

InTouch

Autumn 2022



The magazine of
Fleet and Beacon Hill
United Reformed Churches

FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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A PRAYER IN A TIME OF CHANGE AND TRANSITION

Dear Father God,

We begin our prayer by reminding ourselves of your loving care to all your created children.

In this world we often feel overwhelmed by the inescapable turmoil that surrounds us. Recent sudden events have further rocked our lives and we ask for your peace, also your blessing and guidance for those most closely involved. Particularly we ask this for our new King and his Queen Consort and other members of the royal family who mourn the sudden loss of their beloved matriarch.



We thank you for the deep Christian faith known and expressed by our late Queen, which characterised her long and extensive reign. We pray that this faith will sustain, comfort and guide our King as he begins a new and demanding life.

We pray for our new government as it grasps the stinging nettle of the many problems that it and we, as a nation, face.

We pray for those hardest hit worldwide by global warming, drought, famine, war and economic crisis.

We thank you, Lord, for the appointment of new ministers to both our churches, and ask your blessing on Helen and Alison as they begin their ministry among us.

Help us to be Micah people: 'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?'

From where we are, to where you lead us,

From the security of what we know, to the adventure of what you reveal,

To re-fashion the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your Kingdom,

Lord Jesus, now lead on.

In His name we pray, Amen

Margaret Tracey, Fleet URC

Our churches have been blessed by the appointments of two new Ministers—Revd Helen Everard to the pastorate of Fleet URC, and Revd Aliston Toplas to Beacon Hill URC—both inducted on the same weekend.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW MINISTERS

REVD HELEN EVERARD—FLEET URC

Hello from your new minister! Here is a bit about me, to help you all get to know me a little.



I am married to Alex, a practising Catholic, and we have four grown up children and one granddaughter, who is two. I look after her for two days a week. My youngest daughter is at university in Durham, and the others all live in the area.

I am a self-supporting minister of the United Reformed Church and was ordained three years ago. I live in Mytchett. Self-supporting ministers do not receive a stipend, but we are paid expenses for travel etc and we are sent to churches at the request of the Synod.

I was taken to church in Norwich as a child, and became a member of the URC just before my 18th birthday. After moving to Mytchett I attended High Cross Church in Camberley, and was ordained an elder, served in the children's church, and as Church Secretary. Since High Cross is a Methodist/URC LEP I attended circuit meetings and met members of Fleet Methodist Church.

About ten years ago I trained to be a Lay Preacher in the URC, and Revd Stephen Thornton was my tutor. I did a worship placement at Fleet URC in 2014, and then trained for the ministry part time at Northern College in Manchester, travelling up for study weekends at College and undertaking placements locally, at St Mary's Parish Church in Ash Vale, at Frimley Park Hospital with the chaplains there, and at Woking URC.

I have served for the last three years at Womersley URC and as Chaplain to the Moderators of General Assembly 2020-22. Womersley already had a minister who was scoped for only 8% of his time, but I was appointed to liaise with the flourishing scout groups and the pre-school, as well as preaching twice a month.

Now with the chaplaincy role having come to an end, I have more ministry time available, and the Synod asked me if I would consider a move to Fleet.

I enjoy reading, good detective series or history programmes on TV, and I love music too. I am looking forward to sharing with you all in our Christian journey.

I can be contacted on 0771 664 7288 or at helen.everard158@gmail.com, and I am intending to spend quite a bit of time this autumn coming to groups and popping in to church, and doing a bit of visiting too, and after that I will have a better idea of how my time might be spent with you.

With good wishes

Helen Everard



SERVICE OF INDUCTION OF REVD HELEN EVERARD

We are delighted to welcome Revd Helen Everard as our new minister at Fleet URC.

Helen was officially inducted to her new post in a service on Saturday 10th September. It was wonderful to see our church full with friends, family members and members of local clergy, who had all come along to support



l to r: The Revds Graham Hoslett, Clare Downing, Helen Everard, Ray Stanyon, Lucy Brierley & Michael Hodgson

Helen and wish her well. Those taking part in the Service included the Revd Clare Downing (URC Wessex Synod Moderator), Revd Michael Hodgson (our Interim Moderator), Revd Ray Stanyon, Revd Graham Hoslett, and Revd Lucy Brierley, Convenor of the Pastoral Synod (North), who gave the sermon. Lucy spoke on Helen's chosen readings, Micah 6: 6-8 and Ephesians 3: 7-21.

Elders and members of Fleet URC also participated in the service, reading the lessons, welcoming Helen to our church,

and offering gifts. A time of fellowship followed the service, when everyone was invited to stay and chat over refreshments.

It is wonderful to have Helen with us as our new Minister, and we pray that God will bless us in our journey together.

Christine Gibbons, Fleet URC



REVD ALISON TOPLAS—BEACON HILL URC

Hello—I'm feeling excited and a little daunted as I take up my role as minister at Beacon Hill. I'm really looking forward to getting to know more about you and the local community. It will take a little time for us to find out how we will work best together. I'm not starting out with a set work pattern, but will join you for different activities in the first weeks, so that I can see for myself what happens, and reflect on what part I might usefully play.



I've been asked to tell you a bit about myself to start things off. I am married to David (not a regular churchgoer) and we live in Guildford. We have two grown-up daughters, two grandsons, and a cat called Izzy. As you can see from the picture I collect blue and white china. I also enjoy gardening, photography (especially plants and butterflies), and making things.

I grew up in Horsham Methodist Church, becoming a member in the year that the URC was formed. At university I was part of the Round Church—linked to Holy Trinity, Brompton. I had a group of good friends there, but never felt wholly at home with their prescriptive approach to the Bible (there was a meaning which someone told you, and that was it) and their focus on individual salvation. For some years after graduating I was absorbed by work and then marriage. The push to rejoin the church came when I had children.

I became a member of Guildford URC in the 80s, and embarked on TLS in its early days when residential weekends gathered people from all over the country, and I discovered the breadth and richness of the URC. I spent weeks on Iona with the Wild Goose Resource Group, exploring ways of enriching worship and enabling deeper engagement with the Bible. In 2000 I started training for the ministry on the ecumenical STETS course at Sarum College, spending my final placement at Beacon Hill, when Tower Road had just closed and the extension of the building was only paper plans.

In 2004 I was ordained and inducted to serve as minister of Worplesdon URC, and was there until we closed in November 2020. I had never had a sabbatical and took some time out to think about what to do next. Synod asked me to consider Beacon Hill, and I accepted when the church meeting voted to support my being appointed as minister. I wasn't sure I was up to the challenge, but I was inspired by that week's story of Jesus sending out disciples and telling them to take nothing with them, to rely on other people and the Holy Spirit to help them. It seemed the question wasn't so much confidence in my experience and ability, but whether I was willing to risk going for it for the sake of the gospel and learning on the way. I was told that you are a congregation who teaches and grows their minister.

You can get in touch with me by phone or text at 07969 574355 or email: bhurcminister@gmail.com. (Only I will receive emails to that address.)

With best wishes

Alison Toplas



SERVICE OF INDUCTION OF REVD ALISON TOPLAS

We extend a warm welcome to Reverend Alison Toplas, who was inducted as Minister at Beacon Hill URC with a special service on Sunday 11th September. It was a delight to see so many at the service to support her in her new ministry and for the church to be filled with singing, with such a warm, welcoming atmosphere.



*l to r: The Revds Ray Stanyon,
Clare Downing, Alison Toplas &
Wayne Hawkins*

We were pleased to be joined by representatives from the local clergy of different denominations. The service was led by Revd Clare Downing, and Alison was presented for induction by the Interim Moderator, Revd Graham Hoslett, with additional contributions from Revd Ray Stanyon and members of the congregation. Revd Wayne Hawkins gave the sermon, based on a reading from John 21: 1—15.

The service was followed by a delicious tea, with much chat and laughter. We look forward to supporting Alison in this ministry.

Thanks be to God.

Karen Smith, Beacon Hill URC



URC 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

On Saturday 1st October a number of events are taking place to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the URC, including a Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster.

Tickets for the Service of Thanksgiving are free, and it's still not too late to book them. For more information visit: <https://urc.org.uk/who-we-are/our-50th-anniversary/50th-anniversary-tickets>. However you don't have to travel to London to enjoy the service as there are plans to livestream it—more details to come.

QUIZ NIGHT WITH FISH & CHIP SUPPER

We are resuming our popular Quiz Night + fish & chip supper, so put this date in your diary:

Saturday, 15th October at 7 pm.

The cost will be £12 per person. Come with a team of up to six people, or join a team when you arrive.

An evening of fun is promised, with Colin McClune as your quiz master.

All are welcome!—For catering arrangements please let John Gibbons (07900 908990) know if you'd like to come along.

Liz McClune, Fleet URC



Our Prayer and 'Nurturing Faith' Groups will continue to meet on Zoom for the rest of the year.

They are open to everyone.

Invitations are sent out beforehand by email. Please apply to the respective church secretaries if don't receive an email and would like to join a group.



NOTICE BOARD



'NURTURING OUR FAITH' THROUGH BIBLE STUDY JOINT GROUP

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

**17th October; 21st November;
5th December (Advent)**

Please note that contributions for the Winter issue of *InTouch* (December 2022—February 2023) should be with the editor, Christine Gibbons, by **13th November**. Thank you.
(christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk)



JOINT PRAYER GROUP

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

10th October; 14th November; 12th December

Come and join us for 30 minutes of quiet meditation.

Beacon Hill URC will be hosting two MacMillan coffee mornings in The Hub:

Monday 26th & Wednesday 28th September, 9 am—12 noon

There will be a small raffle, plus seeds & plants and cakes & biscuits to buy.

At Fleet URC the regular Wednesday coffee morning will also be raising funds for MacMillan when they meet on

Wednesday, 28th September, 10—11.30 am

All are welcome at any of these events.

Alternatively, you are invited to donate via Karen's MacMillan fundraising page: <https://thyg.uk/BUS007164178>

STARS IN THE BIBLE

Talk and Stargazing

with amateur astrophotographer, Ken Pitts

- What would the people in biblical times have seen in the sky?
- How has our understanding of the firmament changed?
- Just how big is God's creation?
- Biblical signs and astronomy
- Optional stargazing afterwards (weather permitting)

on Friday, 25th November 2022, at 7.30 pm

at Fleet URC

Refreshments — Retiring collection in aid of church funds

IN MEMORIAM SHEILA & JILL DURBIN



In a brief ceremony following a morning service Revd Ray Stanyon paid tribute to the lives of Sheila and Jill Durbin, two much-loved sisters who worshipped at Fleet URC for many years.

Thanking God for all they meant to us, Ray commended Sheila and Jill into God's care. Then their ashes were scattered, according to their wishes, in the grounds of our church, their

spiritual home. Bernard Potter and Bee Griffiths, two long standing friends of Sheila and Jill, were honoured to perform this task.



CHRISTMAS ANGELS



Hello Angel knitters/crocheters—It's me again, to remind you that we will be needing knitted Angels again this year to bring the message of Christmas to all who pick them up around Fleet.

If you wish to continue—or start—knitting for this worthwhile outreach, please drop me a line by email: darrell.henderson@ntlworld.com, or text or phone me on 07757 508549 or 01252 659569. This is so that I can give a rough total to the organisers. We will be

once more distributing these beautiful creations around Fleet, as we have done in previous years.

If you need a pattern, I have placed some on the noticeboard in church: please help yourself. Also, let me know if you need wool or needles.

Once you have knitted/crocheted your angels, will you please visit LivingStones Christian Centre in Fleet Road to pick up your labels, ready printed for you to attach. If this is difficult for you, please contact me.

STOP PRESS: The provisional date venue of the Angel Blessing Service this year is **27th November at 4 pm**, at Crookham Baptist Church. (To be confirmed nearer the time.)

Many thanks to you all,

Darrell Henderson, Fleet URC

OUR SUMMER ECO PROJECT IN THE CHURCH GARDEN

It's been a hive of activity in the rear garden over the summer. We had to hatch a plan to deal with the wear and tear from the little feet of the Nursery children running about on it all year, as well as the general erosion of soil and grass. In fact, the first concern was that there was no grass in a lot of the areas!

The Elders and Property/ECO team consulted with the Nursery and decided on a new approach. One of the staff at the nursery, Tom, offered to do the work, so he and Hugh presented the idea to dig out the key trails around the garden and put in play bark. Tom then added a hedgehog house, and marked out the compost area and the mud kitchen for safer access and easier use. The fences, boat and seat have been given a face lift—and it all looks great!

It has been so easy and pleasant to work actively with the Nursery on this eco project, and build on our community relationships. If you visit us, come and have a look!

Beacon Hill URC



A PRAYER FOR THE AUTUMN

Lord,

As our glorious summer slowly ebbs away, fast becoming a distant dream, and the days get shorter, we are aware of the seasonal nip in the early morning air. On close inspection we notice the sparkle of the dew on our parched lawns. The shady, damp corners of our gardens and hedgerows are adorned with colourful fungi as they endeavour to show their face to the world. We are overwhelmed by the abundance of seasonal fruit, vegetables and nuts available at this time of year.

The closer we look at our surroundings, the more we realise there are many living creatures all around us. Large and small plants, insects, birds, reptiles, all making their own contribution to the wonderful, mysterious world you have so generously given us to enjoy and explore. We thank you for these priceless gifts and ask that you support us as we try to take the best possible care for future generations.

During our summer and at this autumn time, many of us travel for a variety of reasons to places near and far. Some travel to escape the roar and shriek of noisy civilisation; others to enjoy the beach, cliffs and lure of the continuous lapping of the waves on the sand. Students travel on a gap year to extend their knowledge of the world, meet new people, and often to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Sadly, some travel to escape war, harsh unelected political regimes, famine, drought, floods, fire and persecution.

Comfort, strengthen and protect all travellers as they make their way along an unknown path, often forced to do so by circumstances way beyond their control. Help and watch over them as they struggle to rebuild their shattered lives in a safer and more friendly environment, with you as their guide and steadfast rock.

May your spirit of freedom, love, compassion and tender loving care for all become infectious throughout the world, enabling all to live in harmony.

We ask these things in your name. *Amen*

Michael Orchard, Beacon Hill URC



A decorative border of colorful autumn leaves in shades of red, orange, and yellow surrounds the central text.

FLEET URC AUTUMN CRAFT & GIFT FAIR

Saturday 5th November 2022

10 am—3 pm

Our ever-popular Autumn Craft Fair will be returning this year on **Saturday, 5th November**. As well as many of our old friends we will also be welcoming several new stallholders, representing a wide range of crafts, including paintings, jewellery, knitted and crocheted items, wood turning—to mention just a few. So do come along and maybe pick up a few Christmas presents.

Steve English will be in the kitchen sustaining us with tea, coffee and other refreshments, including his delicious home-made soups. If you are able to contribute cakes/traybakes would you please let him know.

Bee Griffiths would also be grateful for any items that she can sell on her bric-a-brac stall.

As always I will be looking for volunteers for the admission table, setting up, refreshments, and the eventual clear up. If you are able to help in any way I should be very grateful. Please contact me on the number below, or see me at church.

Finally, don't forget to pass the word and come and support us on the day! I look forward to seeing you.

Carol Rayner, tel: 07909 632511, Fleet URC

A PUZZLING PARAGRAPH

This is an unusual paragraph. I'm curious as to just how quickly you can find what is so unusual about it. It looks so ordinary and plain that you would think nothing was unusual about it at all. In fact nothing is actually wrong with it; but it is highly unusual. Study it and think about it, and work at it a bit and you might find out. Try and do this without coaching!!

[The answer is on page 19]

THE ESSENCE OF LIFE

Autumn is a season when we traditionally celebrate harvest. The gathering in of crops, from cauliflowers fluffy and cabbages green, apples ripe and plums red, to broad beans sleeping in their blanket beds! All this is 'fed and watered by God's almighty hand; he sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain, the breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.'

But what happens when the warmth that swells the grain is a bit excessive and the soft refreshing rain is notable by its absence?



Did you know... that 68.7% of all the fresh water on earth is trapped in glaciers (although with global warming this figure will change); that unsafe water kills 200 children every hour; that 70% of the human brain is water; that in some countries less than half the population has access to clean water; that a person can live for about a month without food, but only a week without water;

that 85% of the world population lives in the driest half of the planet, and that by 2025 half the world's population will live in countries with high water stress, ie not enough to go around? (*Seametrics: 100 Amazing Water Facts You Should Know*)

We are utterly blessed in our country to have an abundance of clean water. It is all too easy to use it enthusiastically and without thinking.

At the time of writing we are officially in a drought and have a hosepipe ban. Watering the vegetables growing in my garden is harder work with a watering can, but doable. The grass that was brown and crispy in mid August is beginning to show tufts of green. It will recover and will manage perfectly well without a sprinkler! Water is so precious and we shouldn't take it for granted. With global warming, water will become an even more precious resource, and every drop counts. Perhaps you could try some (or all) of the following ideas to protect our precious water supplies:

1. Swap a bath for a shower.
2. Use a water efficient shower head.
3. Shorten your shower, or swap to a stand-up wash at a basin.
4. Turn off running taps, eg when brushing teeth.
5. Fix dripping taps.
6. Use washing machines and dishwashers only when full, and use the eco settings.
7. If washing up by hand, run water into a bowl before starting, rather than leaving the tap running.

8. Use the small flush button on the toilet, or put a water saving device in your cistern.
9. Use grey water (eg washing up water) to water the garden.
10. Install a water butt to collect rain water for use in the garden.

Remember: 'Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean.'
(*Ryunosuke Satoro*) What will your impact be?

Grace Bagshaw, Fleet URC



RECYCLING MILK BOTTLE TOPS

I have found someone who is collecting plastic milk bottle lids to raise money for the Thames Valley Air Ambulance and am happy to collect them and pass them on. Please ensure that you only include milk bottle tops, and that all lids are washed and clean.

Thank you!

Grace Bagshaw, Fleet URC



STARS IN THE BIBLE: A TALK BY DR KEN PITTS



If you want to be reminded of the awe and wonder of creation, then Ken's talk on *Stars in the Bible* will bring that for you!

Ken, who is the son-in-law of Robert and Bridget Mitchell at BHURC, presented his talk to the church in July. This was the first time his thoughts and research had been presented to an audience. He did not disappoint. Ken's technological skills, his fast growing interest in astronomy, and his passion for both of those and his faith, sang out.

The talk was in two parts. The first explained so much about changes and constancies in constellations, galaxies and the skies that we were all a little dazed by the extent of his knowledge and the information he shared. After a swift cuppa and nibbles, Ken took us through the work he has done in looking at consensus of opinion and ideas on very familiar Biblical references to stars and the astronomical evidence related to them. Absolutely fascinating!

It was a very stimulating evening. I hope you will find it so when Ken comes to speak at Fleet URC in November. (See page 9 for details.)

Karen Smith, Beacon Hill URC

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD—ROBINS

Why do we associate robins with Christmas?

Long known as the 'robin redbreast', our familiar robin gave its name to the first postmen, who wore red jackets and became known as 'robins'. Some suggest this is the reason why robins appear on Christmas cards; but there is a link with Christmas which pre-dates Victorian postmen.

Legend has it that the robin's red breast gives it a direct link to Christianity.

One fable suggests that when the baby Jesus was in his manger in the stable, the fire which had been lit to keep him warm started to blaze up very strongly. A brown robin, noticing that Mary had been distracted by the inn-keeper's wife, placed himself between the fire and the face of baby Jesus. The robin fluffed out its feathers to protect the baby's face, but in so-doing its breast was scorched. This redness was then passed on to future generations of robins as a memento of his love for Jesus.



Another story suggests that a robin pulled a thorn from the crown of Christ whilst he was on the cross and that it was Christ's blood that created the bird's red breast.

Yet another tale relates how St Surf of Kinross was befriended by a robin, so that when he prayed the robin would come and sit on his head or shoulder. Some of his disciples became jealous of the attention the robin received and killed the bird. However another follower, who became St Mungo, founder of Glasgow Cathedral, prayed over the bird and restored it to life.

You choose which of these stories to pass on! A difficult choice.

We all know that as soon as we take a spade out of the potting shed we are likely to see a robin perched on the handle. The robin will be looking for earthworms and grubs where we dig, but this habit has also lent the robin a whole range of slightly sinister, funereal connections. For example, in the anonymous poem, 'The Babes in the Wood', a robin ministers to two children who died from the cold:

*No burial this pretty pair
from any man receives
Till robin redbreast piously
Covers them with leaves.*

This type of association is probably the reason why a visit from a robin to a sick person might be said to foretell death. However I prefer to think that the visit from a robin is actually a really positive sign:

If you are regularly seeing a robin in your garden or on your walks, it may well be that a loved one is keeping an eye on you and showing you that you are still loved... Now that is my favourite.

Our affection for the robin was cemented in 1960 when it was voted our national bird. Robins will be forever commemorated on Christmas cards, and I hope they will always be a common sight in our gardens.

Darrell Henderson, Fleet URC

[Image: Christiane on Pixabay]



FUNDRAISING FOR OCEAN STARS

Ocean Stars Trust is a charity that was founded in 2005 in the aftermath of the Boxing Day tsunami of 2004. The charity supports many projects in Sri Lanka, and has a focus on child education, especially preschool education. They are committed to giving children in Sri Lanka equal opportunities and helping them to overcome the barriers that are in their way. More information can be found at oceanstars.org.uk.



Calthorpe Park School works with Ocean Stars Trust and offers students the chance to get involved. Students work both individually and as a group to raise funds for Sri Lankan schools and provide equipment that they cannot otherwise afford. After a year of fundraising, students have the amazing opportunity to visit Sri Lanka and make unforgettable memories with the children who live there. I am lucky enough to have been selected for a place on this trip

after application and interview, and I will therefore be raising money for Ocean Stars over the coming months until the trip in October 2023.

Over the course of this academic year I hope to raise funds through sponsored events, as well as selling homemade items, so please look out for more information soon! However I would like to start by asking you to 'Save Your Silver!' If you have any spare silver coins that you can put aside for Ocean Stars, please bring them to church, where I will have a collection pot. I will be collecting until July 2023.

I hope you will be able to support me, and that, together, we will raise lots of money for Ocean Stars.

Alice Bagshaw, Fleet URC

‘STAND BY ME’

We promised in a previous edition of ‘In Touch’ to give a bit more information on each of the children we are sponsoring via *Stand by Me* and the circumstances in which they are living. We are currently sponsoring Laurith (age 10) from Colombia, Arsema (8) from Ethiopia and Pau Sian Muang (6) from Myanmar, but in this edition of ‘In Touch’ we are focussing on Laurith and her community.



Laurith

Laurith lives in Guacamayal, a small town which is about 8 miles from the coast and more than 540 miles from the capital city, Bogotá. The town is very poor with extended families often living in poorly constructed homes with one or two rooms. Laurith shares her home with her grandmother, mother, uncle and aunts, and her mother doesn't have a steady job, which makes it hard for her to cover all the family's expenses.

The Emmanuel Care Centre, which Laurith attends each day, was established to give food, medical care, counselling and education support to the poorest children in the area. To quote the experiences of one visitor to the project in 2018,

“It is very difficult to get a good education here and most of the children do not leave Guacamayal, as people finish school, then work on the fincas (banana plantations), and many of the girls get pregnant at a very young age. Furthermore, many of the children have complex behavioural needs and crave attention irrespective of whether that is positive or negative.”

Educating children is the best way to help them escape a future of poverty and the associated risks of child abuse: emotional, physical and sexual. Although government schools are free, they often have a low standard of education, and so the Emmanuel Care Centre provides homework clubs to give extra support. *Stand By Me* also provides children with uniforms, books and school resources to give them everything they need for school. As importantly, the team is also showing the children that they are loved and supported always. In the wider community, *Stand By Me* has also helped the neediest families in Guacamayal by repairing homes and providing toilets.

Laurith tells us that her favourite lesson is Maths and that she also enjoys riding her bike, playing with dolls, watching TV and playing hide and seek. She would like to be a nurse when she grows up.

In August 2022 Laurith celebrated her 10th birthday, which allowed a great connection to be made to some of our younger church community, as Isla and Eden (Christine and John Gibbons's granddaughters) also had their 10th birthdays that month.

As well as Fleet URC sending Laurith best wishes and money (£25) for her to choose a present (*Stand By Me* recommends sending money rather than physical gifts and will then give the child a choice of items to purchase), Isla made a birthday card and Christine sent a message and photo explaining the birthday connection. They received a lovely letter from Laurith in return, translated here from the original Spanish:

Dear Christine and Fleet United Reformed Church,

Hi, how are you? I am happy that you are my sponsors.

How great that your granddaughters' birthday with me is in the same month and the same age.

Thank you so much for the birthday card you sent me, it is beautiful. Happy belated birthday to the girls. On my birthday my mum had a party for me and I had fun with my friends and played with my sister. I have 5 siblings, 2 boys and 3 girls.

What do the girls do on their birthdays? Do they have fun? Do they have friends?

I feel happy about the photo you sent and I am happy that at Christmas time you are all together like we do here with our family.

A big hug for Isla,

With love, Laurith

For more information on *Stand By Me's* work in Colombia, look online at:

<https://www.standby.me/news/bringing-hope-to-guacamayal>, and

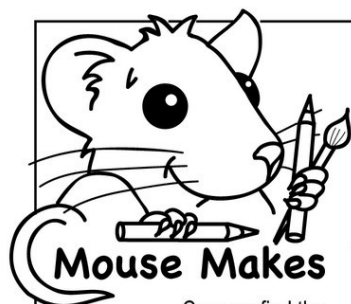
<https://www.standby.me/countries/colombia/news>

Helen Bailey, on behalf of Footsteps, Fleet URC



ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGE ON PAGE 13:

There is no letter 'e' in the paragraph. This is highly unusual because E is the most commonly used letter in the English language.



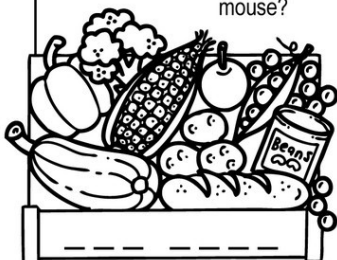
Can you find the mouse?

A HARVEST PUZZLE

Change each letter to the letter **before** it in the alphabet to see how QSPWFSCT 3:9 says we can give thanks to God.



IPOPVS



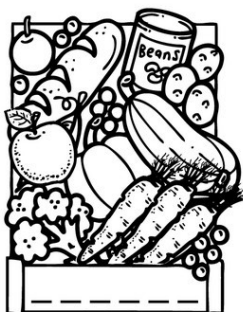
UIF MPSE



XJUI



ZPVS



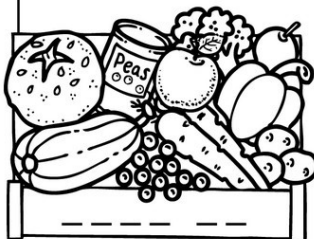
XFBMUI



BOE UIF



GJSTU



QBSU PG



ZPVS



IBSWFTU

Which two boxes have the same harvest food?