

# In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in  
Maidenhead and Marlow



## Letter From Our Minister

I loved the first three Star Wars films that came out. I thought they were all perfect, and I have watched them countless times - as Jo will testify because of the number of quotes I come out with. After The Return of the Jedi, it was the end of something quite special. Then, after quite a while, came the next one, which was the first one: The Phantom Menace. Now, it's far from being my favourite of the Star Wars films (although there are some great scenes), but I do know that this started the Star Wars journey for a new generation. So we were left with the first three films made, and then the three prequels. That was that. Until the sequels came out! Again, some great stuff in there - but I do look back to the three films that I first fell in love with.

Recently there have been more Star Wars stories... TV shows (Clone Wars, Bad Batch, The Acolyte and more). All of which have been different and have connected new generations with the Star Wars universe.

This is one reason why ministers move on. It changes things, and hopefully allows others to join in with the story that the church carries. We may look back with a deep love of the old, but the future is always more important.

It's a cycle that is found in the Bible: Jesus was born, lived, died, was resurrected, and then ascended. The story keeps changing and moving on. Which part of the Jesus story drew you to faith, or do you connect with the most? I suspect it's not the same as a different person! I'm leaving to discover the next part of my ministry. You will be discovering the next part of your story.

I remember when I was at college training for the ministry, I spoke with someone who was nearing retirement. I asked them what they thought the most important part of ministry was. Their response was something along these lines: *To continue the gospel story, by trying not to mess it up too much for the next minister!*

Well, that is my simple prayer! That, as I leave, it's not too messed up for whoever comes next!

I'm sure we haven't got everything right over the last eight years. But, with everything we have done, I know we got a lot right.

I know we have saved lives in Zimbabwe.

I know we have sustained lives in Ukraine.

I know we have held those in mourning.

I know we have discovered more about God.

I know we have praised God.

I know we have shared our hopes and fears, our certainties and our doubts.

I know we have cried together, and we have certainly laughed together!

I know we have sat isolated, together - yes, we got through the Covid years together!

So, I do hope that I haven't left it in too much of a mess for whoever comes next!

Your task in many ways is much simpler than mine! What do you need to do next?

Save lives. Sustain lives. Comfort those in mourning. Discover more about God. Praise God. Keep sharing your hopes, fears, certainties and doubts... cry together if necessary, and laugh together! Along the lines of what we have been doing. As for me, I'm still discovering more and more about what a Moderator actually does!

On behalf of Jo and myself: thank you.

We arrived, and you accepted us, made us welcome and have lived with us through different stages and events of all our lives. Thank you.

Jo and I often wonder how much we will remember about Maidenhead and Marlow... Will we remember the buildings, the river, the parks? Who knows? But we know that we will remember you. It's not the bricks and mortar of church that you remember, it's the people. You will stay with us and be in our prayers.

The Star Wars stories I mentioned are all about bringing about a greater Kingdom; a kingdom greater than any one person has imagined. A kingdom of

peace, justice, and freedom. There are many ways of telling these stories, but the main story leads not to evil empire but, through all the actions of many different people, to a greater kingdom.

The church has a story to tell. It is a story-teller, a story carrier, and it should embody that same story. Its work is to remind people of a greater kingdom that is full of God's peace, God's justice, and freedom found in God. Keep holding to these stories. Keep sharing these stories.

Be church.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The love of God,

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

BE WITH US ALL, Amen.

God bless,

*David and Jo*

## The end of an era

All good things must come to an end and sadly that is the case for David's ministry in Maidenhead and Marlow. I think we all had the same reaction when we heard the news that David was leaving: upset he was leaving but delighted that his talents had been recognised and that he had been appointed as Moderator of the South Western Synod. But what an amazing and fruitful eight years we have all had together!

We have so many special memories of David going right back to 2016 - David being roped into judging the hat competition at Marlow URC's Love Marlow Royal Garden Party to celebrate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday before he had even started his Ministry with us, David's induction, David's marriage to Jo at Maidenhead URC, concerts (including some where David was seen dancing in the aisles!), wine-tasting and quiz nights to raise funds for Zimbabwe, Christian Aid and Ukraine, visits to Calais in support of Marlow Refugee Action Group to help at a refugee centre and to Poland to meet Ewa and our other Aid for

Ukraine partners, craft workshops (who can forget David trying to make a Motanka doll!) loading the Ukraine lorries, the weekly vigil for Ukraine in the Marlow church garden, the moving service David led to mark the death of HM The Queen, the celebrations at Maidenhead to mark the Coronation of King Charles III, Easter day sunrise services in the garden (albeit at 9am!), the Star Wars themed carol service - to mention just some of the many events and activities which David initiated or where David played a key role.

David shepherded us through COVID lockdowns and the closure of our church buildings and all the challenges that brought with it and made us all “zoomers” even those who previously were not particularly IT savvy!

In his time with us, David has sought to make us think about our faith, to challenge us and encourage us to think outside the box – he has led Lent courses drawing on West Side story and the Sound of Music (intriguing!) Advent courses based on “Repeat this Sounding Joy” and looking at our favourite carols which may not now be our favourite carols, helped us better understand the URC on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, worked through the Holy Habits with us, supported those following Stepwise, led Maundy Thursday Passover style suppers, set up a weekly Death Café, run Taize services, co-hosted a weekly faith programme on Marlow FM and led a weekly vigil for Ukraine. He also conducted our first same sex marriage at Marlow and what a joyous occasion that was.

One of David’s greatest legacies for both churches is the Aid for Ukraine project. Working on this project has brought our two churches even closer together and also greatly raised our visibility within both Maidenhead and Marlow, where we are now seen as the churches which are taking action to help people in Ukraine.

But we cannot finish without mentioning Pokemon! Be honest - who had heard of Pokemon before David arrived? We will never forget the Pokemon Carol Service at Maidenhead, which brought in so many folk who may have never been in church before. And who hasn’t been concerned about David getting repetitive strain injury on his finger when they see him playing a game?

There is no doubt that we are all going to miss David and Jo enormously but they leave us with our very best wishes. We hope it is “au revoir” and not “goodbye”!  
*Valerie Brownridge and John Holton*

## 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
16 June	Join Marlow for CTM Worship in the Park	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 10.30	No service at 10.30	Rev David Downing Communion
<b>14 July 3.15</b>	Joint service at Marlow at 3.15: Rev David Downing followed by vigil for Ukraine and tea	
21 July	Zoom: John and Alison Holton	
28 July	Derek Wensley	Geoff Cronin
4 August	Favourite hymns and communion: Irene Pullin	Scott Wheeler
11 August	Linda Jackson	Berenice Fray
18 August	Zoom from Windsor	
25 August	Andrew Gibb	Bob Robertson: Communion
1 Sept	Bob Robertson: Communion	Hilary Hunt
8 Sept	Keith Whyte	Rob Lewis
15 Sept	Zoom: Maidenhead Elders	

In Maidenhead Irene is planning a ‘favourite hymns’ service on August 4. Let her know your favourite hymn and a brief explanation of why it is special for you.

## Marlow diary dates

### Ukraine collection days

Marlow is open for donations for Ukraine on Fridays from 10am-11am and Sundays from 4.15pm-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. Please contact George Flett for details.

## **Coffee mornings**

Join us for coffee and fellowship at the Ark café every Tuesday, 10.30-11.30am.

## **Marlow Elders**

July 8 at 7.15pm and August 12 at 7.15pm.

## **Maidenhead diary dates**

### **Ukraine collection days**

Saturdays from 10am-12 noon.

### **Coffee Morning**

Wednesdays June 19 and 26, 11am-12 noon at the Premier Inn, behind the church. For July and August see below.

### **Maidenhead Elders**

Tuesday 9 July, 3.30pm.

## **Maidenhead Garden Coffee Mornings**

Remember those balmy days last Summer, back in July and August, when we held our weekly coffee mornings in people's homes, and sat in the garden if the weather was good?

It would be nice if we could do the same again this year, so to start things off Alison and I would like to invite you all to our home on **Wednesday 3 July** for coffee at 11am, rain, hail or shine.

If you would also like to offer your home/garden for a July or August Wednesday, please let me know with your preferred date.

*John Holton*

## Notes from David

By the time this goes to print I will have just two more of my monthly Faith Matters shows on Marlow FM. You can listen live (Tuesday nights and Sunday mornings) or 'listen again' from the web site. Just look for 'Faith Matters with David and Vicky'.

I have one more Synod meeting to attend - and I'll be chairing it! I have been part of the Mission Development Group for the Synod which has now joined with a couple of other committees to form Mission and Outreach. We have redesigned some of the grants available for mission and because of this I found myself convening the group that organised the Synod Big Day Out this year.

## Preparation for David leaving and beyond

We are planning a joint Maidenhead/Marlow farewell party with a cold buffet for David and Jo at Maidenhead URC on **Saturday 6 July** from 5pm - 8pm (or later!). The cold buffet will be "bring and share". Maidenhead congregation are asked to bring savoury finger food (note, we don't want to use the ovens or cutlery!) while Marlow are asked to bring sweet delights!

We hope you can put this in your diary and come along. As we need to know numbers in advance, **please tell John or Valerie if you will be joining us, by the end of June at the latest.** If you are able to help with the setup on the day please let John or Valerie know.

Then David will lead a joint Maidenhead /Marlow farewell service at Marlow URC at 3.15pm on **Sunday 14 July**. The service will finish just before 4pm so that we can all go out to the garden for the Ukraine Vigil at 4pm. This will be followed by tea/coffee and cakes.

And just to keep you up to date - each of the four churches in our new Pastorate are starting to prepare their church profile and, together, they will comprise the Pastorate Profile. We aim to have this ready by September. We have been allocated Interim Moderators (Rev. Michael Hodgson and Rev. Graham Hoslett) who will give us guidance going forward. We are very grateful to them.

*John Holton & Valerie Brownridge*



## Aid for Ukraine

As my time of being part of Aid for Ukraine comes to an end, I want to say 'thank you' to a few people...

### **At the start**

I want to say how thankful I am for Jolanta, Hayley and Natalie: they got the ball rolling. Without their inspiration, we may not have done anything. They connected us with Poland and also with local groups. I will never forget turning up at church the first day we opened to receive donations and saw the number of people waiting to donate.

### **Volunteers**

I'm not going to name names... because I will miss people out! But thank you to those who packed pot noodles, loaded the lorries, made refreshments, turned up early in the morning, turned up late at night, helped us just once or have turned up at nearly every Saturday morning or other donation session to continue to receive donations. It truly has been a multi-lingual team effort of people from within the church and a far wider family!

### **Behind the scenes**

There is a lot of hidden work that goes on. From organising collections of food, paperwork, finances, making sure the church is open, advertising events and much more - thank you if you have been a part of the hidden work.

### **Ewa**

I can't say enough how amazing it is, and what a privilege it is, to work with Ewa, even if at such a distance. Never underestimate what she does, and always be proud to be part of a group that enables her to get aid to those in dire situations to adults and children. She is brave and faithful and puts others first. I am glad that she will soon be receiving letters of appreciation from the mayors of both Maidenhead and Marlow as well as Rev John Bradbury (URC General Secretary).

### **Hearts**

We have tried to make sure everything we do is as personal and connected as possible, and what better way to show this than all the hearts that have been knitted and packed in every single box that has been sent.

I first realised when Theresa May came to visit on International Women's Day, I have been reminded time and time again since, what a key part women have in everything that we do in this project - thank you.

### **What next?**

We are hoping to send a truck in the second or maybe third week of July. We know that food is needed - badly needed! We also need:

First Aid items

Toiletries

Incontinence items

... and extremely good condition, washed and properly dried bedding.

And if you can find any very good condition children's clothing that would also be great.

We will be boosting this truck by spending several thousand pounds from funds we have raised. With a concert coming up and maybe one or two more events to raise funds, that should leave enough for at least one more truck in the autumn, if not more!

I am delighted that we have just been donated a car! This will be loaded on to the next truck and will be going to work as a mini ambulance for some doctors. Aid for Ukraine has sent (at a conservative guesstimate) over £185,000 of aid since the outbreak of war. This next truck will take us close to £195,000. That is a lot of life saving, life giving, and life-affirming aid.

Thank you for whatever part you have - so far - played in it. It has been a privilege to share in this work. Thank you for the opportunity.

*David*

### **Easy access at Christ Church URC Marlow**

We are delighted that we will be inviting more people from the pastorate to events such as worship at our church. But we have noticed one thing that is different about Marlow... our worship area is upstairs, and our refreshments are downstairs!

You may be visiting for the first time, or you may be a regular worshipper at Marlow – it doesn't matter, sometimes steps can be a pain. But we have a lift! If you need help using the lift, just ask! There's always someone able to help – and once you've done it once, you'll be able to work it yourself. It's that simple!

Coming for worship – feel free to use the lift!

Coming for an event – feel free to use the lift!

Coming for any reason – feel free to use the lift!

No one is welcomed any less or any more depending on whether they arrive by the stairs or the lift!

*David Downing*

## Christian Aid at Marlow

THANK YOU to all who supported Christian Aid week this year.

In Marlow we raised a total of £4430.00, of which £2114.92 came from envelopes, and £527.58 was raised by the Taplow Youth Choir concert at Christ Church.

Thanks especially to our loyal band of envelope-droppers, those who helped with the concert arrangements, and those who bought tickets. It was a wonderful evening.

*Catherine Johnson*

**A Concert to Benefit Aid for Ukraine**

**SAT 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2024**

**7:30pm to 10pm**

**UKULELE MONDAYS**

**ROCK** **POP**

**HITS FROM 5 DECADES!**

**at**

**United Reformed Church**

Oxford Rd, Marlow, SL7 2NL

**£10 on the door**

**incl. free glass wine/soft drink**

**BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND**

**Facebook** **YouTube**

ukulelemondaysband@gmail.com

**RAFFLE**

**Christian Aid**

## International Children's Day Concert - An individual's impression

Oh Boy! My Word! Wow!!!



Maidenhead URC was full of adults and children on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. I mean FULL. Standing room only. Yes - really - Standing Room Only.

Naturally, Ukrainian was the language of choice, with some English translation; there was a pamphlet with English translation of the words of the Ukrainian songs. But, you know, it really didn't matter not understanding the words being spoken and sung.





The energy of the dancers (both traditional and modern); the beauty of the



choral and solo singing, and piano playing was a joy as was the obvious pride young and old took in their national identity in all its forms.

At some points the standing folk wanted to be so close to the platform that I wasn't able to see what was going on there, but that was OK because I was able to watch the performances via the mobile phone screens of the

people taking videos. It was all part of the experience.





Our dear Mariia Petrinets was a wonderful MC, speaking with all the passion and love of a mother supporting her children, and from what I could understand a soldier from Ukraine presented her with a signed Ukrainian flag. I wasn't able to confirm what that was about – will have to ask next time I see her.



I was only able to attend the Concert, but what a wonderful experience. I also won a prize in the raffle. (I have since heard that afterwards the tables in room 1 were laden with Ukrainian food for all to try.) This was the message at the end of the Concert Programme:

“From the bottom of our hearts, we, the people of Ukraine, want to express our

deepest gratitude to the incredible people of the UK.

Their outpouring of love and support will never be forgotten. It has given us strength, hope and courage to continue.



With your help,  
we will rebuild.  
With your help,  
Ukraine will  
prevail  
Thank you, the UK.  
Thank you for  
everything.  
Slava Ukraini!  
Glory to Ukraine!"

*Irene Pullin*

## Tuesday coffee – a poem to welcome you

Sitting in the Ark

On a Tuesday morning

Janet, Ailsa and Al

Kailey if she's not working

I'll have OJ, hot chocolate for mum

Coffee David? Yes please

Come over have a perch

There is always people we know

John, Judith, Richard, and Co

It's not just Christ Church

So don't leave us on the lurch

Come join us on a Tuesday

10.30 at the Methodist Church

*Ailsa Milne*



## Christ is watching over us (as always)



We wanted to share this photo from our recent holiday in Madeira.

We took a bus to Cancela and walked down to Cristo Rei. The monument is on a coastal promontory to the east of Funchal. It was inaugurated 4 years before the more famous one in Rio.

We then walked about five miles back to Funchal followed by a nice meal to round off the trip.

*Anthony Bodrell*

## Voting, poverty and more



The United Reformed Church is encouraging all voters to engage in the upcoming General Election, to take place on 4 July 2024, and to use it as an opportunity to urge political leaders to end poverty in the UK.

The URC is a member of the Let's End Poverty ([letsendpoverty.co.uk](https://letsendpoverty.co.uk)) movement, inspired by national movements such as the Jubilee Debt Campaign and Make Poverty History, where large coalitions of civic organisations and individuals were able to influence government policies for the common good.



In the Bible, God consistently shows a bias to people experiencing poverty and those who are excluded, and often speaks to and through those on the margins. Jesus proclaims a mission to be good news for the poor. Christians are called to tackle all that traps people in poverty and oppression.

As we know, the General Election will be held on 4 July.

You might already be tired by the media coverage, but this is an important opportunity to choose who will speak up for our community including voices that may not be heard.

Do you know what photo ID you need to take to the Polling Station?

Which issues do you care about most?

Could you help a neighbour get out to vote on election day?



The URC Joint Public Issues Team has created a pack to help us all engage in the general election and influence politicians afterwards. This covers issues including poverty, refugees, peace and conflict, economy, politics. Just click the link:

<https://jpit.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/202405-Election-issues-briefing.pdf>

## A prayer for voters

Loving God, we face a choice.

Be with us as we consider the options weigh the arguments  
and assess the claims and the candidates.

But also prompt us to listen:

to the voices on the margins

to the cry of the earth

and to those who reach a different conclusion to us.

God, we pray that you would stimulate our minds  
stir our hearts  
and sanctify our choosing.

Help us also to remember  
your command to love our neighbours both during and after this election.

Amen

*Source: JPIT Election Briefing*

## Fashion with Compassion - a Christian Aid pop up shop

**FASHION  
WITH COMPASSION  
COMING TO WINDSOR URC  
JULY 6<sup>TH</sup>  
10.30 am-3.30pm  
POP UP PRELOVED FASHION  
SHOP  
TO HELP ALINE AND OTHERS  
FIGHT POVERTY  
  
ALL PROCEEDS TO  
CHRISTIAN AID**

Windsor URC will be holding a pop-up shop selling clothes for Christian Aid. It's a great venture and a really great way to raise money for Christian Aid. You may remember Aline (in the photo) living in Burundi.



Christian Aid supported her so that she could build her business and feed her family. The pop-up shop will help Christian Aid to continue their work.

If you have any near mint condition clothes that they could sell, just let David know.



## Synod Big Day Out

For Hollycombe, the Synod Big Day Out was their very first day of opening after the winter. I understand this caused David Downing and his organising team a few headaches, but those who went knew none of this and enjoyed a great day out! There were lots of events and not only the full-size steam train but also a little one, and we could ride as often as we wanted.

Everyone was very friendly and chatty, essential as we waited patiently in the queue for our roast pork sandwich.





And the Maidenhead banner and the Marlow banner proudly adorned the “banner walk”. Thanks to all who contributed to these masterpieces! They are due to be returned at some point!

*Alison Holton*

I had a lovely day out at Hollycombe Steam Park. Thanks to Alison and John for taking me. David and Jo were on the gate, which was good to see them. I had a ride on the stream train – the views are beautiful.

*Carol Bates*







I had a lot of rides.  
The music machine  
was very loud but  
my little brother  
loved it. We went on  
the little train. When  
can we go again?  
*Callie (aged 4)*



## A poem from Pam - The Letter

On days when you are feeling low, there are ways to make that feeling go.  
Pick up a pen and write a letter. That could make you feel much better.

Choose someone who lives far away. Who may have helped you in some way.  
An old workmate neighbour or friend, family feud that you can mend.

One good way to cross the miles. Is your penned missive full of smiles?  
Maybe they enriched your life when you endured some kind of strife.

Or they helped you with a selfless deed, just send them something bright to read.

Picture them not knowing that your words will soon land on their mat.  
And see their pleasure shining bright that someone had the time to write.

Too often email or text are sent that cannot express what you really meant.  
When words are coming from your heart, grab a pen and make a start.

Now when life drives you round the bend please send a letter, start 'Dear Friend'.

*Written by Pam Breen's friend, Rose*

## An Iona Experience

This month, two of us fulfilled an ambition to revisit the beautiful island of Iona, off the coast of Mull in Scotland with the express purpose of going to the Abbey.



Taking the morning ferry over from Fionnphort, we walked briskly up the hill with many other excited modern 'pilgrims' from all over the globe.

We were fortunate enough to visit on Pentecost and to attend the atmospheric morning service there.





This was packed with people from all over the world but the atmosphere was one of reverence, friendship and spirituality.

Iona, of all the many sacred places in Scotland, is an enduring symbol of Christianity. St Columba arrived on the island in AD 563 with twelve companions and founded this monastery that was to become the heart of the Scottish church during its early years.



The Scottish Reformation of 1560 put an end to the monastic life on Iona and the Abbey and Nunnery gradually fell into the picturesque ruin so popular with the tourists of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Nunnery remains a ruin but the Abbey was restored to new life during the 20th century. As modern tourists we were continuing the long tradition of pilgrimage to the island and

thoroughly enjoyed our visit in the Scottish sunshine and we left with uplifted hearts.

The present Iona Community has over 250 members and about 1500 Associates plus an equal number of Friends. They represent a wide spectrum of church traditions and are bound together by a rule of life and faith; they work together for justice, healing and peace locally, nationally and internationally. I will finish with the words of St Columba himself who gave us this prayer:

Be, Lord Jesus, a bright flame before me,  
A guiding star above me,  
A smooth path below me,  
A kindly shepherd behind me:  
Today, tonight and forever.

*Pauline and Carole*



## Marlow URC town twinned with the Eglise Protestante in Marly-le-Roi

The town twinning arrangement with Marly-le-Roi has existed for 53 years. Prior to me moving to Marlow towards the end of 1992 there had been, I think, two exchanges with members of the Marly-le-Roi congregation. My first visit to Marly-le-Roi was, I believe, in 1994 when Martin and Jean Ashford, John and Sheila Wendes and I visited Marly. It was only after making this, my first visit, that I became a Town Twinner and so visited Marly-le-Roi every two years. It is about 30 kilometres west of Paris and roughly half-way between Versailles and St-Germain-en-Laie.



The traditional Town Twinning arrangement is that we meet each year with the Marlovians going every two years and the Marlichois (residents of Marly-le-Roi) visiting us in the intervening years always providing reciprocal hosting arrangements. The Marly-le-Roi Pasteur, in the 1990s, Francois Faure and his wife, hosted by me, visited twice and on each occasion he preached in the “culte” (the service) at our church. His replacement as Pasteur was a Hungarian minister, whose name I have forgotten. She also visited us one year, hosted by the Ashfords and preached. Charlie Eldon, who worked at the French protestant radio station, became the person with whom I most regularly exchanged over the years. Of course, Charlie always brought the Good Wishes of his “paroisse” to us and I always presented to them the Good Wishes of the URC in Marlow when I was in Marly. For a number of years, Gwen Roe, also a member of our church was an active Town Twinner and participated in the “culte” in Marly.

Like so many other things the Town Twinning exchanges had to be cancelled at the time of the pandemic. When the exchanges started up again two years ago I was unable to participate due to a prior Scottish Country Dancing commitment, but this year I attended the morning “culte” on Sunday the 26 May. I was very



warmly welcomed by the members of the “paroisse” especially those who knew me from the past and in the course of the service was able to express “Les Bon Voeux” of the Marlow parishioners to the Marly congregation.

*George Flett*

## Rules and Regulations – a gift of (serious) humour



As some of you will know, I can be very laid back over rules and regulations. But there are times when they can be helpful. Sometimes rules are written down, and sometimes they aren't. Some you wish were written down.

As I prepare to leave, I thought I'd recap and leave some ministerial rules that should help you, *especially if you have been involved in any of the discussions that I have had about these issues.*

Below are some frequently asked questions and my rulings...

### **What biscuits can I dunk in my tea or coffee?**

David's ruling: None. Dunking is not acceptable. It spoils a good drink, and a good biscuit, leaving a soggy mess at the bottom of the cup.

### **When can I eat a croissant or pain au chocolate?**

David's ruling: These are clearly morning food items, not to be ordered with or after lunch.

### **When is it acceptable to eat a cheese scone?**

David's ruling: This is simple. A cheese scone may be eaten in the morning. I



am not overly strict, and I have mellowed over the years. I do allow them to be eaten 'with' lunch e.g. soup. But a cheese scone should not be eaten after lunch.

### **When can I eat other forms of scone?**



David's ruling: This is complex. A raisin scone can be eaten with butter and jam (any variety) after lunch. A plain scone may be eaten with raspberry jam and cream (no butter) in the afternoon – after all, it is an 'afternoon tea'. The jam should be put on first – obviously.

It's more complex because there are things such as cherry scones. These are ridiculous and should be avoided, as should other improvised scones.

Have you ever had an ice cream cone? Mr Whippy, a '99', or something like that? Ice cream: in a cone. Now add an 's' before cone... That settles the pronunciation debate. Fact.

### **What are the best biscuits?**

David's ruling: As we have noted, there are no 'best biscuits' for dunking. But beyond that, what about others? Avoid specials. A Jaffa Cake is a perfectly good item. Why on earth have special flavours? It's then no longer a Jaffa cake. Other biscuit makers mess around and spoil perfectly good biscuits. Don't be fooled.

### **David, can you help me know what to do about Hot Cross Buns?**

David's ruling: Yes. Hot Cross buns should have a cross on them. They may be eaten hot or cold, but don't peak too soon. I know it is tempting to eat one in January when they are starting to pour into the shops. Leave them until Easter. Now.... (here we go), do not attempt to eat any oddities. Salted caramel Hot Cross Buns? Chocolate and orange Hot Cross buns? What on earth is going on? Just walk away from them.

## David, Christmas isn't too far way? Any tips?

David's ruling: Glad you asked. Mince pies – DO NOT START TOO EARLY. Along with Christmas pudding, these are very good winter food items. If you start eating them when they come out in the shops, it will be a mistake. But do invest time in working out which mince pies are best served hot. Also, you will get silly attempts to tempt you. Orange Dime bars came out last Christmas – why? If you want chocolate orange, there is only one type. If you want a Dime bar, have a Dime bar. Christmas gets silly and should be nice and simple.



## How should I put food on my plate?

David's ruling: With great care and precision! Nothing spoils rice more than having curry dumped all over it. Nothing spoils a roast more than gravy being poured all over it. Food items should be kept separate so that you can choose each mouthful with great care. Very young children have those plates with raised barriers to keep food apart – great idea! Should be socially acceptable for all adults as well!



I hope that this all helps you. The Bible contains many mentions of food, and there are many rules and regulations, certainly in the Old Testament. I hope you will feel that everything I have mentioned is building on good principles!

*PS if you haven't had a conversation with me that included one of these topics...*

*Consider yourself lucky!*

*David*

**Note from editorial team:** we have illustrated David's rules appropriately and trust he will want to find a recipe for the gingerbread-men mince pies – just the kind of combination he loves!

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