

In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in
Maidenhead and Marlow



Lest we forget

From our Minister

Dear friends

From November to December takes us through a whole range of emotions in our worship and community life. We begin with a period of remembrance with All Saints and all Souls days; then remember, remember through the lights of bonfire night and within a week we remember with gratitude those that have died and still die in war. This year especially we are just too aware of the casualties of war as our screens have been filled with news from Gaza and sadly still in Ukraine. As always, we will pray to the God of peace and love that peace will be in our hearts and in our world, just as we pray each week in worship and during the vigils in Marlow.

In December we begin the journey to the gift of the Christ-Child at Christmas. Advent is a time to prepare for this, the greatest gift to the world. Advent is one of my favourite times of the church year. Contrary to the world the church is reminded that Christmas is worth waiting for and as we hear again the promises of prophets, Mary and Joseph I hope we all can prepare a place in our hearts for Jesus.

We will mark the nearing of Christmas with candles and trees. There will be opportunities to share the love of Jesus with the community as we all attend events and gatherings throughout December. In all this I hope we not only see but also share the love of God for us and all people.

We will still be praying for Ukraine and this December please pray for the children, young people and families in our community, and just as Christ was born into a troubled world to bring the love of God, so we too have the call to bring God's love in all we do this November and December in God's name.

Shalom

Chris

Worship at Maidenhead and Marlow

Services begin at 10.30am unless indicated otherwise

Date	Location and worship leader for Maidenhead	Location and worship leader for Marlow
2 November	Paul Murphy Communion led by John Holton Followed by Church Meeting and AGM	Rev Daphne Preece Communion
9 November 	Rev Chris Parker Remembrance Service Scout Group joining	No service at Christ Church Marlow Town Remembrance service at Cenotaph or join Maidenhead Service
16 November	Zoom Led by Marlow	
23 November	Linda Jackson	Rev Chris Parker
30 November	Fifth Sunday Joint Service at Marlow Judith Inman	
7 December	Bob Robertson Communion	Linda Jackson
14 December	Rev Chris Parker Followed by Spivochi mini-concert	Valerie Brownridge Communion
21 December	Carol service and nine lessons John Holton	Rev Chris Parker
24 December Christmas Eve 7pm	7pm Joint service at Marlow Chris Parker Communion	
25 December	Joint Christmas Day Service at Maidenhead Irene Pullin	
28 December	Invitation to Carol Service at Bracknell URC (See below)	
04 January	Bob Robertson	To be confirmed
11 January	David Fowler and Alison Holton	Bob Robertson Communion

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 November 10 and Monday December 8.

Church Meeting: The next Church Meeting will be on 25 January.

Maidenhead diary dates

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

Coffee Morning: We will meet at the Premier Inn from 11.00

Maidenhead Elders: To be confirmed

Church Meeting: 2 November after the service followed by sandwich lunch.

Induction of Rev Chris Parker, 20 September

What a joyous day! It seemed to be a long time coming and then suddenly it was here.

Members and long-standing friends of all four churches in our new Pastorate (St Paul's URC, Bracknell, Christ Church URC, Marlow, Maidenhead URC, Christ Church URC, Windsor), and of Chris's former church were joined by the Mayors of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and of the towns of Bracknell and Marlow, representatives of Synod including our Interim Moderators, and Chris's family and friends to celebrate Chris's induction as our new Minister at an uplifting service.

This was led by the Moderator of Wessex Synod, the Rev Michael Hopkins, with a little help from his father, the Rev Derek Hopkins. The service was followed by a magnificent afternoon tea and, as is traditional at church events, there was so much food that many left the tea with "doggy bags" of sandwiches and cakes. A special vote of thanks should go to everyone involved in any way with the event, either beforehand or on the day. It was a real 'Team Effort' from all four of Chris's churches making the day such a wonderful occasion. You are now officially our Minister, Chris! Welcome to you, Ruth and Julia.

Valerie Brownridge



An Invitation

The fellowship of St Paul's URC Bracknell invites sister churches to
Celebrate and Sing favourite Christmas Carols
Sunday 28th December 2025 at 10.30am

Aid for Ukraine

The war continues to rumble on in Ukraine although we hear very little about it on the news as the world's attention is understandably focused on what is going on in Israel and Gaza. Russian attacks have intensified in recent weeks particularly on Ukraine's energy infrastructure which is obviously essential to keep the country running and on Ukraine's railway system which is a central pillar of Ukraine's war effort, but towns and cities including Kiev and Lviv also frequently come under drone attack. Nowhere in Ukraine is safe. Kherson and the surrounding villages where most of our donations go are shelled on a regular basis. There are reports that President Trump is now turning his attention to ending the war in Ukraine. Let's hope and pray that the talks between President Trump and President Zelensky on 17 October lead to a just peace for Ukraine. Our latest lorry of donations for Ukraine set off from Maidenhead on 8 September. Huge thanks to all those who donated goods and helped load the lorry and well as those in both Maidenhead and Marlow who regularly staff the donation sessions and pack the boxes.

We are now collecting goods for our 18th lorry which we expect will leave for Ukraine in late November/early December. Emergency power outages have been brought in across almost all of Ukraine following Russia's intensive campaign of air strikes targeting energy infrastructure. Ewa has told us that many of the villages round Kherson were already without access to electricity. As winter approaches, Ewa has asked us for blankets, new or in very good condition, charging stations,





power banks, candles, rechargeable camping lights with a power-bank. We have added these items to our list of goods needed – see new list on page 13. As you will see, we have included a link to a rechargeable light which comes with a power-bank, but any similar lights would be most acceptable.



As this lorry will arrive

just before Christmas, the Marlow team is again filling small bags with a few sweets as a little Christmas gift. They would be grateful for donations of tubs of Celebrations, Quality Street or Roses. The more sweets they have, the more bags they can fill!

Valerie Brownridge

Ukulele Mondays' fundraising concert, 18 October



Yet again Ukulele Mondays did us proud! They gave another concert at Christ Church URC - their fifth - to raise funds for our Aid for Ukraine project. Word has obviously got around that this is not an event to be missed as some 90 people came to hear them play, one of

the biggest audiences we have had at one of their concerts. The band played a great selection of music. Many in the audience found it impossible to sit in their seats as the band went through their repertoire and for much of the second half of the concert they felt compelled to get up and dance in the aisles.

But it was not all about having a good time. We also raised a record-breaking £2295 for Ukraine, which includes an amazing donation of £1000 from someone

who was unable to attend the concert but wanted to support it as Ukraine is close to her heart. We owe a huge vote of thanks to Ukulele Mondays who give up their time and talents to stand with Ukraine. I would also like to thank all those who helped on the night, those who attended the concert and everyone who



donated raffle prizes. We had a magnificent range of prizes which proved to be very tempting to the audience judging by the amount we raised from the raffle. Ukulele Mondays have already told us that they are looking forward to putting on another concert for us. I will keep you posted.

Valerie Brownridge

Candlelit Vigil for Peace in the Marlow church garden

Listening to conversations at both churches, it is clear that many of us regularly feel a sense of helplessness when we watch the news and see what is happening around the world, but particularly in the places which top the headlines such as Israel and Gaza, Ukraine and even our own country where there seems to be a rising feeling of mistrust and misunderstanding between communities leading at times to unrest and injustice. Many have been asking how we

CANDLELIT VIGIL FOR PEACE

For the Marlow and surrounding area community.
This quiet, lit vigil for Peace, Hope and Justice is open to all with a candle, LED candle, even your phone light.

No speeches, placards or flags please - just your presence



Sunday 26th October
Sunday 2nd November
Sunday 9th November

All ages welcome
Welcome words at 6.30pm

Held in the garden of the URC
18 Oxford Road, Marlow

can share our concerns with the wider community and show that we care. We are not alone in feeling this way. We learned that River Church, Marlow were having similar conversations and also felt the need to do something. We therefore decided to join together to hold a candlelit vigil for peace in the Marlow church garden at 6.30pm on Sunday 19 October. We publicised the event widely as we were keen for this to be a community event.

In spite of the torrential rain, around 40 people turned up. The leader of River



Church, Anthea Wratten, opened the vigil with a few words of explanation of why we were there and invited those present to stand together in silent prayer or reflection. Rev Chris Parker closed the vigil

with a prayer.

We will be holding another vigil at the same time on Sunday 26 October, 2 and 9 November. Please spread the word. We would love you to come and join us.

Bring your family, neighbours and friends. All are welcome.

Valerie Brownridge

Open the Book – 25 years on



It all started in Bedford in 1999 as a millennium project.

Dave Todd recognised that children didn't know Bible stories and he yearned to change that. He believed that if there was a way to bring Bible stories to life for children in

a way that was engaging, interactive and fun, it would make a difference. One evening, he gathered a group of Christians who had experience working with children and in schools. Dave unveiled a giant cutout of a lion that he had made, and asked the group, 'How are we going to tell the story of Daniel in the Lions' Den?' Since then, Open the Book, as it became known, has grown beyond what anyone ever imagined. There are now more than 7,500 Open the Book

Storytellers who comprise more than 2,500 teams. These teams go into over 3,000 primary schools across England and Wales. This means more than 360,000 children are hearing Bible stories regularly in their school assemblies. Open the Book is also growing in another 18 countries spread across Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

As invited guests hundreds of volunteers, in creative Storytelling teams, use the Open the Book programme to prepare and present 10 to 15-minute scripted Bible stories to school assemblies, involving the children as much as possible. These teams have created lasting memories, sparked the imagination, given hope, taught important lessons, connected generations and touched the hearts of countless young people and their teachers.

Please pray that Open the Book, part of Bible Society, continues to flourish, to sow seeds of faith in young lives and to share these important, timeless stories over the next twenty-five years and beyond, even as the landscape of our world changes.

The team I belong to consists of members of at least four churches in the Maidenhead area, so if you have an hour or so available on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon during school term times I know people who would love to hear from you.

Irene Pullin

Church of England Initiative “Love and Faith”

Maidenhead URC has signed up to a national ecumenical group called *Inclusive Church* which fosters equality and inclusion in churches. Currently the Church of England is running an initiative called Love and Faith. Inclusive Church have prepared a letter for their members in the Church of England to consider signing. You can only sign it yourself if you are a member of the CofE, but you may want to share the letter with your CofE friends. An extract from the letter is below.

Recent surveys and votes in General Synod have consistently shown that the majority of those within the Church of England now seek greater inclusion and affirmation of LGBTQ+ people. It is not right that these voices remain unheard,

nor that the Church continues to inflict the pain of exclusion and rejection on LGBTQ+ people, their friends, families and allies.

The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) process has received significant investment of time, money, prayer, theology and discernment. It has engaged deeply with scripture, tradition and reason, whilst seeking to also listen to lived experience. We do not support coercion or silencing of any view, but rather commit to open, honest and compassionate dialogue that honours individual conscience and fully hears the call to love one another as Christ has loved us.

We call on the House of Bishops to offer leadership and direction that honours the inclusive majority of the Church of England and truly values LGBTQ+ people. We speak now, not in defiance, but because we live in love and faith, believing that the Church is at her best when we love courageously and listen deeply. We stand together in faith, hope, and love trusting that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

If you would like a copy of the letter to forward to CofE friends do let me know.

Bob Robertson

Harvest Thanksgiving at Marlow

We were delighted to welcome Rev Chris Parker to Marlow on 12 October to lead our Harvest Thanksgiving service. Chris drew inspiration for his talk from Psalm 104, a beautifully written reminder of God's creation and all the wonderful gifts God has provided to us.

The congregation gave generously and our harvest table looked amazing after everyone had come forward with their harvest gifts. The produce donated included tins and dried goods as well as fresh fruit and vegetables and some home-made bread and cake. Richard Bailey, one of our Aid for Ukraine volunteers, again kindly donated some of his



beautiful prize-winning dahlias. They added a real splash of colour to our harvest display. We sold off the dahlias and the non-perishable goods after the service and raised a magnificent £90. We have now donated the money and the non-perishable goods to One Can. Many thanks to Paul for delivering the donations to their High Wycombe warehouse. It is good to know that our harvest gifts will help those in need in our own local community.

Valerie Brownridge

News from Mission Aviation Fellowship

Working in partnership with hundreds of other Christian and relief organisations, MAF enables practical help, physical healing and spiritual hope to be delivered to some of the world's most remote and inaccessible communities.

Since October 2024, a floatplane - in partnership with the Sustainable Development PNG Programme - is serving the isolated water communities in



Papua New Guinea, especially in and around Lake Murray.

PNG's largest lake spans some 250 square miles but has no access to any major roads, leaving it cut off from the rest of the country. Over 14,400 people

live on Lake Murray's many islands and around its shoreline and hundreds of lives have been transformed for the better by this plane that lands on water.

Chad Tilley, MAF floatplane pilot says:

'It's difficult for people to access services in the area and throughout the province.'

'To get to Boboa, where there is a basic health centre, is far and very difficult to travel by canoe. To get to the town of Kiunga, where there is a hospital, takes five days by boat. Thanks to its water landing capabilities and speed, the flight takes 22 minutes.'

Esthel Babare, Head of Usukof Primary School & MAF passenger says: *'Growing up, it was a struggle to travel on the lake in the rain, wind and sun. When I needed stationery, it took me days to get these materials from Kiunga.'*

Now it's very easy for us because the water plane comes right to our doorstep. School materials are now flown directly to the village and school matters are dealt with in Boboa or Kiunga as quickly as possible. 'I can't express my gratitude to MAF. It's a brilliant idea to provide this service for us and I thank you for this golden opportunity.'

Floatplane pilot Chad Tilley also transports barramundi fish to Kiunga Town in the plane!

Max Gom, fisherman and MAF passenger says:

I send my barramundi catch to Kiunga through the floatplane, where it is sold at a good price. This money helps me and my family sustain our living.

Photo credits: Chad Tilley

Source: MAF newsletter



Stepwise

Take your discipleship to the next level!

For more information about the three courses on the poster, speak to Bob Robertson. Booking for the Woking course in January has already started!

November 15 International Day of prayer for the Persecuted Church

Open Doors HQ in Witney invites you to come for an hour or stay all day. 8am - 8pm. And if you can't travel, join our online evening prayer session, 7 - 8pm. Please ask Bob Robertson

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/act/idop/>

A poster with a colorful, abstract background of diagonal lines in blue, yellow, and red. The text is centered and reads: "Stepwise" in a large, purple, stylized font with a footprint icon above the 'i'. Below it is "2026" in bold black. Then "Faith Filled Life" in bold red, followed by "at Woking URC, starting in January 2026" in purple. Next is "Faith Filled Community" in bold green, followed by "in SW area of Wessex, starting in March 2026" in purple. Then "Faith Filled Worship" in bold blue, followed by "Online group, starting in October 2026" in purple. At the bottom, a white box contains the text: "Register your interest by contacting", the email "bookings@urcwessex.org.uk", and the phone number "Tel: 023 8067 4513". To the right of this box is a logo for "The United Reformed Church Wessex Synod" featuring a cross and a stylized 'X'.

Prayer as we approach Advent

May the love, hope, joy and peace of the Advent season be ours.

May we embody, express,
and experience all the
blessings.

May God's promise,
faithfulness, and love
sustain and inspire us all
as we live the Jesus way.
May we find ways to share
this with others,
especially those who find
themselves on the
margins.

And may this year's
journey to the Saviour's
birth
be eventful, exciting,
thought-provoking,
reflective,
hope-filled, and precious.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Source: URC worship materials

WINTER 2025/26



AID FOR UKRAINE

Delivering aid into Ukraine - nearly 4 years on!

Our partners in Ukraine have asked for:

- FOOD**
Tinned food, Rice, Pasta,
Easy cook products, Cereals, Sweets
- FIRST AID / MEDICATION** (non-prescription)
- INCONTINENCE PRODUCTS**
- TOILETRIES / SANITARY ITEMS**
- NAPPIES**
- Pens/Pencils/Crayons/Notebooks**
- CLEANING PRODUCTS / CANDLES**
- POWER BANKS / CHARGING STATIONS**
- BLANKETS - NEW or VERY GOOD condition**
- RECHARGEABLE CAMPING LIGHT & POWER BANK**

eg. <https://amzn.eu/d/1gF57xY>

You can donate:

Saturdays 10am-12 noon at MAIDENHEAD United Reformed Church
West Street, SL6 1RL

Fridays 10-11am & Sundays 4:15-5pm at MARLOW United Reformed Church
Oxford Road, SL7 2NL



@MaidenheadAid for Ukraine

Use this QR code
to donate now:





Advent candles to lead us on the journey to
a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Photos of Induction Day! From greeting friends old and new to the induction service itself, joyful music, reading of the Word, participation of all the churches, gifts and of course...tea!





Contact us

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