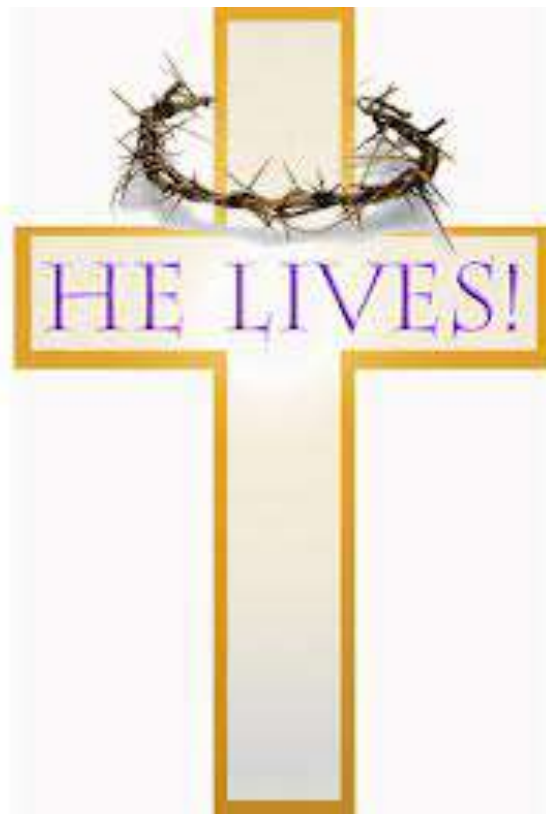




March and  
April 2024

# In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in  
Maidenhead and Marlow



## Letter From Our Minister

It's important that we celebrate Easter.

Even though it may not be for us!

The Easter story has its heart in everything that goes wrong.

The garden of Eden goes wrong, and we get the garden of Gethsemane.

The bread in the wilderness goes wrong, and we are left with the broken bread of Maundy Thursday.

The calling together of disciples goes wrong, and we are left with the breaking up of the disciples.

The shouts of hosanna from Palm Sunday go wrong, and we hear shouts of accusation.

There are lots of things that show that the stories of the gospels are set in broken lives, for broken people, in a broken period of time.

So, it is logical to say that maybe the story of Easter, while joyful for everyone, can only really connect with those who are broken:

Broken because of war in Ukraine.

Broken because of a lack of food and/or water.

Broken because of climate change.

Broken because of being caught in an abusive relationship.

Broken because of a broken body, or a broken spirit.

Broken to the core of what it is to be human.

And if we are honest... None of us would choose to be in those situations. None of us want to be in those situations, none of us want to create those situations.

But you can imagine the power of a story that starts with betrayal, conflict, pain, heartbreak, torture, and death... and then leads to new life! It's for people like this that the flow of the Easter story is so powerful.

Imagine being renewed by peace and justice in Ukraine.

Imagine being renewed by having food and water.

Imagine being renewed by a healthy relationship.

Imagine being renewed in body and or spirit.

Imagine being renewed to live life in all its fullness.

But of course, much of our lives can be spent trying to convince people that we aren't broken. When someone asks how you are today, how do you answer? Do you say "I'm fine thank you" even if you aren't! If this happens in church life, it can build an image of church being a place full of people whose lives are balanced, sorted, and trouble free. That's a church that just doesn't need Easter.

We may not be in Ukraine, we may not be starving or getting disease from poor water, we may not be in abusive relationships, and we may be living in hope... But to get the most from Easter, we need to find where we are broken. What parts of our lives aren't perfect and aren't as complete as they should be?

When we find those areas, Easter is for us.

So we celebrate Easter for others, and we celebrate it for ourselves.

We celebrate it for all who have been broken, for all who are, and for the world. Jumping from Palm Sunday's celebrations to the joy of Easter Sunday can mean we lose out on the depth of why Easter is still relevant to me, to you, and to this broken world.

May the good news of the gospel lift us all this Easter... From whatever depth we find ourselves in. From whatever depth we know others are in.

From being tortured, dead, and buried, Christ is alive for evermore! Alleluia!!!

*David Downing*

## Easter Schedule

### **Maundy Thursday March 28**

**2.30pm**

Washed for Easter? An event at Maidenhead reflecting on foot-washing and more! Followed by refreshments.

Maundy Thursday in John's Gospel doesn't mention bread and wine, instead focuses on Jesus kneeling to wash the feet of others. Should we wash each

others' feet? Or hands? We will worship and explore the events of John's gospel.

### **6.30pm**

Bread, wine, and a meal in Marlow. Jesus shared bread and wine as part of a meal, and so we shall do the same! Tickets will be sold for this event and will include the two-course meal. Available on a first come, first served basis due to limited numbers.

### **Good Friday 29 March**

#### **9.30am**

We gather in Higginson Park for a Churches Together in Marlow short worship, before walking up to the Methodist church for 10.15 shared worship.

#### **11am**

In Maidenhead we will gather outside Sainsbury's for the Churches Together walk of witness.

### **Easter Sunday 30 March**

#### **9am**

Pretending it's sunrise, we will worship in the church of Marlow URC for half an hour, reflecting on the resurrection stories set in a garden!

#### **9.45am**

A continental style breakfast will be served at Maidenhead as we prepare for **10:30** worship which will include Communion.

#### **4pm**

Vigil for Ukraine at Marlow

### **Marlow Warm Hub**

We are still offering a warm welcome on a Monday morning... But our last full session (10-2pm) will be on Monday 11 March.

## 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
10 March	Rev Stephen Thornton	Rev David Downing Communion
17 March	Rev David Downing Zoom	
24 March	Geoff Cronin	Rev David Downing
Thur 28 March Maundy Thursday	2.30 Rev David Downing Service based around foot washing	6.30 Rev David Downing "Passover" style meal
31 March	10.30 Rev David Downing Joint Easter Service with Communion	9.00 Rev David Downing Joint Easter Service in Garden
7 April	Rev David Downing Joint service at Maidenhead	
14 April	Bob Robertson	Rev David Downing Communion
21 April	Rev David Downing Zoom	
28 April	Andrew Gibb	Rev Margaret Yee
5 May	Rev David Downing Communion, Church Meeting	Rev Daphne Preece
12 May	Scott Wheeler	Rev David Downing Communion Church Meeting/AGM

## Marlow diary dates

### Ukraine collection days

Marlow is open for donations for Ukraine on Monday 4 and 11 March from 10am – 2pm, Sundays from 4.15 - 5pm and Fridays from 10am -11am.

### Ukraine vigil

Sundays at 4pm in the Marlow church garden.

## **House Group**

House Group will be meeting weekly at 10.30 on Tuesdays throughout Lent and thereafter on the first and third Tuesdays every month at Doreen's house. For further information contact David Downing.

## **Coffee mornings**

It's been great running as a Warm Welcome hub through the winter in Marlow... I think we've all enjoyed the quizzes! But what now?

As from April 8 we will be changing slightly. 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**

Marlow church meeting and AGM Sunday 12 May.

## **Marlow Elders**

Marlow has meetings on March 11 and April 15.

## **Maidenhead diary dates**

### **Ukraine collection days**

Saturdays from 10am-12 noon.

### **Coffee Morning**

As the Lent group finishes at Easter, from Wednesday 3 April onwards Maidenhead's coffee morning reverts to the Deli in the Nicholson Centre, every Wednesday from 11-12. Everyone is welcome!

### **Church meeting**

Maidenhead church meeting May 5.

### **Maidenhead Elders**

Maidenhead has Elders meetings on April 9, May 7 at 3.30pm.

### **Lent Group**

Don't forget that both churches have Lent groups running:

Tuesday mornings in Marlow.

Wednesday mornings in Maidenhead.

Not long left, but you can join both if only for the last sessions!

## The Sound of Music-Musings

With very little notice, it was great to be able to have Bryony Wood lead worship in Maidenhead in February. Bryony wrote the book *The Sound of Musings* that we have been using for the Maidenhead Lent Group.

When was the last time we sang 'Do-Re-Mi' as part of worship?! Some of us also got our books signed!

One of the things that lots of people have mentioned was the sung blessing at the end of the service, which was set to the tune 'Edelweiss'. The words are below. Do you think we should use it to close our worship on Sundays? What do you think?

**May the Lord, mighty God**

**Bless and keep you forever**

**Grant you peace, perfect peace;**

**Strength in every endeavour.**

**Lift your eyes, and seek His face**

**And His grace for ever.**

**May the Lord, Mighty God**

**Bless and keep you forever.**



## The New Pastorate

Since the last magazine, lots of people have been very busy!

All four churches (Maidenhead, Marlow, Windsor and Bracknell) voted to seek to form a new pastorate of the four churches. Since then, I have been to preach at Windsor and Bracknell. On those Sundays, both churches were asked to have Church Meetings when they voted on a) forming the new pastorate, and b) calling me as their minister as part of that pastorate. Both churches voted unanimously in favour. So, what happens now? What is going to change? Immediately, not much will change. All the churches' Elders will be discussing what priorities they have for me as minister. We will be trying to get the Church Secretaries to get together as well. The worship plan won't change for the foreseeable future, but I will be visiting Windsor and Bracknell for various events as we look to form a short-term strategy, and a long-term plan.



Will there be a service of blessing for the pastorate and an induction for me? Yes. But we don't know when! Rev Michael Hopkins starts as our new Synod Moderator on March 1 and he will be working out a space in his diary so that he can be present. But I can start the new ministry from now onwards so that nothing is delayed.

Please do keep asking questions as we explore this new venture!

God bless,

*David Downing*

## Welcome to Windsor and Bracknell

On 18 and 25 February respectively Christchurch Windsor (top right) and St Paul's Bracknell (below) invited David Downing to preach with a view. On both occasions, immediately after David had led the service, the churches held a meeting chaired by the Interim Moderator at which they agreed unanimously to join a four-church pastorate comprising Marlow, Maidenhead, Windsor and Bracknell. Both churches also agreed unanimously to call David to be their minister. David was informed immediately, and Windsor and Bracknell are now members of the Joint Pastorate.



*Bob Robertson (Interim Moderator for Windsor and Bracknell)*

## Pastorate Administrator

It is with great excitement that not only can we tell you that we have appointed a new administrator to the new post, but that Mila has already started! Mostly based in Maidenhead, we are thrilled that she is part of our church life.

I asked her to write a piece for us so that we can get to know her. She says:

*My name is Liudmyla and I'm 38 years old. Originally from a town called Uzhhorod in western Ukraine, I came to Maidenhead after the war began. The war in Ukraine brought me to England, where my husband, whom I had met back*



*home, warmly welcomed me. A year ago, we celebrated our love with a marriage in Maidenhead, a town that reminds me of my own – peaceful, green, and full of friendly faces.*

*My background lies in biology and chemistry, with a Master's degree in these subjects. My journey has led me through various experiences, mostly teaching. I've also gained valuable experience in roles involving administrative duties, honing my organizational skills and attention to detail.*

*Starting anew wasn't easy. However, I knew I needed to adapt. So, I embraced learning English, took a Business Administration course. Learning for me is both fulfilling and rewarding. My journey doesn't stop there. I am constantly driven by a strong desire to learn and grow. I believe it is necessary to be dedicated and passionate whatever you do. I am striving to bring success not only to myself but also to those around me.*

*Most importantly, I adore my family – my husband and our wonderful children, a 10-year-old son and a 12-year-old daughter. Spending time with them, often with friends, brings me immense joy. From walks and nature trips to kayaking, badminton, and playful evenings, we're always creating happy memories. We often host friends, as hospitality is close to our hearts! And whenever I crave some quiet time, I escape into the world of drawing.*

*My deepest wish is for everyone to find their own happiness, just like I have. But above all, I pray for peace and kindness to prevail everywhere.*

*I'm excited to get to know you all better and be part of your welcoming family!*

*Liudmyla*

## Scout Group Quiz

Once again we are grateful that Gordon is preparing questions ready for the Scout Group Quiz on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March. He and Morag will lead us in round after round, but half-way through we will stop for a baked potato supper. All welcome at Maidenhead URC - £10, bring your own drinks and nibbles! Thank you for your support!

*Alison Holton*



Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 7.30pm

United Reformed Church, West Street, SL6 1RL

Adults £10 – Under 18s £5

Includes baked potato supper

Bring your own drinks and snacks

Tickets from Alison & John 01628 639582 / 07481 020157

## Thank you Linda

Just before the Maidenhead Church Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February Linda Nightingale was given a warm word of thanks for her 18 years of service to the church as its Administrator. She started her retirement just before Christmas. She cut a special cream cake and shared it amongst everyone.

*John Holton*



## Synod Big Day Out

This year the Synod Big Day Out is at Hollycombe Steam Park... And if you are coming, then 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!

A colorful promotional poster for the 'Wessex Synod Big Day Out '24' at Hollycombe Steam Park. The poster features the event title in large, stylized letters, a ticket price box (Children £5, Adults £8), and a central text box stating: 'Were you at the Wessex Synod Big Day Out in 2022? Big Day Out '24 will be Bigger and Better with many more rides and additional programme activities provided by the Wessex Synod. Open to all church groups, user groups, and community links'. It also lists 'SATURDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024 10AM - 5PM' and includes a QR code for booking. The poster is decorated with images of steam trains, a carousel, and other park attractions, along with logos for 'BRASS BAND', 'FOREST CHURCH', and 'STORY STORY STORY'.

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 4<sup>th</sup>. 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*

**The General Assembly  
of the United Reformed Church  
invites you to the induction of the  
Revd Dr Michael Hopkins  
as Moderator of the Wessex Synod**

**3.00 pm on Saturday 23 March 2024  
at London Street United Reformed Church, Basingstoke**

The service will be led by the Moderator of the General Assembly,  
the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson,  
and the preacher is the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church,  
the Revd Dr John Bradbury

*The church address is: 20 London St, Basingstoke RG21 7NU*

*There is no parking at all at the church, please use public car parks. On Saturdays only the Eastlands Car park is available and near to the church.*

*Public transport is easy with many local buses, and the railway station is a half mile fairly level mainly covered walk.*

*We encourage car sharing and use of public transport as much as possible.*

**RSVP**

*Email replies appreciated where possible*

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*The*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church  
Wessex  
Synod**

**Thank you**



Many thanks for the beautiful  
bouquet of flowers and generous  
gift voucher given to me at the

February Church Meeting.

I really appreciate your thoughtfulness.

*Irene Pullin*



## Ukraine

Two key things to report on.

First, thank you to those who commemorated the second Anniversary of Russia's invasion by attending either the event in



*Maria with Ukraine candle*



Maidenhead or the vigil in Marlow. Marking such dates is important.

In Maidenhead we made 'prayers' to hang on a tree (see below left). We also wrote messages on strips that will be attached round trench candles. These prayers and messages will be sent on to soldiers fighting in Ukraine.

We also heard music and Ukrainian songs. These can be heard on our Facebook page.

Oh, and we also ate Ukrainian food!

It felt like an important event as we celebrated what it means to be Ukrainian.



Second, what are we now collecting and sending? We are hoping to send our next truck the week of March 18.

We know these things from Ewa:

**Food.** All the places we have been supporting are struggling to get food. Above all else, we need to send food. We will be spending nearly all the money we have left to send food. But the more food that is donated the better.

**Easter eggs** are a great way of helping people feel remembered. So we want to send as many eggs as possible. We don't want big eggs. Instead we need eggs such as crème eggs and bags of mini-eggs. These are easy to transport.

**Pyjamas!** There is a hospital that we can support on the outskirts of Kherson. There are around 100 children that need this hospital due to treatment for various conditions. But they can't stay in the hospital over-night because of the

risk of bombing. If we can send pyjamas, it will mean they have things to wear during their day-stay in hospital. We need new, and very good condition pyjamas for boys and girls aged 3-13.

So, we need donations of:

**Long Life Food**

**Small Easter Eggs**

**Pyjamas**

Can you help? Do you know of others who want to help us make a massive difference to the



lives of children and adults struggling in Ukraine?

You can donate items, or money at church, or use this QR code.

This truck may well be our last big shipment of aid.

Not because we want to stop. Not because the war has stopped. But

we know that donations are not as abundant as they were, and we have spent nearly all the money that has



been donated.

We will still get some donations, I'm sure, but it is getting harder.

If you have any ideas as to how we can increase donations, or fundraise, please do let me know!

*David Downing*

## **'Wine to Aid' - Fundraising Evening for Ukraine**

We thoroughly enjoyed the excellent 'Wine to Aid' fundraising event for Ukraine at Maidenhead on Friday 9 February.

We all assembled in the church and after a warm welcome and introduction to the Aid for Ukraine project from David, the evening got off to a great start with our talented Ukraine choir (who meet weekly at the church) entertaining us with a super selection of Ukrainian songs along with readings in such impressive

English. Corks then started popping at the back of the church (that must be a first!!) as the first of the evening's wines (Cava & Prosecco) were uncorked and served to everyone.

We were so fortunate that Master of Wine Richard Bampfield hosted the evening. Richard led us through each of the six wines we tasted, carefully explaining the attributes and origin of each one, including two from Ukraine! We then all adjourned to the hall for a blind tasting of the same six wines - this time the wines were only identified by the bottle number.

Armed with our quiz sheets, we toured each of the tables to taste each of the wines once again, naming each wine in turn and answering some additional quiz questions. On a 7<sup>th</sup> table were non-alcoholic wines, courtesy of Noughty. We also enjoyed a tasty buffet of bread, cheese and nibbles – did these flavours alter the taste of the wines?

It was fantastic that the evening was so well supported. Such a great atmosphere with everyone attending mixing so well and sharing opinions about the different wines. A magnificent sum of £1,469 was raised and more people became aware of our Aid for Ukraine project!

A thoroughly enjoyable evening – very many congratulations to everyone involved in organising the event and especially to Richard Bampfield and his wife Jackie for leading the evening.

*Joyce Cawthorpe*

## **Maidenhead Street Angels: Appeal for volunteers**

Would you enjoy meeting and helping all kinds of people on Saturday and pay-day Friday nights? If so, why not try a taster session around Maidenhead town centre with a small friendly group. Mainly Christian, they include those of other faiths and none. Their ethos is “Love the person in front of you“. The public will greatly welcome your friendly approach.

Please contact: [stangelsm@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:stangelsm@hotmail.co.uk)

And/or visit: Facebook, and search for maidenheadstreetangels

## Holocaust Memorial Day

I wrote this on Holocaust Memorial Day, 27<sup>th</sup> January, a day that meant so much more to me this year. It is nearly a year since the six of us went to southeast Poland to meet those in the chain of our Aid for Ukraine project and one morning we visited Belzec. It is estimated that at this major Nazi death camp over 600,000 Jews and thousands of gypsies were exterminated.

In 1943 the Nazis then destroyed the camp supposedly to hide any evidence. So there are no buildings left, just chunks of charred remains covering the sloping ground, making it even more stark and poignant. We could see the line of the railway that had carried all the unsuspecting victims to this killing factory. The museum displays, particularly those of victims' shoes, items of jewellery and other personal effects, were truly shocking. The quotation from the Book of Job (16:18) etched into stone reads "Earth do not cover my blood: let there be no resting place for my outcry!".

*Alison Holton*

## Artpeace News



At the end of last October we received the message from Johnston that Lizeni Nasho, the only female sculpture artist at Artpeace had died after a short illness. She was only 55 years old. We knew her well and we had sold some of her art in our big 2009 exhibition. This feels like the end of an era.

At our church meeting on 5 November the congregation decided to send Artpeace £3000 to buy maize seed and fertilizer. Two days later the money

was paid out in Harare and we received a raft of thank you messages by WhatsApp from the artists. Here is a selection:

Mike Masedza: 'This is a great relief for AP. Thank you Marlow. God bless you!'

Shingi: 'Thank you Marlow for the great job you are doing for AP'.

Coster: 'Good news from Marlow'.

Dickson: 'Good news thank you Marlow for the donations and your efforts -may



God bless you all'. Ignatious: 'Good news indeed, thank you Marlow'.

Godfrey: 'Really good news from our Marlow friends. Thanks once again for donations'.

Peter: 'Big thanks to our friends of Marlow with the inputs donation'.

Godwin: 'Very much appreciated and thank you Marlow.'

Lovemore: 'That's good news to hear that Marlow agreed to help with fertiliser and seed money'.

The artists immediately bought seed and fertilizer. Here's another message from



Lovemore: 'It's all so happy happy today. We are about to become farmers again as well as sculpting'.

Then Mike Masedza who organizes the artists sent

us a two-minute video, thanking us for our support. Obviously I cannot share the video in this newsletter but I will WhatsApp it to you if you'd like to see it. I sent them a thank you note to let them know that we speak of them often and that we feel privileged to know them and support them.

Shingi: 'Thank Martin for the reply to Artpeace, we will send photos of sowing



the seeds we say thank you, thank you Marlow! God Bless You

All 🙏🙏🙏'.

They had already prepared their fields and when

the rain finally arrived in early December, they planted the seed. *Above: Coste and his wife Beauty sowing.*



Global climate change means that the weather patterns in Africa are getting more erratic every year. The rainy season can be delayed. When the rain finally comes, it often rains for weeks on end and the soil gets washed away.

*Here Shingi is tending the young plants.* This region, its farming and food supply is more directly affected by climate change than we are.

In mid-January we received the first photos from Dickson in his field (*below alongside Godwin*). The plants are taller than he is.

In mid-February Lovemore sent a photo of his wife and son in front of their crop. It looks like they have had another successful growing season and the harvest will provide them and their families a basic food supply for the year.

We will receive more photos and videos in the next few weeks as all the plants are maturing and ready for harvest.

We know that we are able to cover their basic food needs

with our donations and we are grateful for this. Our donation is

a lifeline for everyone at Artpeace. And I would like to say

a massive THANK YOU to everyone who has supported this

project through

the years.

Thank you

Mahlo!

*Martin Beck*



*Lovemore's sculpture with daughter Anita*



## Christian Aid week 2024

This year Christian Aid week is **12-18 May**. As usual in Marlow there will be an envelope drop to raise funds for Christian Aid's work relieving poverty, responding to disasters and helping the world's poorest people to find independence and dignity. The task is simply to go out for a nice walk in the spring sunshine, admire gardens coming into bloom, and push envelopes into letter boxes as you go!

Gillian Dibden MBE will be bringing talented young people from the Taplow Youth choirs to perform for us in the annual Christian Aid concert at Christ Church Marlow on the **evening of Sunday 12 May**. This is always a wonderful evening - save the date and tell your friends and families too.

*Catherine Johnson*

## Beavers and Birds!

My favourite evening with the Beavers, (and looking at their faces it was theirs too), was when Berkshire Birds of Prey paid a visit. It was very special to watch a hawk flying around the church hall then to be introduced to four different types of owl, all local species. Finally a huge eagle owl said hello. Along with some of the Beavers I was adamant I wasn't going to hold a bird but in the end we all weakened.

The lady with all her young volunteers



was so good at keeping the enthusiastic Beavers engaged but calm. What a memorable evening for them all.

*Alison Holton*

*Joint Group Lead Volunteer*



## How great thou art

I have been reminded of this hymn these past few weeks as I spend so much time looking out on my garden which is always beautiful especially this time of year. The bulbs put in the ground over the 40 odd years we have lived here. Snowdrops, multicoloured crocus,



daffodils narcissus and fabulous smelling hyacinths, grape hyacinths. The new growth on the trees and shrubs new life all around. It has boosted my soul. Added to that the many different birds all hopefully checking out the bird boxes. This week surprise visitors - three ring-necked parakeets. The flashing of green feathers in flight was great but I hope they don't devour all the peanuts I give the tits and gold finches. Last year I welcomed an American Robin, but only robins this year.

YES HOW GREAT THOU ART.

*Pam Breen*

## Request for help

As a member of the Tuesday Singers ladies choir I am hoping that some-one could help us replace our lovely accompanist/conductor, James Church. After fifteen years with us he is moving on at the end of this summer. Please let me know if you know someone who would be interested in this role.

Do also ask me for information if you would like to sing with us – we are very happy to welcome new ladies.

*Judith Inman*

## A new wall decoration

In Maidenhead you will notice a new addition to the “wall furniture” in the Link in the form of a bead embroidery crafted in Ukraine. It is one of the items that was donated for the silent auction recently but was not sold at the time. The Elders have decided that the church will purchase it as a reminder of the work done through Aid for Ukraine over the past two years.

*John Holton*

## Contact us

<b>Maidenhead</b>	<b>Marlow</b>
Maidenhead United Reformed Church West Street, Maidenhead SL6 1RL <a href="http://www.maidenheadurc.org.uk">www.maidenheadurc.org.uk</a>	Christ Church United Reformed Church Oxford Road, Marlow SL7 2NL <a href="http://www.christchurch-marlow.org.uk">www.christchurch-marlow.org.uk</a>
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Church Administrator: <a href="mailto:administrator@maidenheadurc.org.uk">administrator@maidenheadurc.org.uk</a>  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](mailto:magazine@maidenheadurc.org.uk)

Find us on Facebook:

@maidenheadurc

@ChristChurchMarlow

YouTube: Maidenhead and Marlow URC

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