



November and
December 2023

In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in
Maidenhead and Marlow



Letter From our Minister

Dear friends,

Jo and I were fortunate enough to get to the beach during our holiday, which was great. But, upon reflection, there are two things I don't like about being at the beach: the sand, and the seawater. I know... and I still love being there!

The waves where we were, were quite rough. Sometimes bigger than we were, and powerful! Several times we were completely knocked off our feet, disorientated and left splashing around trying to regain our balance. What I hate about sea waves is the horrible salty taste in your mouth.

Is that how you feel about life recently? If the news that has been coming out of Palestine and Israel hasn't knocked you, if the ongoing war in Ukraine doesn't leave you floundering, if the continuing cost of living crisis hasn't spun you around, if the crisis of climate change hasn't left a bad taste in your mouth ... I'm not sure what will.

Life can feel like we are being battered by wave after wave. What can make you stronger is having a hand to hold. You may still get knocked over, but you can find your balance again.

That is the Christmas story. From the heat of the beach, to the cold and dark of Christmas – that is Christmas. God comes to be with us. God becomes vulnerable with us. God holds our hand to help us get our balance again. God becomes one of us, to be with us in the dilemmas of life.

When Jesus was born, the world had different problems. But it had big problems. Into those problems, God was born into us. The cross of Easter (spoiler alert) shows us again that God does not run from pain, in fact God can be found in pain.

Christmas isn't nice... it's a necessity! We don't believe in a far off, removed God. No. we hear the story that God was born among us and remains with us. God

will be with us as we worship. But God will be found in the grieving of Israel, the pain of Gaza, the destruction in Ukraine. God will be with us in our pain too.

How important is Christmas? What do you think?

In the chaos of the waves on the beach, I still found my balance. Perhaps in the story of Christmas, as we hear it unfold during our services, God can help us find our balance, lift us up, and set us on our way again. That we may be part of God's kingdom, but also that we might also be bringers of God to this world that is in so much need. Whatever you are going through, whatever weighs on your heart: God is with us. Don't forget.

May we find faith, hope and love this Christmas... the greatest of which, of course, is love.

God bless,

David Downing

Christmas Worship Highlights

I don't know about you, but Christmas feels a long way off. But it really isn't! This year Advent begins right at the start of December.

Friday December 15: A special night – **Jazz Carols!** Geoff Cronin will be bringing some of his jazz friends to Maidenhead. It will raise funds for **Aid for Ukraine** and will be a great way to invite friends and neighbours to share in our Christmas celebrations. More information will be available very soon!

Sunday 17: We will join together on **Zoom for morning worship** before meeting up in the afternoon at Maidenhead for our **Carols by Candlelight** service at 4pm. There will be no vigil for Ukraine that day.

Sunday 24: Christmas Eve

We will join together at 5pm in Marlow for our Christmas Eve worship with communion as we prepare for Christmas Day. You can take part in the 4pm Ukraine vigil in the church garden before moving inside for mulled wine, mince pies followed by the Christmas Eve worship. No morning services.

Christmas Day

We join together for our 10.30am celebration in Maidenhead.

New Year's Eve

We will prepare to welcome the new year together in Marlow at 10.30am.

By the time we start 2024 will we have sung all of our favourite carols as nominated by yourselves?

Worship at Maidenhead and Marlow

All services start at 10.30 unless stated otherwise

Date	Location and worship leader for Maidenhead	Location and worship leader for Marlow
5 November	Elders service Communion	Rev David Downing Communion and Church Meeting
12 November	Rev David Downing	No service at church CTM service: Marlow Cenotaph
19 November	Rev David Downing Zoom	
26 November	Rev Ray Stanyon Church Meeting	Rev David Downing
3 December Advent 1	Rev David Downing Communion	Linda Jackson
10 December Advent 2	Dr Phebe Mann	Rev David Downing Communion
17 December Advent 3	Rev David Downing 10.30 Zoom	
17 December	4pm Joint Candlelit service in Maidenhead	
24 December Advent 4	Rev David Downing 5pm Joint Christmas Eve service in Marlow	
25 December Christmas Day	Rev David Downing Joint Christmas Day service in Maidenhead	
31 December	Rev David Downing Joint service in Marlow	
7 January	Rev David Downing Communion	Bob Robertson

Advent Course for Everyone

We hope you will come to this course! But more than that... you can help shape the course itself.



What are your two favourite Christmas Carols? Each week we will look at two Christmas carols, comparing them and contrasting them, and seeing what they tell us about God. We may even end up disagreeing with our favourite carols!

Let me know your two favourite carols by email, text or message.

We will also find out the favourite Christmas carols in both churches. The course will be on Wednesday mornings 10.30-12 and includes time for coffee. Anyone can come, especially as we will also be Zooming it so that people can join us from wherever they are.

It doesn't matter if you are from Marlow, Maidenhead or if you've never been to a church event before – come and join us as we discover what our favourite carols tell us about God.

David Downing

Marlow diary dates

Ukraine collection days

Fridays from 10am – 12 noon and Sundays from 4.15 – 5pm.

Ukraine vigil

Sundays at 4pm

House Group

10.30am on the first and third Tuesdays every month: 7 and 21 November and 5 and 19 December at Doreen's house. For further information contact David.

Coffee mornings

Every Tuesday, 10.30 at the Ark Café at Marlow Methodist Church until November 28. The following week, on a day yet to be decided, it will become the Warm Hub Day (at Christ Church Marlow).

Church meeting

Marlow church meeting Sunday 5 November

Marlow Elders

Monday 13 November at 7.30pm at Christ Church URC

Monday 11 December at 7.30pm at Carole's house.

Marlow Warm Hub

The Elders will be recommending that we open again as a Warm Hub. We will discuss it a Church Meeting, but the plan is for us to open during December, January and February maybe 10-2pm.

We will be combining it with church coffee morning, but it will be a chance for ANYONE to come to the Cornerstone room for company and warmth! There will be tea and coffee and possibly a cup of soup as well.

More news at our Church Meeting

Maidenhead diary dates

Ukraine collection days

Saturdays from 10am -12 noon

Coffee Mornings

These will continue on Wednesdays at the Deli in the town centre at 11am until November 22. On November 29 they will change into the Advent course at Maidenhead URC 10.30-12.00 and on Zoom. There will be no coffee morning at Maidenhead on December 27.

Church meeting

Maidenhead church meeting Sunday November 26

Maidenhead Elders

Tuesday November 7, Tuesday December 5 at 4pm

Aid for Ukraine

Aid for Ukraine still carries on at both Maidenhead and Marlow churches to help Ewa in her distribution of much needed aid into Ukraine.

Donations have slowed down considerably but the kind donations of money mean we have cash to spend ... so a trip to Booker Cash and Carry just before a lorry is due has become a feature!

As relative newbies, we follow David round with our huge orange trollies, pulling items from the shelf while John zaps them with the zapper: toilet rolls, 20 giant packs please, tins of fish, tins of meat, washing up liquid, though not last time, then we come to the piles of Pot Noodles, different flavours. With five or six trollies piled high, thank goodness for the zapper and electronic checkout.



And don't forget to collect all the empty boxes they have! What an experience!

Alison Holton

Ukulele concert

Are you ready for a fun night out to support Ukraine?

Don't miss this one!

A Concert to Benefit Aid for Ukraine
SAT 18th November 2023
7:30pm to 10pm



ROCK **POP**

HITS FROM 5 DECADES! **RAFFLE**

at
United Reformed Church
Oxford Rd, Marlow, SL7 2NL
£10 on the door
incl. free glass wine/soft drink
DON'T MISS OUT!

Contact:
ukulelemondaysband@gmail.com



Israel and Palestine: thoughts from David

Now is not the time to point the finger of blame and judgement. If we start doing that, we act in the opposite way to God – God who shares in the suffering as revealed on the cross.

Now is the time to reflect on the appalling suffering that is growing. Ordinary people's lives are being lost and broken.

What is our response? Well we have one thing that some feel they don't have – the option to pray.

Here are some words that have been written by a URC minister (adapted), and a prayer. Use these as you feel able. We are about to enter into a season where the New Testament land of Palestine is going to become an absolute focus for our Bible stories. We cannot ignore it, nor cancel it from our past. We should remember that it was a tortured land even then.

Our prayers are not then a 'last resort'. They are indeed our 'first option'.

Where rockets and missiles and bullets prevail

GOD IS NOT GLORIFIED

Where dust and smoke and teargas fill the air

GOD IS NOT GLORIFIED

Where food and medicine are denied and water is cut off

GOD IS NOT GLORIFIED

Where land is seized and walled off and others are excluded

GOD IS NOT GLORIFIED

Where soundbite slogans of support override decades of complex history

GOD IS NOT GLORIFIED

GOD IS GLORIFIED

Where stories are heard and difficult truths are shared

GOD IS GLORIFIED

Where land is fruitful and all can flourish

GOD IS GLORIFIED

Where streams of living water bring healing to all

GOD IS GLORIFIED

Where the air is filled with music and laughter

GOD IS GLORIFIED

Where steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
Where righteousness and peace have kissed.
GOD WILL BE GLORIFIED.

Prayer: Lord have mercy

God of mercy,
we lay before you the hearts, minds and bodies
of all those suffering from violence
in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel.
Shower upon all the people of this holy land
the spirit of justice and reconciliation.
And so we pray: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

In you, Lord, all life is connected
and all the Earth and its land are to be cherished, not controlled.
Your gifts are for all.
Yet as we see the violence and hatred in the land called Holy,
and see the signs of climate breakdown,
help us all to work to live in communion.
And so we pray: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

As people of many religions remind us:
All humanity is connected, no one is really free until all are free.
Help us to pray for all in Israel and all in the Palestinian territories.
We pray for those who live in fear of the other;
For all who consider violence to be the way forward.
We pray for all who by acting in hate dehumanise themselves.
And so we pray: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

By LEANNE CLELLAND, posted by the Iona Community

Maidenhead Churches Together

At the time of going to print, there are several conversations happening about the crisis in the Middle East. I have been in touch with Rabbi Jonathan Romain

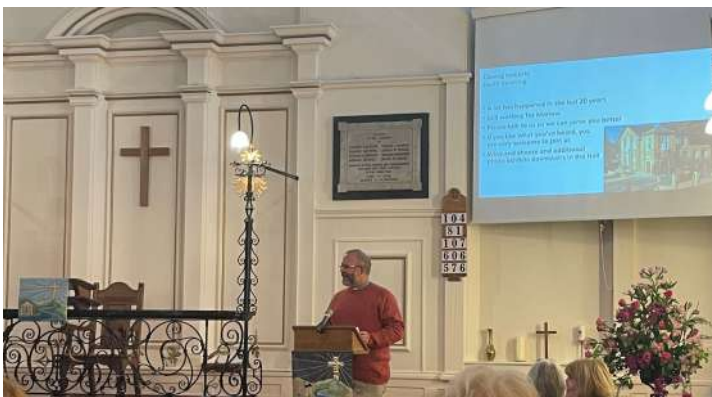
and other church leaders have contacted one or more mosques.

We are thinking of holding a vigil at some stage as we reflect on the great suffering that has happened and continues to unravel. Nothing confirmed as yet, but news will come if anything gets finalised.

David Downing

Celebrations at Marlow URC, 15 October

What a wonderful celebration Sunday turned out to be! Over 60 people came along to Christ Church URC to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the renovation and upgrade of the church building.



However, as David pointed out in his opening remarks, it was not the church building we were celebrating, but what the new building has enabled us to do as a church in the 20 years since the refurbishment.

Libby spoke about the various exhibitions we have organised such as the Zimbabwe Sculpture exhibition in 2010 which raised just under £20,000 for the Art Peace artists in Zimbabwe and the Out of the Dark furniture exhibition in 2012 which we arranged in partnership with the now famous Jay Blades. At that time he was running a charity in High Wycombe helping young people to learn carpentry and other skills by upcycling old furniture. Libby also mentioned the Zimbabwe concert we organised jointly with the Jacaranda Trust in 2018 and the 75 concerts organised by Music in Marlow, aka Jean and Martin Ashford!

I covered some of the ways we have served and continue to serve the community including the Volunteers' Forum we held in 2019, the redesign and opening up our garden so that it is now not only a much-used quiet haven for the community but also a venue for community events such as the weekly Ukraine Vigil, the Walk of Life we have established in the garden and the warm welcome space we offered at our church last winter.

David focussed on Christ Church's mission work in the wider world – acting as a hub for many years for Marlow's support for Christian Aid, providing support to refugees in Calais by opening as a donation centre for Marlow Refugee Action Group in 2017 and some church members going to Calais in 2018 to volunteer at a refugees' centre there, our current Aid for Ukraine project and our ongoing support for Art Peace in Zimbabwe. Martin gave more information about our work in Zimbabwe. He also spoke about the range of community groups in Marlow who use our building.

We were delighted that the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Coleen Stapley, and Buckinghamshire and Marlow Town Councillor Carol Heap both attended our event. Cllr Stapley said “We consider ourselves fortunate that our churches work closely with each other, as well as with the Town Council, fostering a spirit of unity and cooperation that truly enriches our community. One shining example of this collaboration is the Love Marlow Festival. The then Christ Church URC Minister served as the catalyst for this initiative, and other churches enthusiastically joined in. The primary aim of the Love Marlow Festival was to make our town a kinder, more caring place for everyone.” She went on to say “The Town Council welcomed the special service that Christ Church URC held for our town to mark the passing of the late Queen, underscoring their role as an anchor in times of both celebration and reflection.” Cllr Stapley ended by saying “As we look to the future, I look forward to continuing the excellent relations we have with both Christ Church URC and our other churches in Marlow. Our shared values of compassion, unity, and community spirit are the cornerstones of Marlow's strength and vitality, and together, we will continue to make this town a beacon of kindness and cooperation for all.”

Cllr Carol Heap spoke warmly about the work Christ Church does in the community, highlighting its involvement with the Community Board, as well as the Volunteers' Forum and the Warm Hub.

Finally Barbara Whitehead, Choirmaster of Marlow Music Makers regaled us with her memories of attending Sunday School at Christ Church some 80 years

ago before leading Marlow Music Makers in a moving rendition of “We Raise You Up” to end the formal part of the evening.

We then spent a very enjoyable hour or so reminiscing and chatting with each other over cheese and wine. And as with all church events, there was plenty to go round! A huge thank you to all who helped in any way as well as to all those who shared in our celebrations with us.

Valerie Brownridge

Not a farewell concert!



On Friday 29 September we bade farewell (for a short while) to our music Director Mateusz Rettner as he set off for a three-month sabbatical in his home country of Poland. Before he left, he gave us a delightful recital of piano music with pieces by Chopin, Scriabin, Szymanowski and Albeniz as a way of saying thank you to everyone for all the kindness he has been shown over the

time he has been with us. And of course, he's not left us in the lurch accompanist-wise as he has arranged for colleagues to cover for him while he is away.

Rest assured he is not leaving us for good and emailed me after the concert saying that it was so lovely to be able to catch everyone and say goodbye before he left, adding that he is very much looking forward to seeing us in January!

John Holton

Harvest Thanksgiving at Marlow

Geoff Cronin led the Harvest Thanksgiving service at Marlow on Sunday 22 October. He introduced us to a new harvest thank you hymn which was sung to the tune of “My bonnie lies over the ocean”! Thankfully this was one of the Sundays Bob Crawshaw was there to play the organ for us.

This year the produce donated included tins and dried goods as well as fresh fruit and vegetables. We raised £30 from the sale of the perishable goods. Paul kindly took this plus the rest of the donations to the One Can warehouse in High

Wycombe. I have reproduced below an extract from the letter they have sent us: “I am writing on behalf of the One Can Trust to thank you for your generous Harvest Thanksgiving service donation of food and £30.

As I am sure you are aware, the number of people being referred to our food bank for support is at record levels and continues to rise as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. We are now regularly supporting more than 650 local people each week. We are also working hard to try to break the cycle of poverty that confronts so many of the families we help.

We are therefore running cookery classes to help people improve their skills and confidence in the kitchen, half-term lunch and dinner clubs for families who are struggling and who cannot access free school meals, and a parent/toddler group for young parents who are in financial difficulties and suffering from social isolation...”

I wasn't aware of the range of activities which One Can support. There is so much need on our own doorstep. Thank you to everyone who donated so generously.

Valerie Brownridge

Maidenhead harvest donations



The Maidenhead service was led by David and donations were given to Maidenhead Foodshare. Local people are helped every day by Foodshare, and need more donations than ever in these days of financial hardship. Let's remember to keep supporting them whenever we can.

Remembering Elizabeth Shaw

It was with much sadness that we heard of the death of our friend Elizabeth Shaw at the end of August. Every Sunday she would walk across Kidwell's Park to our service in Maidenhead from her new home in Swift House to where she moved in 2018 to be near her daughters. On her first visit to us she made it quite clear she was looking forward to worshipping with us without any

responsibility – she was in her mid-80s.



At her funeral in the tiny Royal Wootton Bassett URC, it became clear why! The presiding minister had known her so well during her time there, first as wife of the Church Secretary then as Church Secretary herself after her husband died. She quietly took on so many additional roles and was a much loved pillar of the congregation. Hanging in the front of the church was the most beautiful red banner, one of many she skilfully sewed for the

church. Her skill extended to baking and the welcome in her home would be accompanied by a laden table of scones and cake.

She leaves behind her dearly loved two sons and two daughters and her seven grandchildren of whom she was rightly so proud. Elizabeth, we miss you at church and at our weekly coffee get-togethers.

Alison Holton

Remembrance: The War Graves Commission and The Pope

David has received the information below about a unique event. We hope that this mass will be available via a link. One of the Maidenhead churches may also screen it. We will share the information as soon as we can.

My name is Peter Francis and I normally attend mass at St Elizabeth's Church in Cookham. My day job is working for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission whose headquarters are in Maidenhead. We care for the graves and memorials to 1.7 million Commonwealth men and women who died during the World Wars.



*I hope this news might be of interest to you. **On 2 November, All Souls Day, His Holiness The Pope will celebrate mass from our war cemetery in Rome.***

<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2019300/rome-war-cemetery/>.

Mass will commence at 9.30 Central European Time.

Dolls, Sunflowers and Sleepovers

Maidenhead recently hosted a craft workshop organised by one of our Ukrainian



friends, Maria Petricec. She and others are raising funds for a printer for the unit that her two sons are fighting in (on the front line). They showed everyone how to make traditional cloth dolls and

painted sunflowers for the troops.

They also treated us to cakes! If you missed it, you would be welcome at the Marlow workshop on November 26 at 2pm.



I would like to share what our granddaughter (newly 4 years old) learned from the morning and the challenge she gave us:

‘We made a doll out of teeny bits of cloth. It was hard for me but a nice lady helped – well really she had to do most of it I think. The dolls were very pretty and the people in the place where they live wear clothes like that for parties. My new friend there had a dress like that. They like sunflowers too.

They don’t really live here. They live in another place but it’s scary there. So they can stay here. Did you know that some of them can’t go and live in their own house? They can’t get their toys or have sleepovers. Not even one night. That’s not nice. It’s because there are some people there who are really unkind.

Why are people unkind, Granny? If I’m unkind to my friend I have to think about what I said and why they are sad and I have to say sorry ... and I have to mean it. Then you can play together again. It’s not that hard. Other places maybe have unkind people too.

What are we going to do about those unkind people, Granny? So the nice doll people can go home. It’s not fair. You and Grandpa and your friends in church can maybe make it all better.’



Not sure how that's all going to work out, but we need to keep trying to make it all better.

The link to Maria's fund-raising page for the printer is:

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/mariia-petrinets-1?utm_term=vpJ2JxmYR

Liz Robertson

Another truck sets off for Poland/Ukraine

They say a picture is worth a thousand words so my article is primarily two photos – the first is the truck being loaded at Maidenhead URC on Monday 2 October and the second is the truck being unloaded a few days later in Tomaszow in Poland. For the first time we loaded through the side door in the church rather than the door at the back of the lobby. I don't know if it was because we used that door or because we had what seemed to be an optimal number of helpers or because we managed to get a good loading system going,



but we loaded the truck in 45 minutes which must be a record!

We know that Ewa took our much-needed donations into Ukraine the following week. Thank you to everyone who donated goods or money, everyone who manned the donation sessions, everyone who packed boxes and everyone who helped load the truck.

We have already

started collecting for the next one which I understand will be early December!

Valerie Brownridge

Save the Date ...

Evening of Friday 9 February 2024 – **Turning Wine into Aid for Ukraine.** A chance to discover more about wines from a wine expert ... and taste some! More details to follow!



And here is the next craft workshop in Marlow...

FOR UKRAINE
CRAFT WORKSHOP – MAKE A MOTANKA DOLL
& PAINT SUNFLOWERS



SUNDAY 26TH NOVEMBER, 2 PM

MARLOW UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

OXFORD ROAD, MARLOW, SL7 2NL

JOIN in the fun of making a doll

PAINT sunflowers for the soldiers

ENJOY coffee/tea and Ukrainian cake

KNOW you are helping those struggling in Ukraine

Charge: £10 or a donation so that a Ukrainian Mum here can buy a printer for the Unit where 2 of her sons are fighting on the front line.

Rev Peter Grimshaw: memories

We have always felt a close affinity with Peter because he married us way back in 1983, and he also shared a birthday with John, although he was a year younger. We were very sad to hear of his passing.

Diana & John Robertson

When Lyn and I first arrived in Maidenhead in 1977, one of our first priorities was to find a church to attend. Coming from a Baptist background, we tried various of the local churches, and I recall Lyn visiting the URC for an evening service, while I stayed at home to put the children to bed. He came home full of enthusiasm, and spoke of the lovely minister, so we all turned up for the service the following Sunday morning and remained!

In those days when we had a large Junior Church, Peter's children's addresses were very memorable. (Who remembers "Jimmy Lamppost"?)

Our families became close friends, with children of similar ages. When the Grimshaws lived in Courthouse Road, and went away on holiday, we used to have the happy duty of visiting daily to look after their menagerie of pets, chickens, tortoises etc, who lived in the manse garden. Annual firework parties in November were a real treat.

Since Lyn passed away, Peter and Susan have always been kind and supportive to me, and I have enjoyed many wonderful meals and get-togethers with them. Susan continues to be my dearest friend.

Sheila Perkins

This memory of Peter goes back a very long way.

Peter was our first Minister at West Street and this dates to just after Chris and Fiona were born. I was struggling with some issues and Peter suggested I meet him in the vestry one morning for a discussion. I attended at the appointed time...I had Katy our golden Labrador with me and asked if she could join us. Peter had no problem and our discussion went well. As I was leaving he stopped me and said: "This is the first dog I've ever had in the vestry".

Peter was a dear friend, very active in so many ways with the URC. I'm so glad

we had involvement recently with him about the stained glass windows in our entrance hall and fond memories of him will last.

Morag Campbell

A wealth of happy memories of Peter Grimshaw's time as minister of Maidenhead URC come flooding into my mind. During several summers Peter and David Parkin led the church young people (MURCY) on a long-distance walk. In 1977 I was privileged to join them as the third (young) adult on the Cotswold Way: yes all 102 miles of it.

Starting in January, our Sunday afternoons were spent on local "practice walks", filling our rucksacks with more and more weighty tins as the weeks went by. So we were fighting fit when the big day came and all 15 (?) of us set off with our heavy loads from the front door of Bath Abbey. The western ridge of the Cotswolds lay ahead of us, all the way to Chipping Campden. Our beds were the floors of URC churches along the route - just as well we were tired! Typically they would be situated down in the valley meaning each day would start with a hill climb. Peter was always so cheery each morning as he roused us from our sleeping bags at some early, early hour and made a hearty breakfast for us. We enjoyed many a laugh and Peter's dry humour kept us going day after day – I don't think I've walked 20 miles a day since! Along with the feeling of achievement, I hold such special memories of this walk and Peter.

Alison Holton

New Moderator of Wessex Synod

The Revd Dr Michael Hopkins has been nominated to serve as Moderator of the United Reformed Church (URC) Wessex Synod after the Revd Clare Downing became the Moderator of the North Western Synod in June.

Michael has served in pastoral charge of local churches since his ordination in 2002, and also as Clerk of the URC General Assembly since 2014. His term of office as Clerk finishes at the end of General Assembly 2024.

Michael currently serves as minister of the Spire Church (a Methodist and United Reformed Church local ecumenical partnership) in Farnham, Surrey; Elstead URC, also in Surrey; and in the Hants-Surrey Border Methodist Circuit.



“I am excited, delighted, privileged, and humbled, to receive and accept a call to serve as the next Moderator of the Wessex Synod,” Michael said. “God is clearly at work among the people and churches in Wessex, and I look forward to joining in with that and to sharing in the leadership of this part of the United Reformed Church family.”

Michael grew up in the family of Rugby URC, Warwickshire, and graduated from Durham University in chemistry, biology, and geology in 1997. He went on to train for ordination at Mansfield College, Oxford, and graduated with a theology degree from Oxford University in 2002, just before his ordination.

Most recently, Michael undertook a MPhil research degree in church history at the University of Birmingham, and in 2021 gained a PhD by studying through the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Examination in Theology writing a thesis on the history of the Presbyterian Church of England, particularly after 1876.

Michael’s wider service in the URC has included Convener of one of the Wessex Synod’s Area Pastoral Committees from 2007-2014, many years’ volunteering on the Assembly Arrangements Committee becoming Convener in 2014 (from which he was appointed Clerk of the General Assembly), many years’ service on the Wessex Synod Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, and currently Ecumenical Officer for Surrey since 2019.

Michael’s other contributions include serving as Trustee of the URC History Society since 2001, and as its Secretary since 2019. Since 2016, Michael has been a Trustee of the Coward Trust, which funds ministry in the dissenting tradition,

and a Trustee of Dr Williams's Trust, which funds scholarship and education and a research library of Protestant Dissent.

Speaking on behalf of Wessex Synod, Karen Bell, Synod Clerk, said: "We have been privileged to have Michael as a minister in our Synod for a number of years. We have benefitted from his vast Assembly and Synod experience in committees and at Synod meetings and are delighted he has accepted the call to be the new Wessex Synod Moderator. We look forward to sharing this next stage of his ministry and supporting him in his leadership as we discern where God is leading our church in 2024 and beyond."

The Revd Philip Brooks, URC Deputy General Secretary (Mission) added: "The Nominating Group was impressed by Michael's prayerful and considered responses to the questions posed by the panel. They identified a clear sense of call to the role of Wessex Synod Moderator. On a personal note, I have always valued working with Michael during my time at Church House. His commitment to and knowledge of the URC, as well as wider ecumenical matters, are always evidenced in his clear and insightful responses. He will bring many valuable gifts to the role of Synod Moderator, not least his heart and passion to serve the Gospel in a part of the world he knows so well. I congratulate Michael on his nomination."

A Synod Choir for Michael Hopkins's induction?

Synod is trying to gather a choir of people from around the Synod to sing at Michael's induction as our Moderator on Saturday 23 March 2024 in Basingstoke. There are no auditions, and you don't need to sing in a choir. There will be one rehearsal at Basingstoke on the morning of the induction, and there may be a brief zoom rehearsal or two if that is deemed helpful.

If you would like to offer to join the choir, please contact the Revd Michael Hodgson by email on michaelgwenidog@gmail.com with your name, phone number, email address, which part you sing, and a *brief* note of any relevant experience. **No later than December 4.**

If you like to sing, but don't have a church choir in your church at the moment, this is an ideal opportunity!

Time

This prayer poem was requested by Judith Inman who was reminded of it in Reform. It touches those who feel that their time is gradually running out, those who are constantly busy trying to find time to do everything, as well as those who feel that they have nothing useful to do with their time.

Lord, I have time,
I have plenty of time,
All the time that you give me,
The years of my life,
The days of my life,
The hours of my days,
They are all mine,
Mine to fill quietly, calmly,
But to fill completely, up to the brim,
To offer them to you, that of their insipid water
You may make a rich wine
Such as you made once in Cana of Galilee.
I am not asking you tonight, Lord,
For time to do this and then that,
But for your grace to do conscientiously,
In the time that you give me,
What you want me to do.

Michael Quoist

Scout Group News



October began with the Maidenhead Boundary Walk and I wasn't the only one surprised to complete all 13 miles! (Many thanks to those who sponsored me!) 39 Beaver, Cubs, Scouts, parents set off along the river to start with. The river crossing to

Bray courtesy of the Sea Cadets was a hit, and then those moaning about how much further seemed to get a second wind. Most made it half-way and 4 Scouts, a Cub and a Beaver made it to the end, and even had energy left to leap onto the hay bales! Well done!



The Scouts weathered the sudden October cold spell whilst camping at Stoke Poges but enjoyed sunny days doing all sorts of activities. As darkness falls early, apparently it was only mid-evening when some were asking when bedtime was!

Alison Holton

It's still a little while away. There's lots to do before we get there. So many things to plan. And still we have to think about everything else that comes during Advent. Sad things, happy times, events in the world to worry about, keeping healthy, staying positive, listening and learning as we go along. It can be a bit exhausting. But however we spend the time in between, Christmas will arrive.

Let's enjoy it!



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