

InTouch

Summer 2023



The magazine of
Fleet United Reformed Church



FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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WEEKLY WORSHIP

Sundays, 10 am: Family Worship

Holy Communion usually on third Sunday of month

An afternoon service is held at 2 pm on the last Tuesday of the month

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

<i>'Footsteps' Young People's Group:</i>	Sundays, 10 am (<i>term time only</i>)
<i>Pilates</i>	Mondays, 12.15-1.15 pm
<i>Coffee Morning:</i>	Wednesdays, 10–11.30 am
<i>Toddlers Group:</i>	Fridays, 10 am

Under the umbrella of the United Reformed Church, *Guide*, *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.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTER



Dear Friends,

All of a sudden, nature has sprung into bloom! It is fantastic to see all the colour of the azaleas and rhododendrons as I drive between my house and Fleet. It reminds me that God's creation is always growing and changing, and always there for us. As I write this, we are about to celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of the church and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Margaret and I put up a banner in the church which has the dove and the

flames, reminders of the Spirit which hovered over Jesus at his baptism, and the flames which hovered over the disciples on the first Pentecost day.

God promised us the Holy Spirit, to be with us always, just as Jesus promised He would always be with us. Sometimes we wonder where Jesus or the Spirit might be, as difficult times mean that it is sometimes harder to feel God's presence with us. Yet, looking back, we can often see that God was still alive and active, even if we ourselves couldn't perceive God.

In God's people, the Church, God works still. We help each other through difficult times, and the support of our fellow Christians keeps us following Jesus' way through good times and bad. I hope that now it is warmer and the plants around us are full of life and colour, we can look forward to good times ahead.

I am going to lead some more Bible study groups in June and August. I hope that, together, we can discover more about what God might be saying to us. All are welcome and, as in Lent, I will try to make each session work by itself. So whether you can only come to one, or whether you can get to more, you are welcome. I hope to link them into a preaching theme so that everyone can share in what God is saying to us as a church through the Bible.

Blessings

Helen

BIBLE STUDY DATES

Tuesday, 6th June, 2—3 pm
Tuesday, 20th June, 2—3 pm
(August dates to be arranged)



Each session is self-contained, so you don't have to attend them all. Come as you can, and come as you are.

BEETLE DRIVE



On 22nd April this year we held our first Beetle Drive since before the dreaded Covid. Ten minutes before we were due to start I was concerned that I would have to cancel, as there were only six people present, but suddenly everyone started to arrive. A grand total of 28 people took part.

It was an evening of fun, with many frustrated cries when the dice did not role in their favour, and there were a few gentlemen who thought that a beetle had only four legs! Tea and coffee were served

halfway through the event, thanks to Carol Woods, and this gave people a chance to mingle.

Congratulations to Rita Powell, who gained the highest score.

Date for your diary: Our next Beetle Drive is on **Saturday, 14th October at 7 pm**. Hope to see you there.

Carol Rayner



COFFEE MORNING CORONATION CELEBRATION

A jolly time was had by all at our recent Wednesday Coffee Morning when there was a good turn out to celebrate the King's coronation. There was a festive air, with everyone decorated in their red, white and blue, or dressed for a Palace garden party. A coronation quiz and plenty of a Palace garden party. A coronation quiz and plenty of party food contributed to the celebratory atmosphere.

There was no question who should receive the prize for the best-dressed party-goer - Kevin Williams (*right*) in his impressive Civil War costume!

Photos from our celebration even featured in the news section of the United Reformed Church website: <https://urc.org.uk/local-urcs-celebrate-kings-coronation>.

Our church coffee morning is held every Wednesday morning, 10—11.30 am. Why not join us for tasty refreshments and the chance to meet or make new friends? You can be sure of a warm welcome. For more information, contact John Gibbons (07900 908990).



BARN DANCE

Saturday, 1st July at 7 pm

With caller and music by

'Six Beats in a Bar'

Tickets: £15 a head (children £5),
which includes a two-course hot supper and drinks.

All proceeds to church funds.

Tickets from John Gibbons (07900 908990)



Please note that contributions for
the Autumn issue of *InTouch*
(September—November 2023)
should be with the editor,
Christine Gibbons, by
12th August. Thank you.

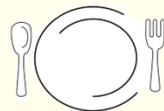
(christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk)



NOTICE BOARD

SUNDAY LUNCH OUTINGS

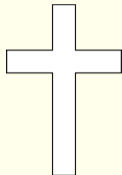
A group of us meet together from time to time at a local
hostelry to enjoy Sunday lunch and fellowship following
morning service. Everyone is welcome—please let me
know if you would like to join us.



Our next get-together will be on **Sunday, 25th June** at The Ely, Blackwater.

Carol Rayner

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SERVICES



Our afternoon services continue, and are normally held at
2 pm on the last Tuesday of the month. **Everyone is welcome,**
and we hope that many who find it hard to get out on a
Sunday morning will be able to come. We can arrange
transport if needed, refreshments are served, and there is
chance to chat after the service.

Dates for the next services are: **27th June, 25th July and 29th August.**
Please contact Moray Henderson or Helen if you would like more information.



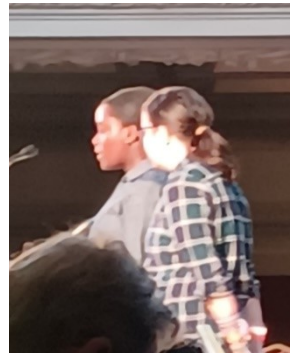
**Faith – Hope – Love –
Since 1972**

A GREAT EVENT

Great celebrations were planned to mark the United Reformed Church's 50th birthday last October, with people coming from all over England, Scotland and Wales, but sadly they had to be postponed because of a rail strike. Next arranged for 6th May, until the King planned his coronation for that day, so it actually happened on 15th April—and a great occasion it was.

1200 people came to the service at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, with our office staff, ecumenical visitors, and guests from overseas. In the morning we were invited to visit our splendid offices near King's Cross and see our folk at work; and then walk to Westminster, seeing all the sights linked to our forebears.

Then the service: great hymn singing; worship songs from across the globe; readers both male and female, black and white, gay and straight, young and old; a vibrant choir; three profound sermons; a most moving communion; fervent prayers; a great organ, and splendid trumpet and band accompaniment; greetings from all our world wide friends—and much, much more. Oh! What it was to be there, celebrating 50 years of worship, prayer, work, mission, witness, care, compassion, adventure and love. We've done our best! The only disappointment being that the unity we so longed for with the other denominations, which they promised at our founding, hasn't happened, despite our striving, to the hurt of the Gospel and our corporate mission.



Philippa Osei (Youth Moderator) & Heather Moore (Youth Moderator Elect)

And the hundreds of postcards we were all asked to send, saying why we appreciate our Church, were displayed on large screens, and in the day's service book. How so many find their spiritual home in our Church!

At the end we made a joint commitment which I hope you will make your own, and feel part of this great event.

People of the United Reformed Church, giving thanks for God's mercy and grace in times past, we call upon each other in this year of jubilee, to make a new prayer and commitment for today and tomorrow. It is this:

May the quest for unity forge us,
May the celebration of diversity sculpt us,
May the vision of abundant life for all steer us.
Transfused by God's grace,

walking the way of Jesus Christ,
bound together in the Holy Spirit,
we commit ourselves to be signs and servants of God's new creation.

God of the past—together we give you thanks;
God of the hidden future—together we place our trust in you,
God of our own time—together we will follow where you lead.

Amen and amen

Stephen M Thornton



OUR PRAYER CIRCLE

Just a reminder that we are still here, and available to add any requests for prayer from anyone who has a concern they would like to share.

In our current format we have been praying daily for over three years, and our pray-ers have varied between three and four people.

As always, if you feel this could be a ministry for you, please get in touch with any of us and we will gladly talk you through what's involved. We are delighted that our Minister, Helen Everard, has found the time to commit to praying alongside Christine Gibbons, Nicola Hamilton and me. We meet together once a month to update and share joys and sadnesses.

Requests come to us by word of mouth, telephone, email, and we also have a closed WhatsApp account for our own use. All requests are held in strict confidence, and many are very personal.

Most prayer is requested for illness of loved ones, but other situations of a varied nature come our way. This is fine because we know that God is our loving Father in Heaven who wants us to involve Him in all areas of our lives. It's a joy when we hear that God has richly answered our prayers, and we can then turn to praise and thanks.

Apart from prayers for specific people, we cover the whole world, as need arises. Currently Sudan, Israel/Palestine and, of course, Ukraine and Russia. We pray for our link church in Palani, Tamil Nadu, South India. At home we pray about current issues in the news and, locally, for Christians Together in Fleet, the schools' work run by FACCTS, even the potholes in our roads!

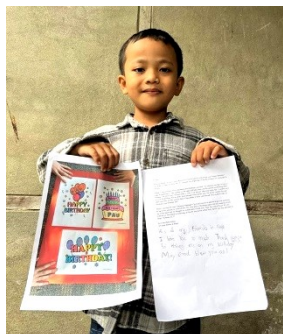
If you have been 'Touched' by reading this, please do get 'In Touch' with me or Christine or Nicola, and we will be happy to talk with you.

God bless you all.

Margaret Tracey

STAND BY ME

Since our last *In Touch* report, two of our sponsored children have celebrated their birthdays. Pau in Myanmar and Arsema in Ethiopia are now 7 and 9 years old respectively. *Footsteps* sent colourful birthday wishes pictures to them, as well as our church making



Pau

a money transfer so that they can purchase a gift locally with *Stand By Me's* assistance. We have received some lovely correspondence and pictures in reply, as you can see.

Pau's message reads: 'Hi, all my friends in Fleet. I love you so much. Thank you for wishing me on my birthday (*sic*). May God bless you all.'

All three children sent Easter greetings, and it is clear how much they appreciate the connection they are making with us. As Arsema said in her latest message, talking about the 'lovely birthday messages and cards': 'I was really pleased when I received them.'

I am grateful for everything you have been doing for me.'

Recently we also received a message from Laurith in Colombia showing us what she had bought with money we sent at Christmas. It is clear that our support is not just making a difference to Laurith personally, but also to her wider family and community.



Laurith



Arsema

If anyone would like to make a contribution to a future letter to any of our sponsored children, or make a financial contribution, please talk to one of *Footsteps*. Thank you all for your ongoing monetary and prayerful support.

Helen Bailey,
on behalf of *Footsteps*

<https://www.standby.me>



STAND BY ME IMPACT REPORT 2022

Stand by Me has proved to be a worthy long-term overseas mission for us over the past two years. Our young people chose to support three children in Colombia, Myanmar and Ethiopia, although *Stand by Me*'s work encompasses numerous countries. I would recommend you read their Impact Report 2022, to gain a deeper understanding of their work and our mission.

Stand by Me demonstrates child-centred care in a variety of ways:

- Loving Care—they get to know each child and invest time in raising them to know that they are loved and accepted for who they are.
- Strong Families—they work hard to keep families together. In the absence of a stable family they welcome the children into their loving family homes.
- Education—their programmes equip the children to rise above their circumstances and help transform their communities.
- Health Care—the children are kept fit and well, and can enjoy their childhood.
- Hope—all aspects of the care, love and support reflect Jesus' love. He is their role model to follow.

If you are not already involved with this initiative, and would like to be, then please speak to any of the Footsteps team. Do borrow and read the Impact Report (available from Helen or Grace).

John Gibbons, Church Treasurer



OCEAN STARS UPDATE

My latest fundraising effort for Ocean Stars was to cycle '100 Miles in May'. At just under two weeks in, I had cycled 99 miles, so I increased my target to 150 miles, which I managed to complete before the end of May. Thank you to everyone who sponsored me. There is a JustGiving page (address below) for anyone else who would like to sponsor me. It would

be very much appreciated. You can also sponsor me 'in-person' rather than online if you would rather—just speak to me or Grace on a Sunday morning.

A huge thank you to everyone who is continuing to 'Save your Silver' (and copper) coins for me. I have already raised over £100 through 'Save your Silver' alone!

Alice Bagshaw

(www.justgiving.com/page/grace-bagshaw-1682858190753)

WHEN I SAY 'I AM A CHRISTIAN'

Grace Bagshaw read the following poem as part of the opening devotions at a recent Elders' Meeting, and the author has kindly given us permission to reprint it in *In Touch*:

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I'm not shouting, 'I've been saved!'
I'm whispering, 'I get lost sometimes
That's why I chose this way'.

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I don't speak with human pride
I'm confessing that I stumble—
needing God to be my guide.

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I'm not trying to be strong
I'm professing that I'm weak
and pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I'm not bragging of success,
I'm admitting that I've failed
and cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I don't think I know it all
I submit to my confusion
asking humbly to be taught.

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I'm not claiming to be perfect
My flaws are far too visible
but God believes I'm worth it.

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I still feel the sting of pain
I have my share of heartache
which is why I seek God's name.

When I say, 'I am a Christian'
I do not wish to judge
I have no authority
I only know I'm loved.

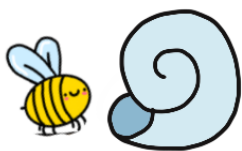


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GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD—TWO-COLOURED MASON BEES

There is a variety of solitary bee that is a wonder to me. Although all bees are amazing, the female Two-Coloured Mason Bee (or 'Witch' bee) blows my mind!

When looking for the ideal place to lay her egg she carefully checks empty snail shells—some too big, some too small or damaged—and carries on her search until she finds just the right one within which to lay an egg. Then when she has located her ideal shell she takes a firm hold of the ground with her mouth, and with repeated bites she grasps the slippery shell with her legs and hauls it to an ideal spot.



Some bees apply a plant paste, called Propolis, which is a natural resinous mixture produced by bees from parts of plants, buds and sap mixed with saliva. This they use to adhere to parts of the empty shell, enabling their feet to get a firm grip. Some bury the shell in sandy soil, if it is available, and turn it so that it

is facing downwards with a small gap provided by a small dome of earth or stones so that they can get inside, and so that raindrops cannot seep into the shell. After laying each egg the bee will seal up the shell and hide it under a pile of tiny sticks.

So why do we call her a 'Witch' bee...?

Because, having laid her egg, the bee flies around looking for grass to collect: dry grass sticks are her favourite—not too long, not too short but just right (sounds familiar?) Then she collects each stick individually, and carries it under her body as she flies, so that she looks like she is riding a tiny broomstick. The heavy load slows her down, and must make her work extra hard. Then, building a sort of wigwam over the shell to help protect her precious egg, off she goes again to collect more grass stems—backwards and forwards, to and fro. All in the same day, she collects pollen to put with the egg, and mud to help seal her egg inside the shell. During all this work she has to feed and water herself: no wonder these amazing solitary bees only live a few weeks!



So, flying around on broomsticks, and 'cooking' their young in snail-like cauldrons, these two-coloured Mason bees are one black brimmed hat away from being a witch!

Now that is another reason why bees are amazing, and need our help.

Darrell Henderson

[Illustrations: Eve Chevalier]



WALKING FOR UNLOCK

It's a while since I've written anything about *Unlock* and its annual awareness and fundraising

London Walk. Three years, in fact—mainly of course due to Covid lockdowns, when such activities were banned. There were virtual, on-line walks; but these are not quite the same.

You may remember that *Unlock* is a small Christian charity whose aim is to help urban churches of any denomination, usually in deprived areas, to respond to their specific challenges. *Unlock*'s finances suffered greatly during lockdown as the annual sponsored walk provides a substantial amount of their income. As they say: 'No money, no workers, no work'. They had to reduce to one worker in Rotherham, but hope to be able to re-start in the many inner city areas where the need is great.

This year I decided to try the walk again, partly to challenge my ability to walk 7.5 miles, and partly because my granddaughter and her partner were keen to come. The route was planned around the current eastern limit of the new Elizabeth Line, so the six check point churches ranged between Woolwich and Abbey Wood.

The weather forecast was promising, and I left Fleet early to meet Emily and Ethan at Woolwich at 9.30 am. I left plenty of time, which was needed to reach the Elizabeth Line from Canary Wharf tube station. We duly met up, and I was very happy to leave the map reading to the young ones, with their phones at the ready. Goodbye, A-Z?

We started across a tree-lined open space with numerous cannons dotted about: a reminder of Woolwich Arsenal. This led to the bank of the Thames, where water met sky with only a line of flats to distinguish them. A little further along was a group of Antony Gormley statues with disconcerting splits right up their backs.



Our first checkpoint was St John's Church, Plumstead, where drinks, cakes and toilets were provided. This is the Parish Church, rebuilt in 1959 using material salvaged from the bombing of the original Victorian building. Sadly it is a common feature of this area.

Our next stop was at East Plumstead Baptist Church, which survived the bombs. It was built in 1925, although the original work started in 1868. It serves a very diverse population from the Glydon Estate (built to replace older housing) including an African, West Indian, Sri Lankan, Eastern European, Nepalese—and even English—congregation (their description).

Continuing through Plumstead, we climbed a hill up to St Nicholas Church. The parish is first recorded in 960 AD when King Edgar and Archbishop Dunstan gave the land known as Plumstede. The tower of this church dates from 1664, but in 1907 a gas explosion at Woolwich Arsenal caused severe damage, and more damage ensued when a V2 rocket was dropped on the burial ground. A former Rector here was the father of Robert Baden Powell, founder of Scouting. Its internal architecture clearly displays its Anglo-Catholic tradition. We were all warmly welcomed.

Crossing a busy railway line we arrived at St David's Catholic Church, which was founded in 1964 within the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It serves several local schools and enjoys good relationships with them.

Then came the loveliest and most surprising part of the walk. Green lanes, bird song, bluebells. We were approaching Thamesmead and Birchmere, a beautiful lake surrounded by graceful trees and hosting several water birds. I saw a Great Crested Grebe!



We followed a path beside a feeder stream which gradually became more litter ridden, as did the footpath. We soon reached the

Christian Life Centre, which is a largely black-African, non-denominational community aiming to bring the gospel to all and make disciples. A Joy-full church!

After that a traffic-free area with more cannons on display, and several modern blocks of flats. We emerged into Bazelgette Way, which my young companions were pleased to inform me was named after the man who designed the London Sewage System—they learned this in History at school!

Leaving that area we walked alongside Erith Marshes, populated by semi-wild, inquisitive ponies. They were delightful and had very sweet moustaches, as if they had raided the dressing-up box! Getting tired by this time, I was glad for a sit down and cup of tea at Emmanuel Baptist Church. It serves Thamesmead East, where less than 60% of the population is UK born, so it has a challenging outreach opportunity. Along with several of the other

churches we visited, they run a Trussell Trust Foodbank Distribution Centre.

Our last church was almost in sight, on the border of ruined Lesnes Abbey, after which Abbey Wood was named. Founded in 1178 by the Chief Justiciar of England, it was demolished in 1534 by Henry VIII. There was a carnival in progress in the surrounding park, where lots of families were enjoying themselves. In the midst was the modern Abbey Wood Community Church, very busy serving food—and us!



So not far to the station, as far east as the Elizabeth Line goes. A fast ride to Canary Wharf, a few tube stops to Waterloo, and back to Fleet. God was very good to me, as the No 7 Aldershot bus was there to take me to the top of Kings Road. That hot bath never felt so good!

Margaret Tracey

<https://www.unlock-urban.org.uk/>



THE LORD IS MY SAT NAV

In a recent visit to Fleet, lay preacher Anna Crawford reflected on ‘The Road Less Travelled’, and Jesus’ promise to show us the road to travel to reach his Holy Kingdom, with a guide to help us on the way (*John 14: 1-21*). I was reminded of the late Peter Pay’s modern interpretation of Psalm 23. *[Editor]*

The Lord is my Satellite Navigation System,
I shall not go astray.
He helps me to choose the best routes,
He guides me to my destination,
He knows where I am.
He leads me in the right paths for His name’s sake.
Yea, though I ignore your suggestions or take wrong routes,
You will neither get angry nor desert me,
For you are always ready to guide me,
Your screen and your words they comfort me.
Your recalculated routes they get me back on track;
If I follow your word I need never be lost.
Surely paths and points of interest shall sustain me all of my journey;
And I shall reach my destination in the Lord’s Heavenly Kingdom.

Peter Pay

YOUR SUMMER ECO TRAVEL GUIDE

Summer is a great time to go away... Who doesn't like to spend time out and about in the sunshine, exploring new destinations?

It is only half of the UK population that will take an international flight in a typical year, but the British fly abroad more than any other nation. This is not great news for the environment, due to the impact of flying. Personally, I have made a pledge not to fly, but this is often not possible for anyone with far-flung family and friends.

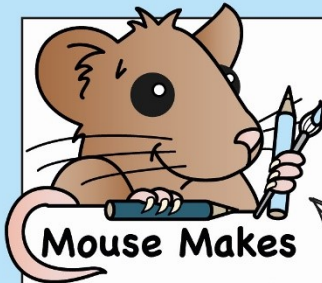


An Ethical Consumer magazine recently created a hierarchy of travel (EC197). To lessen your impact, try 'travelling' in the following ways (1 is best, 7 is worst).

1. Digital communication. This is not physical travel, but allows you to 'visit' others via Zoom or similar. It may not feel like travel, but saves the environmental impact. Not recommended for holidays, but useful for meetings!
2. Walking and wheeling (wheelchairs). An easy alternative for short or medium distances! Do you need to get in the car to visit a local shop or café, or indeed to come to church? It's better for your health, too.
3. Cycling. Another excellent form of exercise, with minimal environmental impact.
4. Public shared transport. If you want to travel further, why not pick a destination that you can travel to by train, coach or ferry? Please note that cruises are not included here!
5. Electric vehicles. If you decide to replace your car, consider looking at an electric vehicle. Hybrid vehicles offer benefits too, as long as they are running on their batteries.
6. Internal combustion engines and car sharing. Offering lifts will help to lessen the impact of a traditional petrol engine.
7. Air travel. New solar and hydrogen powered planes are ideas for the future, with experts working hard to find ways of reducing emissions. In the meantime, please consider carefully whether you 'need' to book a flight, or whether you can find an alternative.

Other ways to reduce your impact while away could include looking for venues with sustainability at their core, rather than mainstream hotels. Consider finding locally-owned accommodation, shops and restaurants, to support local economies and artisans. Lastly, remember your reusable, refillable water bottle or mug, to help you avoid throw-away alternatives—and don't forget to enjoy the summer sunshine!

Grace Bagshaw



READ the full story
in the book of Jonah



What swallowed Jonah?

A big _____

How long was he there?

three _____ and
three _____

Jonah 1:17

JONAH'S JOURNEY

Which city did **God**
tell **Jonah** to go to?

and why?
Jonah 1:12



Where did Jonah
try to go instead?

What did he travel in?

Jonah 1:3

What did God send to stop him?

A great _____

What did Jonah tell the **sailors**
to do to make the sea **calm**?

him into the **sea**
Jonah 1:4-16



What did Jonah do?

then what did the fish do?
Jonah 2:1-10

DID YOU KNOW?

In Bible
times wearing itchy
sackcloth made from
goat's hair was a sign of
grief and repentance



When Jonah reached Nineveh
he proclaimed God's **message**...

the city would be overthrown in
_____ days
Jonah 2:1-10

What did the people do?

F _____
What did they put on?

Jonah 3:1-9

What did God do?

R _____
Jonah 3:10

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

Find the missing words. Look up the Bible references then
look for them and the words on this page in **bold** in the word search