*; but as all gardeners know, soil is not always sweet and good: if it has lacked oxygen, has been untouched and is too wet, then you get that unpleasant decaying smell.



Understanding your soil cultivates a conscious relationship with it. Feel it! Smell it! Some people even taste it! (Sorry—that's a bit too far for me.) Soil isn't just dirt, but a dance of microbes, bugs, minerals, plants—and even ourselves. I wonder, have you sniffed yours lately?!

When we nestle a little seed into the soil I think we plant a prayer. We ask the soil to protect and nourish this seed of life. Then we wave our magic wand (the kind water comes out of) and whisper a prayer that sets off a series of relationships between ourselves, the soil, and the seed that will hopefully lead to a salad or a soup for our table.

We pray 'please grow': then our chosen soil wraps its damp darkness around the little grain to encourage it to burst its skin and reach out a tiny root below, and a shoot that reaches up to God's sky in answer to our prayer. The soil hugs the little shoot, gently supporting it, feeding and nourishing it. Slowly the shoot turns into a seedling with leaves, then a plant, eventually producing fruit in either flower or edible form.

If we are keen gardeners we do our bit by adding manure and compost to assist this dance of life. The ancient minerals that have been present since the beginning of time also help feed that seed you planted, holding and nourishing it like a mother holding her child.

When you pull, say, a carrot from your garden, dust it off and give it to your neighbour, you are participating in the great dance of life that all begins with soil.

Because of the complexity of our living soil we have shade from our trees, sweetness from our



strawberries, and even each breath of fresh air. And when our journey is complete, the cells that make up our bodies will eventually return to the soil, gifting our own nourishment to the circle of life.

*But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*  
(Luke 8:15, AV)

*Darrell Henderson, Fleet URC*



## IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN!

Readers may remember that I recently wrote an article about the numerous items that can be recycled in and around Fleet (Winter 2022 Edition). It is heartening to hear back from some members of the congregation that they are contributing to these schemes, now that they are aware of them. Gold stars to those who have!



Unfortunately, I must now tell you that one of the items on the list is perhaps better not recycled! Whilst most supermarkets have a bin for carrier bags and other soft plastics, there is little transparency about what happens to the plastics after they leave the store. 'A Plastic Bag's 2,000-Mile Journey Shows the Messy Truth About Recycling' is an article which looked into this. Baffled by exactly what was

happening to these plastics after she couldn't get a clear answer from Tesco, Caroline Ragueneau placed three digital trackers inside used plastic items. One tracker circled London's road system before disappearing. Its last known location was the banks of the Thames. Both of the other trackers ended up at a shabby industrial estate on the outskirts of a small town in Poland. The plastics were not to be recycled there, but passed on further by a 'waste broker'. From there it is unclear where the plastics would end up, but the likelihood is that they are shipped overseas.

So what should you do with your soft plastics? I think the best answer for Fleet residents is to bin them, which is what I now do. At least this way CO<sub>2</sub> from transporting them will be greatly reduced, and the incineration carried out in Hampshire is to a high standard, whilst also generating electricity.

This is not a phenomenon linked only to plastic recycling, and is generally known as 'greenwashing'. This term stems from the original term 'whitewashing', and involves portraying an image that seems more 'green', more sustainable, or ecologically friendlier than it actually is. You may have seen adverts on the

TV by BP which focus on renewable energy investments. This gives a false impression that BP are prioritising renewables, despite the vast majority of investment (>96%) going towards non-renewables.

How can we avoid being greenwashed? The only thing we can do is our best! At the time of writing my previous article I thought that the soft plastics I was dropping off were being recycled. I now know better. Stay open to new information. Think about what companies are claiming. Use the internet to explore the green options. [Ethicalconsumer.org](https://ethicalconsumer.org) have a wealth of information about a huge range of 40,000+ brands and products which they rate according to their ethical credentials. So, do your best and remember, as Kermit says, It's Not Easy Being Green!

*Grace Bagshaw, Fleet URC*

### LAUGHTER.... THE BEST MEDICINE



A journey of a thousand miles begins with trying to park your car near the church.

~~~~~

As you get older you've got to stay positive. For example, the other day I fell down the stairs. Instead of getting upset, I just thought, "Wow, that's the fastest I've moved in years!"

~~~~~

The poster read: Where will you be on judgement day?  
The graffiti below read: Still waiting for the Aldershot bus.

~~~~~

Living on Earth is expensive, but it does include a free trip around the sun every year.

~~~~~

I had a ploughman's lunch the other day. He wasn't very happy about it.

~~~~~

The young minister took his wife to the Maternity Hospital and was told it would be a long labour. So he agreed to ring at lunchtime for news. But when he phoned, he dialled the wrong number and got the County Cricket Ground. He said: "I brought my wife to your place early this morning. Is there any news?"

He was surprised to be told: "Yes, there are seven out and the last two were ducks."



## HARRY'S BENCH

You may have noticed that a new bench has recently been installed in the courtyard of Fleet URC. We are looking forward to making good use of this in the warmer months of the summer as we relax outside in the sunshine. The bench has been donated in memory of Harry Whetherly, who enjoyed many hours of fellowship at our weekly coffee mornings. His daughter Pauline Warner (known to some as 'Owl') explains how and why our church became important to her father:



In 2006, at the age of 83 Dad came to live with me in Fleet. He didn't know anyone and I told him about the coffee mornings at the URC. He was made to feel very welcome there and always looked forward to Thursday mornings when he could have a chat with people and enjoy the friendliness of the ladies who served the coffee and cake. Every week when he got back I'd ask him what cake he'd chosen and quiz him on who he'd chatted with. He had always had a lovely time, and came back with a smile on his face.

When he was younger Dad was a Scouter, and my Mum had been a Brownie and Guide leader. Dad was always interested in what 4th Fleet Brownies and 1st Fleet West Rainbows were up to, and he was a great supporter of activities which encourage children to develop new skills whilst having fun. I've been helping with youth groups at the URC since 1989, and his granddaughter ('Kitten') has been involved in Girlguiding groups there since 1993, so the URC seems to be the perfect place for his memorial bench. It will be a nice place for people to sit in the sun and enjoy being at the URC as much as he did.

*Pauline Warner*



### FOOTNOTE:

Our church coffee mornings are now held on Wednesdays, from 10—11.30 am in the church hall. However the friendliness and fellowship are still the same! Come along and enjoy a hot drink and a piece of cake, and meet old friends or make new ones. You can be sure of a warm welcome.

## HOLY DAYS & HOLIDAYS (1)

### ST SWITHUN—SAINT FOR A RAINY DAY

St Swithun is apparently the saint you can blame for rainy summers. It is said that if it rains on his special day, 15th July, it will rain for 40 days after that.

It all began when Swithun was made Bishop of Winchester in 852 by King Ethelwulf of Wessex. It was an important posting: Winchester was the capital of Wessex, and during the ten years Swithun was there Wessex became the most important kingdom of England.

During his life, instead of washing out people's summer holidays and damping down their spirits, Swithun seems to have done a lot of good. He was famous for his charitable gifts and for his energy in getting churches built. When he was dying in 862 he asked that he be buried in the cemetery of the Old Minster, just outside the west door.

By the 960s, Winchester had become the first monastic cathedral chapter in England, and the newly installed monks wanted Swithun in the cathedral with them. So it was decided to move Swithun, and on 15th July 971 his bones were dug up and he was taken into the cathedral.

That same day many people claimed to have had miraculous cures. Certainly everyone got wet, for the heavens opened. The unusually heavy rain that day, and on the days following, was attributed to the power of St Swithun. Swithun was moved again in 1093, into the new Winchester Cathedral. His shrine was a popular place of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages, was then destroyed during the Reformation, and restored in 1962.

If he had been left in peace, who knows how many rainy summers we may have been spared over the last 1,000 years!

#### *The Parish Pump*

[Image: St Swithun's Shrine at Winchester Cathedral (Creative Commons, [WyrdLight.com](https://www.wyrdlight.com))]



## HOLY DAYS & HOLIDAYS (2)

### A SERMON IN SAND

If you are fortunate enough to get to the seaside this summer, then you might like to wriggle your toes in the warm sand, and consider the following:

It has been said that there are more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on all the beaches in the world. More recently, as the estimated number of stars has increased, then even the grains of sand in all the world's deserts have been added to the comparison!



The Sun, vast though it is, is a fairly ordinary star, 93 million miles away. It is not easy to grasp that sort of a distance, but here's a measuring stick: if you were to fly in a fast passenger jet at 600 miles per hour, then it would take you about 17 hours to fly from London to Sydney; about 17 days to reach the Moon, and about 17 years to reach the Sun!

As for how long it would take to fly on to the next nearest star to us—Proxima Centauri—it would take about 40 billion years, as the distance is more than 24 trillion miles! And that is just to the next nearest star after the Sun.

How many stars are there in the Universe? Astronomers recently estimated that there are about 70,000 million, million, million stars.

As you sit there you might care to pick up a couple of grains of sand. Then look at the whole beach and consider all the beaches on Earth, with every grain of sand representing a star... then it gives some meaning to the phrase, "God the Father *Almighty*, Maker of heaven and earth."

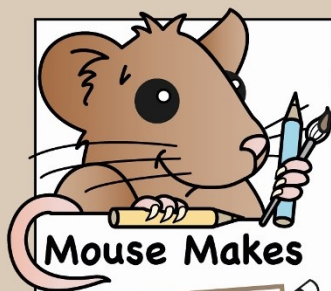
*Revd Richard Higginbottom, The Parish Pump*

### A PRAYER OF BLESSING

Lord, you have called us and brought light into our lives. And now you ask us to be your light into the continuing darkness. At times we may be like a small, fragile, flickering candle, at times a bright, strong, beam of light... Help us this coming week to let your light shine through us in our words and our actions, in our attitudes and relationships. With our hands, our faces, our feet and our smiles.

In the name of Jesus, *Amen*

*Dave Hopwood © Dave Hopwood/engageworship.org*



## Mouse Makes

Cross out all the X  
to find the bible verse:

NXOXWXTXHXEREXEXA  
XRXEXMXAXNXYOXT  
XHXEXRXTXHXIXNXGX  
SXTXHXAXTXJEXXSXU  
XSXDIXDX.WXEXRXEXE  
XVXEXRXYXONXEXOXFX  
TXHXEXMXTXOXBEXW  
XRXIXTXEXNX,IXSXU  
XPXPXOXSXETHXAXTX  
TXHXEXWXOXRXLXDXI  
TXSXEXLFXCXOXUXLD  
XNXOXTXCXOXNXTXAI  
XNXTXHXEXBOXOXKXS  
XTXHXAXTXWXOXULX  
DBXEXWXRIXTXTXEXN  
X.JXOXHXNX2X1X:2X5X

What did Jesus turn  
water into?

John 2:1-11

Who's mother-in-law  
did Jesus heal?

Matthew 8:14-15

How did Jesus get out  
to the disciples  
in the boat?

Matthew 14:22-27

Who did Jesus raise  
from the dead?

John 11:38-44

How long had the  
woman at the synagogue  
been disabled?

— — years

What did she do after  
she was healed?

Luke 13:10-13

Who did Jesus  
heal when his ear  
was cut off?

Luke 22:47-51

DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus fed thousands  
of people from a  
few loaves and fish,  
... not once but twice!

READ

Matthew 14:13-21

AND

Matthew 15:32-39

In each story...  
How many loaves  
and how many fish  
did Jesus have?

How many people  
were fed?

How many baskets of  
broken pieces were  
left over?

DID YOU KNOW?

There  
are over

37

miracles of Jesus  
recorded in the Gospels.

How many of them  
do you know?

Find these words  
in the word search

JESUS • MIRACLE

DEAF • HEAR • BLIND • SEE

PARALYSED • WALK • SICK

HEALED • DEAD • RAISED

MUTE • SPEAK • DEMONS

CAST OUT • STORM

CALMED • WATER • WINE

FISH • MULTIPLIED

F A L S H B J O H E A L E D  
I S T T W L W M I R A C L E  
S P G O A I I D E A F A I M  
H E A R T N N Y J I S S W O  
C A L M E D E A D S I T A N  
K K P A R A L Y S E D O L S  
M U L T I P L I E D E U K T  
J E S U S I C K E M U T E W