

# In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in  
Maidenhead and Marlow



*Notre Dame de Paris  
A sign of renewal*

**In this reflection for New Year, published on the URC website, the Revd Jenny Mills Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), asks: “Are you planning on making a New Year’s resolution?”**



I spent a lot of my life making such commitments and consequently a lot of time beating myself up when, inevitably, I fell short. I resolved to change my level of fitness, my eating habits, I focused on the things I felt I was doing or getting wrong. And as a consequence, I felt a failure because I had judged myself to be “not enough” and my inability to stick to my resolutions that were going to make me “better” just compounded that sense of failure. I was so busy focusing on what I thought I ought to be and what was expected of me that I lost sight of who I was and who God had called me to be.

This year, I have decided to remind myself that I am enough, just as I am. Yes, there are things I could do better and things I could improve about how I live my life BUT the person I am is good enough, just as I am.

And do you know what? So are you. Each and every one of you!

It is good to stop and think about life. It is good to seek to find out how to be more like the person God created each one of us to be, but starting from the premise that we are not good enough as we are, is destructive and unhelpful.

Psalm 139 tells us: “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

In this text we are reminded, by the Psalmist, that we are amazing and that we are God’s creation. But more than that, we are reminded that God does not make mistakes. That God’s work is wonderful and that we are part of that wonder.

Let us begin the new year with love – for ourselves, for our neighbour, for God and trust that is enough and will make a difference in the world – and that we don’t need to give up things in order to be loved!

## 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
12 January	Rev David Fowler	Hilary Hunt and Valerie Brownridge Communion
19 January	Zoom Led by Marlow	
26 January	Christian Aid Catherine Johnson and Alison Holton	Geoff Cronin Church meeting
2 February	Rev Stephen Thornton Communion	Bob Robertson Communion
9 February	Paul Murphy	Catherine Johnson and Elders
16 February	Zoom Led by Scott Wheeler	
23 February	Andrew Gibb	Keith Whyte
2 March	Bob Robertson Communion Church meeting	Rev Margaret Yee Communion
9 March	Rev Derek Wensley	Irene Pullin and Pam Breen

## 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

The Vigil takes place every Sunday 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.

### Marlow Elders

There will be an Elders meeting on 10 February at 7.30.

**Church Meeting** on Sunday 26 January.

## Maidenhead diary dates

### Ukraine collection days

Saturdays from 10am-12 noon.

### Coffee Morning

Come and enjoy a coffee on Wednesdays at the Premier Inn from 11am.

### Maidenhead Elders

Elders will meet on Tuesdays 14 January and 4 February, both at 2.30pm.

### Church meeting

Sunday 2 March.

## Maidenhead Eldership Update

At our Church AGM in November, we confirmed the following:

Returning Elders: Mike Liddle and Irene Pullin

Continuing Elders: Beth Cummings, Bob Robertson, Gordon Campbell, Alison Holton, and myself, John Holton.

Sheila Perkins stepped down at the end of the year - we thank her for her many years serving as an Elder. We now have seven serving Elders.

Everyone in our congregation is assigned to an Elder for pastoral care. Hopefully “your” Elder is in touch with you every now and then, but if you are not sure who that is, please ask me.

*John Holton*

Church Secretary

## Ukraine Vigil



Members of the Marlow church and other supporters, continue to hold a vigil on Sunday afternoons to show support of the plight of the Ukrainians.

We light a candle “in hope and expectation” and meet in the garden

(weather permitting) to talk and pray about the war as we fly the Ukrainian flag as a gesture of solidarity. Over tea and cakes later, usually provided by Janet, we relax into a social mode and are also on hand to collect any food donations being handed in for our next aid lorry.

This war will soon enter its fourth year and shows little sign of ending, despite the rhetoric of various leaders. Many cities have been reduced to rubble, lives have been lost and the road back from this will be a steep one. Russia is now gaining ground more quickly than at any time since it launched its full-scale invasion and the outlook for Ukraine is grim, but we will continue to support them with our prayers and our aid lorries.

I found this poem and read it out at one of our vigils:

### **War in Ukraine**

Hundreds of people are dying. Millions more are displaced  
And we sit and watch in horror as Putin destroys the Ukrainian race.  
He calls this war a “mission” to protect the Russian State  
And we watch as people suffer, fearful of their fate.  
Our government puts in sanctions, our cost of living will increase  
But Ukrainians are dying, for them, there is no peace.  
Poland opened her borders to this tide of misery  
As mothers and their children seek a place of sanctuary.  
Their world has now been shattered; they are asking for our aid.  
When the time comes for a reckoning, there’s a huge price to be paid.

*Pauline Wyllie*

### **Ukraine - Your help is urgently needed - Marlow**

We are planning to send another lorry to Ukraine at the end of January. Our Polish partner, Ewa, who takes our donations into Ukraine has told us that **FOOD** is the top priority, but medical items, particularly for colds and flu, dressings and bandages as well as incontinence items are also still required. About 90% of our donations go to Kherson in Southern Ukraine, roughly 1000 km from Tomaszow so a 2000 km round trip for Ewa. Kherson regularly comes under attack from



Russian bombardment – in one of her recent messages to us, Ewa told us about a massive attack there on 20 December. In spite of the attacks, the food kitchen which we help to supply continues to open every Friday to distribute hot meals to the elderly and local volunteers continue to unpack, sort and distribute our donations to needy residents. And there is definitely a massive need.



We would therefore be grateful for any donations you feel able to make in the next few weeks so that we are able to send as much food as possible in our next lorry. And even more importantly PLEASE spread the word to friends and neighbours about our next lorry. The list is on the last page of In Touch for easy access. Many thanks in advance.

*Valerie Brownridge*

## Ukraine update (Maidenhead)

We are still getting goods every week from Waitrose Maidenhead and Tesco Taplow. Marlow have raised money with their recent Concert and will purchase canned and long-life goods from Booker. This will be bought and sorted and delivered to Maidenhead Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The current plan is to get another truck to Poland and then onto Ukraine at the end of the month as we have so many items that we could not get on





the last truck and we have been sorting and gathering donations every week in Maidenhead and Marlow.

Our local contact, Ewa, has asked that we concentrate on food as this is what is really required and she has asked us to send re-usable plastic containers so that the donations can be distributed in smaller quantities for families. We have identified and agreed a

product and will send this to her on the next truck.

Apart from the donations we continue to receive cash and we will endeavour to purchase the goods as requested by Ewa from Amazon or Booker and then send on the next truck.

As soon as we have a firm date for the next truck we will advise all to get the date in peoples diaries. The current list is easy to find on the last page of In Touch.

*Mike Liddle*

## Advent Treats

A big thank you to all those who prepared and led us on our Advent and Christmas journeys.



Both churches started Advent with a very different service – a Jazz Service led by Geoff Cronin from Cores End URC. Interspersed between the readings, prayers and singing along with the band, we listened to the accomplished singer and



instrumentalists perform a variety of jazz songs with such poignant words.  
Thank you, Geoff and the band!



Two weeks later and following a slightly shortened service, Maidenhead were treated to a mini-concert by Spivochi, the Ukrainian choir who meet and practise at our church. They sang and recited poems with such sincerity in both English and Ukrainian, (thoughtfully providing us with translations). We really appreciated them sharing Christmas cheer with us through their music - then they joined us

for a mince pie afterwards. They say thank you for the donations we collected.

*Alison Holton*

## Community Carols – by Christ Church and Jam Theatre

It was early October when I received an email from one of our hirers that surprised me. Jo Carter, who runs the Jam Theatre group, who run various sessions in our church during the week, asked if we could team up and run a

Community Carols service before Christmas together. The Elders discussed and welcomed the idea. We agreed that we wouldn't charge a fee for using our building, Jam would sort out the service and the publicity and we would have a retiring





collection for Wycombe Homeless Connection, whom we have supported at Christmases in the past.

For those of you who haven't met Jo Carter I will say that she is a bundle of energy, someone who gets things done. She designed the flyer, came up with the order of service, chose the hymns and readings and kept everyone on target. The Jam Theatre choir was on stage (some 50 adults) as well as some teenagers and even younger performers, with Jo orchestrating everything from the piano. The church was softly lit with overhead string lights and electric candles. I wasn't sure what to expect and I was pleased to see how much planning and effort had gone into the preparation of the event. How many people would turn up? Maybe 50 or 60? Previous carol events in the church garden had not attracted great numbers of visitors, so my expectation was low. The church filled up and then we had to get more chairs from downstairs and still more people arrived. We easily had more than 100 visitors plus 50 performers, definitely a full house.

Lessons were read, alternating between Jam and us. Some carols were performed just by the choir while others were sung together. Many thanks to Kailey and Libby for reading their lessons. Jo Carter said a prayer that came from the heart and the atmosphere was both joyful and respectful.

The retiring collection from this event and from our morning service amounted to £650 for Wycombe Homeless Connection, who are running their night shelter again at this time of year. A massive Thank You goes to Jo Carter and the Jam Theatre for floating the idea and bringing the Christmas story into the community in such a lovely and professional manner. When we went home that evening, we all had that Christmas feeling – and it wasn't even Christmas yet.

*Martin Beck*

## **Ukulele Mondays' fundraising concert in Marlow**

Christ Church URC, Marlow was packed to capacity for the latest fundraising concert given by Ukulele Mondays on 13 December. And what a fantastic evening we all had. Ukulele Mondays performed many of our old favourites from



the 70s through to the 2000s interspersed with some popular Christmas hits from years gone by. It was impossible not to join in for a bit of a singalong.

For some, the music was so foot-tapping that they had to take to the floor to dance in the aisles! But

it wasn't just about having a great time – we also raised an amazing £1200 for our Aid for Ukraine project. We owe a huge vote of thanks to Ukulele Mondays who not only put on a brilliant performance but did so for free.

I would also like to thank all those who helped in any way on the night, those who donated raffle prizes and those who came to the concert. Ukulele Mondays have already told us that they would like to do another fundraising concert for us in the summer. I will keep you posted!

*Valerie Brownridge*

## Farewell to Mateusz



Maidenhead's Music Director, Mateusz Rettner, treated us to a final concert on Saturday 2nd November, in advance of him returning to his native Poland. We listened and watched with amazement as his fingers ran up and down the keyboard. He played challenging pieces by Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Gershwin and others, many without music! What a treat!

The following day he played for his last service then we bade him farewell with a presentation and wished him well in his future endeavours. He will be deeply missed after eight years with us. On 12 January it was good to see Mateusz back visiting us (and playing!) along with his wife Monica. They have allowed us to share a couple of lovely photos of their wedding last September.

*John Holton*



## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Marlow

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed every year from 18 to 25 January. As 2025 marks the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea which has been embraced by the global Church as a significant moment of shared history across different Christian traditions, there will be a focus this year on the Nicene Creed and on belief.

At the heart of the reflections for the Week of Prayer will be the story of Martha's confession of faith in Jesus as narrated in John 11: 7-27 and the question posed by Jesus to Martha when speaking of the promise of eternal life - **"Do you believe this?"**

Prayer meetings will be held at Marlow Methodist Church on several days during the Week of Prayer. These will start at 12.30 pm and be directed by different church leaders. The Unity Supper will be held at St. Peter's School, Marlow, on Tuesday 21 January at 7.30 pm, when the speaker will be Rowena Worthington from 'Embrace the Middle East'. It would be lovely to see you there. If you haven't attended a Unity Supper before, why not come along this year? There is a first time for everything!

At the end of the week a Celebration Service and AGM for Churches Together in Marlow will be held at All Saints Church Hall on Sunday 26 January at 3 pm.

*Valerie Brownridge*



# World Day of Prayer



(A WOMEN LED, GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT)

*'I made you wonderful' Psalm 139*

Our sisters in the Cook Islands welcome us and lead us with a Day of Prayer 2025. This group of 15 islands in the South Pacific Ocean has a rich and colourful Māori heritage and a deep connection to nature.

Join us as we pray together and reflect on the theme 'I made you wonderful'.

World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical organisation which enables

us to hear the thoughts of women

from all parts of the world: their

hopes, concerns and prayers. The

preparation for the day is vast and

begins with the writing country and

theme being chosen a number of

years earlier. After much discussion

internationally, plans are made at a

local level for the service across the

world on the first Friday of March.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in

over 120 countries beginning in

Samoa. Prayer in native languages

travels throughout the world

through Asia, Africa, Middle East.

Europe and the Americas before

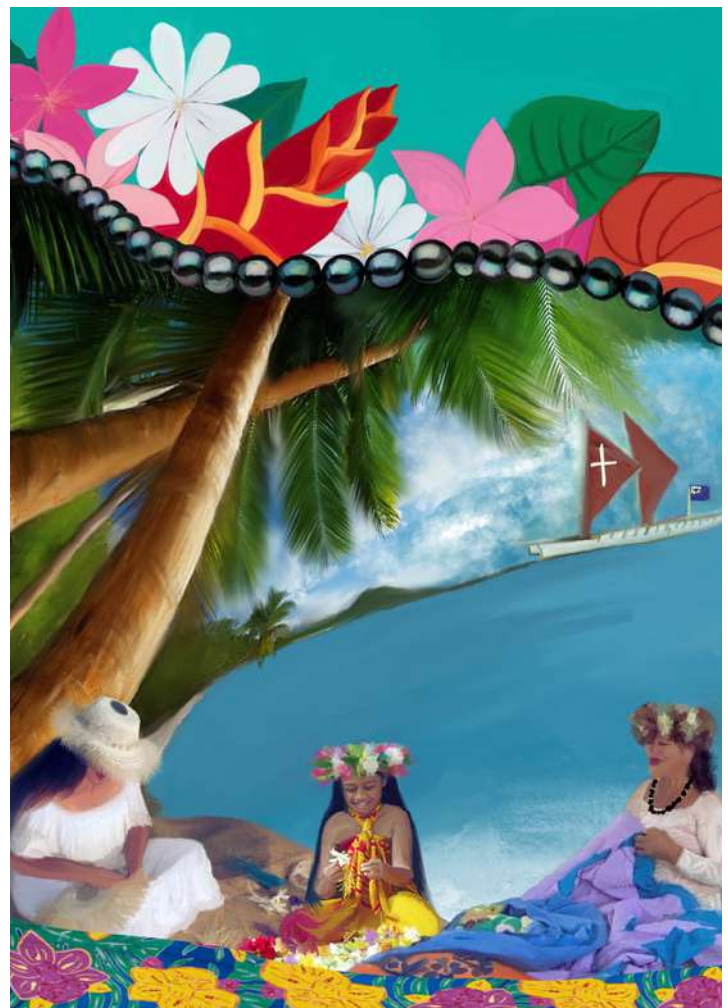
finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later.

A worldwide wave of prayer

The picture is a Tivaeva quilt created for the Day of Prayer by two creative

artists, mother and daughter, who wanted to share through their artwork a love

for their home, their faith and their heritage.



‘Our women play a vital role in keeping our heritage and traditions alive. They are the keepers of talents, teachers and mentors. From mothers to daughters, the cycle of life, faith and love continues here on our islands of paradise. We show our respect and love for God and for one another in harmonies of song and prayer. Our precious Tivaevae quilts represent patience, love and unity. We honour God’s love and mercy with hats we wear to church, woven by skilful loving hands from the strands of rito, the young coconut leaf. We adorn ourselves with sweet-scented Tiare tropical flowers, made into crowns and garlands. From the heart, we teach and nurture our beloved children, the younger generation, our future.’

The World Day of Prayer will be celebrated in **Maidenhead on Friday 7 March at 2pm** at St Mark’s Crescent Methodist Church, Allenby Road, SL6 5BQ.

The World Day of Prayer will be celebrated in **Marlow at 11 am on 7 March** at All Saints Church. Prayers will be led by representatives from churches of various denominations in Marlow, Little Marlow, Marlow Bottom and Bisham.

Pam needs large sea-shells and new recruits for the committee – please let her know if you can help!

## [Fundraising Barn Dance for Zimbabwe](#)

Please keep the afternoon of **Sunday 16 March** free! Judith Inman is organising a family Barn Dance that afternoon at **Liston Hall from 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm** to raise funds for our ArtPeace friends and their families in Zimbabwe. Tickets cost £10 for adults and £5 for children. There will also be a family ticket costing £25 for 2 adults with children. You don’t need to know how to barn dance - Ivan Aitken will be on hand to call out the steps. Music will be provided by the band Toucan Play (Chris and Patsy). All ages are welcome. You are invited to bring a plate of food to share (no dips), unless you prefer just to bring your own food. Tea, coffee and squash will be provided. Details of how to obtain tickets will follow, but in the meantime, please put the event in your diary and tell your friends and families about it.

*Valerie Brownridge*

## Christian Aid in 2025

Christian Aid week this year is 11-17 May. To start the week there will be a concert on the evening of Sunday 11th at Christ Church Marlow, when once again Gillian Dibden will bring young people from the Taplow Youth Choirs to entertain us. Put the date in your diary and tell your friends! Then we'll be doing the usual "envelope drop" in Marlow during the week; if anyone can help with this, please let me know.

*Catherine Johnson*

Both Maidenhead and Marlow are looking forward to Catherine talking about the work of Christian Aid. She will be doing so at Maidenhead on 26 January and at Marlow on 9 February.

## January Eco Prayer

On the border between winter and spring  
May the Living God be praised  
In the uncertainty of seasons amid climate change  
We turn to God, whose world we inhabit,  
To pray for animals and plants,  
Abundance of life, caught in difficulties of our making  
Have mercy, Lord.  
Yet still, in the cold  
When the promise of growth is still far away  
Or a day when the sun warms the bare branches of trees  
May the Living God be praised  
Thank you, Lord, for the time of waiting  
Sleep time for plants and animals  
Thank you for the pause before growth  
When snowdrops show that  
Abundant growth is arriving in secret  
Until blooms coat the earth  
With joy May the Living God be praised!

*Source: URC website*





January 2025

# AID FOR UKRAINE

*Delivering aid for Ukraine*



*Our partners in Ukraine have asked for*

**Tinned Food, Instant food**  
**Dried Food-pasta, rice, pot noodles**  
**Breakfast cereal, Tea/Coffee/Sugar**  
**First aid items**  
**Incontinence items**  
**Household cleaning products**

**Our next truck goes end January 2025**

You can donate on Fridays 10-11 am and Sundays 4.15-5pm  
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/](https://www.facebook.com/MaidenheadAidforUkraine/)



Use this QR code to donate now

## Save the Date!

Saturday evening 8 March: Annual Scout Group Quiz Night at Maidenhead when Gordon will once again be asking us questions, and supper will be served!

## 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>
Please contact a Church Secretary or the Administrator until a new Minister joins us.	
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Church Administrator: <a href="mailto:administrator@maidenheadurc.org.uk">administrator@maidenheadurc.org.uk</a>  Office: 01628 635781 (For urgent matters contact Church Secretary)	Church Treasurer: Tom Craig
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