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The Special Flame

Is Monday 16th July marked specially in your diary? Have you seen all the banners in the High Street? That's the day that the Olympic torch is passing through Petersfield. Will you be there? The Olympics are the greatest sporting event in the world. Eleven days later the Games begin, in London.

The torch and relay were important parts of the cultural festivals surrounding the Olympic Games of Ancient Greece. During the Games, a sacred flame burned continually on the altar of the goddess, Hera. In addition, heralds were summoned to travel throughout Greece to announce the Games, declaring a sacred truce for the duration. A very precise ritual for the lighting of the flame is followed at every Games. It is lit from the sun's rays at the Temple of Hera in Olympia, in a traditional ceremony among the ruins of the home of the ancient Games. After a short relay around Greece, the flame is handed over to the new host city at another ceremony in Athens. The flame is then delivered to the host country, where it is transferred from one torchbearer to another, spreading the message of peace, unity and friendship. It ends its journey as the last torchbearer lights the cauldron at the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony in the Olympic Stadium, marking the official start of the Games.

As a town, we are honoured to be part of this. As Christians, let's take part and be a welcoming presence and a friendly face for our visitors. Jesus is the light of the world, and let's focus on him as this special flame passes through our town. Let's pray that his presence will go with this flame, and that Petersfield and the surrounding areas will be blessed.