

In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in
Maidenhead and Marlow



Let the flame burn!

Letter From Our Minister

If ever we had a month that reminded us of what church is about, it's May. Well, it is for me. There are three events in May that remind me of our purpose.

Dying Matters Week

Part of our discipleship is trying to reflect on life and death – in the presence of God. If we can't grapple with some of the big questions of life and death (even if we don't have the answers!) then perhaps we are missing something, and something important. How can we connect fully with Christmas and Easter if we don't reflect on life and death? So, that's why there's an event at Marlow in May that is part of this week. It may be your first 'death chat' but come along and find out more. If the name is disturbing, I could name it 'coffee morning while reflecting on the possibility of what is to come after our time here on earth' – but that doesn't fit on a poster! The name is intentional and honest.

Christian Aid Week

The Magnificat (Mary's song). The Good Samaritan. "Love your neighbour". And more... Our mission to help/lift up/bless those in need has always been clear. That's why our work in Ukraine is so important. But Christian Aid has been able to deliver amazing work to enable 'life before death' in some of the poorest communities around the world. Christian Aid doesn't just give aid, it campaigns against some of the causes of poverty – such as some of the political and climate injustices.

Birthday

May is my birthday month, when is yours? We are of course aging, as individuals and as churches. But that is the way of life. It reminds us to make the most of what we have. We often hear the phrase "what we have left". Yes that is true, but it doesn't matter how long that is – and of course, we just don't know. None of us do. But in caring for each other, in caring for ourselves, in caring for the planet – all of us can work out what we can do, and where and how we find our place.

Whatever we may feel 'called to be', we are called to be real in the world. That is the body of Christ, that is the church. Yes, we are human, but we are not self-contained. Reaching up, reaching out, reaching from within, keeps us honest to the gospel, and honest to each other. That is church.

God bless,

David Downing

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 May	Rev David Downing Communion, Church meeting	Rev Daphne Preece
12 May	Scott Wheeler	Rev David Downing Communion, AGM
19 May Pentecost	Rev David Downing Zoom	
26 May	Bob Robertson	Rev David Downing
2 June	Rev David Downing Communion	Keith Whyte
9 June	Scott Wheeler	Rev David Downing Communion
16 June	Zoom service from Windsor (see note below)	Rev David Downing CTM Worship in the Park
23 June	Helen Everard	Linda Jackson
30 June	Andrew Gibb Joint service at Marlow	
7 July	Rev David Downing Communion	Judith Inman Favourite hymns
14 July	TBC	Rev David Downing Communion

Please note: On June 16 Marlow you can either share Zoom worship with Windsor URC or you can join in with Churches Together in Marlow who take their part in the Marlow Regatta with a worship in Higginson Park. Gather at 10.30am, bring a chair, and enjoy the fine Marlow weather!

Marlow diary dates

Ukraine collection days

Marlow is open for donations for Ukraine on Monday mornings 10-11.30, Fridays from 10am - 11am, and Sundays from 4.15 - 5pm.

Ukraine vigil

Sundays at 4pm in the Marlow church garden.

House Group

Meets on the first and third Tuesdays every month at Doreen's house.

Coffee mornings

You all are welcome to join us at the church, in the Cornerstone Room on Mondays between 10.00 and 11.30. Tea, coffee, chat, puzzles and more!

Church meeting

Sunday May 12 after worship (AGM, includes election of Elders)

Marlow Elders

May 13 at 7.15pm and June 10 at 7.15pm.

Maidenhead diary dates

Ukraine collection days

Saturdays from 10am -12 noon.

Coffee Morning

Everyone is welcome at the Deli in the Nicholson Centre, Wednesdays 11-12.

Church meeting

Maidenhead church meeting Sunday May 5 after worship.

Maidenhead Elders

Tuesday May 7 at 3.30pm and Tuesday June 4 at 3.30pm

Announcement

Below is a copy of the words that were read out at worship on April 5

Dear friends,

Easter gives us stories of the revelation of God's love and how that changes the course of our lives. God does sometimes create chaos in our lives! But we all take our place in the outworking of Gods kingdom. My life is in the midst of

some change at the moment.

After nearly eight years of ministry here, Jo and I will be moving in the summer, probably second half of July. I am privileged to have been nominated to serve as the Moderator for South Western Synod.

It has been an amazing time here.

Together we have saved lives in Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

Together we have found our way through Covid.

Together we have shared times of loss, joy, frustration, and of hope.

Never underestimate what we have accomplished together. We will have time for more reflections over the next three months.

The forming of the new pastorate was never just about me. The timing has been very complicated. But for now, Jo and I would like to say thank you. Maidenhead was the church we were married in, and you both were our first church families as a married couple. We are thankful for good times here, but we are more thankful for the privilege of getting to know you.

Who knows what will happen in the next few months, because although we will all now be planning for the future, life will continue and God's love still needs to be shown to those around us, and those far away from us.

At worship, we sang a closing hymn whose words remind us of the Easter message we have, and the challenge we have to carry it and share it:

Colours of day dawn into the mind,

The sun has come up, the night is behind,

Go down in the city, into the street,

And let's give the message to the people we meet.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,

Open the door, let Jesus return,

Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,

Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

God bless,

David Downing

Elders' elections in Marlow

The next church meeting in Marlow on 12 May will also be the AGM. One of the items on the agenda will be election of Elders. Nomination forms need to be completed and returned to David or me by **Sunday 5 May**. If you nominate someone, the person you nominate must also sign the form to confirm they are happy to be nominated. If you are approached, please give prayerful consideration to whether you would be willing and able to serve the church by agreeing to be nominated as an Elder.

If anyone would like more information about what being an Elder involves, please speak to David or me. You might also like to take a look at the leaflet produced by Synod called "They've asked me to be an Elder". It can be found on the URC website - <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/more-about-ministry/become-an-elder/>

Although the roles and responsibilities of an Elder may sound quite daunting, remember you will be part of a team who are all working together to provide leadership, spiritual oversight and pastoral care to the congregation, to prepare recommendations to church meeting on arrangements for the proper maintenance of the church building and the general oversight of all the church's financial responsibilities and in general to serve the life of the church, the community and the wider United Reformed Church. A challenging, but immensely fulfilling role! I speak from experience!

Valerie Brownridge

Christian Aid Week 12-18 May 2024

I hope you all have Christian Aid week in your diary already. The different ways you can support Christian Aid are listed below – let's see if we can beat last year's total of almost £5,000 (including Gift Aid) raised in Marlow.

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

fundraise.christianaid.org.uk/envelope-2024/Marlow



ENVELOPE DROP: As last year we will be distributing envelopes to many homes in Marlow. It is not necessary to collect envelopes unless you choose to. All you have to do is put them through letterboxes. The recipients can return their filled envelopes to any of several drop-off points. 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 a part of church communities or aren't able or willing to use the internet, and last year raised nearly £3,000.



Bix 'Walk the Country' sponsored walk is on Saturday 18 May. If you would like to take part, I'll put you in touch with the organiser.

CONCERT: Continuing Marlow URC's long tradition there will be a fundraising concert at Christ Church URC on Sunday 12 May at 7.00pm. This will again feature the very talented members of the Taplow Youth Choirs under the directorship of Gillian Dibden MBE. The programme includes 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 for alternative ways to buy your ticket. We aim to sell as many tickets as possible in advance.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/taplow-youth-choirs-christian-aid-concert-tickets-870472977107>

Read on to learn how the funds raised will be used.

Christian Aid Appeal 2024

On 2 March 2024 I attended a "watch party" in Oxford organised by Phil Evans, the Christian Aid (CA) organiser for our area, to watch live transmission from the Changemakers' Conference at St James' church, Piccadilly, London. Several inspiring speakers with first-hand experience shared the impacts CA is having around the world.

Patrick Watt, CEO, gave examples of CA's recent work including: Odessa, Ukraine; East Africa, focusing on adapting to climate change by providing



drought-resistant crops, reservoirs and tree-planting, Sierra Leone, where “spillover effects” have been studied, eg training women and helping them escape poverty giving them the confidence to seek healthcare for their children.

Julie Mehigan described CA’s work in the Middle East including feeding people in Gaza in recent months. CA has been well-placed to support victims of the Turkey/Syria earthquake having had a presence near Aleppo since 2012.

Philip Galgallo, who grew up in the poorest part of Kenya and now lives in Burundi told us why CA is so effective. It works with local partners who understand the local needs so are well-placed to design the response. CA looks through the eyes of communities to address structural and systemic issues and the root causes that hold people in poverty.

Burundi is the focus of this year’s campaign. It is a densely populated country with a high birth rate. This limits opportunities for young people who can’t access land. These are the things CA is doing in Burundi:

- Agricultural training to increase yields
- Providing seed loan schemes – a farmer can borrow seeds, but must pay the loan back, with “interest” (more seed than borrowed) at harvest-time – so more people can be helped next season
- Providing loans for the purchase of livestock, which provide manure, boosting crop yields
- Protecting springs to maintain access to clean water
- Gender justice – women currently have little choice about their family size
- Peace building and conflict resolution

CA has worked in Burundi for nearly 30 years. One of the women they helped,



Aline, features in this year’s campaign materials. Aline’s early marriage ended in abuse and violence. Separated from her children and sleeping on the streets, she was pushed to the brink of survival. But at a community workshop with CA-funded trainers, she learnt how to

establish a steady income. With a small start-up loan she began trading avocados and peanuts. With her profits she bought a bicycle to transport greater quantities of goods to markets further afield. Eventually she earned enough money to rent a house and be reunited with her sons. Now she has grown her business, built her own house, and bought solar panels so her sons can do their homework by electric light. One of them dreams of becoming a doctor.

Please help CA help more women like Aline by supporting Christian Aid Week.

Catherine Johnson For Catherine's contact details please email magazine@maidenheadurc.org.uk

Christian Aid pop-up shop in Windsor

Our friends at Christ Church, Windsor, have also planned a busy schedule for Christian Aid. They will run a POP-UP SHOP on Saturday June 22 at their church to raise money for Christian Aid. This is for good-condition repurposed clothes, shoes, accessories and baked goods. If you have anything you would like to contribute or would like to help out on the day, please email magazine@maidenheadurc.org.uk . Collection can be arranged.

Safeguarding

As churches, we are proud that we do what we can to take care of people and help people feel safe. If we can't do that, we are not offering any pastoral care! That is what safeguarding is. Helping people feel safe and cared for.

Safeguarding needs people to be at the end of a telephone, others to check a policy, and some to pass on information!

We are not looking for people to do everything but we are looking for some people to be part of a team. If this interests you in any way, or you feel you have something to offer, please do let me know. There will be a Zoom meeting in late May for anyone who could be part of a team.

David Downing

Ministers Spring School

Wessex Synod will again be holding its yearly Minister's Spring School at Sarum College in Salisbury between 10th and 13th June. I'll be there.... Learning! Yes it is like a school. But with a fair bit of fun and mayhem! (Just like school!).

Synod Big Day Out



This year the Synod Big Day Out is at Hollycombe Steam Park. And if you are coming, you are in for a treat! Who can go? Anyone! You! It's for all ages with things for single people, families, older people, youth groups and everyone else! What is there to do?

Steam train rides, worship, pub quiz, arts and crafts, mini trains, old fashioned fair-ground rides, eco church, first church, resources, brass band and more... oh, and it's on May 4th. So if you like Star Wars... you may want to come!

It's going to be a great day out. Fancy coming? Book your tickets! Should you

have any more questions, why not ask the Chair of the Synod planning group? That's me!

David

Marlow Favourite Hymn Service, 7 July

Judith Inman has kindly offered to lead the service in Marlow on Sunday 7 July. She is going to base the service around our favourite hymns. **But she needs your help!** All you need to do to have your favourite hymn included in the service is to be prepared to introduce your hymn, perhaps say a little about its origins and/or its writer but more importantly explain why it is your favourite, what it means to you, why it is special. If you are not keen on speaking in public, just let Judith have your thoughts on your chosen hymn in writing and someone else will read your words out for you. Judith would also like help with the choice of bible readings and with the prayers. Do you have a favourite bible reading or prayer which brings you joy, comfort, encouragement or speaks to you in some way? Why not share it with the congregation?

Please let Judith know **by 23 June at the latest** if you wish to nominate a hymn or favourite bible reading or if you wish to lead a prayer. And finally, Judith would be delighted if anyone would like to volunteer to help her organise the service. We will try to have an organist that Sunday!

Valerie Brownridge

Death Chat!

If you can't be honest with the title of an event, you probably can't be honest at it! It is a blunt name for a coffee morning – but it's true!

What questions have you got about death? Or... what question does a friend of yours have?! What would you like to discuss but never know where to raise such a question? You can submit a question (text, email, or anonymous note) and we will discuss it. We may not find the answer, but sometimes having a chat about things can be helpful.

Come to Marlow church on May 17 from 10 to 11.30am. Tea, coffee and more!

David Downing

Ukraine updates



Aid for Ukraine
Photos from Ewa of the donations arriving.



Spivochi

I hope you have heard the Ukrainian choir 'Spivochi' at recent events, wine tasting night, festivals. We have now been able to secure some funding which Maidenhead URC is complementing to enable Maria to be based at church and

help try to develop the choir. She sometimes uses the office upstairs. Oksana, who leads the choir, will also be getting some support. We are very thankful to the Bayliss Trust and The Prince Philip Trust Fund for their support.

We can still send at least one more truck! We don't know when the next one will be going, but possibly early July.



We have now sent over £180,000 – possibly well over! That is amazing.

We are very thankful to Tesco at Taplow who are now collecting for us as well as Waitrose here in Maidenhead. This has really boosted what we are able to donate.



Do you know of a community group or network that could help us? By circulating information or fundraising. The appeal that we put out for pyjamas for a hospital near Kherson had a great response. We are very thankful to everyone who helped, and especially the Amersham Polish Foundation and the Maidenhead Catenians for their support.

What's next? Too soon to say yet, but food continues to be really high on the list. It is the single most important thing that we send. Drop donations to either church:

Maidenhead: Saturdays 10-12am

Marlow: Mondays 10-11am,
Fridays 10-11, Sundays 4-5pm

David Downing

A Concert to Benefit Aid for Ukraine
SAT 22nd June 2024
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
BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND



ukulelemondaysband@gmail.com



Vigil for Ukraine

The winter was really helpful to us on Sundays at 4pm. Most of our Sunday vigils weren't too cold, nor too wet!



We continue to pray for Ukraine for 5-10 minutes on a Sunday afternoon in the garden at Marlow. It will often include a thought, a poem, and a community said statement of prayer. You are welcome to join us! We conclude with refreshments in the church, as we stay open to received donations until 5pm.

On Easter Sunday we lit our Ukraine Vigil candle next to the cross that we decorated.

David Downing

Easter

The Lent group found plenty to discuss and think about as David led them through the *Sound of Musings*. Faith, doubt, confidence, prayer, favourite things. Not forgetting the edelweiss. And lots of singing!

The Ashing service was followed on Good Friday by Walks of Witness.



Then celebrating Easter day in the garden at Marlow.

world of global peace and friendship and prosperity unless we believe it has a very good chance of succeeding. Visions of utopias have a place in our thoughts and in our efforts because they activate the ideas and the desires that move us in those directions. Beatrice Bruteau', 'Radical Optimism', 1993.

What if our imagination, our positivity, holds on to hope that hatred and violence can be left behind. Think of people in the past up against impossible odds on making crucial changes: women gaining the right to vote, the Berlin Wall coming down, the Civil Rights Movement, the ending of apartheid in South Africa. People believed it could happen. It did.

Radical optimism differs from magic or an egoism that believes something can be forced to happen just because it's willed. Optimism moves towards the good and takes action towards consequences favouring the welfare of all beings. Optimism knows big changes take patience and trust. This quote reminds us of our reliance on one another if we are to retain optimism amid what seems certain defeat:

'My friends, do not lose heart. One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, build signal fires... causes proper matters to catch fire. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these ... to be fierce and to show mercy towards others; both are acts of immense bravery and great necessity ... Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it.' Clarissa Pinkola Estes.

Written by Pam's friend, Joyce Rapp

Scout Group News

I can't believe we are into summer term already and the Cubs and Scouts are planning their camps. The Scouts will head off at the end of May to Phasels Wood, a Scout campsite near Watford, where they will spend the long weekend pedal racing, climbing, caving in tunnels and of course building wood fires to cook on.



Just before Easter, David spent a fun time with the Beavers and gave them a special message for Easter. They had to carry an egg on a spoon round the church but their

buddies had to help by making sure the egg didn't fall. And who is always there to make sure we don't fall –



God!

However the real egg did fall and it cracked – just like each of us, a bit broken ... as David mentioned in his Easter message in our last In Touch magazine.



Alison Holton Joint Group Lead Volunteer

David Marshall Jones



All those who were around over 30 years ago in Maidenhead remember David and Pam Marshall Jones. Sadly David died in February. After attending schools in various corners of the country (his father was a minister) he joined the Civil Service so again moved around a bit.

When he and Pam settled in Maidenhead, where their two sons grew up, they took an active part in our church - David served as Treasurer and Church Secretary. They further developed the Scout Group at the church, persuading many of the congregation to become involved, including John and me! Following his retirement from work, David trained to become a non-stipendiary minister and also held many more Scouting appointments both nationally and locally in Caterham. He kept very busy all his days. At his funeral in Caterham,

which Sheila, John and I attended, the church was packed. Over the years his life had touched so many people's lives.

Alison Holton

60 years in ministry: a letter from Stephen Thornton

As I have been ordained 60 years this year, I have been asked to write a letter to Churches on the subject. Called to be a Minister of Word and Sacraments at eight years old; leaving College and University at 25; ordained on 18 July, 1964; serving churches in Indiana, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Cumbria, California, Newcastle and the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church for 60 years. I am very grateful to all the members and friends who have sought to live the life of discipleship with me, through good times and bad. Thanks also to my family who have supported me throughout.

It's a different world, a different nation and a different Church now from when I began, so that there has been much learning and change along the pilgrim way. Certain things have been important to me through the years and remain so to this day as we face a challenging future. I share these with you now.

First, and in no particular order, the Reformed Tradition, especially the 'priesthood of all believers'. All Christians are called to Ministry according to their gifts and their situation and we have no separate clergy.

Second, the place of children in the church, not as the church of tomorrow, but the church of today with so much to share with the adults. After all, I was called aged eight!

Third, the need for all our people to be well versed in scripture, so that we can all share the Bible's glories with young and old.

And fourthly, the church to offer deep pastoral care to its people and all around. This is not only caring for them when they are in trouble, but primarily helping all to find out what God wants them to do with their life, because doing it is life indeed.

Without God, we can do little to heal broken people and a broken world, but with God we are enabled to do things beyond our wildest dreams. The world

awaits, so on we go and to God be the glory for ever.

A favourite Bible passage : 1 Peter 2. Vv. 1-10.

A favourite hymn : 497 & 433 in Rejoice & Sing.

A favourite quote : 'All it needs for evil to prosper is for good people to do nothing.'

Stephen M. Thornton

Moderator's photo/drawing request

Our Moderator, Michael Hopkins, would like to have a small range of notelets/greetings cards printed with images reflecting Wessex.

Everyone in the Synod is invited to send in photos or artwork that they think is suitable, and as many as possible will be used. Michael is not particularly looking for photos or drawings of church buildings, but anything that conveys an idea of Wessex.

Some parameters:

- You can interpret Wessex however that speaks to you.
- Everything submitted must be original, and by submitting you grant permission to the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church to use any material submitted for stationery and/or publicity in perpetuity.
- No photos of identifiable people please, to avoid safeguarding or data privacy difficulties. Unidentifiable people in the background are fine.
- Everything must be electronic, so if you draw, paint, etc. please scan it and send in an electronic file.
- Please use wettransfer.com or equivalent for large file sizes.

Send to: office@urcwessex.org.uk by Monday 13 May.

Using our Church Buildings for Mission

The URC Buildings Forum Webinar: 'Living stones for a living church: buildings for the ministry of Mission'

Part 1 21 May 7.30pm

Part 2 04 June 7.30pm

This is an open invitation to attend the URC Church Buildings Forum webinar on Zoom on 21 May 2024 7.30-9pm. Following the launch of these webinars just

over three years ago, The Revd Dr John P. Bradbury will return as the keynote speaker to address how we may best use our building and assets for mission and ministry, particularly within the context of the Church Life Review and its outworking. As always with the webinars, you will have the opportunity for conversation in breakout rooms and, importantly, it will also be a listening exercise to hear the questions that you have, the challenges that churches face, and positive ideas, examples and news to be shared.

A complementary and more pragmatically focussed Part Two will take place on 4 June 2024 7.30-9pm. There will be a presentation of North Western Synod's strategy 'A Church with People at the Margins: A Strategy for Mission and Ministry' and examples of a number of local churches already on that journey, in order to stimulate debate and encourage other synods and local churches. Coming along to one of the webinars will be more useful than not coming to either, but we do hope that you will be able to attend both.

To register for either or both seminars please email mission@urc.org.uk

Volunteer with the URC at The Greenbelt Festival 2024!

22 – 25 August 2024 at Boughton House, near Kettering

The theme for this year's festival is: *Dream On*.

As well as being an exciting opportunity to be part of the URC team in the yoURCafe venue offering food saved from landfill, crafts, talks, music and more, you will also get to enjoy the myriad activities the festival has to offer.

You will receive a complimentary weekend pass, food vouchers and a car or caravan pass as a thank you. For more information on how to become a volunteer, what is involved, and how to apply, visit urc.org.uk/greenbelt

STOP PRESS – Request for help

Maidenhead URC would love to know if you have a spare smart phone that you could donate to the church. No contract or data needed... Just a smart phone. Please let David know.

Contact us

Maidenhead	Marlow
Maidenhead United Reformed Church West Street, Maidenhead SL6 1RL www.maidenheadurc.org.uk	Christ Church United Reformed Church Oxford Road, Marlow SL7 2NL www.christchurch-marlow.org.uk
Minister: Rev David Downing revmandm@gmail.com 07967 502710	Minister: Rev David Downing revmandm@gmail.com 07967 502710
Church Secretary: John Holton secretary@maidenheadurc.org.uk	Church Secretary: Valerie Brownridge secretary@christchurch-marlow.org.uk 01628 523367
Church Administrator: administrator@maidenheadurc.org.uk Office: 01628 635781 (For urgent matters call Minister's number above)	Church Treasurer: Tom Craig

Keeping In Touch with us

Send articles or suggestions for our magazine to:

magazine@maidenheadurc.org.uk

Find us on Facebook:

@maidenheadurc

@ChristChurchMarlow

YouTube: Maidenhead and Marlow URC

In Touch is collated and edited by a team. Articles acknowledge the name of the writer unless written by the team. Photos are from members, friends, partner organisations or

<https://www.unsplash.com/>