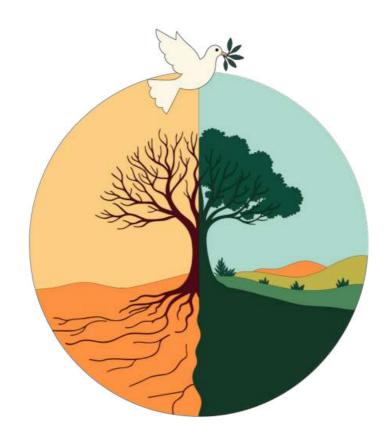




In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in Maidenhead and Marlow



Garden of Peace: Isaiah 32:14-18

From our Minister!

Dear Friends in the Marlow and Maidenhead churches,

It's a joy to be writing to you as I begin this new chapter of ministry with the BMMW group. Nearly all the boxes are unpacked, and we're starting to feel settled here—Ruth, Julia and I are so looking forward to getting to know you all better.

We'd love to invite you to a drop-in coffee day at the manse soon—just a



relaxed chance to chat, share a cuppa, and say hello properly. We'll send out a date shortly and hope you can pop in.

We were truly touched by the warm welcome we received—the cards, the kind words, and especially the cakes! Thank you so much. Your kindness meant a great deal to us as we

arrived and started to find our feet.

So here we are—beginning this time together, as we worship, serve, and walk with God in community. I'll be visiting all the churches in the area over the coming weeks, but I thought I'd take this chance to share a little of my journey with you.

I was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne—my dad was a congregational minister, so we moved a bit as I grew up: first to Ossett in West Yorkshire (where I gained a sister!), then to Kettering, where Dad served the Toller Group of churches. That area still holds many happy memories for me—school, Scouts, cricket, and later, returning to minister nearby in Wellingborough in my last Pastorate.

It was as a teenager that I first went to Greenbelt Festival, and it was there, in 1990, that I felt an unexpected and powerful call to ministry. I had just sorted a teaching and theology degree in Leeds, and ministry wasn't on my radar—but God had other plans. After talking it through with my Dad (who had just accepted a new call to Northallerton at the time), I followed advice to go ahead with my degree, test the call, and see where God would lead.

I'm so glad I did. In Leeds, I met Ruth through the local Methodist Church, where

we both joined a young adults' group. By the time I graduated, we were engaged. Ruth began teaching in Warrington while I worked with the NorthWest Synod in a youth role as part of the Ginger Group—born out of the closure of Yardley Hastings. Eventually, I trained at Northern College, and was ordained in 1998.

We married in 1996 and became parents to Hannah in 1997, and Lauren arrived in 1999. Life took another turn in 2023/4 when we became guardians to our granddaughter Julia, after Hannah's struggles with her mental health meant she wasn't able to care for her daughter. That journey continues to teach us more about grace, resilience, and the depth of God's care.

Over the years, I've served in a number of pastorates—Sedgley in the West Midlands, then in Croydon with two wonderfully diverse, majority-Black churches, later in Wigan, and most recently in East Northants. Alongside church ministry, I've had the privilege of serving as a chaplain in schools, in prison, with Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade and with the police, and I've also been involved in various roles at Synod and national level.

But more important than where I've been or what I've done is what I've learned—and what I'm still learning. At the heart of everything is God's all-embracing love: a love that welcomes, includes, heals, and transforms. I've seen how even the smallest acts of kindness—done in love—can grow and multiply in beautiful and unexpected ways.

That, I believe, is where we begin: trusting in God's love and hope, and committing ourselves to share that hopeful love—simply, honestly, and faithfully—in all we do. As individuals, as a church family, and as part of God's wider creation, we are called to love, to serve, and to be open to where the Spirit leads.

So as we step into this new season together, I do so with hope, with gratitude, and with trust in the One who goes before us.

Shalom, and every blessing,

Chris

Worship at Maidenhead and Marlow

Services begin at 10.30am unless indicated otherwise

Date	Location and worship	Location and worship
	leader for Maidenhead	leader for Marlow
7 September	Gordon Campbell	Hilary Hunt
	and Bob Robertson	
	Commitment for Life, Harvest	
	and Communion	
14 September	Nick Gough	Rev Chris Parker
		Communion
		Church Meeting
21 September	Zoom	
	Led by Maidenhead	
28 September	Rev Chris Parker	Irene Pullin and Pam Breen
5 October	Alistair Telfer	Bob Robertson
	Communion	Communion
12 October	Scott Wheeler	Rev Chris Parker
	Church Anniversary	Harvest Thanksgiving
19 October	Zoom	
15 001050.	Led by Rev Chris Parker	
26 October	Rev Stephen Thornton	Rob Lewis
2 November	Paul Murphy	Rev Daphne Preece
	Communion (John Holton)	Communion
9 November	Rev Chris Parker	No service at Christ Church
	Remembrance	Marlow Town Remembrance
		service at Cenotaph
		or join Maidenhead Service

Marlow diary dates

Ukraine collection days: Marlow is open for donations for Ukraine on Fridays from 10-11am and Sundays from 4.15-5pm.

Ukraine vigil: Takes place in the Marlow church garden at 4pm every Sunday. **House Group:** House Group will meet at Doreen's house on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 10.30am. Please contact George Flett for details.

Marlow Elders: Monday September 9 and Monday October 13.

Church Meeting: Church Meeting will be on 14 September.

Maidenhead diary dates

Ukraine collection days: Saturdays from 10am-12 noon.

Coffee Morning: We will meet at the Premier Inn from 11.00 (see below)

Maidenhead Elders: Monday 6 October 2.30pm.

Induction Service - 20th September

Just a reminder that if you are coming to the Induction Service for Rev Chris Parker, parking will be **VERY** limited at the church so, if possible, please try to arrange to share cars. Please be aware that in the carpark under the offices we will need to use all the spaces so cars must be double parked - you may well get blocked in temporarily. If you are NOT coming, please avoid parking there that day.

John Holton

What's the picture on the front cover of In Touch?



Each year churches of many denominations (including the URC) around the world celebrate the *Season of Creation*. It runs

from September to November and encourages churches not only to celebrate at their 'Harvest Festival' but to think more widely and deeply about how the world is being damaged by climate change, environmental damage, financial greed. This year the Season title is *Peace with Creation*, and themes look at the effect of war, violence, greed and injustice on our lands and seas. To achieve restoration of the natural world and food resources we need also to achieve justice and peace.

Inspired by Isaiah 32:14-18 the symbol 'Garden of Peace,' depicts a white dove flying over a tree. The left side of the tree is barren, with roots digging into dry soil, surrounded by an arid, desolate landscape. In contrast, the right side of the tree is lush and green, standing amidst a flourishing landscape. The dove, carrying an olive branch in its beak, flies toward the right—symbolizing peace as

a transition from a war-torn, overexploited land to one that is fertile, thriving, and hospitable.

Between Maidenhead and Marlow we include Commitment for Life, Fairtrade, Christian Aid, Ukraine collections and support, and Eco Church as part of our Season of Creation commitment. But we are also encouraged in this Season to work for peace and justice in our own towns and communities. Something to think about.

A prayer for the season

Lord of justice and compassion,
you created the world in goodness and love
and made us to care with compassion for your earth and each other:
Forgive our neglect of creation and our indifference to suffering,
stir-up in us a hope that acts, a faith that speaks,
and a love that crosses every boundary.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who came to bring good news to the poor
and to restore all things in you,

Amen

With thanks to Revd Mike Perry, the Bishop of Salisbury's Adviser for Creation, Care and Climate Justice.

Eco Church resources.

Do it Fair in Fairtrade Fortnight

In our September Zoom Service Gordon Campbell will explore Fairtrade and how it works for justice and what our role as Christians might be.

Did you know ... in the UK, we drink 100 million cups of tea every day? In an unjust world, can we unite under Fairtrade's "DO IT FAIR" campaign (22 September to 5 October) to celebrate and stand with the people around the world who are behind the everyday products we love (especially this year – tea)? The people behind our cuppa deserve to live with dignity and earn fair, sustainable incomes. But for many people growing our food, that's not reality.

What can we do?

The simple act of buying Fairtrade products like tea, coffee or bananas, offers a powerful way for us to 'do it fair'.

Have a tea party using Fairtrade products and tell friends about why they are vital to people and their ways of life and they can 'do it fair'.

Fairtrade says <u>sign our petition</u> calling on the government to take stronger action in the tea industry.

Did you know ... tea has the potential to contribute to rural development, water access, improve education outcomes, empower women and – ultimately – change lives.

Let's make sure we know how Fairtrade does this.

Fairtrade Fortnight calls on us all to act for justice. That's another thing to think about!

Resources from www.fairtrade.net

Aid for Ukraine Lorries

Since our latest lorry (number 16) arrived in Tomaszów Lubelski on 22 May, Ewa has made a number of trips into Ukraine to distribute our donations. As you will



know from earlier reports, most of our donations end up in Kherson and neighbouring villages. At

the end of July, Ewa was in Mykolaiv, a town which regularly comes under Russian shelling. Ewa told us that the people there did not believe that anyone

would come to help them so were surprised but also extremely grateful when Ewa pitched up with a van full of donations. She said that the hope she saw in their eyes when she arrived made it all worthwhile.

It means a lot to them to know they are not forgotten.



From time to time we do try to send a few treats along with the essential items.

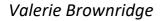


Some of you may be aware that in a recent lorry we sent a couple of boxes of cream Easter eggs in knitted bags in the Ukraine colours.

Ewa kindly sent photos to prove that these have now finally made it to Kherson and Mykolaiv!

Our donations continue to be desperately

needed and much appreciated so please keep donating whatever you can. Please also keep reminding your friends and neighbours that we are still collecting, storing and sending donations to Ukraine. Our 17th lorry is scheduled to leave Maidenhead on 8 or 9 September.





Remembering Mike Liddle

Members of both congregations were shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden and unexpected death of Mike Liddle during the night of Friday 8 August. We send our sympathy to Maggie and the family who were so important to him. Mike was a faithful worshipper and a valued member of West Street for many, many years. At Elder's meetings his views were always respected. As a professional facilities manager he brought his expertise, experience and time to help West Street in technical, legal and challenging matters relating to our buildings and trustees' responsibilities. He chaired and led our Admin Committee throughout several of its iterations and steered us through the process of refurbishing the sanctuary; without him co-ordinating day-in and day-out with

contractors and suppliers, our buildings and church affairs would not have run as smoothly as we are used to.

His view of Christian stewardship and social responsibility went wider than West Street. He contributed to our team when we worked with Newham and Plaistow in London. Over the last three years he has been a principal instigator in our collections for Ukraine whereby we have sent sixteen deliveries of essential items worth several hundred thousand pounds.



Mike's organisational skills and leadership ensured that we quickly built a strong team of generous volunteers in Marlow and Maidenhead and established strong links with contacts in Poland and Ukraine so that we get the right aid to the right places.

Personal relationships were important to Mike. One of the roles he filled so admirably at West Street was that of BBQ King (one of his official titles in the Church Handbook at one time). Who does not

remember the garden parties at his and Maggie's home, the Sausage Sizzles with the Youth Group, or hot-dog lunches at young people's events? I for one shall always remember his hot-trolley full of baked potatoes and marinated chicken and giant pans on the grill full to the brim of paella and house speciality - garlic peas. West Street URC will miss Mike as a dependable and generous colleague and fellow pilgrim. He enriched our church life in many ways.

Bob Robertson

Ukulele Mondays – Ukraine Fundraising Concert

As mentioned in our last edition of In Touch, Ukelele Mondays have offered to put on another concert at Christ Church URC, Marlow in the autumn to raise funds for Ukraine. We now have a date: **Saturday 18 October**. PLEASE put this date in your diaries now.

We are holding the price of the tickets at just £10 which is a real bargain! It even includes a glass of wine or juice during the interval. I know we are always told

that if something sounds too good to be true, then it probably isn't, but this really is!! So don't miss out. Come and join us on 18 October for what is always a great evening.

We will be running a raffle again and would really appreciate any raffle prizes you are able to donate. The more tantalising prizes we have, the more it will encourage people to buy raffle tickets and the more money we will raise. We raised £1000 for Ukraine at our last concert in May, all of which was spent on much needed food for Ukraine. This is all packed and sitting in Maidenhead URC ready to go in our next lorry. We would love to raise more than this at the October concert. Please help us to do so by spreading the word and, of course, coming along yourself.

Valerie Brownridge

Summer Coffee Mornings

A big thank you to everyone who kindly hosted us in their homes and gardens over the summer. The weather was mostly good (sometimes even too hot!), and it was lovely to chat together in the fresh air with friends from both churches.

From Wednesday 3rd September, we'll be meeting again at the Premier Inn behind the church at 11.00 am. They're very happy to welcome us back. Previously some of us have found the high-chairs awkward, so I spoke with the staff, and they've offered us a new area. It's a little further into the restaurant on the left, with two tables, a bench seat along the wall and normal chairs.

I hope you'll be able to join us there. *John Holton*







Commitment for Life

On the 7th of September Maidenhead holds our annual Commitment for Life



service. This is combined with harvest celebration and we will be collecting money for Zimbabwe. We will be hearing from Christian Aid about the work that they are doing there and learning a little more about other areas of the world. There will be offering envelopes available but the easiest

way to give is to pay by bank transfer. We pay into the normal bank account but if you need to know the bank details please let me know.

I have a few collecting boxes for those unwanted coins you may have! Gordon Campbell

Lighthouse Marlow

What an incredible week we had at Lighthouse Marlow this summer!

A huge thank you to the 200+ volunteers who poured in their time, energy, and love to make Lighthouse happen. You've made a difference to the lives of more than 260 children who attended, and we are so grateful! Thank you also for the help of the outside members of Lighthouse who don't help on site but still support, pray and cheer us on.

We hope everyone had a truly fantastic week with memories to treasure.

See you next year!!

Kailey Milne

Big Birthday Celebrations!

We had all the balloons and bunting out at Christ Church URC on Sunday 6 July along with cake, candles and fizz to celebrate a very special birthday of a very special lady. Our birthday lunch at church was the first of a number of events that week arranged by Doreen's family, friends and neighbours who all wanted to celebrate Doreen's 100th birthday with her.

Doreen Harrison, as she then was, was born on 8 July 1925 in York. When Doreen was 12, the family moved to Plymouth, where Doreen went to



secondary school. After the war started, when returning from holiday the family narrowly missed being bombed on at Newton Abbot station. Consequently, the family moved to a small village in Yorkshire. When Doreen's father's job moved to Harrogate they moved there. By this time Doreen was at work, cycling each day to the War Office in Harrogate. Her father's job moved to London in 1943 so they came to live in West Harrow. Doreen joined the WAF as a teleprinter operator and quickly had to learn to touch-

type! As was the case for many during the war, Doreen had a variety of jobs, including working with the RAF in Lincolnshire, then for the Ministry of Aircraft Production in an underground office, in Banbury to close the Signal Section and finally at Bush House in Aldwych doing shift work.

While at Bush House, Doreen met George (known as Mac) McGechan, who was to become her husband. On Demob he joined the family coal business. They married on 1 July 1950 and went to live in Harrow Weald where Mac then took over the business. Their first child, Michael, was born in 1951 and their daughter Gillian followed three years later.

Doreen did office work at home, looking after her children and, later, her ailing mother-in-law. The family moved to Kenton in 1963. Until then they had not been involved in church life. However, with the influence of Presbyterian neighbours, they started to go to church and sometime later became members; the church later becoming a URC. Doreen was a steward for more than 15 years, was involved in the Women's Guild and the printing of the church magazine. She was also treasurer of the Townswomen's Guild for 21 years.

Doreen is a much-travelled lady, sometimes in their caravan – one time surviving the dangers of the Olympic Games held in Moscow, but that's a story for another time! Among the many auspicious events Doreen recalls are the rebirth

of their Fuellers Livery Company in 1989 with George as Master; being on the first float in the Lord Mayor's Show; and attending the Royal Garden Party. Doreen became a Freeman of the City of London back in 2001. This entitles her to drive a flock of sheep across London Bridge!!

Finally, in 1994, the family coal business was closed after 98 years. Sadly, George died two years later. In March 1997 Doreen moved to Marlow and stayed with her son and family for a few months while her current flat was being built. Her son sadly died in 2004.

Doreen decided that the URC in Oxford Road was to be her church, and, since giving up her car, her home has been the venue for our morning House Group. We are blessed to have Doreen in our congregation and were delighted and privileged to be able to celebrate her 100th birthday with her.



Valerie Brownridge

Maidenhead Elders Elections

It's hard to believe I know, but it's time to start thinking about new Elders to serve from January 2026. This is an exciting time for our church with Chris, our new Minister, joining us and it would be nice to have some nominations for new Elders.

If someone suggest that YOU would make a good Elder, or indeed if you feel this could now be for you, please do give it prayerful consideration and speak to me or Chris if you have any questions.

John Holton

Maidenhead Church Secretary

Hot stuff, this camping!



field for a weekend, with temperatures in the 30s. Such was our 9th Maidenhead (URC) Scout Group Family Camp this July, near Chalfont St Peter...but it turned out just fine. The adults mixed well and between chatting and relaxing just got with what needed to be done –

Place 15 children and 18 adults in a

in between chatting and relaxing just got on with what needed to be done cooking and washing-up never go away! Our main activities like Abseiling and Pedal Karts took place in the woods which helped keep our energy levels up.



But when a spare minute arose, the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts were out there in the blazing heat, running around playing cricket, the big game this year! The water slide and water fight were great hits! Our short AGM



was held on the Saturday and if you'd like to read more about this past year please do pick up an Annual Report from the Link.

The new term is upon us! The age range of our current children means we are now looking for more 6 and 7 years olds to help boost our Beaver numbers. Know anyone?

Alison Holton Joint Group Lead Volunteer



John Wimber

Rev Derek Wensley, who leads worship for Maidenhead and Marlow has kindly sent this article about a controversial and inspirational Christian teacher who influenced his life.

John Wimber, unlike any other modern Christian teacher, successfully married the Pentecostal experience to Evangelical initiative. Wimber taught classes at Fuller Seminary in California, most notably one in the early 1980s called "Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth." This class was famous and somewhat controversial putting together theory and practice and giving space to the Holy Spirit to inspire thousands of church leaders to implement the Kingdom principles and importantly, the Charismatic practice.

Clinics and services led by John often included Holy Spirit manifestations when some worshippers appeared to be drunk (as described in: Acts 2: 13 - 15), dazed or uncoordinated. John's popularity and his kingdom teaching attracted criticism and rejection from a certain brand of Christians who felt they were doing God a service by 'exposing the heresies.' John refused to fight back.

"I don't think the Lord would have responded that way – it's not our thing"

However, when asked to explain the miracles or the power and authority he had,

John would hold his Bible aloft and say "It's simple. I've been reading this book

and it's all in here"

At the invitation of David Watson, David Pytches and Sandy Millar, John brought his team periodically to the UK between 1981 and 1987. Carol, his wife, described how each of these leaders, in turn "watched and participated, as the Lord undid age-old presuppositions about how God encounters us and finding themselves in realms of spiritual reality they had never even thought to pursue". One evening meeting at Holy Trinity, Brompton, John invited the presence of the Holy Spirit and over half of the 250 people present were overcome by His Presence. John invited folk to gather round anyone on whom the Spirit had come, to minister to them, whilst he and his team walked around, giving assistance where necessary. As John exercised the gift of knowledge, he said of one young man "Take that one out." As he was carried out of the room for

prayer, John added "God is giving to that man the ability to tell people about Jesus"

At that time, no-one had any indication what the young man's future would be. He was a Barrister in the City of London: very cynical and sceptical about the team from California. But that night, it was Nicky Gumbel who received a powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit. Over twenty-nine million people worldwide have since attended his Alpha ministry. Thousands of new Christians have come to know and serve Jesus through Alpha of which Nicky Gumbel has been Director until his recent retirement.

In 1993, John was diagnosed with cancer and underwent a difficult period of treatment. Before his death in 1997 he said "It was not the age of the car that counted- it was the mileage! When all is said and done, dying is the last, the worst thing that any of us will face. As Christians we need to recognise that it's also the best thing. Going to Heaven is what we signed up for - that's not so bad, is it?"

John was clearly a massive inspiration for us all, yet he never lost sight of the practical and obtainable, the compelling and the possible. He always was a trainer and never a superstar - always wanting to equip others, never to shine himself as a solo artist. John helped me realise, as indeed did thousands like me, that it is possible to be used by God, even though we, so often, see ourselves as just normal and ordinary. How else can we fulfil Jesus' expectation that we will do the works that He did - and even greater ones too? (John 14:12) *Rev Derek Wensley*

Whom do you seek?

This poem was written by Ruth Daniel (a friend of Irene Pullin and known to some of us through local activities) following a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

He is not in the earthquake,
The wind or the fire;
He is not in the empty tomb;
He is not in the trappings
That many desire;
He is not in the darkness and gloom.

But look at the lake As it laps on the shore; Look at the hills that he knew; Look at the stone In the ground he has known; Look at the trees He saw too. He is here In the peace of the sun going down; He is here At his bitter end: He is here In the pain of the city and town As the still small voice Of a friend. **Ruth Daniel**



Sea of Galilee

A Message from the Moderator

Dear friends,

September has always felt more like the true beginning of the year to me than January ever does. In church life we walk our way through the life of Jesus from Advent to Pentecost, and now we begin the cycle again by turning to creation. Scripture begins with God's delight in creation: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). The earth is not ours to use up, but God's gift in which we share, entrusted to our care as part of creation. When the land suffers, as it has this summer, we are reminded of Paul's words: "The whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now" (Romans 8:22). This Season of Creation is a time for us to join our prayers with creation's groaning, and to renew our calling, as fellow creatures, to "serve and keep" the earth (Genesis 2:15), caring for the web of life of which we are a part. September is also the beginning of the academic year. When we learn, teach, and seek understanding we are honouring God. Jesus himself was called "Teacher", and now is a good time to give thanks for all who teach, guide, and encourage the young. Even if your church has no young people, this is still a good time to pray for students and staff.

This year, in particular, we are living through a time of heightened tension about immigration. Again and again, Scripture calls God's people to remember their own history: "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19). "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33–34). Abraham and Sarah set out in faith towards a new home (Genesis 12:1), Israel knew exile and return, and Jesus himself was once a refugee in Egypt (Matthew 2:14–15). The church is most truly the church when it embodies this welcome. I especially want to reassure all Ministers, Elders, and members who have come to the UK from around the world that you are not only welcome among us, but that we treasure the insights and experiences you bring to enrich us.

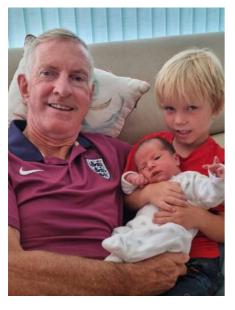
In all these things we hold fast to the unshakable promise: "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

With my thanks for all that you do for God's work through the United Reformed Church, and with prayers for every local church and minister,

Michael Hopkins,

Wessex Synod Moderator

More Family News



David and Alison Rose's younger daughter Nathalie and her husband Clive have recently had a new baby. Nathalie is well known to many of us through Junior Church, youth activities, and Brownies through to Venture Scouts and we send our congratulations to them all. Alison has sent us photos and we thought you would like to see the proud Grandpa in action.

AID FOR UKRAINE

Delivering aid for Ukraine





Our partners in Ukraine have asked for

Tinned food, rice, pasta
Easy to cook food, pot noodles
Breakfast cereals, sweets
First aid items
Over the counter medicines
Adult Incontinence items
Nappies
Household cleaning products
Power banks & charging stations
Pens, pencils, crayons, notebooks

You can donate on Fridays 10-11 am and Sundays 4.15-5 pm at Marlow United Reformed Church, Oxford Road, SL7 2NL and on Saturdays 10 am-12 noon at Maidenhead United Reformed Church, West Street, SL6 1RL



@MaidenheadAidforUkraine/



Use this QR code to donate now

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