

# In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in  
Maidenhead and Marlow



*Christian Aid and Jen (more inside)*

## From our Minister

### The Queen of Hearts

I like the Queen of Hearts, but she does have a vicious side... and of course, I prefer Alice. But there are some great stories of them together. At one point, the Queen instructs Alice to run! And they do! They run fast! When they stop running, Alice realises that they actually haven't gone anywhere. They are in the same place that they started. **'It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place'** is the response. I love this story, and I use it often.

Well, these weeks ahead will need some running because we have lots going on!

The Coronation will be a fascinating time for the UK. Not all think the monarchy is the way for us, but others believe deeply in it. What we all connect with is the idea that it will be a great chance for us to serve the community and be part of it. So I know some of us will be watching it, but it will be great for both our congregations to come together not only to worship but to share lunch together. Much of what King Charles has been involved in is about bringing community together so we will share in his vision.

But May has much more!

We of course know that Christian Aid Week comes in May and it would be great to support the concert in Marlow on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Christian Aid still does amazing work and deserves our full support. Concert details are in the magazine.

May also has a week designated as Death Week – I know! Who knew that such a thing existed? But it's a serious week aimed at helping us think about how to make the most of our lives, partly by having conversations and thoughts about death. We will be posting some things about this on our Facebook page.

Then we reach Pentecost and in June we have more times for reflection such as refugee week.

We will need to run, and it may not seem anything has changed except the calendar month!

But Alice, bearer of great wisdom also knows that you can't go back to yesterday because you were a different person. Read any of the gospel stories and I think one prayer of Jesus would be that people he met would be different as a result. So, with everything we have coming up, how will we be formed more like Jesus as a result of all these things? That's a good challenge for us!

God bless,  
*David Downing*

## Supplement about *Aid for Ukraine*

In May and June you get all our normal news AND a special supplement. You may know that six volunteers from Marlow and Maidenhead went to Poland recently to help unload the last lorry we sent with *Aid for Ukraine*. The aim was to see how the aid is rolled out and find out how else we could support the efforts on the ground. The supplement is intended for you, your friends, supporters or anyone who wants to know about the work going on. So please take copies and share them.

## Jazz Worship

By the time you see this magazine you may already have enjoyed the jazz service led by Geoff Cronin and with pianist Ken McCarthy. If you missed it, you will hear about it in the next *In Touch*.

## Faith matters – radio show

Don't forget, David is part of the Faith Matters show at least once a month on Marlow FM. Live on Tuesday nights at 9pm, or go to Marlow FM's web site to 'listen again' at a more convenient time <https://www.marlowfm.co.uk>

## 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
30 April	Joint Jazz Service Maidenhead Geoff Cronin	
7 May	Joint Coronation Service in Maidenhead Followed by Coronation Lunch David Downing	
14 May	Vivien Gerhold	David Downing (Communion) Followed by AGM
21 May	Zoom service Bob Robertson	
28 May Pentecost	Andrew Gibb	David Downing
4 June	David Downing	Daphne Preece
11 June	Helen Everard	David Downing
18 June	Zoom service David Downing	
25 June	tbc	Bob Robertson
2 July	David Downing	Keith Whyte

## Coronation weekend – meal, friendship and crowns

After the joint service marking the coronation at Maidenhead on May 7 come and join everyone for a shared Coronation lunch.

Savoury donations from Marlow and desserts from Maidenhead please!

What crown will **you** wear to lunch? Why not create your own... design it, build it, colour it, and wear it! But what it looks like – that's down to you!

And when we gather for our lunch on Sunday 7 there will be a competition for the best one and we would love you to enter!

## Marlow diary dates

### **Ukraine collection days**

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

### **Coffee mornings**

These are now held weekly at the Ark Café at Marlow Methodist Church at 10.30am on Tuesdays.

### **House Group**

This meets fortnightly at Doreen's house at 10.30 am on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. The group will therefore meet on 2 May, 16 May, 6 June and 20 June. For further information please contact David.

### **Marlow Elders meeting**

Elders will meet at 7.30pm on Tuesday 9 May and Monday 12 June in the Cornerstone Room.

## Marlow Elders' Election

Marlow will be holding Elders' elections at the Church AGM on 14 May. Nomination forms have been circulated by e-mail and are also available at church or from Valerie. Only church members may be nominated, but both church members and regular attendees may nominate someone. The person nominated must sign the form to confirm that they are willing to stand. Serving Elders also have to be nominated.

Marlow currently has 6 serving Elders – Carole Bailey, Martin Beck, Valerie Brownridge, George Flett, Hilary Hunt and Pauline Wyllie. Nominations should be submitted to David by 7 May.

Elders share responsibility with the Minister for the spiritual oversight and pastoral care of the congregation. Once elected, they also become Trustees of the church and are therefore responsible for the management and maintenance of the church building and oversight of church finances. If you have any questions about nominating an Elder or perhaps even standing as an Elder yourself, please speak to David.

## Maidenhead diary dates

### Ukraine collection days

Saturdays 10-12

### Coffee Mornings

Every Wednesday we gather at the Deli which is in the Nicholson centre. We start to build up for 11am, but you can join us whenever you can make it!

### Elders

Maidenhead Elders will meet at church for their next meeting on Tuesday 2 May for a 4pm start. The next meeting will be Tuesday 6 June.

## Aid for Ukraine event

Marlow United Reformed Church holds a weekly vigil at 4pm on Sundays in the garden at which everyone is welcome. However on June 4 please join us at a special event at 4.15 following the vigil. For this event some of those who went to Poland will give feedback from the trip and will answer questions and give updates about Aid for Ukraine.

Bring friends! More details will be available soon so follow us on Facebook.

## Tea party invitation from Burnham URC May 14

A royal afternoon tea party – A Cuppa for the King.

At Burnham URC, Stomp Road, Burnham SL1 7LR

From 14.30-16.30. Refreshments, stalls and entertainment for all ages.

All proceeds shared equally between Thames Hospice and Aid for Ukraine.

## Holy week at Marlow URC

### Maundy Thursday

Twenty of us gathered in the Cornerstone Room at Marlow URC on Maundy Thursday for a meal and a most interesting and moving reflection on our Holy



Communion from the starting point of the Passover meal. David led us through our meal, explaining the symbolism of its different elements.

We started by eating parsley and salt water reminding us of the hyssop that was used to apply blood to the door frames of the Israelite slaves, while the salt water reminded us of the tears shed in bondage and of the waters of the red sea. We each received a piece of unleavened bread, dipping it first in horseradish and then in sweet charoset. The bitter herbs represented pain and reminded us how hard the Israelite slaves worked in Egypt and how the Egyptians embittered their lives, while the sweet mixture reminded us of the straw and clay from which the Israelites made bricks for Pharaoh. We therefore moved from bitter to sweet as we tasted the pain and the rebuilding of hope.

David told us that the bread was unleavened because it is a reminder of the night when God brought the people out of Egypt. The people had no time to let their bread rise so they couldn't make proper bread. We ate slices of hard-boiled eggs to remind us of new hope and life. Lamb as our main course was a reminder that before the Israelites escaped from Egypt, they sacrificed a lamb at God's command and sprinkled some of the blood around their doorposts, so that the angels of death passed over their houses that night. This brought us to our Holy Communion as David read to us that familiar passage in Luke 22, v 7-20 about the institution of the Last Supper. It was a very special evening which was greatly appreciated by all who attended.

### **Good Friday**

Some of us met in Higginson Park for a short 'Churches Together in Marlow' outdoor service led by David, supported by Marlow Ministers' very own boy band starring the Ministers from three other Marlow Churches. We then walked to the Marlow Methodist church where we joined members of our and other churches for a family service led by the Ministers from Marlow Methodist church and Marlow Bottom Lantern church.

## Easter Sunday

Our worship began with a 9am service in the church garden led by David. As part of the service, we thatched the cross which we left in the garden for others to enjoy. We then shared a delicious Easter breakfast kindly prepared by Janet and Kailey before David led a joyous Easter service in the Sanctuary.

*Valerie Brownridge*

## Holy Week at Maidenhead

Maundy Thursday saw a prayerful Taizé service at West Street. After listening to the bells we shared the quiet, repeated songs and their sense of peace.

Then out again into the everyday world on Good Friday to share our faith on the Walk of Witness through the town centre.



And then the joy of Easter Sunday service when we decorated the cross with spring daffodils to show how new life and hope had sprung up.

*Liz Robertson*



## Christian Aid Week in Marlow 14-20 May 2023

I hope you all have Christian Aid week in your diary already. I now have updated information to share with you, following last month's announcements. The different ways you can support Christian Aid are listed below. Let's see if we can beat last year's total of over £6,000 (including Gift Aid).



**ONLINE DONATIONS** – Our JustGiving page is live and already receiving donations – no need to wait for the actual week!

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/marlow-christian-aid-group1679501779050?>

**ENVELOPE DROP** in Marlow – As last year we will be distributing envelopes to many homes. It is not necessary to collect envelopes unless you choose to – I know collecting was the part some people found difficult, but now all you have to do is put them through letterboxes. The recipients can return their filled envelopes to any of these drop-off points: Marlow Bottom Pharmacy, the Ark Cafe, and post offices in Institute Road and Oak Tree Road. I've already been in touch with our regular helpers; please let me know if you can help push envelopes through doors this year, as not all of the town is covered; you could make a real difference. This is an important way to connect with supporters who aren't able or willing to use the internet, and last year it raised over £2,000.

**CONCERT** – Continuing Marlow URC's long tradition, there will be a fundraising concert at Christ Church URC on **Sunday 14 May at 7:00pm**. This will feature the very talented members of the Taplow Youth Choirs under the directorship of Gillian Dibden MBE. The programme will include instrumental items as well as singing. Tickets priced £12 (£6 for under-18s) are available online using the link below. If you're not able to use this please contact me. I'm very happy to help you with an

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00pm**  
At Christ Church URC, Oxford Road, Marlow SL7 2NL

A summer serenade by young singers and instrumentalists from  
**Taplow Choirs**  
Musical Director: Gillian Dibden MBE

Programme to include vocal solos and duets, and music for harp, violin and piano.

Concert in aid of Christian Aid

**Tickets £12 (under 18s £6)**  
From <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/taplow-youth-choir-christian-aid-concert-2023-tickets-578686776727>

A QR code located at the bottom right of the concert poster, used for purchasing tickets.

alternative way to buy your ticket. We are aiming to sell as many tickets as possible in advance.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/taplow-youth-choir-christian-aid-concert-2023-tickets-578686776727>

*Catherine Johnson*

## How are donations used?

The money you raise during Christian Aid Week funds projects all over the world, from allowing us to be first on the scene in a disaster or emergency, to long term projects like helping farmers find practical routes out of poverty in Malawi.

Costs are soaring around the world. In Malawi, food, fuel, fertiliser and school fees have doubled in price in the last 12 months. The climate crisis means farmers are struggling to survive. Devastated by droughts, floods and storms, harvests fail. Children are robbed of the chance to go to school. Their families can't pay the fees, and they are forced to give up on their hopes for the future.

Jen Bishop, a loving Mum in Malawi, dreams of her children being able to have the education they deserve. Her hardworking boys have earned places at top colleges – but Jen cannot afford to send them both.

Jen says “My heart longs to see our children finish school. These dreams are very important to me because by doing so, I'll be sure that I am creating a good future for the children.” No Mum should have the heart-breaking choice of which child to educate and which one will miss out on their dreams. No hardworking person should be forced to give up on education, locking them into poverty.

But there is hope. Together we can help people stand strong and help their children's dreams come true this Christian Aid Week. Jen grows pigeon peas, an essential part of the diet of millions of people around the world. By collecting in Marlow and Maidenhead this May, we can turn Jen's peas into prospects. With our help, she'll be able to plant more hardy, drought-resistant pigeon peas, sell

them through a cooperative to get a better price, and pay for her children's education.

Christian Aid is here for the world's most vulnerable people for the long haul, by empowering vulnerable communities to find practical and sustainable ways out of poverty, including giving them the skills to:

- grow crops (like pigeon peas!) that are more resilient to the climate crisis
- restore soil fertility
- increase harvests
- learn business skills
- join cooperatives to earn more for their crops.

Help Jen turn peas into prospects! Thank you for supporting Christian Aid Week.

*Article adapted from Christian Aid's 2023 materials*

## Death Week – well, it's actually called Dying matters Week

The week is May 8-14 and it will be marked by an event at Maidenhead URC. On Thursday May 11 why not come to church for a cup of coffee? The conversation will be based around death and dying!

We all have questions and ideas on this subject – so let's share them. We will use some discussion points to guide us and you can come for the whole event (12.00 – 14.00) or just come for part of it. You can just drop in. Please bring your own lunch and we will eat as we chat!

We will all experience death... yet we spend so little time talking about it. Is that really healthy? Is it really Christian?

Time to think about it.

*David Downing*

## Aid for Ukraine

You will find lots more about the visit to Poland (and Ukraine) in the May Special supplement.

Here we briefly share experiences of the volunteers from Maidenhead and



Marlow who visited Poland recently to help unpack the 8th lorry and see how the aid is used.

Thank you to those who helped with our latest truck loading! We can do it in the morning, in the evening, in the warm, in the cold... and certainly in the wet! It was one of the most challenging

loading experiences but we did it, and everything went on!

It really does take some work to lift boxes, whilst others stack them on the truck, and others hold doors open, and some re-tape boxes! A great team effort.



*Team loading in the rain!*

At the moment there is no confirmed date for next truck, but maybe end of June/beginning of July... watch out for emails, WhatsApp messages and Facebook posts!

*Some of the Maidenhead and Marlow*

*And the unpacking team in Poland – including some of the same faces!*

*David Downing*



## Experiences of the visit to Poland

Language can be a challenge, even when picking a dish in a restaurant. Here we see David getting translations from his phone, flanked by John and Valerie, his two church secretaries! This difficulty reminded me of the language barrier Ukrainians may face here or wherever they find themselves.



Despite the snow that greeted us on our last morning, signs of Spring were beginning to appear. Shops and market stalls were full of Easter flowers and handcrafts and at the Susiec Cultural Centre there were colourful displays, some created by the local children.

*Alison Holton*



Welcomed in Palm Sunday worship in two churches

And 'our' boxes being stored in Eva's flat ready for distribution.



April 2023




**DONATIONS  
NEEDED**



**CANNED/INSTANT FOOD**  
**POWERBANKS**  
**FIRST AID ITEMS**  
 TOILETRIES  
 ADULT PAMPERS  
 OIL, SUGAR, FLOUR, RICE,  
 PASTA, BREAKFAST  
 CEREALS, TEA/COFFEE  
**MEN'S CLOTHING:**  
 SWEATSHIRTS, T-SHIRTS,  
 TRACKSUIT TROUSERS  
 BOXERS & SOCKS  
**(NEW/MINT CONDITION)**

## Stepwise – Your Invitation



# Faith Filled Life


**On Zoom**  
**7pm – 9pm**

**Introductory session – 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2023**  
**8 further sessions:**  
 July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>  
 August 14<sup>th</sup>  
 September 4<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>  
 October 16<sup>th</sup>  
 November 6<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>

Please do not be put off joining if you cannot attend every session.  
 You will receive a link by email before the introductory session.

**Complete a participant form available on the Synod website**  
[www.urcwessex.org.uk/discipleship](http://www.urcwessex.org.uk/discipleship)  
**Please book before 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023**

**Contact: Ruth Heine**  
[bookings@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:bookings@urcwessex.org.uk)  
 Tel: 023 8067 4513



## Richard Lisney



Maidenhead members will be sorry to learn that Richard Lisney has recently died. He was an active part of the church community, helping with everything from youth activity weekends to Samaritan's Purse boxes.

We extend our condolences to Doreen and Helen.

## Josephus – hero or villain?

Come and meet Professor Martin Goodman who will speak on:

### **Josephus: hero or villain ... for Jews and Christians?**



Why is Josephus - chronicler of the 1st century - so controversial...but also so important for both faiths?

Organised by the Berkshire Council of Christian and Jews on Tuesday May 16th at 8.00pm at Maidenhead Synagogue, Grenfell Lodge, Ray Park Road, Maidenhead, SL6 8QX (ample parking inside the Synagogue car park). There is no charge, but you need to book in advance by emailing [admin@maidshul.org](mailto:admin@maidshul.org) with your name and address.

## Calling all budding photographers and artists!

Enter the URC Communications Team's 2024 URC calendar competition. Themed 'Art of the URC', you're invited to submit your pictures, stylised photos or anything that shows the URC's creativity, by 4 August. For preference, please send landscape photos or artwork, but square and portrait images are welcome in JPG or PNG file formats. Please include the name and location of the church and the name of the photographer or artist. For information or to send an image please email [sara.foyle@urc.org.uk](mailto:sara.foyle@urc.org.uk) URC Graphic Designer.

*From URC news update March 2023*

## Wessex summer camps open for bookings

For ages 7-12 from May 30 – June 2 and for ages 11 – 17 from July 14 – 16  
Packed with activities, great fun for children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren! For more information, see flyer on noticeboards or <https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/wsc23>

## A thank you note from Pam

I would like to thank everyone for their kind thoughts, flowers and homemade meals during this very difficult time but especially for your prayers that have been like an all-encompassing blanket of warmth. Never did I feel afraid or separated from the Lord God. My faith is stronger than ever and hopefully I'll have more time in His presence. Chris wants to thank you too as he was refused any compassionate leave which made it particularly distressing for him. Your letters and prayers are so welcome.

Thank you all again and God bless you all.

Love

*Pam Breen*



## Wedding news from the Raharijaona family

Many in Maidenhead will remember Dorothy, Patrick and their children before they moved to France. We have received a photo of Ambre's civil wedding and an update from Dorothy:

After we left Maidenhead, we settled in Fontainebleau, a town located in the southeast of Paris. Patrick continued to work at Sita-Suez and then changed jobs. I became a primary Catholic school teacher. The children attended the bilingual Franco-English school in the town. Then Ambre became an engineer and settled with her husband, who is also an engineer, in Munich, Germany.

Matthieu will also soon graduate as an engineer. Arnaud is studying management and Cyril is preparing for his GCSE.

Since we returned to France, we have been attending the English-speaking Anglican church Saint Luke's in Fontainebleau.

Patrick has been a churchwarden there for several years and we had our last two boys baptised and confirmed there. Ambre will have her church wedding there in July.

Please convey our warm regards to all those we knew at the URC.

Dorothy and Patrick Raharijaona and their children.

## Walking the English Camino – The St James Way

Nine years ago, this week, having been inspired by the film "The Way" about the Pilgrim walk across Spain, Libby Beck and I (both members of URC, Marlow) headed out from Oviedo to walk the 321 kms (200miles) to Santiago de Compostella, which we completed in 2 weeks.

It was an incredible experience, inspiring and very challenging and having spent the 2 weeks reflecting on my life, whilst walking, I came home, handed in my notice as a Marketing Manager for a wound-care company and went back to nursing.

In January this year, 9 years on, having read an article by a journalist who had walked the St James Way, the English part of the Camino Way from Reading to Southampton where early Pilgrims had taken the boat to Spain, I was inspired to don my walking boots and set out on another Pilgrimage.

As a seasoned walker, along with my friend Amanda, who I asked to join me, I felt that the 68.5 miles (110 km) was do-able in 4 days, as done by the journalist. So simple accommodation was booked for the last week of March along with a plan of daily mileage, anticipating good weather and lighter evenings with the clocks going forward – how wrong we were!!



We arrived in Reading on the Wednesday afternoon to explore the ruins of Reading Abbey, which was founded in 1121 by Henry 1 (youngest son of William the Conqueror). The Abbey was dissolved in 1539 when the last Abbott was hanged for treason having refused to surrender the Abbey

during the reign of Henry VIII...! Who knew that the venerated, mummified hand of St James, one of 230 relics once held in the Abbey, would eventually end up at St Peter's Catholic church in Marlow?!

We had arranged for a Pilgrim Blessing at the Roman Catholic church of St James and on the Thursday morning, armed with the St James Way Pilgrim Guide, our "Pilgrim Passports" and our rucksacks, we set out full of optimism and excited anticipation for the way ahead.

My friend Amanda and I are good walkers and striding out along the Kennet and Avon canal on a cloudy but bright morning, nothing prepared us for the amount of water and mud that we would encounter along our way. You may remember that March was particularly wet and we had not taken into account just how wet



and muddy the paths would be, especially as most of the paths followed rivers or canals and the St Swithuns Way (there's a bit of

a clue there!!) from Alresford to Winchester, finally winding its way along the river Itchen to Southampton.

Our first day was lovely, a couple of short sharp showers left us undeterred, the breeze was light and the sun shone. We encountered a nature reserve, some lovely little villages, crossed from Berkshire to Hampshire and picked up several Pilgrim stamps for our "passport" along the way. We explored the delights of St Mary's church Sulhamstead, Silchester church (near the ancient Roman city) and St James in Bramley, not to mention a few pubs along the way to collect our pilgrim stamps though we did not indulge our thirst! Our destination and resting place for the night was a converted chapel in Little London where we were very happy to lay our heads (and our feet) after our first 20 miles... However, that night it rained, and rained, and



just for good measure rained again and was still raining when we set out for another 20 miles on the Friday morning, feeling somewhat less enthusiastic than we had the morning before!

The paths had become extremely muddy and striding along was not an option as we slipped and slid our way through undulating terrain with horizontal rain and a bitter wind. Unfortunately, there were fewer churches to provide either shelter or pilgrim stamps for our passport and we were very glad to drag our cold, wet and soggy feet into Alresford and find respite at the Swan Inn where we had reserved a room for the night.



The next day, buoyed up with a good sleep, a good breakfast and the fact that the rain had stopped, we headed out once more, this time with only 12 miles to get to Winchester. Once again, we found churches and hostelries which provided us with pilgrim stamps, each one giving us a lift and a boost as we gradually filled our passport. Once again though, we encountered vast amounts of water (they are famous for growing watercress in Alresford) and the mud on the paths sucked at our boots.

Arriving in Winchester on Easter Saturday, we made our way to the Cathedral to collect our Pilgrim stamp and had we not been so tired and hungry, would have stayed for Evensong which was due to commence in half an hour. However, we saw the beautiful circular stained window and the tomb of Jane Austen and were given a very quick guided tour by one of the Wardens before heading to a restaurant for much-needed pizza and wine!

At breakfast the following day we met a delightful couple of elderly gentlemen, who turned out to be twins aged 95 having a weekend break! Sadly, we were unable to stay for the Palm Sunday parade due to a further 16.5 mile walk to reach our final destination at God's House Tower (GHT) by 4pm before it closed.

The last day was a real slog....

Whether it was due to the time pressure we felt to get to GHT by 4pm or a lack of interesting scenery as we spent most of our time walking through woods following the river Itchen, or the lack of any little churches proffering pilgrim

stamps or the cumulative effect of 4 days of walking, I don't know... but the last day seemed relentless and never ending!

At one stage in our walk, we encountered some serious flooding which we had no idea how to cross. It was right across the path and knee-deep! Plunging my hand in my pocket and grasping the small cross of olive wood my mother had given me when I went to Samos 4 years earlier to work with refugees I prayed...

“Please God, you parted the waters for Moses, any chance you could do it for us?”

Well, He didn't part the waters, but out of nowhere, strode a be-wellied gentleman who helped us navigate the expanse of water (a good 20 foot in length) helping us cross from one tree stump to another and supporting us as we clung to the fence...my prayers were certainly answered...and we continued along our way a lot drier than we could have been!

In fact, there were a number of times when random strangers appeared from out of nowhere and gave us guidance when we got lost (the signage and directions are not great in some places) and one lovely pub landlady invited us in at 9.45 on a Sunday morning to use the facilities and gave us free coffee. My friend is not a church-goer but during the walk, even she conceded that all the random acts of help and kindness we received along the way were not just coincidence.



We finally made it to God's House Tower at 3.15pm having spent the last 3 miles walking through the most miserable back-end of Southampton and happily tucked into tea and buns, only to find we had another mile to walk to the station to get the train back to Reading...!!

Despite the challenges of rain, extremely muddy pathways and sometimes seemingly endless lanes which appeared to go nowhere and had little signage to

reassure us that we were on the right path, the walk provided time for reflection. There were great opportunities for i-Spy and guessing games and it strengthened the friendship I had with Amanda, though it was tested a few times when we were tired, cold and wet! We even got to sing Amazing Grace a few times, something Libby and I had done when going through long tunnels and under motorways due to the wonderful echoing acoustics...it was very uplifting.

It was a wonderful few days and a great opportunity for spiritual and self-reflection. I would recommend the walk to anyone, though maybe not in 4 days. However, I'm pleased to report that we completed it smiling and blister-free and ready to walk another day!

*Nicki Connelly*

## The URC's 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Celebration service

Every so often in life you get the opportunity to be part of something big, and with me it has very often involved music in some form or another.

And this is how it was with the URC's 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee service at Methodist Central Hall Westminster when, after just one rehearsal quite literally a few days before, Alison and I travelled up to London on 15<sup>th</sup> April to be part of the big service.



This had originally been planned for last October...but was postponed due to a national rail strike.

We'd had our first taste of the music that was to come just on the Monday before the service. It didn't take long for us to

realise that the service was going to be amazing as we were led by the most inspirational music director, Scott Stroman from the American Church on Tottenham Court Road. In fact, he composed some of what we sang, having set to music winning entries of the hymn and poem competition. He had a knack of spreading his inspiration and enthusiasm to the whole choir.

So, on Saturday afternoon of April 15th the URC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service certainly raised the roof of Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, when our choir of 45 singers, accompanied by a small band of musicians, led the singing at the service. With all the readings, poems, three short sermons and 'traditional' hymns as well as some very Jazzy, upbeat interludes together with short videos of children from around the country reading prayers, the whole service did the URC proud. In fact, right from the first Introit (a rousing setting of Let All The World In Every Corner Sing) through to the last Amen it was a joy and a pleasure to be a part of it.

If you would be like to watch the service, there is a YouTube recording of it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34bymAfzws0>

Unfortunately the sound level is not great, and the actual service starts around 40 minutes into the recording. There is a copy of the 55-page order of service on the URC website. In it you will see some quotes from people who were asked why they joined the URC - one of them reads as follows: *Quite literally 'God only knows' I presume I benefit the URC in some way. There is a sense of being part of a (slightly dysfunctional) family. I will leave that thought with you.*

Here's to the next fifty years is all I can really add...!

*John Holton*



## Contact us

<b>Maidenhead</b>	<b>Marlow</b>
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