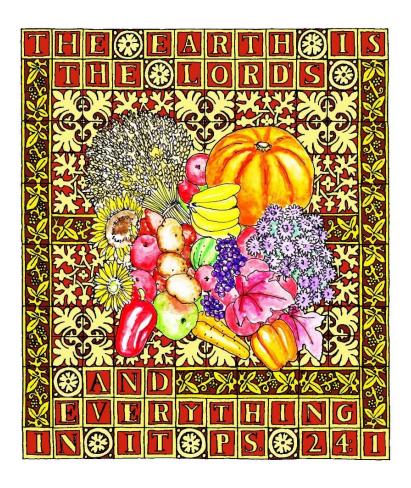
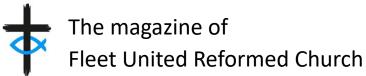
InTouch

Autumn 2023





FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



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www.facebook.com/fleeturc

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CHURCH CONTACTS

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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

'Footsteps' Young People's Group: Sundays, 10 am (term time only)

Pilates Mondays, 12.15-1.15 pm
Coffee Morning: Wednesdays, 10–11.30 am

Toddlers Group: 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.

I hope you have all had a good summer. Although some of our regular activities have had a break, and many of you have been away, we have had some new and exciting events this August.

We had a full church on 11th August at the Trumpet Concert given by Kieran Booker, who certainly gave us an amazing evening. We wish him well on his term in Canada, experiencing many new challenges. It was a pleasure to be able to support him.

On Friday mornings in August the hall, and sometimes the garden, have been full with children and their parents and carers enjoying fun with paint, water, junk modelling, and other crafts. I had an idea that this summer our building would be ideal to run a session to help families with children of primary school age to have a morning of fun with no cost. Chatting to some of them, it is clear that, with prices rising, a holiday has not been possible for everyone this year. To be able to come along to one activity and find something for everyone has therefore been greatly valued.

So I want to thank those church members who volunteered to help out with something a bit different and a bit of a leap into the unknown. It was great to see the children enjoying themselves and the parents and grandparents having time to chat.

I do believe that part of our mission as a church is to welcome people of all ages and offer something fun! I did tell a Bible story each week, and I hope that we might offer some similar activity sessions later in the autumn.



Having fun at our summer activity mornings

We thank God for the opportunity to welcome people to our building and to offer them a little love. We do not know how God will grow the seeds we sow, but perhaps the Family Fun mornings were one answer to prayer for some families, and that is a huge privilege.

I have been minister at Fleet for a whole year now, and it has been a very rewarding time for me, so I would like to thank you all for your encouragement and support, and say that I look forward to ministering with you in the days and weeks to come.

Blessings

Helen

'THANK YOU' FROM KIERAN

To everyone who came to watch my Trumpet Recital on Friday, 11th August, and donated towards my term abroad in Toronto, I'd like to say a huge thank you. It was great to have such a large, supportive audience in front of me whilst I performed. All the money raised will help me immensely once I arrive in Canada.

A special thanks goes to Carol Ainsworth and Steve English for providing the teas and coffees after the recital.

Thank you again for all the support, and I will let you know how my travels are going once I get to Canada!

Kieran Booker

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Church House wishes to say a big 'thank you' to all URC members for their commitment to meet—and in many cases exceed—their Ministry and Mission requests for 2022 and 2023. Those commitments managed to turn around an anticipated £1.9 million deficit into a £600,000 surplus, with the help of investment returns.



The funding of stipendiary ministers is calculated on a formula which takes into account the direct and indirect costs of employing ministers, church related workers, Synod and Church House employees, together with other associated costs, plus the total number of members as declared at the previous year end.

On average it costs £486 per church member to employ a full-time minister, of which £325 covers direct costs, £75 indirect costs, and £85 other costs. This commitment falls on all churches, whether or not they have a stipendiary minister: it is merely a mechanism to cover the costs. As a church we pay £2,021 per month into the fund.

General Assembly is committed to finding a fairer way of covering the costs, and in 2025 it will consider a new scheme, yet to be devised. Therefore in 2024 the current arrangements will continue to apply, and we are being asked to consider 1% or 2% additional contribution. Church Meeting on 3rd September agreed to meet a 1% uplift, taking our monthly Ministry and Mission payment to £2,041. Synod will be informed of our decision by 30th September 2023.

John Gibbons, Fleet URC Treasurer



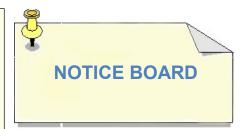
SERVICE OF REMEMBERING

A quiet service to remember loved ones who have died will be held on **Sunday 29th October**, at **3 pm**.

The service will be followed by refreshments.

Contributions for the Winter issue of InTouch magazine
(December 2023—February 2024)
should be with the editor,
Christine Gibbons, by
12th November. Thank you.

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



BEETLE DRIVE

Saturday, 7th October at 7 pm

Save the date for our next Beetle Drive!

Once again this will be a free event, just for fun.

Adults and children both welcome.
Light refreshments will be served,
and there will be prizes!

Carol Rayner (07909 632511)

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SERVICES

Dates of our next afternoon services are:

26th September and 31st October, at 2 pm.

Please contact Moray Henderson or our Minister, Helen, if you would like more information.





BIBLE STUDY DATES

Tuesdays, 3rd & 17th October
Tuesdays, 7th & 21st November
All meetings start at 2 pm.
Everyone welcome



HARVEST THANKSGIVING & PARADE SERVICE

Our Harvest Festival and parade service will be held on **Sunday, 1st October.**

(All donations to Hart Foodbank)

A PRAYER FOR THE AUTUMN



Dear Lord

It feels like that time of year again. The days are getting shorter, and all around the plants are showing off their fruits. You have made us cyclical people: seasons of the year, day and night, all make their mark on our lives. We ask your blessing on farmers whose lives are governed by this pattern, and we thank you for all who work ceaselessly to feed livestock and cultivate the land

in order that we may eat, and that they may have a living.

Help us to keep our vision broad, Lord, and we ask you to bless the many whose crops fail year after year in Africa and other places, where famine is a killer disease. Thank you for the Aid Workers who experience hardship to help with education for better crop results, and to teach new irrigation systems. Let us not grow weary in our prayers and our giving.

Before winter comes, September brings change for many children and young people. Please be with those who are starting or changing schools, and older ones who are seeking the way forward, maybe via college or university, or as an employed apprentice. Please give them clear vision, peace of mind, and commitment to their new situation. Anxious parents also need your peace of mind as adjustment to a new level of parenting comes into play.

Help us all, Lord, as we face the rigours of cold weather, and rising costs of fuel and food. We ask you to bless and guide our government over the difficult decisions that must be made. The electorate is so diverse, it is impossible to please everyone. We pray especially for the many refugees across the world, all seeking a better life. Many seem to make this country their goal; sadly, unlike Dick Whittington, they are not finding the streets paved with gold. Help us to be generous within our capability, whether it be financial, food bank donations, or just a smile and a kind word when the opportunity arises.

We pray for your gracious wisdom in relation to the strikes which impact us so seriously. In particular we think of the NHS and the railway workers. It must be desperate for these people, at all levels of employment, to take such drastic action. We pray for the leaders, that they may have compassion for all who suffer as a result.

As a church, we praise you that we are still here, despite concerns during Covid lockdown. We have a new Minister, and are so grateful to her and to you for answering our prayers so wonderfully. Keep us faithful to your commission, left to us by Jesus, and may we not lose heart.

Thank you, Lord, for everything you mean to us. May our lives reflect this as we go forward into Autumn.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Margaret Tracey

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CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2023

Christian Aid's Cake and Plant sale was held on 20th May, and again we held it in the car park behind St Philip and St James's Church on Kings Road. We raised £863.84, and enjoyed a lovely afternoon of plants, cakes

and fellowship. The weather was very kind to us. We had been watching weather forecasts with an eagle eye, as if it was an Olympic sport, but all was good on the day: lovely sunshine and no rain!

The church raised £237 with our envelope collection. This was an amazing total and we say 'thank you' for your generosity.

Linda Storey & Liz McClune





CfL: A MESSAGE FROM KEVIN SNYMAN

Commitment for Life was strongly represented recently at the biggest ever climate protest to be held in the UK. The event was organised by Extinction Rebellion, and supported by Christian Aid, Global Justice Now, War on Want, Rewilding

Britain, the NHS workers, Tear Fund, CAFOD, and a whole host of churches, including the United Reformed Church.

Climate disruption affects everyone on the planet, but has an exponentially adverse effect on our partners in the global south. Droughts, floods and poor food production are going to get worse unless rich people and nations fundamentally change the way they behave. Every person's voice matters, and when we stand together governments have to listen, even if doing so risks the profits of the wealthy, to whom governments too often owe their allegiances.

We have so little time to act before runaway climate disruption becomes unavoidable. But, there is HOPE!

Thank you for all that you do in support of a world breaking through all our anxious uncertainties: a world characterised by peace, equality and justice; a reality that Christians often call, 'The Kingdom of God'. Let's work and pray for our partners in Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and the occupied Palestinian territory, and celebrate the good news stories as displayed on our notice boards. Your kindness when you purchase one or more of the small items for sale in our church foyer really does help.

Thank you.

Kevin Snyman, URC Programme Officer for Global Justice and Partnerships

FLEET ANGELS

It was great to be able to share with you at Fleet URC recently. For those of you who weren't there, here is a little update on the work of Fleet Angels:

Fleet Angels, which was set up by Churches Together in Fleet and Church Crookham over 15 years ago now, still has an active presence in Fleet town centre on Saturday evenings. In essence, the Project aims to make the town centre a better, safer place, and to be a practical expression of the love of God to all those who are out and about in the town late at night, enjoying the Night time economy. Now that the Project has become an accepted part of the night scene, the Angels are recognised and appreciated, as they provide hot drinks, biscuits and lollypops. There are always interesting conversations and intrigue, as to why we do what we do, and when the time is right we are always willing to share our faith.

The Project is staffed currently on two Saturday evenings per month, from 22:00 to 02:00, by a team of four volunteers, ideally with both a male and female mix. Our volunteers have a lot of fun (even in the pouring rain!), and have never encountered any antagonism or danger. We base ourselves in the car park behind the Emporium Pub, from where we serve our hot drinks. You will also see us patrolling Fleet Road, engaging in conversation, and looking out for anyone who may need assistance.

Our Project is underpinned by prayer. We have a prayer letter that goes out once a month to update folk on what we have been doing and to ask for specific prayer needs for the coming month.

If you are interested in receiving our prayer letter, which comes by email, or would be interested in finding out how to become a volunteer, please do be in touch. We would love to have you on board!

Please contact me on 0797 2597130, or at fleetangels23@gmail.com.

Janet Alston



Our stall all set up to serve the community



We even have Bailey, a 2 year old Golden Retriever, patrolling with us occasionally

QUIZ NIGHT

We will be holding another of our popular Quiz Nights, so be sure to put the date in your diary:

Saturday, 23rd September at 7 pm.

The cost will be £5 per person—payments to John Gibbons (07900 908990). Come with a team of up to six people, or join a team when you arrive.



Bring your own drinks and nibbles. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. An evening of fun is promised, with Colin McClune as your quiz master.

All are welcome!

AUTUMN CRAFT & GIFT FAIR

Saturday 4th November 2023 10 am—3 pm

Our ever popular annual Craft Fair will be returning this year on the first Saturday in November. This is always a good opportunity to buy your Christmas presents, cards or decorations.

I will be looking for volunteers to help set up on Friday 3rd and clear up after the event. Please let me know if you can help in any way—speak to me at church, or ring/text me on the number below.

Bee Griffiths welcomes any items that she can sell on her bric-a-brac stall, 'Bee's Bargains'. Unwanted gifts and nearly-new items will be gratefully received. Higher value items can be sold at a silent auction.

Steve English will be in the kitchen sustaining us with refreshments, including his delicious home-made soups. Contributions of cakes or traybakes will be much appreciated.

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

Carol Rayner, 07909 632511



CHRISTMAS ANGELS



Hello Angel knitters!

The enthusiasm of you knitters is still there and I know that some of you are already knitting for this year. There is still a lot of interest in our Angels within the local community, and I hope that those of you who have assisted in the past are all happy to continue with this outreach.

A date for your diaries: the Blessing Service will be held on **Sunday, 26th November at 4 pm**, hosted by

All Saints Parish Church, Fleet. Distribution will start from 2nd December, and we will be delivering ours in the town as usual.

The Angels will be delegated to churches in batches of 50, to ensure that everyone gets enough to spread the good news of Christmas in this way.

Labels can again be collected from LivingStones, as can spare wool and patterns. Any problems or queries, please contact me at darrell.henderson@ntlworld.com, or text or phone me on 07757 508549 or 01252 659569.

Many thanks in advance.

Darrell Henderson, Fleet URC



TOILET ROLL APPEAL

We have received a request from Brita Coleman, on behalf of a local group working with Caritas, a Catholic charity which aims to serve the poor and to promote charity and justice throughout the world.

Brita supports low income and struggling families in the Basingstoke/Hook/ Fleet area. These families often have unsettled lives and find communication difficult. They often tend not to seek help, even when there is an urgent need.

In particular, Brita has identified a shortage of toilet rolls, where families have to 'borrow' rolls, or use whatever they can find. She writes, 'It isn't just a pack of toilet rolls, as I am their personal safe space by their front door, so they open up to me gradually. Much comes out on the doorstep—some of it shocking, so I end up back at my church in prayer.'

Church Meeting has agreed that we support Brita's request. A labelled box will therefore be available on Sundays for our donations. Perhaps, through the year, when we buy our own toilet rolls, we could buy an extra pack for a low income, struggling family?'

Thank you for all the help you are able to give.

Christine Gibbons

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD—WOODLOUSE: FRIEND NOT FOE

How often, when you are gardening, do you move a flower pot, turn over a rock, move a piece of wood or other debris, to be greeted by quite a few common rough woodlice? Flat, oval and uniform grey, with a thick bumpy exoskeleton, they have seven body segments, each with a pair of legs.

As well as decaying wood, woodlice feed on leaf litter, fungi, fallen fruit, dead animals, and even faeces. They even eat their own excrement (nice to know!) They do this to recycle copper in their diet, as their blood is copper-based, like marine crustaceans. Woodlice also play a vital role as nature's decomposers, which is why your compost heaps are woodlouse heaven!

Woodlice make a distinctive bad smell by excreting ammonia through their shell. As a result, many local names for woodlice liken them to pigs, such us 'chiggy pig' (Devon), 'gramersow' (Cornwall), 'sow bug' and 'woodpig'. You can test this by keeping woodlice in a jar for a short time and sniffing the air inside—a new hobby for you! (Let me know your thoughts on this!)

Woodlice breed in summer, and the females carry the eggs in a ventral pouch under their thorax, like a marsupial. The young are born in this pocket and develop there for about forty days then, once out, undergo moults for their growth until they have reached sexual maturity at one year.

When it is time to moult—usually every two months, a woodlouse will stop eating for a couple of days, then its 'skin' will split in the middle, shedding the back half and then, a few days later, the front half. They only shed a half at a time, which makes them different from insects. They have tidy habits as well, as they eat their old discarded skeleton!



Woodlice have 14 legs, but are born with only 12. They gain their extra two after their first moult. Amazing, getting an extra pair of legs when you reach maturity... on my 21st birthday I only received the key to the door!

One more fact: in the past, woodlice were often carried in a small pouch attached to a cord around the neck. They were swallowed as a cure for stomach aches and other minor ailments. It is possible that the calcium carbonate in their shells is able to neutralise stomach acids—although I confess I have not had the courage to test this theory!

Darrell Henderson

[Illustration: Eve Chevalier]





PALANI MISSION UPDATE

In a recent update received from Revd John Abraham he outlines the work undertaken in 2023 to date. Our 2023 Palani donations, derived entirely from the Curry Night meal ticket sales in February,

combined with the amount carried over from 2022, totalled £2,047. The funds were transferred to Palani in late March.

Revd John says that the money has been used to benefit the community in the following ways:

- To fund the final tuition and examination fees of our sponsored nurses, Priya and Leela, who both passed the course with distinction, and took up their places as qualified community nurses in paid employment with the Mission hospital.
- To construct two metal framed houses for Christian families, the Thangamani and Arumugam families. Both homes are used for Sunday worship and weekly prayer groups. Mrs Thangamani does not enjoy good health, and is physically very weak, but has to work to support her family.



Mrs Thangamani

3. To provide medical help for the poorest of families. Patients with epilepsy, heart disease and skin problems have all been treated, and minor surgery carried out. In all, 19 patients have received health care that would otherwise have been denied to them because they could not pay.



Traditionally-built houses cannot withstand the monsoon rains

From the outset of our partnership it was understood that the sponsoring of the young health care nurses would eventually slow, as the scheme was dependent upon them moving into permanent paid employment. This is now the case, as the hospital can recruit only one nurse for the 2024 programme. Chira has been selected, as her father recently passed away following a stroke, and she now becomes the sole provider for her mother and two sisters.

We have also been approached to consider funding the training of a young boy, Saravanan, who wants to become an engineer and is studying at the local polytechnic. His family is very poor, and must take out a loan for his second year, which they cannot afford.

Revd John says, 'We remember with heartfelt gratitude the efforts you have taken for the welfare of Palani Mission, since you came to know about the ministry here.' He concludes by quoting from Hebrews 6, verse 10: 'God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love that you have shown His people as you help and continue to help them.'



Newly-built metal framed house

Our next fund-raising Curry Evening for Palani will be held on Saturday, 18th November—further details to come.

John Gibbons



OCEAN STARS UPDATE

It is not long now until my much-awaited trip to Sri Lanka. We will be departing on Tuesday, 17th October, and with not long left I am looking to round up my fundraising efforts.

Thank you to everybody who has made a donation to 'Save Your Silver' so far. The final date for silver (and copper!) coins to be brought in is Sunday, 1st October.

All contributions of any amount, large or small, will be highly appreciated.

My latest sponsored event was to cycle '100 Miles in May'. Part way through this I realised I would complete the challenge well before the end of the month, so I decided to increase the target to 150 miles. This I achieved near the end of the month. I would like to thank everyone who sponsored me and helped to raise an amazing £699 (not including Gift Aid).

Finally, as the trip is with a charity we have a generous luggage allowance, and will be able to fill up spare space in our bags with essentials that are hard to find in Sri Lanka. There will be a box available for any donations, all of which are welcome. Below is a list of suggested items:

- Soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, female deodorant, male spray deodorant, new hair accessories.
- Scissors, children's scissors, boxes of erasers, Sellotape, boxes of sharpened pencils, glue sticks, chubbie wax crayons, chubbie paint markers.
- Self-adhesive foam shapes, self-adhesive gems, stickers.
- Balloons, bubble machines, bubbles, skipping ropes, sponge balls, playdough pots, small wind-up torches.

Thank you again for all your support.

Alice Bagshaw

STAND BY ME

One of the children we sponsor, Laurith Daniela Iglesia, who lives in Colombia, celebrated her 11th birthday in August. Our church sent a monetary donation as a gift for her, as we do for all three children we sponsor on their



birthdays and at Christmas. Our two granddaughters, Isla and Eden, also turned 11 in August, and they both wrote to Laurith and sent cards too.

We were delighted to receive individual replies from Laurith, as well as a photo and a general 'thank you' letter to our church, translated from the Spanish as follows:

Dear Fleet United Reformed Church

How is everybody? I am very well, thank God.

It makes me very happy because you wrote to me again. I received your letter with great emotion and I want to thank you for remembering my birthday. I turned 11, and I tell you that I played. They organised a party for me with my two friends, my aunt, cousins, and my sister who is two years old. When the meeting was over we started to play, and then the next day we went to the river and I continued to enjoy time with them.

At the Care Centre they celebrated all the children who had a birthday in



August. They took us to a restaurant and gave us some very nice gifts. I'm sending you a photo, so you can see mine.

Thank you very much for sending me such a beautiful card. I saw that it has the number 11, and it is my favourite colour, which is pink. I'm going to keep it in a special place where I keep everything you send me.

Thank you very much for all the congratulations you send me. Please tell everyone that I have them in my heart.

With all my love, Laurith

You can see how much our letters and cards mean to our sponsored children. If you feel able to write a note or send a card to Laurith, Arsema or Pau Sian Muang, I know they would love to receive it. You don't need to post it as it can be scanned and emailed to a central address. Please speak to one of *Footsteps* for more information.

Christine & John Gibbons



COMMON RECYCLING MISTAKES—AND HOW NOT TO MAKE THEM!

Mistake No 1: Thinking that recycling is 'the answer'... the way to fix things, to help the environment and, yes, to ease our consciences!

Recycling is still an absolute necessity to deal with the waste that we all produce in our everyday lives, but as Lindsay Miles of 'Treading My Own Path' says, 'Recycling is a Great Place to Start, but a Bad Place to Stop'. If recycling is where you have stopped, read on to find out what else you can do!

Mistake No 2: Believing everything you read.

Many companies hype up their green credentials ('greenwashing') whilst not giving you the full picture. Is your product *really* as eco or recyclable as it claims? Is the packaging truly recyclable (see Mistake No 3)? Is there an alternative that is reusable rather than recyclable? Is there an alternative with less packaging or better packaging? Do you really *need* it?

Mistake No 3: Assuming you know what is recyclable, and putting what you 'think' is recyclable in the bin.

This is known as 'wishcycling'. You have all seen the yoghurt pot or plastic container with the arrows making up a triangle. This means that the product is technically recyclable, but does *not* mean that it will be recycled if you put it in the bin. Every time a plastic item is recycled, it loses quality. In Hart you can only put bottle-shaped plastic (defined as anything with a 'neck') in the recycling bins, as this is the best quality plastic. Anything else will have



already been recycled at some point, and will be of poorer quality. If you put it in your recycling bin, it has the potential to contaminate what can be recycled.

Wishcycling is a big problem. One of the biggest things you can do for recycling is to make sure you are putting the right things in any bin, whether that's the milk bottle lids and foil boxes in church, the WEEE or rag recycling bins left out by councils, or your blue bin at home.

A reminder of what is accepted in Hart's recycling bins: Bottle-shaped plastic; tins, cans and empty aerosols, eg cola or baked beans; metal lids, eg beer, jam; paper and card... this can have some grease on it, eg a fish and chip wrapper, but should not have actual food on it. (DO NOT recycle shredded paper, tissue paper, wrapping paper OR paper towels, as the quality is too poor.) DO NOT bag items; please put them in loose. As Hart's own website says, 'If in doubt, leave it out!'

Grace Bagshaw

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

