

InTouch

Winter 2024—25

THE HOLLY



& THE IVY



The magazine of
Fleet United Reformed Church



FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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www.facebook.com/fleeturc

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

<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
<i>Bible Study & Prayer Group:</i>	Please contact the Church Secretary for details of current meetings.

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 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTER



Dear Friends,

This Advent and Christmas we will be exploring the messages of the angels in the Gospel stories of Jesus' birth. Angels are messengers from God, and they brought surprising news to ordinary people who found themselves chosen to be part of God's plan for all people.

Many of the angels begin their messages with the words 'Do not be afraid'. I am sure that an angel's appearance was quite a fearful thing, yet

these messengers were anxious not to be frightening, but to bring a message of encouragement and joy.

In today's world, where our news seems to be of war and disaster, we can be messengers of encouragement and joy this Christmas. Our services, getting together with family and friends, receiving news of loved ones, exchanging presents—all these things enable us to be like those angelic messengers, bringing good news of great joy for everyone. The gift of Jesus born not into privilege but into an ordinary family which knew difficulties and dangers as well as joy and love, this is the child we welcome this Christmas. The good news we celebrate is not just for us, but for everyone in our community. It is for those who have had a difficult time as well as those who have known happiness. It is our gift to those around us, to bring a little light and hope this Christmas.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas,

Helen



FOCUS ON PRAYER

In our services and Bible studies in January and February we will be considering prayer—how we pray, and how we might breathe new life into our prayers. Following on from our conversations as part of our Child and Youth Friendly Church award, we have had a few new ideas about how to bring prayer to life in the church, and we have plans to make some attractive prayer stations to encourage all who come into the building to offer prayers if they wish.



A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Dear God

Thank you for the gift of your son Jesus, who brings your love into our story.

Just like all those in the story, may we welcome you into our lives this Christmas.

Thank you for your story.

Thank you for our story.

Amen

(from URC Children Resources)



CHRISTMAS GIFT SUNDAY

Our Gift and Parade Service this year will be on **Sunday, 1st December at 10 am**, and will be led by our Minister.

This year our gifts will be supporting two appeals:

Cash gifts will be used to purchase shoes for children in desperate circumstances via the charity, Stand by Me.

There is detailed information about this appeal on page 14 of this magazine.

Physical gifts will be donated to the Fleet Phoenix Christmas Toy Appeal. Fleet Phoenix is a local charity supporting young people locally and they have requested gifts for children and young people aged 0—18. Toys and games are welcome, but they would particularly like presents suitable for teenagers, eg gift boxes of toiletries, selection boxes, fluffy socks. All gifts should be new, unused and in their original boxes. Please do not wrap them. They will be distributed to local young people in need.

You can read more about the work of Fleet Phoenix here: <https://www.fleetphoenix.co.uk/aboutus>.

Thank you for helping us to support these two very worthwhile charities.





FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SERVICES
2024



Everyone is warmly invited to join us for any
or all of our Advent & Christmas services.
We look forward to welcoming you!

All services will be led by our Minister, Revd Helen Everard,
unless stated otherwise

Sunday 1st December—1st Sunday in Advent

10 am: Christmas Gift Service, with Rainbow, Brownie & Guide Parade
Gifts donated to *Stand by Me* (Cash) and *Fleet Phoenix* (Presents)

Sunday 8th December—2nd Sunday in Advent

10 am: Family Worship led by David Wong & Phebe Mann

Sunday 15th December—3rd Sunday in Advent

10 am: Family Worship with Holy Communion

2.30 pm: Quiet Christmas Service

A more reflective service for those who find Christmas a difficult
time of year, with music, readings and prayers.

Tuesday 17th December—Afternoon Service

2 pm: A Service of Carols and Communion

Sunday 22nd December—4th Sunday in Advent

10 am: Family Worship led by Revd Stephen Thornton

4 pm: Carols and Christingles, followed by refreshments

Monday 25th December—Christmas Day

10 am: A Christmas Day celebration



Refreshments will be served in the church hall after
all services, except for the 10 am services
on 22nd & 25th December.
Please join us for a further time of fellowship.





KNITTED CHRISTMAS ANGELS

Just to let you know that the Angel Blessing is to be held at Fleet Methodist Church on **December 1st at 4 pm**. We would love you to be there to send these works of art off to bring cheer and God's hope to the people who pick them up.

Thank you so much to all those who have knitted or crocheted angels this year.

Darrell Henderson



A PLEA—FLEET SCOOP

Fleet Scoop has been open for nearly six years, and for nearly as long I have been mentioning them in my eco articles in In Touch. They survived the pandemic and moved to bigger premises on Fleet Road (almost opposite the Waitrose end of the shopping centre).

Now they need your help! Fleet Scoop are struggling and, after the recent Budget when business rates were put up, they will need our support even more.

If you have never been in to Fleet Scoop, please take the time to visit and just have a look around to see what they sell. You may be surprised by the range of products they have and the very reasonable prices. You can take your own containers to fill, but they also have paper bags and a shelf of free jars and bottles that have been donated by other customers that you can use. It does work out cheaper to buy just the product and not the packaging as well!

If you have been to Scoop, but not recently or regularly, could you visit again—go once a month or once a fortnight, perhaps?

If you are unable to visit in person, could you follow them on Facebook? By sharing, 'loving', 'laughing' or commenting on their posts, it raises their profile. Everyone can do this. It won't take much to turn things around, and this shop really is a wonderful resource for our community, which helps so many to reduce their plastic use.

Thank you.

Grace Bagshaw

[\[https://fleetscoop.co.uk/\]](https://fleetscoop.co.uk/)

CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING

Wednesday, 18th December, 10—11.30 am

Party Food ~ Carol Singing

Join us for a morning of Christmas fun & friendship

Everyone welcome!

Dress Christmassy!



TUESDAY AFTERNOON SERVICES

Our next afternoon services will be on
**17th December, 28th January,
& 25th February at 2 pm**



NOTICE BOARD

PILATES AT FLEET URC

The last class for this session will be held on
9th December.

New session begins on
**Monday, 6th January,
12.15—1.15 pm.**

Join us at our fun and friendly class—all abilities welcome.



BIBLE STUDY DATES

Tuesdays, 14th & 21st January

Tuesdays, 11th & 18th February

All meetings start at **2 pm**

*Focus on Prayer
(see page 3)*

Everyone welcome!



Save the Date!

LE WEEKEND

2nd—4th May 2025

*A weekend away with friends
in Luneray, France*

(No need to speak French!)

Contributions are invited for the Spring issue of *InTouch* magazine (March—May 2025)

Please send them to the editor, Christine Gibbons, by

16th February. Thank you.

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



AUTUMN FAIR THANKS

Our annual Autumn Fair was once again a huge success, with 32 stalls offering a vast range of different crafts. Many of the stall holders commented on the friendly atmosphere, saying this was their favourite craft fair.

I would like to thank everyone who helped in the setting up and clearing up after the fair, those who baked cakes, our wonderful catering team, and anyone else who helped in any way. Without all your help the fair would not be possible.

All monies from the table hires was donated to Step by Step, a local charity supporting homeless young people.

Let's hope that next year's will be just as successful. Thank you all.

Carol Rayner



WHAT SORT OF CHRISTMAS CARD PERSON ARE YOU?



The time to send and receive Christmas cards has come around again—time for our annual shock at the cost of cards, and disbelief at what the Post Office intends to charge us to deliver them.

It seems there are three kinds of people when it comes to Christmas cards: the total abstainers, the total givers and the selective givers.

Abstainers write 'Happy Christmas, everyone' on Facebook, and consider the job well done. Total givers spend a fortune on cards and stamps and send them to everyone they know. Selective givers try to cut corners, but then cannot remember who sent who what, and as the cards pour through their door, spend time worrying....

However you do it, it is good to stay in yearly touch with your widest circle of friends and family. Proverbs points out that: *'Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.'* (Prov 25:25) Your loved ones will enjoy hearing from you!

<https://www.parishpump.co.uk>





CAROLS AND READINGS FOR CHRISTMAS



Sunday, 1st December at 3 pm

All Saints Church,
Church Road

Free Entry + Refreshments
Donations to Christian Aid

fleet Orchestra **Concert**

Community Orchestra in Fleet, Hampshire



Wednesday, 11th December, at 8 pm

Phyllis
Tuckwell
Hospice

'Music for a Nordic Night'

Ss Philip and James
Kings Road

Free Entry, with retiring collection
for Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice



Christmas
Concerts &
Celebrations

Fleet URC

CAROLS AND CHRISTINGLES

22nd December, 4 pm

Followed by Refreshments ~
Everyone Welcome!



CHRISTMAS CONCERT

with Hart Voices

Saturday 7th December, at 7.30 pm
at All Saints Church, Fleet

*A selection of Advent & Christmas carols,
along with an assortment of well known
Christmas songs to celebrate the festive season*

Tickets £18, under 16s £5 www.hartvoices.org.uk



WILDLIFE IN WINTER

Do you feed the birds in your garden? Approximately half of the UK population do. You don't need a big space, or even a garden to be able to support wildlife. If you have a window and a window sill, you can do it! Did you know that scientists at Oxford University, in collaboration with others, have discovered that in the last 40-50 years great tits' beaks have evolved to be longer in order to reach more easily into garden bird feeders. Isn't that amazing?

Like many people, I derive a great deal of pleasure from putting out bird food and seeing 'my' birds visit and take their fill. After taking part in the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch on several occasions, I decided to keep a log of how many different birds visit my garden. I counted them in the same way that they are counted in the Bird Watch, ie the greatest number of any species seen in your garden at any one time. I have seen a total of 28 different species*, the greatest number of any single species at one time being starlings at 14, and at least 75 individual birds have visited!



The Big Garden Bird Watch will be coming around again from the 24th to the 26th of January. It only takes an hour, so why not take part? In 2024, 9.7 million birds were counted, more than 610,000 people took part, and 12.1 million hours have been spent watching birds since 1979! If you want to take part but don't already put food out for the birds, you might want to start soon... it can take birds a while to find and trust a new food source.

A lot of bird food comes in plastic packaging, but it is perfectly possible to buy it without. Fleet Scoop sells fat balls, meal worms and bird seed 'loose'... just take your own containers (jars, Tupperware, take-away tubs—anything as long as it's clean!) I also buy fat blocks and sunflower seeds online from a company called 'Eyebrook Wild Bird Feeds': <http://www.eyebrookwildbirdfeeds.co.uk>. Eyebrook are a traditionally run family farm who are passionate about birds and conservation. They blend their seed recipes on the farm, with many of the seeds being homegrown. Their suet comes from another long established family farm with high environmental standards. Delivery and customer service is excellent and all packaging is recyclable and compostable (mine all comes in cardboard boxes or paper sacks). I have also heard good things about Ark Wildlife <http://www.arkwildlife.co.uk>, but have not tried this company personally.

Why should we feed the birds? Our wildlife needs as much support as it can get. There has been a noticeable lack of insects over the Summer of 2024. Insects form a large part of some birds' and mammals' diets. Bat conservation groups have reported starving and underweight bats, often juveniles. Birds will have been in a similar position. Natural food shortages can occur at any time of year, so feeding our birds all year round helps to ensure that birds survive these hunger gaps. And the reward? Knowing that you are doing your bit to help our British wildlife, along with the pleasure of seeing our feathered friends feasting on tasty morsels. Happy birding!

Grace Bagshaw

*Species I have seen in my small garden: blackbird, blue tit, bullfinch, chaffinch, coal tit, collared dove, crow, dunnock, fieldfare, goldfinch, greater spotted woodpecker, greenfinch, herring gull, heron, jackdaw, jay, long tailed tits, magpie, nuthatch, pigeon (feral), pigeon (wood), redwing, robin, sparrow, sparrowhawk, starling, thrush, tree creeper

STOP PRESS: As of 10th November we can now add ring necked parakeet to the birds that have visited our garden!



ALTERNATIVE GIFTS—STAND BY ME

If you often struggle to find a meaningful gift for someone who has everything, then why not purchase a gift for a child who has nothing?

Purchasing one of Stand by Me's alternative gifts is a special way to bless a child with the simple things that matter to them, whether that be a school bag to help them feel proud on their walk to school, a pair

of glasses to see the blackboard, or the gift of underwear to give them dignity so they can run and play without embarrassment.

Alternative gifts are simple to buy online, and one way that you and your loved ones can think of children less fortunate this Christmas.

Visit <https://standby.me/catalogue-priority> for more details and to order.

Helen Bailey

STAND BY ME

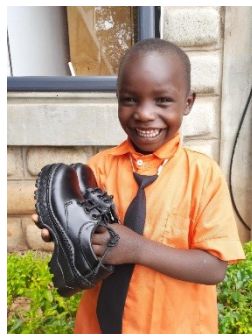
As you will be aware from previous magazines, members of Fleet URC generously sponsor three children each month through the charity *Stand by Me*. *Stand by Me* rescue children from terrible circumstances, and then provide the love, care and attention they need to thrive, which we have been able to witness in Pau, Arsema and Laurith's progress over the past three years.



For children in countries like Ethiopia, Nepal and Colombia, a journey of several miles on foot is not an excursion but a daily necessity; but protecting their feet is an afterthought and sometimes an impossibility. In these parts of the world, shoes are a privilege. An adequate pair marks the difference between a child who will engage in the joys offered by their childhood, and one who will be hindered and denied by disease and disability.

Stand by Me believe that every child should have comfortable shoes that fit well. Many of the children they welcome into their care have never owned shoes that protect their feet. So every year at Christmas, *Stand by Me* aim to try to provide each of the over 3,800 children in their care with a new pair of shoes to protect them from harm, and also remind them of the love and lasting support that surrounds them. Just look at the difference it makes:

"I am very grateful for the new school shoes I have. They are very nice and shiny. There is no hole in the bottom and my feet remain dry all day." *Justin, aged 5, Kenya*



Justin



"This is the first time that I get the opportunity to wear brand new shoes. I used to wear old and plastic shoes that others donated. I can't wait to wear them to school." *Hailemariam, aged 7, Ethiopia.*

This year at our Christmas Gift Service on **Sunday 1st December**, and throughout Advent and Christmas, we will be collecting money to provide as many pairs of shoes as we are able: one pair costs £12, but any donation will make a huge impact and help these children to walk tall, filled with joy and with the knowledge that their feet are protected and, possibly more importantly, that they belong. Thank you for all your support.

Helen Bailey, on behalf of 'Footsteps'

<https://www.standby.me/>

Hailemariam

'THE HOLLY AND THE IVY'



*The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown.*

This traditional Christmas carol has been popular for at least two centuries, but what is the significance of the holly and ivy?

Evergreen plants like holly, ivy and mistletoe were used for thousands of years to decorate buildings during the long dark winters. The Romans exchanged evergreen branches in January to wish each other good luck. The ancient Egyptians brought palm branches into their home during the mid-winter festivals. In Britain, holly and ivy have been an important part of our Advent and Christmas decorations since at least the 15th and 16th centuries, when they were mentioned regularly in churchwardens' accounts.

The holly tree came to have a rich meaning in Christian symbolism, with the spiky leaves representing Christ's crown of thorns, and the red berries the drops of blood Jesus shed when he died on the cross. In Christian liturgy red is the colour of the Holy Spirit and recalls the fiery tongues that descended upon the Apostles when they received the Holy Spirit. The shape of the holly leaf is also said to resemble a flame.

Like holly, ivy was revered for keeping its leaves over winter, and was likewise associated with eternal life. It became a symbol of love, faithfulness and endurance because of its tenacious hold on surfaces. It has also traditionally been associated with healing, especially with the recovery of sick animals.

The rivalry between the holly and the ivy for mastery of the forest has its origins in ancient folklore. Holly was traditionally seen as a masculine symbol, growing upright and strong, and the ivy, twining and clinging, represented the feminine. In Christian symbolism the holly is said to represent Jesus Christ, and the ivy his mother, the Virgin Mary. In this traditional carol 'the holly bears the crown', and this may be why we hear no more about the ivy in later verses, which all refer to Christ's crucifixion. It would seem that this much-loved carol does not celebrate Christmas at all, but Christ's life and death on the cross.





FLEET URC AND PALANI MISSION—A PARTNERSHIP MADE IN HEAVEN!

Our curry evenings to raise money for the Palani Mission, situated in the Tamil Nadu state in southern India, have become a regular feature of our church calendar. They started life as cookery demonstrations by chef Saju Mathew, who cooked some of his grandmother's recipes which the audience then enjoyed in a meal. He also produced booklets of the recipes containing full cooking instructions, which were sold in aid of the Mission.

The cookery demonstrations later developed into full-scale Indian meals, which are so popular and enthusiastically supported by our church family and friends. Tickets are sold out within days of going on sale, and every penny of money raised from sales, gift aid receipts and food takeaways from the leftovers is sent to the Mission.

From the outset we decided that the money raised should be spent effectively and that projects should not only be self-sustaining, but produce further benefits to the local community. In 2016 our then minister, Ruth Dillon, accompanied by Bee and Gordon Griffiths, visited Revd John Abraham, leader of the Palani Mission, and agreed a programme of work to support the Mission in spreading the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ by immersing themselves totally in local culture.



From this inaugural visit came sponsorship of midwifery training, goat husbandry producing milk and meat, clothing and bric-a-brac manufacture providing work and sales. Subsequent years have seen new metal constructed houses to replace the mud brick ones, corrugated metal roofs to replace tree branches, midwives and community nurses employed by the Mission Hospital, a seven hundred foot freshwater well at the Mission site providing clean water for everybody, and a series of medical camps.

The needs and work are never-ending, and money raised in 2024 will sponsor the training of a community nurse, more metal framed houses to combat the monsoon weather, and possibly a medical camp.

The next curry night will be held in the Spring of 2025—watch our website for the date!

John Gibbons





COMMITMENT FOR LIFE (C4L)

Thank you again to those who have purchased from the items given to us by *Commitment for Life*. Every penny counts!

I have received a notice to let you know that a big thank you has gone out to all who donated to the URC's Gaza appeal. C4L is devastated by the violence in Gaza, and how it is affecting the people in that region.

We are gravely concerned for the entire population in the Gaza Strip. 'Nobody is safe, but still our partners are doing extraordinary work in the most extreme conditions,' said William Bell, Christian Aid's head of Middle East Policy and Advocacy.

If you wish to donate, please go to donate.giveasyoulive.com. We are nearly at our £20,000 target already.

Helen will be holding a *Commitment for Life* service in the New Year. We hope that you will join us.

Darrell Henderson



Chaplaincy

Supporting you when it matters most

**HEALTH CARE
CHAPLAINCY
VOLUNTEERS**



Frimley Health
NHS Foundation Trust

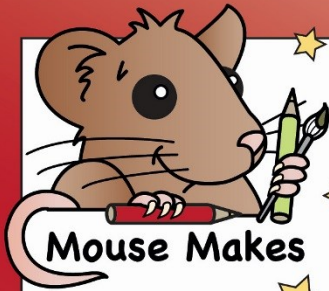
The Frimley Park Hospital Chaplaincy Team would like to recruit more volunteers from the local community to support the pastoral and spiritual work of the Chaplaincy Department within the hospital.

Supporting patients, and sometimes family, is immensely rewarding and makes a significant contribution not only to the wellbeing of patients, but also to the hospital and the wider community.

If you would like to know more, the Team are running a course for anyone who might be interested in exploring the role and all that is involved. This will start on **Tuesday, 14th January 2025**, and will last for six Tuesday evenings at Frimley Park Hospital. There is no obligation to complete the course should you feel this role is not for you.

For more information and to enrol on the course, please contact Revd Andrew Armitt, Chaplain, at the following address. Enrolment must be completed by **17th December 2024**.

Contact email address: fhft.ChaplaincyVolunteersFPH@nhs.net



Mouse Makes

“Jesus said,
I am the ___ Y
and the ___ U ___
and the ___ I ___.
No one comes to the Father
except through me.”
John 14:6

“The child to be born
will be called
H ___ , the
___ of ___ ”
Luke 1:35

“For unto you is born
this day a
S ___
___ who is
___ R ___
the ___ R ___ ”
Luke 2:11

THE GREATEST GIFT

“She will bear a son,
and shall call his name

for he will save his
people from their sins.”
Matthew 1:21

“Jesus said,
I am the

and the life.”
John 11:25

B L I G H T L O
R A Y W O J J R
E M M A N U E L
A B Y J E S O
D S A V I O U R
S A V R J S D

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

JESUS
—
THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL!

P R O P H E T I
R E D E E M E R
I E M I L I G
E M E S S I A H
S R M E G F T
T E A C H E R E

E V E R L A S T I N G
K I N G O F K I N G S
I N K I G W F D O U
S E S O N O F G O D D
S E W O C O U W O R D
C O U N S E L L O R U

EMMANUEL • MESSIAH REDEEMER • KING OF KINGS • WORD
SON OF MAN • EVERLASTING • SHEPHERD • PRIEST • PROPHET • TEACHER
LIGHT • BREAD • VINE • DOOR • LAMB • COUNSELLOR • CHRISTMAS • GIFT

Find the words from the Bible verses too!

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