

In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in
Maidenhead and Marlow



Forty days and forty nights without changing the stones to bread

The Judaean Desert from Mount Yair, Ein Gedi

We have a new Minister!

As you all know, the Rev Chris Parker “preached with a view” to Maidenhead and Marlow congregations at Maidenhead URC and to Bracknell and Windsor congregations at Windsor URC on Sunday, 16 February. Church meetings were held after both services when a vote was taken on whether to call Chris to be our new Pastorate Minister. There was a 96% majority in favour of calling Chris. Chris was informed and the good news is that **he has accepted our call**. The reason for the slight delay in Chris’s response being shared with us is that Chris needed time to inform the churches where he is currently serving as Minister.

Ministers have to give 3 months’ notice but it looks likely that Chris will stay on in his current Pastorate until the end of the school summer term. Those of you who had the opportunity to talk to Chris’s wife, Ruth, will be aware that she is a teacher and will therefore not be free to leave her job until then. Chris and Ruth have a holiday booked as soon as the schools break up, so they are likely to move here during August. This means that Chris will probably take up his new Ministerial post in our Pastorate at the end of August/beginning of September.

Our Interim Moderator, Rev Michael Hodgson, has already been in touch with the Wessex Synod Moderator, Rev Michael Hopkins, about a date for the Induction Service. It looks like this could be on **Saturday 20 September** possibly at **Maidenhead URC** but this has yet to be confirmed. We have been assured that Chris can begin working on an agreed date once he's moved, even if his formal induction has not taken place. Chris and Ruth will live in the manse in Bracknell. All the work which needs to be done to get the manse ready for Chris and Ruth will be organised and paid for by the Synod Trust.

We now have 6 months to think about how we would like to prioritise the time which Chris spends with each of our churches and how we can further develop the good relationship we have already started to build with the other churches in our new Pastorate. All four churches face challenges. We need to think about how Chris can best work with us to help us meet them. Exciting times ahead!

Valerie Brownridge and John Holton, Church Secretaries

Worship at Maidenhead and Marlow

All services start at 10.30am unless stated otherwise.

There is no Zoom service in April.

Date	Location and worship leader for Maidenhead	Location and worship leader for Marlow
2 March	Bob Robertson Communion Church meeting	Rev Margaret Yee Communion
9 March	Rev Derek Wensley	Irene Pullin and Pam Breen
16 March	Zoom Led by Maidenhead Elders	
23 March	Andrew Gibb	Geoff Cronin
30 March	Mothering Sunday Joint worship in Maidenhead Chris Campbell	
6 April	Bob Robertson Communion	Alan Bolton
13 April	Scott Wheeler	Berenice Fray
18 April Good Friday	Walks of Witness in Marlow and Maidenhead Details below	
20 April Easter Day	9am Joint Worship in Marlow church garden Led by Valerie Brownridge and 10.30am Joint Worship at Maidenhead led by Rev Margaret Yee with Communion	
27 April	TBC	Andrew Gibb
4 May	Rev Stephen Thornton	Daphne Preece

Good Friday



Marlow: Open Air worship in Higginson Park at 10.45am, followed by a Walk of Witness starting around 11.05am from the Park up the High Street to the Marlow Methodist Church for an All-age Service there at 11.30am.

Maidenhead: Walk of Witness starts at 11am. Gathering in the square by Sainsbury's we will walk up the High Street, pause on the way for small acts of worship, and finish at the Methodist Church.

Easter worship April 20

Everyone is invited to come to all or part of the Easter morning activities.

The day starts at Marlow.

9.00am This is a short, joint contemplative “Sunrise” service in the garden at Marlow led by Valerie Brownridge.

Then breakfast and our joint service at Maidenhead.

9.45am Light breakfast served in the hall.

10.30am Joint Easter service at Maidenhead led by Rev Margaret Yee, with communion, followed by normal refreshments.

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 in the Marlow church garden every Sunday at 4pm.

House Group

House Group will meet at Doreen’s house at 10.30am on 11 March and weekly thereafter throughout Lent.

Marlow Elders

Elders will meet on Monday 10 March and Monday April 14 at 7.30pm.

Church Meeting

Church Meeting and AGM on 11 May.

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

Maidenhead Elders dates are Monday 3 March and Tuesday 1 April at 2.30pm.

Church meeting Sunday 2 March

Report on Donations and the latest Truck to Ukraine.

The latest truck was loaded and sent on to Ukraine via Poland on Monday February 3. Over 20 volunteers from both Churches and beyond completed the loading in record time. The actual time of the truck arrival is difficult to predict with traffic etc. and in this case, he arrived 5 hours early!



Using cages exiting by the rear Link door improved the loading process and segregating light boxes and heavy boxes made loading easier.



Maggie and Mike met with Waitrose management, who are keen to continue to support our Aid for Ukraine project.



who are keen to continue to support our Aid for Ukraine project. To strengthen visibility within their store, they suggested our publicity and collection basket should be in line with their corporate colours and fonts similar to FoodShare. The cost of producing the new signage and the construction

of the donations collection basket has been approved and will commence when

Waitrose Head Office send details of the Design. We may consider doing exactly the same for Tesco.

We are currently looking to see if we can get a volunteer to additionally collect from Tesco Slough as they are keen to support our efforts as well. Any takers?

We are investigating getting donations from Waitrose in Twyford as well as the current stores.



Every week we continue to collect and pack donations from Waitrose Maidenhead and twice

weekly from Tesco in Taplow. Maidenhead Church is open from 10.00am to

12.00 noon every Saturday.

Marlow continues to be open for collections Fridays from

10am-11am and Sundays from 4.15pm-5pm

and takes the packed and sorted donations over to

Maidenhead nearer the truck departure time.



Setting off again

Donations from “walk in” individuals have decreased and there is less being randomly dropped off. Thames Valley Hospice has provided medical supplies, including incontinence products and stoma bags as well as plastic gloves, dressings etc.

Ewa, our contact in Poland took donations to Kherson, inside Ukraine, on the weekend of 15/16 February and has confirmed the precise list of items needed for the next truck. Please see the list on the next page.

Mike Liddle



Eva's van



More destruction

Ukraine vigil



Deliveries safely arrived



UPDATED FEBRUARY 2025

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 4.15-5pm
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

Marking the third anniversary



Since 2022 we have marked the anniversary of the war in Ukraine. Unbelievably we are now three years on. Recently, on Sunday 23 February, the day before the actual anniversary, we were led in thought and song at Maidenhead by two Ukrainian choirs – Spivochi, who rehearse in our church, and Kryla from Reading. Their singing, violin solo and narration were very moving. The choirs were keen for us to share in their special day and indeed it helped us realise the pain that Ukrainians are going through every day, whether they currently live in the UK or in Ukraine.



Thank you Oksana and your choir members!

Alison Holton

World Day of Prayer March 7

World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who welcome you to join in prayer and action for peace and justice.

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.

Our sisters from the Cook Islands have spent the last few years deepening into the theme: "I Made You Wonderful," based on Psalm 139:1-18. The 2025 program invites us into the knowledge that each one of us was made with care and love by God. When we can receive this profound truth, everything in our life changes and we begin to radiate and shine from within. We also learn how to treat every other person as made wonderful by God.

Psalm 139:14 (NRSV)

*"For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

*Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.*

*My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

*In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.*

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

*I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you."*



Cook Islands artwork

Be quick for these opportunities!

Churches Together in Marlow

Pancake Day

Tuesday 4th March
Marlow Methodist Church
Spittal Street
Noon to 2.00 pm

All Welcome



*Pancakes
Soup &
Rolls*

Proceeds to Lighthouse

THE SCOUTS PRESENT A



9th MAIDENHEAD (URC) SCOUT GROUP

Bring a team or join a table!

Saturday 8th March 7pm

United Reformed Church, West Street, SL6 1RL

Adults £10 – Under 18s £5

Includes baked potato supper

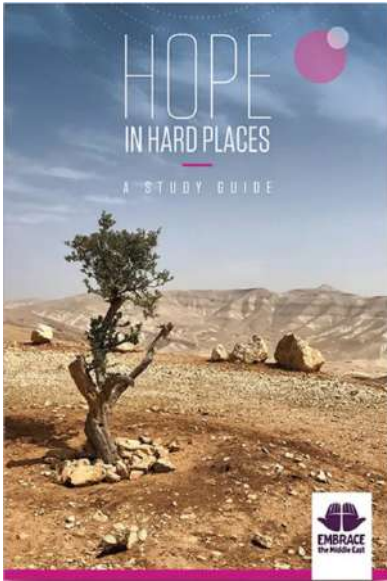
Bring your own drinks and snacks

Tickets from Alison & John 01628 639592 / 07481 020157

Reform Live: A celebration of Rejoice and Sing

With lots of singing, talks, panel discussions and an exhibition, Reform is hosting a live version of its magazine to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the URC hymnbook, *Rejoice and Sing*. The event takes place at Coventry Central Hall on 3 May from 12-5pm. Special guests: David Thompson, Stephen Orchard, Anne Sardeson, Dominic Grant and Roo Stewart. Plus, the opportunity to take part in a scratch choir. A drink is included in the ticket price of £5 per ticket (plus booking fee). To book tickets please visit bit.ly/reform-live

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN MARLOW: LENT STUDY GROUPS IN MARLOW 2025



There will be three Lent Study Groups meeting weekly as follows:

Tuesdays at 10.30 am, starting on 11th March, hosted by Marlow URC house group at 2 Baron's Court, Dedmere Rise, Marlow, SL7 1XX

(gflett@clara.co.uk, tel. 07769 895328)

Tuesdays at 2.30 pm, starting on 11th March, hosted by Joan & Tony Threlfall at 61 Cambridge Road. Marlow, SL72NS

(tonythrelfall61@gmail.com,

tel. 01628 471610)

Tuesdays at 7.30 pm, starting on 18th March, hosted by Sue & Paddy Gallagher at 8 Spinners Walk, Marlow, SL7 2AL

(paddygallaugh@gmail.com,

tel. 01628 298521)

The groups will be using the study guide produced by Embrace the Middle East entitled 'Hope in Hard Places'. The study extends over 6 weeks and comprises scripture readings, reflections, prayers, examples of work being done by Embrace partners and suggestions for action. A charge of £5 will be made for the study booklet. If you would like to join one of the above groups, or need more information, please get in touch with George or Tony or Paddy.

Christian Aid week 11-17 May 2025

This year's campaign focusses on Guatemala, where a farmer called Amelia faces the impacts of climate change as she tries to feed her family. Heat waves and other extreme weather have been killing her crops. With the support of Christian Aid's partner, Congcoop, Amelia is now conserving rainwater, making fertiliser and planting resilient crops, including cacao, sugar cane, cinnamon, corn and pineapples.

As in recent years, we'll start Christian Aid week with a concert on the evening of Sunday May 11 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. It's a good way to get your steps in while doing good at the same time!

Catherine Johnson

Catherine explained the current work of Christian Aid in recent services at both Maidenhead and Marlow. Between the two churches we raised £900 from the retiring collection and gift aid for Christian Aid. Thank you for these contributions and for your continued prayers.

Fundraising Barn Dance for Artpeace Rock Sculptors

This promises to be a fun afternoon! Poster is on the next page. Please spread the word round family, friends and neighbours. All are welcome, particularly those who would like to dance. There are no age limits and NO previous experience is needed! Tickets will be available on the door, but if you would like to reserve your ticket in advance, please call Judith Inman on 01628 486845 or e-mail her at judithinman@btinternet.com

We look forward to seeing you there.

Just to remind ourselves – 'Commitment for life' last month reported how Zimbabwe is still subject to prolonged drought resulting in lack of water and food. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the world's needs, but here's an easy way

to do something enjoyable and help to nourish the sculptors and their families at the same time.

Family Barn Dance!
Come and join the fun at Liston Hall, Marlow, SL71DD
Sunday, March 16: 2:30pm till 5:30

Tickets £10 on the door, Children £5, Family £25 – no unaccompanied children
Bring plate of food to share. Tea, coffee and squash available



Caller: Ivan Aitken
Band: Toucan Play

For more info: 01628-486845

Proceeds in aid of **ARTPEACE**,
a community of Zimbabwe rock
sculptors, supported by Christ Church
Marlow since 2010.

Marlow Eldership

As the next edition of In Touch will not come out till late April/early May and therefore very close to Marlow's AGM which will be on **Sunday 11 May**, I realised that I needed to put a reminder in this edition that one of the items on the agenda of Marlow's AGM will be the election of Elders. This is therefore addressed to the Marlow congregation!

There are currently five serving Elders at Christ Church, all of whom have been serving Elders for many years. We owe them a huge vote of thanks for their dedicated service. But we cannot take for granted that they will just keep on serving year after year without a break. They may well be willing to do so, but that should not stop you considering whether you might be able to serve our

church as an Elder. A number of you are non-serving Elders. You might want to consider whether you feel called to become an Elder again.

There is no doubt that being an Elder is challenging – and has probably become more so as the role has developed and changed over the past ten years or so. But don't let that put you off! You will also find it hugely fulfilling as Elders play an essential role in the life of the church. Although the roles and responsibilities of an Elder may sound quite daunting, don't forget you will be part of a team who are all working together to provide leadership, spiritual oversight and pastoral care to the congregation, to prepare recommendations to church meeting on issues such as the proper maintenance of the church building and the church's financial responsibilities and in general to serve the life of the church, the community and the wider United Reformed Church.

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

Elder nomination forms will be available nearer the time and will need to be completed and returned to me by **Sunday 4 May**. If you nominate someone, the person you nominate must also sign the form to confirm they are happy to be nominated. If you are approached, please give prayerful consideration to whether you would be willing and able to serve the church by agreeing to be nominated as an Elder.

Valerie Brownridge, Church Secretary

An invitation from Wayne Dixon

Meet and hear Karen Martin, author of '*MEMORABLE LOSS – A story of friendship in the face of dementia*'.

I first met Karen over 30 years ago in the school where she was teaching and then knew her for a number of years in one of our local schools. I heard Karen being interviewed recently. I was just blown away and very, very moved. It was

personal and real for me and I would 100% recommend what Karen shares: friendship, faith, church and more! It is very real and moving!

Date: **Sunday 6 April**

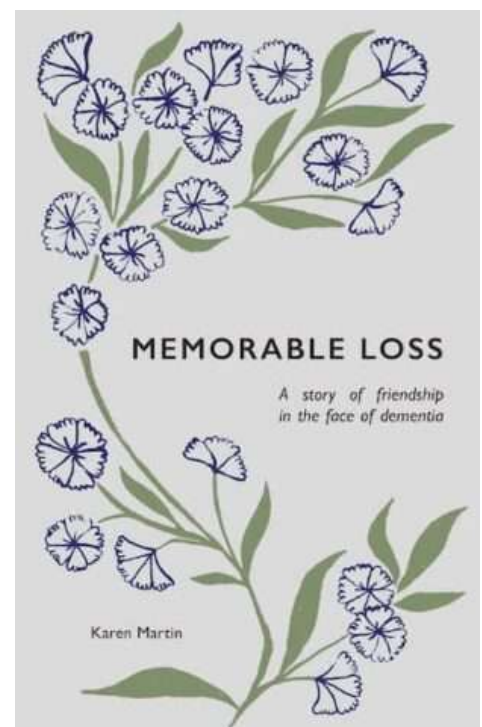
Time: **4.00-5.30pm**

Venue: **Slough Baptist Church**, Windsor Road, Slough, SL1 2EJ

Tea and coffee on arrival. There is NO COST for this occasion but people can leave a contribution to cover costs. The book will be available to purchase. Card or cash facility. There will be other items available to purchase provided by Quench Bookshop.

If you would like to attend, **book your place as soon as possible, latest by Sunday 23 March**. More information will follow during the last week of March including parking arrangements available at the church on a Sunday.

Published by Christian Focus Publications and reviewed very positively by Tim Challies and others, Karen Martin is the author of *Memorable Loss*, a narrative that focuses on loving those living with dementia. She writes from the heart, following her own experience with a dear friend. She wants to encourage others on their journeys. It has a gentle faith, conveying theirs as a God-given friendship. Karen is an ex-English teacher and experienced speaker. She prays that any who read her book, listen to the audiobook or come to her events will be blessed and



strengthened as they walk alongside someone with or have their own diagnosis of dementia. <https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/memorable-loss/>

Thanks for your time. Take care. God bless.

Wayne Dixon wayne@ccischools.org.uk

www.ccischools.org.uk CCiS in association with Scripture Union

Scout Group news

Our Beavers have adopted owls! Yes, by entertaining their parents to tea and cake, they raised money to help Tiggywinkles, the Wildlife Hospital, and voted to support the sick, injured and orphaned owls which are cared for there.

Sadly at Easter we are losing our Beaver leader, Sarah (known to the Beavers as Owl). Sarah and her mum Wendy have been with us for many years giving hundreds of children such a wonderful time and we are very

grateful to both of them. We still haven't found a replacement, so can you help at all? Do you know anyone, age 18 to 80 plus, who may be interested – a neighbour, friend, family member? The Beavers, Cubs and Scouts are now led by teams of volunteers so spreading the load - all levels of help appreciated!

The **QUIZ NIGHT** is back – a fun social evening, with your baked potato supper included, held at Maidenhead URC hall, on Saturday 8 March at 7pm (please note this new start time!). Tickets are £10 (£5 for under 18s) available from me. See the flyer on page 11 for more details.

Alison Holton – Joint Group Lead Volunteer

URC Responds to Aid cuts 26 February 2025

Leaders from the Baptist, Methodist, Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church have responded to the Prime Minister's announcement concerning further cuts to the international development budget.



In the statement, the leaders said:

“We deeply lament the government’s stated intention to make further cuts to the UK’s international development budget. This would break a manifesto promise made to people in the world’s poorest communities and have a devastating impact on lives and livelihoods across the globe. While there is a case to be made for increasing defence spending to support Ukraine in resisting Russian aggression, that shouldn’t come at the cost of vital humanitarian and development programmes, which play a crucial role in promoting human security around the world.

“UK aid programmes protect women and girls from violence, provide cost-effective vaccines to babies and young children and support human rights defenders who work to prevent future conflict. Such programmes will be under threat if UK aid is further slashed by 40%.

“Our Churches have strongly encouraged and supported the UK in its commitment to international development, not only as a way of showing care to our global neighbours, but in recognition of the UK’s historic and ongoing responsibilities to address the causes of global injustice, poverty, forced migration, climate change and conflict. It is a source of deep regret to see a backing away from that responsibility. A massively reduced UK aid budget would be experienced as a bitter blow by partners and communities in the global south, especially coming so soon after the devastating USAID cuts. We urge the government to rethink its decision immediately.”

Source: <https://urc.org.uk/church-leaders-lament-cuts-to-international-aid-budget/>

Pam’s book recommendation

I would like to recommend a book I have found most useful in my ongoing Christian journey. It was given to me by a dear friend who had recently lost her husband. It's called *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young.

This bestselling 365-day devotional *Jesus calling* is written as if Jesus Himself is speaking directly to you with words of encouragement, comfort, and reassurance of His unending love. These writings are based on Jesus's own words

of hope, guidance, and peace within Scripture penned by someone who loves Him and reveres His word. These much-loved devotions will help you look forward to your time with the Lord. Experience a deeper relationship with Jesus as you savour the presence of the One who understands you perfectly and loves you forever.

When older people in the past have asked me *'But what am I able to do? I cannot help in any way'* I used to say *'But you can pray'*. So I'm taking my own advice and doing just that, and concentrating on finding more about my loving God and Saviour. Perhaps we could all do this as we await our new minister.

Pam Breen

Wycombe Homeless Connection thanks Marlow

10 February 2025

Dear Mrs Brownridge

Thank you so much for Christchurch URC Marlow's gift of £650; it will go to support people who are homeless or facing homelessness in our community. Because of you, we have reopened our winter night shelter. Hosted at 7 church venues, staffed by a team of 300 volunteers and our staff, we are able to provide a safe, warm, welcoming place for people who would otherwise be sleeping rough and have no other options. You are saving lives this winter.

The shelter, while not a permanent solution to homelessness represents the heart of what we do, offering hospitality, help and hope. While staying in our shelter, people will be given tailored support and we do all we can to make sure no one has to return to the street.

Your support is also helping keep our vital homelessness prevention services open, including our support centre and our helpline. Stopping homelessness before it starts stops the trauma homelessness does which can last a lifetime. You are helping hundreds of people in our community who are in a housing crisis. Thank you. Together we are changing lives.

Your sincerely

James Boulton, Chief Executive Officer Wycombe Homeless Connection

Contact us

Maidenhead	Marlow
Maidenhead United Reformed Church West Street, Maidenhead SL6 1RL www.maidenheadurc.org.uk	Christ Church United Reformed Church Oxford Road, Marlow SL7 2NL www.christchurch-marlow.org.uk

Please contact a Church Secretary or the Administrator until a new Minister joins us.

Church Secretary: John Holton
secretary@maidenheadurc.org.uk
07481 020157

Church Secretary: Valerie Brownridge
secretary@christchurch-marlow.org.uk
07966 462684

Church Administrator:
administrator@maidenheadurc.org.uk

Office: 01628 635781 (For urgent matters contact Church Secretary)

Church Treasurer: Tom Craig

Keeping In Touch with us

Send articles or suggestions for our magazine to:
magazine@maidenheadurc.org.uk

Find us on Facebook:
@maidenheadurc
@ChristChurchMarlow
YouTube: Maidenhead and Marlow URC

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