

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness  
for they will be filled.*

Matthew 5:6

**Christ Church URC, Marlow**

# **New Forum**

**May - June 2022**

## **Gig for Ukraine**

**The Gill Love Band**

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May, 3.30 pm**

**At Christ Church URC, Oxford Road, Marlow SL7 2NL**

*God of peace and justice,  
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.*

*We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.*

*We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,  
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.*

*We pray for those with power over war or peace,  
for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.  
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,  
that you would hold and protect them.*

*We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace*

*Amen*

The prayer on the front cover of this issue is from the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, and the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell.

**A prayer vigil for Ukraine** is currently held every Sunday at 4 pm in our church garden.

Christ Church is also hosting the next **Churches Together Prayer Meeting** on **Saturday 14 May at 9 am**. This will be held in our church garden weather permitting, or in the church. Please come and join us in prayer.

*God of all peoples and nations,  
Who created all things alive and breathing,  
United and whole,  
Show us the way of peace that is your overwhelming presence.*

*We hold before you the people of Ukraine and Russia,  
Every child and every adult.  
We long for the time  
When weapons of war are beaten not ploughshares,  
When nations no longer lift up sword against nation.  
We cry out to you for peace.*

*Protect those who only desire and deserve to live in security and safety,  
Comfort those who fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones,  
Be with those who are bereaved.*

*Change the hearts of those set on violence and aggression  
And fill leaders with the wisdom that leads to peace.  
Kindle again in us a love of our neighbour,  
A passion for justice to prevail  
And a renewed recognition that we all play a part in peace.*

*Creator of all, hear our prayer  
And bring us peace. Make us whole.*

*Amen*

*Prayer from Christian Aid*

April 2022

Dear friends

I am writing this in the heat of the moment. It is Palm Sunday and I have just returned home from Church. I have just had the new schedule from Judith and saw I was down for this letter.

The last few weeks have been difficult. Peter and I have both had Covid and for me the lethargy has been overwhelming, but really it is the war in Ukraine that has knocked everything out of me. In all my life nothing has ever devastated me so much. (My son was in the Gulf War – though it was grim even that didn't affect me so much.) I couldn't believe this could happen after the horrors of the second World War, after Gorbachev and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the apparent new rapport between Russia and Europe, and Ukraine wanting to be a democracy. I know, I know, Syria, Iraq and those other dreadful suffering places, but even so who could have imagined the Russians losing all sense would become this mad, evil aggressor.

I came to vigils, made donations and bought goods. I said the prayer for Ukraine we were given. But the news got worse and the pictures more horrific and I thought – what is the point? So I closed down and decided I wouldn't 'bother' with Church any more.

This morning Peter pointed out it was Palm Sunday. I responded, 'Not going to Church, just going to read the paper'. He answered, 'You will be sorry'. So I came to Church, the biggest congregation for a long time, old friends from Christ Church, new friends from Maidenhead, and visitors all joining in worship. David talking about marmite and hot cross buns and telling us God loves Putin as much as he loves us! And of the 'ineffability' of God (not being able to be expressed in words). I thought, stop asking why and just get on with it. A favourite prayer of Sue Ryder came to mind:

*Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you. (St Augustine)*

Still in faith, your friend,

*Carole Bailey*

PS: Since writing this Peter is in hospital. He has been very ill but is now making progress. I want to thank all of you who are praying for us, it is a great comfort to me. *Carole*

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*Easter Sunday at Christ Church*

## **Christ Church URC Marlow Diary May-June 2022**

### **May**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Mr Geoff Cronin will lead us
- 8<sup>th</sup> David will lead our service of Holy Communion, which will be followed by the **Church AGM** and at 3.30 pm the **Ukraine Gig** (see page 11)
- 14<sup>th</sup> CTM prayers at Christ Church, 9 am (see page 2)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Zoom worship (see below) and at 7 pm the **Christian Aid concert** to be given by members of Taplow Choirs (see pages 11 & 12)

22<sup>nd</sup> David will lead our worship, which will be followed by a soup lunch at 12.30 pm with talk and picture show by Ailsa Milne about her recent trip to see the Northern Lights (donations to Christian Aid)

29<sup>th</sup> Mr Martin Ashford will lead us

## June

5<sup>th</sup> The Revd Dr Margaret Yee will lead us, to be followed by a **'Bring and Share' lunch in the church garden** to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee – please wear a hat!

12<sup>th</sup> CTM joint worship in Higginson Park, no service at Christ Church

19<sup>th</sup> Zoom worship (see below)

26<sup>th</sup> Mr David Rogers will lead us

## July

3<sup>rd</sup> Mr Rob Lewis will lead us

**Tuesdays mornings** – House Group continues to meet on the first and third Tuesdays of the week at Doreen's house, 2 Baron's Court, Dedmere Rise from 10.30 am. On second and fourth Tuesdays we continue to meet for coffee and a general chat from 10.30 am at the Ark Café, the new coffee shop at Marlow Methodist Church. All welcome at these meetings!

## Third Sundays are still Zoom Sundays

You can use either a computer or your regular home phone. Zoom services are followed by a chance to chat over coffee together with our friends in Maidenhead URC. It is always the same link and always at 10.30 am:

Topic: Sunday Worship

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82345181397>

Meeting ID: 823 4518 1397

To join Zoom services by phone, please dial one of these two numbers and follow the instructions: 0203 481 5240, or 0203 901 7895.

## Lighthouse Marlow – 1 to 5 August 2022

Planning for this year's Lighthouse has started and registration for helpers is now open!

If you helped in the last few years, you should have received an email with a link to register. New volunteers should register at <https://lighthousecentral.org/forms/leader-registration> .

Children's registration will open in May – if you help for more than one day your children will get a place at Lighthouse. We have a creche for children under 4, a group for 4-year-olds whose parents are volunteering, and a full Lighthouse programme for 5-11 year olds.

We need adult helpers in all areas – if you want to know more about the types of roles you could do take a look at <https://lighthousecentral.org/lighthouses/marlow/roles> . A key role is that of a Lighthouse Keeper, people who look after a group of 10-12 children as they do all the activities during the day. Young people aged 12+ are also welcome as helpers, they mainly help as Lamplighters helping to look after the children, but older teenagers with experience can help in other areas. The more helpers we get, the more children we can take. We would like to take up to 350 children this year.



A good way to keep in touch with Lighthouse Marlow is through our Facebook page [facebook.com/lighthousemarlow](https://facebook.com/lighthousemarlow) – we will let you know on here when registration for children will open.

If you have questions, then please contact us by email at [marlow@lighthousecentral.org](mailto:marlow@lighthousecentral.org) .

Thank you and hope to see you in the summer!

*Sarah Jones & Hilary Hunt*

## **New Beginnings....**

That's Easter over and done with then! What a time it was. Thankfully we can all settle down and get back to normal now. Can't we?

The answer of course is, no.

How can we pretend life is normal with the horrific situation in Ukraine? So it is a good job that even in the scriptures, life doesn't get back to normal. In fact, we are now approaching that start: Pentecost! As if the new life of Easter wasn't enough, we now have what is commonly seen as the start or birth of the church. A new beginning. Another new beginning. A time when we pray for the Holy Spirit to come and help us live in common with each other.

How great it would be if this were a reality! It would mean the end of war. It would mean living in balance with creation. It would mean politics for everyone rather than just point scoring. It would be quite a radical new beginning. So be careful when you pray for the Holy Spirit... it is not a prayer that leads to normal.

Other new beginnings are of course around us.

This is the penultimate *New Forum* under the stewardship of Jean! We are looking at merging the church magazines of Marlow and Maidenhead as Jean and Martin plan to move away. So it is a good opportunity to say thank you Jean. You have encouraged us, chased us, and possibly harassed us (! 😊) for material, items, notices and interviews, but we are so thankful because there have been so many positive comments about *New Forum*. It's not always easy to get the items for a church magazine when they are needed, but every issue has been appreciated. You will also note that I said 'stewardship' rather than 'editorship'. Jean has been far more than just an editor.

So here too is a new beginning. A new magazine that will be coming soon.... And watch out for a naming competition!

We have much to mark over the next couple of months, including the Synod day out, Pentecost, Christian Aid week, and of course the Queen's Jubilee. All of these have deep histories but are new beginnings as well.

The church is perhaps a body that remembers well, but always starts a new journey. Maybe that's how it feels with your life as well? It is good to remember. Yet it is also good to start a new journey.

With that in mind, please pray for the church as we always look to journey in faith. Please also pray for Martin and Jean as they continue to plan their new journey.

May God, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, bless and lead us all....

*David*

## **Competition time!**

As David has mentioned above, the plan is to merge *New Forum* with the Maidenhead URC magazine, probably from September. (I am actually hoping to do a short final edition of *New Forum* for Jul-Aug, by which time *New Forum* will be in its 25<sup>th</sup> year! Before 1998 it was just *Forum*.)

We need a new name for the new Maidenhead & Marlow joint mag. Preferably something a bit more exciting than M&M Church Mag!

So get thinking... All inspiration, thoughts and ideas to be submitted please either to me (Jean) or to Liz Robertson (editor of the Maidenhead URC mag, currently known as *Enterprise*) at [lizrobertson27@outlook.com](mailto:lizrobertson27@outlook.com) by the end of June.

I think we will ask David to judge this competition. A small prize will be awarded to the winner!

*Jean*

## **Wessex Synod Big Day Out at Hollycombe Steam in the Country, near Liss – Saturday 7 May 2022, 10 am to 5 pm**

Tickets are still available for this event. Some of us are going from Christ Church! If you would like to join us and need a lift, please contact David as soon as possible! Come and celebrate the URC's 50th Jubilee. Enjoy a day of worship, fun and activities. Ticket information and further details can be found on the Synod website at <https://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Wessex-Synod-Big-day-out-leaflets-updated-Feb-2022-v5.pdf>

## Poland/Ukraine Project

It has been great to see how we have done in supporting the project. As you may know, we at Christ Church Marlow are open Wednesdays and Fridays 10-12 and Sunday 4:15-6pm for donations. I really need to say thank you....

- To the welcomers...
- To the drink makers...
- To the table setters...
- To the sorters...
- To the sharers...
- To everyone who has helped so far!

Sometimes we are quiet, and it's such a good sign that volunteers chat together, and then work well together. It has been good to see church members connecting with those who have joined us for this project.

As we go to print, we are still waiting to confirm the date of the next truck but everything that was collected in Marlow before the last truck went was on the truck!

There will be another special edition magazine coming out soon (produced by Maidenhead URC) which will have pictures etc, so watch out for that.

The need is still great and anything we can do to gather donations from people will be so appreciated. Instant food and medications are the top priority for the next truck. The latest list of wanted items is on the church door.

I still feel that it is a privilege to be able to do something constructive in the midst of a story of such pain and violence.

*David*

## Treasurer's update

Our AGM this year is after worship on Sunday 8 May, when I will officially present the 2021 accounts for approval. They have already been signed by our accounts examiner. The headline numbers are:

- In 2021 we sustained an accounting deficit of £11,899 compared to £14,053 in 2020, both years of course being heavily impacted by the pandemic and lockdowns.
- 2021 income and expenditure were significantly up on the year before, but the figures include the 'Walk of Life' and associated works. The success of fundraising for that project has by now enabled all the costs to be covered by grants and donations.
- Christ Church continued last year to meet its full obligations to the Ministry and Mission Fund of the URC, kept up maintenance on the building, and made donations of £3,500 from the Mission Fund to Artpeace in Zimbabwe.
- Our balance sheet total at the end of 2021 was just under £70,000, of which net current assets (funds in the bank etc) were £57,859, down more than £7,000 year on year. Despite that drop, we have come through the storm of Covid in good shape and there are sufficient reserves for the future. The Elders authorised a further transfer to the Mission Fund which shows an opening balance of £3,000 for work in 2022.

I will be standing down as Treasurer at the AGM, due to our planned move to Bristol, so I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped make this task an easy one since I took it over in (I think!) the autumn of 2012.

*Martin Ashford*

### **An appeal from Churches Together in Marlow**

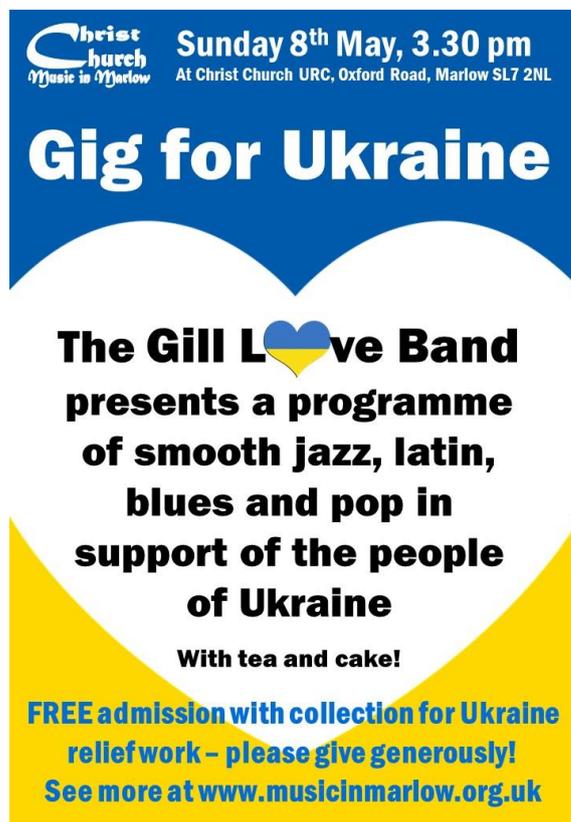
For the last 20 years, the Marlow Christian Aid organiser has come from Christ Church URC, but this is the last year for Jean Ashford who has filled the role since 2009. She has worked in conjunction with representatives from each of the participating churches. Someone with a passion to help change the lives of people around the world, who are struggling just to survive, is needed to take on the role next year. If this could be you, please have a word with [jeanashford@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanashford@yahoo.com) (Tel. 01628 486227).

## Christ Church Music in Marlow

This season's programme hasn't gone entirely to plan, with the 'Sunrise, Sunset' concert having to be cancelled due to the soprano contracting Covid. Happily, the other events have been excellent, and well-supported. The big one coming up very soon is:

### Sunday 8 May, 3.30 pm – 'Gig for Ukraine' with the Gill Love Band

We were delighted to be approached by Iain Lemon, who has been attending Christ Church for a few months (so I hope you have spoken to him!) offering this fundraising event. Iain is the drummer in the seven-piece Gill Love Band which will be performing entirely for free to help us raise funds for the Ukraine project. As you can see, there is no admission charge, but we really hope that the audience will be VERY generous. Tea and cake will be provided, you can come and go if you wish – but do try to be there for at least part of this, and bring your purse with you! We could also do with homemade cakes for this event – offers to either of us, please.



### Sunday 15 May, 7.00 pm

Members of **Taplow Choirs**, performing in support of Christian Aid after a gap of two years. Come and enjoy a summer serenade with singing and instrumental music (harp, piano and violin), including solos, duets and ensembles. This will be the 75th concert that we have run since launching 'Music in Marlow' in March 2012, and it may be the last, so we hope to see a few friends in the audience.

**Martin & Jean**





## Christian Aid Week in Marlow

**15–21 May 2022**

There was a wonderful response to Christian Aid Week in Marlow last year. Altogether we raised over £14,500 (including Gift Aid). Across the UK an amazing £5.7m was raised.

Here are our plans for 2022:

**ONLINE DONATIONS** – Our JustGiving page for 2022 is now open, so please donate at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/marlow-christian-aid-week-2022>. Or you can call 08080 006006.

**ENVELOPE DROP** – As last year we will be distributing envelopes to many homes. There will be three drop-off points for envelope donations – Marlow Post Office, Oaktree Road Post Office and Marlow Bottom Pharmacy. Please speak to your church rep if you can help push envelopes through doors this year.

**CAKE SALE** – There will be a socially-distanced cake sale on the forecourt of Marlow Methodist Church on the morning of **Saturday 14 May**. Bakers and helpers welcome! Contact Alison 482520 or Sue 298521 for more info. Please note that donated cakes need to be wrapped in cling film and labelled with a full list of ingredients!

**CONCERT** – A fundraising concert will be given by members of Taplow Choirs under the directorship of Gillian Dibden MBE. This will be held at Christ Church URC on **Sunday 15 May** at 7 pm. Tickets will be available after Easter from <https://www.musicinmarlow.org.uk/> or 01628 486227.

**SOUP LUNCH** – Come to our soup and bread lunch on **Sunday 22 May** at Christ Church URC from 12.30 pm. This will include a talk and picture show given by Ailsa Milne about her recent trip to see the Northern Lights. All donations to CA.

**Marlow Christian Aid Group** – *Jean Ashford, Tony Threlfall, Alison Rae, Sue Gallagher, Barbara Wallis, Catherine Johnson*

For more information see [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk).

**Every gift. Every action. Every prayer. Every one of us can change lives.**

Drought starves. It robs women of the power to farm and grow food for their families.

Now, for the first time in a generation, global poverty is rising. Covid-19, conflict and the climate crisis are pushing more of our global neighbours into a struggle for survival.

Women and men in Zimbabwe are hungry to provide a more hopeful future. Mums often skip meals to share with their children what little food they have. One of these mums is Jessica Mwedzi. Drought makes every day a struggle for survival. Jessica is hungry. Hungry for a good meal. Hungry to earn a decent living. Hungry to provide a more hopeful future for her family.

**‘My children crave a good meal, but I can’t provide.’** Jessica says. **‘It pains me to send them to bed hungry.’**

Your gift could help Jessica grow drought-resistant crops. You could help her set up a water tap on her farm and learn how to grow food in the harsh climate. She’ll turn her dry, dusty land into a garden of hope.

This Christian Aid Week, you can be one of the hundreds of thousands of our supporters who give, act and pray – stepping out in love for our global neighbours. With you by our side, we won’t stop until everyone can live a full life, free from poverty and hunger.

Christian Aid Week brings people together as one community helping those living in poverty to transform their own lives.

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This Christian Aid Week (15-21 May), please:

- **Give** generously to help women grow crops that survive in the drought.
- **Act** and raise your voice for justice. Join our Loss and Damage campaign.
- **Pray** that families will stay strong during tough times of drought.

**Together, we can turn hunger into hope.**



Jessica Mwedzi at home with her children, Phanuel, Gideon, Marrian and Vimbashe.

# Help Jessica turn hunger into hope

In Zimbabwe, drought starves her crops. 'It pains me to send my children to bed hungry.'

**With you by their side, women like Jessica can provide food – and hope – for their families.**

## Join us:

£5 could buy water taps for a community garden

£15 could buy drought-resistant seeds like sorghum or millet to help 10 farmers to grow food

£60 could train 50 women farmers to adapt and grow food in the changing climate

£250 could help a family build a storeroom and provide seeds and fertilisers.

Please donate via the Marlow Christian Aid Group JustGiving page:

[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/marlow-christian-aid-week-2022](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/marlow-christian-aid-week-2022)



**Christian Aid Week 15-21 May**

**Every gift. Every action. Every prayer. Every one of us can change lives.**

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# George Flett

(born 15 June 1942)

## 80<sup>th</sup> birthday interview



One of George's earliest memories is of an uncle making things in the garden shed. This uncle (a joiner and a brother of his mother's) had been a prisoner of war in Italy and had just returned. Sadly, he was killed in a road accident later that same year, and George remembers how dreadfully upset his grandmother was. He also remembers prancing around the living room with his sister whenever there was Scottish country dancing music on the radio. 'Scottish music is in my blood!'

George was born in Dundee and lived there until he got his first job at the age of 24. He attended evening classes in accountancy at Queen's College Dundee, then part of St Andrew's University. His first job as a qualified accountant took him to Belgium – and thus began his international career working for UK and American companies in Belgium, France and England.

The working language in Brussels was English but in France it was French. George spent three years in Rouen. He recalls how difficult it was at first. As the first ever non-Frenchman in the management group, he was initially seen as an American spy! But he gradually became attuned to the language and ended up greatly enjoying working in French (although this was never appreciated by his American employer). With his love of languages (he can also hold his own in German) he is the ideal person to run one of the Marlow Town Twinning Association's three French classes.

George's move to Marlow came in his late 40s when the American company he was working with in Brussels decided to close the Belgium office. He was given the opportunity to keep the job provided he agreed to move to England. So having previously lived in Penn and worked in Beaconsfield, he now returned to Buckinghamshire, working with a team of four to set up a new Altera Europe headquarters office in Marlow.

Gravitating naturally to Christ Church in 1993, George found a friendly welcome. Stanley Jones was the minister, and the first people he spoke to were Irene and Tom Gordon. George also became friendly with Arthur Kemp, after whom the AK Car Scheme was named. The car scheme does nominally still exist – do ask George about it. Over the years it must have raised £1000s for the church.

George was soon drawn into the social activities at Christ Church.



George recalls with glee the fun that was had at social evenings at Christ Church – such as when he, Ron, John and Judith all dressed up and sang *The Stately Homes of England*. ‘I was Lord Orkney, and Judith was Lady Thames!’ And of course, the Burns’ Supper was an annual highlight.

*Here is a youthful George with Judith and John in Oct 2000 at our 20s evening.*

It was a vibrant community then, and it is a sadness to George that numbers are falling. However, what has replaced all the social gatherings at Christ Church, he says, are the joint activities with folk at Maidenhead URC, and he has very much enjoyed taking part in concerts, walks etc with Maidenhead. And with the numbers we have it is still possible to do worthwhile things – he particularly enjoyed the poetry and puds evening we held before Covid, and of course he is an active member of the house group.

George was pushed into retirement at the early age of 59 when the American company asked Europe to downsize by 20 (at which point he was, he reflects, the oldest Altera employee out of 180 in the whole of Europe). He says he was quite despondent for a time. But after a period of uncertainty and a long holiday visiting his mother’s cousin in Hawaii, he began to accept the situation – and retirement activities began to take off.

It’s difficult to keep track of his various community involvements now – he loves the variety (a true Gemini) but says he wishes he had an assistant to help him stay on top of all the paperwork! ‘I’m very happy living on my own – but I need

an assistant!' In brief, as well as organising the French class already mentioned, he is Vice Chairman of the Marlow Budavar Twinning Association, a member of the executive of Marlow Community Association, Treasurer of Marlow Age Concern, an Elder and member of the management committee of this church, and one of the named persons for marriage ceremonies here. He will be the link person between Rotary and Age Concern for the Jubilee celebrations in June. And then there is that other thing ...

'What really makes me tick is having the hobby I have!' As a past Chairman (and subsequently Accounts Examiner) of the International Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, it is Scottish country dancing that has really given him the travel bug. Prior to retirement, he had danced in ten different countries in the world. Since retirement this number has risen to 21! He thrives on the international element of his hobby and is amused that some in Scottish Dancing circles once described him as a 'Scot gone wrong'!

Lately George has taken a back seat at the international branch, so dancing now happens mainly in Maidenhead (and once a week here at Christ Church – where he is still recruiting). But he has plans to dance in Geneva and Italy later this year, so the tremendous pleasure he gets from his hobby is set to continue. 'It's what keeps me most active in my mind, more than anything else.'

George separated from his wife Marjorie in 1988. His two lovely, talented daughters, Inga and Emma, have supplied him with three gorgeous grandchildren, and Grandpa has been keeping up with the family on Zoom and What's App throughout lockdown. What are his daughters most likely to say to their busy father? 'Dad, where ARE you?!'

George's favourite TV programmes are The Apprentice, The Repair Shop, and anything with David Attenborough. His greatest achievement was running his UK company for several months after the then MD was asked to take early retirement before the next appointment could be made. What would George do as world leader? 'I wouldn't be world leader, I've enough to do already, thank you!' His top priority for Christ Church: to talk about the future.

**To the birthday boy – A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY from all at Christ Church URC Marlow – enjoy your celebrations and – carry on dancing!**

## Doreen at the Moscow Olympics

The war in Ukraine has got Doreen thinking again about events back in 1980 when Russia invaded Afghanistan. I went round to hear the story. Here is what Doreen told me.

Doreen's husband George belonged to the British Olympic Association, so he had got them tickets. They were looking forward to going. Then Russia invaded Afghanistan, and the US responded by deciding not to send their athletes to the Olympics. The UK government set about debating whether to join the boycott.

George went to the Houses of Parliament night after night to listen to the debates, and Doreen joined him on the final night for the voting. MPs voted not to go, but in the end, it was only a partial boycott and – despite the government's objections – most UK athletes did take part. George and Doreen received a letter from Margaret Thatcher asking them not to go.

But George's view was that sport shouldn't be in politics, so Doreen and George stuck to their plans. After all, they already had the tickets. Several people disagreed and tried to dissuade them, including a neighbour who offered to help cover their losses. A week before their departure BA refused to fly them. So they travelled Aeroflot five days earlier than scheduled.

What a start to the trip! Doreen went straight through customs, but George was taken aside for what seemed an age. His rotary badge had aroused suspicion. But they let him go – after confiscating his Coal Trade monthly magazine! Another member of the party had a Bible confiscated.

Their party of 34 stayed at a music and arts centre (not a hotel) about ten miles from the centre. Armed guards paraded around the place at regular intervals. It was frightening at first, but gradually the guards got used to the English visitors and started to smile at them. The visitors had to hand in their passports, but in exchange they received a book of tickets giving them free access to all the Moscow museums, and a trip to the circus.

From the fifth floor of the music and arts centre you could see a power station, a local car park and a goods railway with long lines of trucks passing frequently. Facilities were basic and there was no privacy – a line of washbasins down the corridor, two or three baths – without plugs!

Towels were supplied and changed every day, but they were so thin Doreen thought it was only the starch that held them together...

A team of students looked after the visitors, cleaned their rooms, and made their beds. They were keen to practice their English and taught them a bit of Russian in return. The restaurant stayed open all hours for the visitors – handbags were confiscated on entry (only open carriers were allowed) and the food was grim, but it didn't matter. You got your handbag back on exit. There were parties for staff and visitors every night. The visitors had brought toilet rolls, shampoo, toothpaste, and Mars bars to give to the students, and some of them received letters of thanks afterwards.

A few dilapidated buses were provided to get the visitors around. But there was nothing to prevent them from going off independently. Doreen and George took a mainline train to the end of the line and followed the locals onto a bus, arriving at a river where everyone was bathing and picnicking.

Encounters with local people were favourable. A lady on the bus jabbered away in Russian because she was so concerned that Doreen had paid too much bus fare and arranged for them to be given some change. Waiting outside a shop to buy a bag and an umbrella, Doreen was pushed to the front of the queue by smiling Russians. Everyone seemed content to queue.

A lady guide introduced them to the metro system with its palatial marble architecture and showed them how to use it. It was cheap, spotless and fast, one and a half minutes between trains and approx. 3½ p to any station.

Doreen and George were in Moscow for nearly three weeks. You weren't allowed to take money in – you could change travellers' cheques into Russian money, but there was almost nothing to buy. You just needed small coins for the metro. The museums were fantastic. They got around using underground and buses mainly, they also went on a river trip. And in every underground station the guards were there with their guns.

They queued to visit Lenin's tomb on Red Square where George got in trouble again. He was taken away for a long time and had his camera confiscated.

Armed guards were also much in evidence at the Olympic stadium, seemingly at odds with the big welcome signs in English.

On the first day of the games, Doreen and George had to be on the bus by 1 pm as the start was scheduled for 3 pm. But they didn't leave until 5 pm. Their bus proceeded in a huge convoy. The logistics of getting so many people in meant the start of the games had to be delayed. They had booked tickets for a Russian dance concert in the evening but didn't get to it as they were too late back.

Some other people joined the English group. They had been in St Petersburg. One was a real sports fanatic wrapped in a Union Jack – he bought Doreen's cousin's unused tickets from them. "Oh, he was so pleased!"

There were no programmes, but George kept notes and afterwards made a wonderful album of cuttings and photos, adding comments of his own. It's a fantastic record of an amazing experience.

Among George's many interesting comments in this album: "To give an idea of the magnitude of staging the Olympics, Moscow built 11 new arenas. Truly magnificent. The new handball arena has polished marble floors and stairways. Lenin stadium was built some years before and modified to accommodate the majority of events. It seats 103,000 people."

George and Doreen went to the games every day. Athletics, weightlifting, boxing, you name it, they went to it. They were big fans of Steve Ovett. They also saw Seb Coe and Daley Thompson. The British won a lot of medals – maybe because the Americans weren't there! But how exciting to be in Lenin Stadium on the night that Britain won gold and silver.

Misha bear, the symbol of the games, appeared in the stadium on a big screen. At the finale, Misha bear had tears rolling down his cheeks.

As for Afghanistan, the English group was treated to a talk by two professors at the music and arts centre. A copy of an English newspaper was produced, together with an explanation of how we had got it all wrong. Sad to think the same propaganda machine is still at work today in the context of the invasion of Ukraine.

Thank you for sharing your adventures with me, Doreen. Another time you must tell us your memories of the Munich Olympics ...

*Jean*

## **Jean Sewell – Personal Tribute**

Like a number of other church members I got to know Jean over the past twenty years or so by driving her to appointments with the doctors, dentists, opticians and various hospital appointments rather than by speaking to her when she was in church. The church has the so-called AK scheme, through which members drive other members to appointments or to railway stations and airports. There has only ever been one quite frequent user of the scheme.... Jean. She required over the years on average two or three journeys a month. As the organiser of the scheme, I was supported by many of our church members, all of whom also made a number of trips for Jean. Sheila Blair and Judith Inman made regular trips, but Jean was also supported by Helen Smith, Carole Bailey, Hilary Hunt, John and Sheila Wendes, and Ron and Jinks Waters

Jean was a competent cook and liked to provide things to eat when certain events were taking place in the church. Sheila Blair recalls the delicious twisted shortbread fingers for which she was renowned. Further evidence of her culinary skills is the fact that at least one of her recipes is in the church cookbook. Despite her visual limitations she was quite at home in the kitchen until such time as her legs became too bad for her to be able to move about safely. While it existed, she was a regular member of the church Friendship Group.

Jean also had great determination and was very firm in her opinions. In fact, her own family have said to me that she was simply stubborn. I got to know and experience this. As her legs became quite bad, she still insisted that she could walk with her stick or sticks. However, we reached a point in time when she did accept on hospital appointments, she would allow us to fetch a hospital wheelchair. She had a wheelchair of her own which was standing in the hallway of her Sandygate flat. When on a number of occasions, I suggested to her that I get the wheelchair she insisted that she could still walk and would not go in that wheelchair. On a visit with Jean to the opticians in the High Street one day I could not find a parking space on the same side of the road as the opticians, and I had to park further down beyond Burgers. This meant that we had to cross Station Road, something of a challenge for Jean. We were more than halfway across the road when she developed a shaking fit, something that she had

become prone to, so to complete the crossing I simply had to half carry her to the pavement. I was extremely concerned about this and had decided that despite Jean's instance that she could walk I had to find a way to get her to agree to use the wheelchair on future appointments. I worked out a plan. The very next time that I was to be taking her out, I took the wheelchair with me as I walked into the living room. She told me immediately she saw it that she was not going to go in the wheelchair she would walk with her sticks. I very calmly said, "Jean, it is not safe for me to take you out unless you are in the wheelchair, so if you are not going to go into it, we'll just have to phone and cancel the appointment". Silence. She said nothing and I said nothing! With no comment she slowly moved to the wheelchair and struggled into it. "That's good," I said. She was clearly not very pleased with me but from that day on she permitted me to take her out in the wheelchair.

I have reason to be very grateful indeed to Jean, for what she got me to do in January 2008. I was taking her to the Doctors' House on a doctor's appointment. She asked me how I was, and I said, "I'm fine today but I really felt out of sorts yesterday, I had no energy. This is something which has been happening every third or fourth day recently". "Well, George, you should make an appointment to see your doctor". So, on the way back in the car she said, "Did you make an appointment for yourself?" I told her that I had indeed made a non-urgent appointment on Tuesday of the following week while she was having her GP consultation. To cut a longish story short just 42 hours after my GP appointment I had been fitted with a pacemaker in Wycombe hospital. It was only when the practise nurse was taking out my stitches a week or so after the operation, that I was given the full story, which neither the GP nor the hospital consultant had explained. She told me that I had been fast tracked at the hospital. My resting heartbeat was as low as 44, and I could therefore have had a stroke at any moment. If I had had a stroke, I could well have become disabled. So, it is thanks to Jean's telling me what to do that I've been able to lead a pretty full active life these last 14 years. Looking up, let me say very sincerely once again, "Thank you, Jean".

*George Flett*

## Just keeping your seat warm, Ma'am ...



## Some random thoughts ...

Martin and I took part in the CTM Lent group that journeyed through Psalm 13. The materials were produced by the charity *Embrace the Middle East*. We all found them engaging and helpful for our discussion which focused on the essential place of lament in worship at a time when many people are feeling disorientated by widespread change or anxious about the state of the world. One quote has stayed with me: *The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.* (G.K. Chesterton)

Last week we were in the Peak District and dropped in on the tiny but beautifully kept Congregational chapel at Little Longstone near Monsal Head. For years it had struggled, and local residents had spent many an evening down the road in the Packhorse Inn discussing what to do about it. Eventually a Friends Group was formed, and the chapel is now kept open every day for visitors, with occasional Sunday afternoon services. Five times a year the village comes together for special events centred on the chapel (including harvest and a summer parade from pub to chapel). For some reason this little story of hope really warmed my heart.

*Jean*



**Christ Church United Reformed Church  
Oxford Road, Marlow, Bucks SL7 2NL**

Sundays 10.30 am – Morning Worship  
Holy Communion normally every second Sunday in the month

Joint Worship with Maidenhead URC on Zoom  
every third Sunday in the month

**Minister**

**Revd David Downing**

Manse phone: 01628 634281

Mobile: 07967 502710

Email: revmandm@gmail.com

**Hon Secretary**

Valerie Brownridge

April Lodge

Little Marlow

Bucks SL7 3SF

01628 523367

**Hon Treasurer**

Martin Ashford

24 Squirrel Rise

Marlow Bottom

Bucks SL7 3PN

01628 486227

[www.christchurch-marlow.org.uk](http://www.christchurch-marlow.org.uk)

**New Forum**

Please send copy for the next issue to the editor

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email [jeanashford@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanashford@yahoo.com)