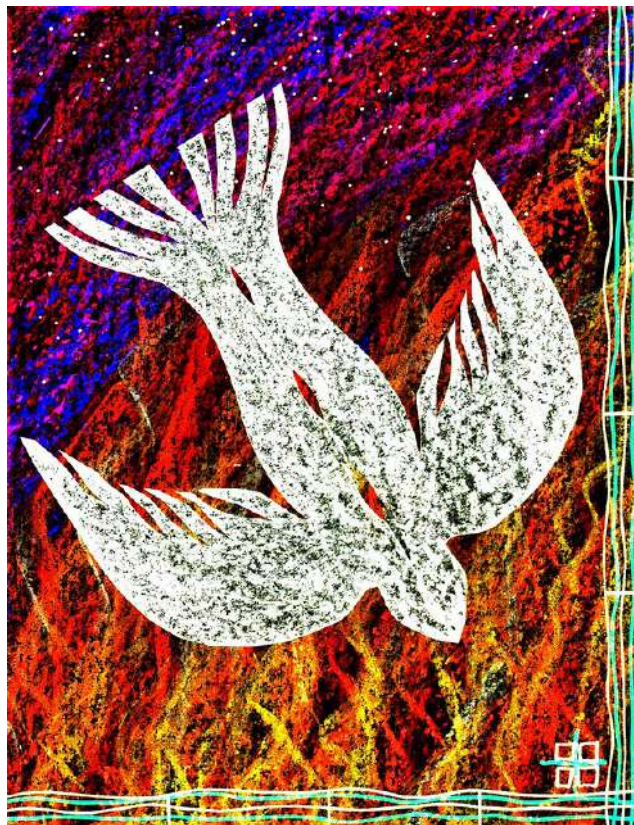


In Touch

The magazine of the URC congregations in
Maidenhead and Marlow



When the day of Pentecost came ...

A Message for Easter 2025 from our Synod Moderator

Dear friends,

As we emerge from the wilderness journey of Lent and stand once again at the empty tomb, we proclaim that God is still in the business of bringing new life out of death. The resurrection was not a return to the past, not a resuscitation of the old, but something completely new. That is the daring promise of Easter - that even when all seems lost, God can and does do something unimaginably new. The women who came to the tomb expected to care for a broken body. Instead, they encountered a broken world transformed by love and hope. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the grave is still moving in our world today, quietly and courageously bringing life where death seemed to have the final word. In a world marked by war, division, and deep injustice, it is easy to be overwhelmed by despair.

But Easter reminds us that God does not abandon us to the tomb. God is already ahead of us, calling us into new possibilities, new hope, and new beginnings. Resurrection does not ignore the pain of Good Friday: it holds it, honours it, and yet refuses to let it be the end of the story.

In our churches, some of us may feel the weight of decline, the pressure of limited resources, or the grief of what has been lost. But the message of Easter is not to cling to what is dying, but to trust in what God is bringing to birth. This season, may we have the courage to let go where we must - and the eyes to see where resurrection is already unfolding among us.

Let us be people of Easter hope - not wishful thinking, but rooted, resurrection hope. Let us tell the stories of new life in our communities. Let us name the places where God is at work. Let us celebrate not only what has been, but what is becoming.

May the peace of the risen Christ be with you, and may this Easter season be filled with grace, renewal, and joy.

With prayers for the joy of resurrection *this Easter*,

Michael Hopkins, Wessex Synod Moderator

Worship at Maidenhead and Marlow

All services start at 10.30am unless stated otherwise.

Date	Location and worship leader for Maidenhead	Location and worship leader for Marlow
4 May	Rev Stephen Thornton Communion	Rev Daphne Preece Communion
11 May	Beth Gomm and Alison Holton	Scott Wheeler Church Meeting/AGM
18 May	Zoom: Led by Marlow	
25 May	Rev Derek Wensley	Rob Lewis
1 June	Bob Robertson Communion	David Fowler
8 June Pentecost	Linda Jackson	Rev Maggie Hindley Communion
15 June	Zoom: Led by Maidenhead	
22 June	Rev Helen Everard	Rev Derek Wensley
29 June	Joint jazz worship at Marlow: Geoff Cronin	
6 July	Bob Robertson Communion and Church Meeting	Berenice Frey
13 July	Irene Pullin	Rev Ray Stanyon 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: This 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. Please contact George Flett for details.

Marlow Elders: Monday, 14 May at 11.15 and Monday, June 9 at 7.30pm.

Church Meeting: Church Meeting and AGM will be 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: Monday 12 May at 3pm and Monday 2 June at 2.30pm.

Church meeting: Sunday 6 July

Update on our new Pastorate Minister

We can confirm that the **Induction Service** for our new Pastorate Minister, Rev Chris Parker, will be at

2.30pm on Saturday 20 September at Maidenhead URC.

Due to space constraints, the number of attendees needs to be limited to around 150 so we must closely monitor and record the names of all those wishing to attend. Our calculations include Chris's guests, Wessex Synod and of course our four churches, so initially each church will be allocated 27 spaces on a first come, first served basis. **To get on the list you need to book with YOUR Church Secretary as soon as possible, giving:**

YOUR NAME(S)

ANY DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Once a church hits 27 names, others will automatically be put on a waiting list for that church and nearer the time will be notified if they have a place or not. The service will be followed by refreshments and with this large number it has been decided to hire outside caterers – the cost will be shared between all four churches.

Chris will take up his new post at the end of August. A few weeks ago, those responsible for pulpit supply at each of our four churches held a Zoom meeting with Chris and our Interim Moderator, Rev Michael Hodgson. Together they agreed Chris's preaching diary from the date of his arrival up until the end of this year – it works out that he will preach at each church four or five times during that period. On **Sunday 31st August** he will lead worship at a joint Maidenhead URC/Marlow URC service **at Maidenhead URC** – this will be his very first service in his new Pastorate.

We hope we will have a good turn out from both churches!!

Valerie Brownridge and John Holton,
Church Secretaries

The Pain of the Cross on Good Friday ...



Maidenhead members joined the ecumenical Walk of Witness up the High Street while Marlow members joined the Open-Air worship in Higginson Park followed by a Walk of Witness to the Marlow Methodist Church for an All-age Service.

... and the Celebration of Easter!

Early worship in Marlow's garden was followed in Maidenhead by a joint Easter breakfast and a service led by Rev Yee. A time of fellowship and celebration.



Ukraine Donations and the next Truck

Maidenhead and Christ Church Marlow are collecting donations every week. Waitrose,

Maidenhead and Tesco, Taplow send donations every week and we continue to receive donations from a choir in Seer Green, Thames Hospice and other generous organisations. We sort, package and store in the Church every Saturday morning in Maidenhead, and Christ Church does the same thing on Fridays from 10am-11am and Sundays from 4.15pm-5pm.

Over the last 3 years we have been giving and receiving goods from Maidenhead Food Bank as needed by Ewa in Poland. The Food Bank is moving to smaller premises and has a backlog of long-life food that they have to move out of their existing facility. They have set aside around 162 boxes of mixed food for onward transit to Ukraine. We are working on the logistics of getting some of the goods to the Church so we can check and compare with the donations we have so far. We will need to organise another truck shortly, with another in about 6 weeks after that. We will have to liaise with Ewa in Poland as she has limited storage place and assistance to distribute. This is by far the largest donation we have had recently but we are confident we can get the logistics smoothly sorted. We will be able to provide details of our progress and how we will do that in the next edition of "In Touch".

Please keep telling people about the collections at both churches. The items needed are on the list on the next page.

Mike Liddle

Ukelele concert for Ukraine

Great news! Ukelele Mondays have offered to put on another concert at Christ Church URC, Marlow to raise funds for Ukraine. The date to put in your diary is **Saturday 17 May**. We have held the price of the tickets at **£10**. This includes a glass of wine or juice during the interval. A real bargain!

Raising funds for Aid for Ukraine
SAT 17th MAY 2025
7:30pm to 10pm

UKULELE MONDAYS

at
United Reformed Church
Oxford Rd, Marlow, SL7 2NL
£10 on the door
incl. free glass wine/soft drink
DON'T MISS OUT!

Contact:
ukulelemondaysband@gmail.com



Delivering aid into Ukraine - three years on!

Our partners in Ukraine have asked for:

FOOD

Tinned food, Rice, Pasta,
Easy cook products, Cereals, Sweets

FIRST AID & MEDICATION

TOILETRIES & SANITARY ITEMS

INCONTINENCE PRODUCTS

NAPPIES

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Pens/Pencils/Crayons/Notebooks

POWER BANKS & CHARGING STATIONS

You can donate:

**Saturdays 10am-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**



@Aid for Ukraine

Use this QR code
to donate now:



Spring 2025

We will be running a raffle again and would really appreciate any raffle prizes you are able to donate. The more prizes we have, the more it will encourage people to buy raffle tickets and the more money we will raise. We raised £1200 for Ukraine at the last concert. We are aiming to raise as much, but preferably more at the next concert. We are counting on your support!

Valerie Brownridge

Prayer chain in Maidenhead starts again



Linda Nightingale has started the Prayer Chain again. If you would like to be supported by prayer, please let her know. She will pass the information to the 'links' in the chain - a small group of members who will pray for you or the situation. You do not need to give any details – it is entirely up to you.

Any information you have given will stay confidential within the group. To speed up the process and ensure accuracy, the prayer request will be passed to the various members by email and they will be asked to acknowledge receipt to Linda - either in words or an emoji 🙏.

For Linda's contact details please ask her or the Administrator.

Irene and Linda

ECO Church and the Green Team

At Maidenhead, we've started the journey of becoming an ECO Church, a program designed to support churches and their leadership in taking practical steps to care for God's creation.



We've registered on the A Rocha ECO Church website

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>, which offers a wealth of resources and questionnaires to guide us through this process. There are five key areas for us to explore and assess:

- Worship and Teaching
- Buildings and Energy
- Land and Nature
- Community and Global Engagement
- Lifestyle

We have already focussed on the Land and Nature questionnaire – a few weeks ago 10 of us sat down after coffee for just 30 minutes and, following lively discussion, came up with several simple actions we think we can achieve. Going forward, we'll continue to address each of the other topics after Sunday coffee, again for just 30 minutes. Let's call ourselves the Green Team and everyone is welcome to join in at any time.

While the framework is based on self-assessment, we do need to meet certain criteria to achieve the Bronze Award. Interestingly, Bracknell URC has already reached Silver, and Woking URC has achieved Gold! I've spoken with the lead volunteers at both churches, and they've kindly offered their support to us.

It's important to remember that the Church is called to reflect God's love to the world. As the climate crisis continues to escalate, its most devastating impact will be felt by the most vulnerable. ECO Church will help us raise awareness of how our church and lifestyle influence our ecological footprint. For me, though, it goes beyond just the environment; it gives us a meaningful way to engage as a church on a deeper level.

If you'd like to get more involved with the Green Team, please don't hesitate to speak with me!

Alison Holton

Christian Aid Week 11-16 May 2025

Christian Aid week is 11-16 May. This is an important time for Christian Aid as fundraising during the week raises a significant proportion of Christian Aid's revenue.

This year, Christian Aid is highlighting its work in Guatemala, where the climate crisis is destroying crops and causing hunger for indigenous communities. But

with training, farmers like Aurelia are fighting back.

Aurelia has faced extreme heatwaves that have killed her crops, but through Christian Aid's partner, Congcoop, she's learning to grow resilient crops, make fertiliser and conserve water. She's sharing this knowledge with others,



helping her community build a sustainable future.

This Christian Aid Week, please give to support farmers, like Aurelia, in their fight against hunger and the climate crisis.

There are 3 ways you can contribute:

1) Have a wonderful evening listening to music performed by the talented members of the Taplow Youth Choirs, directed by Gillian Dibden MBE. They will be giving a concert at Christ Church, Marlow on Sunday 11 May at 19:00. Tickets available on the door (let me know if you'd like some reserved) or on-line from:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-summer-serenade-tickets-1308399912359?aff=oddtcreator>

2) Donate on-line here:

fundraise.christianaid.org.uk/envelope-2025/marlow

3) Put cash or a cheque in a Christian Aid envelope and return it to one of the collection points in Marlow, or to me. Thank you for your support.

Catherine Johnson

Judith Inman has also told us about Slinfold Church which runs an annual **Christian Aid quiz**. The subject this year is 'Dances'. If you would like to have a go, please click on the link and follow the instructions for paying your contribution to Slinfold Church's CA fundraising.

<http://www.stpeterslinfold.co.uk/caquiz.htm>

Sunday 11th May, 7.00pm
At Christ Church URC, Oxford Road, Marlow SL7 2NL

A summer serenade by young singers and instrumentalists from
Taplow Choirs
Musical Director: Gillian Dibden MBE



Programme to include vocal solos and music for violin and piano.



Concert in aid of Christian Aid

Tickets £14 (18s and under £7)
From <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-summer-serenade-tickets-1308399912359?aff=oddtcreator>



A Fairtrade Church

I was tasked with researching Maidenhead URC's registration as a Fairtrade Church as it had seemed to lapse. The key elements were:

- We had to use Fairly Traded goods in the church where possible
- We have to take part in Fairtrade Fortnight (September)
- We have to promote Fairtrade to church members through at least one other service.

I looked at what we had done over the years and much had been done but we had just not talked about it. We made it central to our last Zoom service and we should be aware when doing our own shopping.

I submitted our application to Fairtrade and we were given approval.

But, to paraphrase (and simplify) Winston Churchill, this is not the end. This is just the beginning. If you find anything useful when shopping perhaps we can share it on other Zoom services.

Gordon Campbell

World Day of Prayer March 7

The Maidenhead service for this Year's World Day of Prayer took place on 7th April. It was really well-received with over sixty people attending.

I personally thought it one of the best ever. Mind you I think that every year! Joking aside it was so inspirational in fact I have sent the programme to many people who could not attend and they all agree it was excellent. Wish I could thank all the people of the Cook Islands personally it was so life changing.



Theresa May, now Baroness May of Maidenhead, always comes to the service and this year was no exception.

We thank the Methodist church at St Marks for their hospitality and the afternoon tea was amazing – just as good as Cliveden!



Also attending was our Mayor, Simon Bond, who has attended before. Unfortunately our MP was indisposed so could not attend. The Advertiser did not send a photographer but we managed to do our own. Next year will be Nigeria. I'm sure it will be really good.

Pam Breen

Come and join Stepwise in May!

Stepwise is the discipleship development programme from the United Reformed Church. It is for everyone: all ages, shapes and sizes – including all of us!

If you are keen to reflect on, and develop your Christian faith, ready to be stimulated and challenged, and want to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others, then Stepwise is what you're looking for.

Stepwise is shaped around your strengths and needs, in the context of your own community and church. It emphasises the importance of learning from your daily life – wherever you are and whoever God might be calling you to be. It is designed for people of all ages and backgrounds and aims to deepen your discipleship and help you to grow in faith as you walk the way of Jesus.

For details, please talk to Bob Robertson



Dancing for Artpeace

On the 16th of March Judith hosted a remarkable barn dance to raise funds for Artpeace, a project that Marlow support in



Zimbabwe. She did such a fantastic job that myself and Ronnie joined in with every single dance. (I think Ronnie enjoyed it more than I did!)

I have looked after the little boy you can see in the photo above since he was in

the baby room at my previous nursery. He has grown up so much and he really enjoyed the dancing.

He was quick to pick up each new dance move and definitely can dance better than me. (But then that's not difficult.)

Well done Judith you did a brilliant job!! We all had a good time while raising £350 for Zimbabwe.

Kailey Milne

Tribute to David Rogers

David Rogers sadly passed away a few weeks ago. He was a good friend of mine for some 30 years. In addition to being members and elders of the URC in Marlow, we shared some activities together. I persuaded him to come Scottish Country Dancing, but our other quite regular connection was spending time doing a fair bit of walking together. Following the death of Kay Garroway, a fellow church member with whom he went canal tow path walking and holidaying, I became his longer walking friend usually covering about 8 to 10 miles. Over a number of years, we generally did this weekly. David could become breathless going uphill and I sometimes had to wait for him to catch up, but due to my sometimes difficult right knee he had to wait for me at the bottom of hills!

I also supported him by taking him to hospital when he was undergoing cancer treatment. I was the driver who had taken him to hospital when he was told that he needed to have chemotherapy. This was less than a week before he was due to go on holiday. I was in the waiting room and he said he wanted to tell me what the consultant had said. His immediate dilemma was that he did not want to cancel the holiday due to begin a week or so later and start the chemo, as recommended by the consultant. We briefly discussed this and I told him I thought he should cancel the holiday and get the chemo started ASAP. So, I went in with him to see the consultant and to support him at this challenging time. He had, of course, many follow up visits to hospital and I was just one of the friends who regularly supported him on these frequent hospital visits.

David liked his holidays, in truth he had quite frequent holidays, more I would

say than the average person. On a number of occasions he suggested that I might go to one or other of his time-shares with him, but it never did happen because I was frequently not available to join him usually because of my Scottish Country Dancing commitments. However, earlier this year we agreed that I'd go to Cornwall for a week in July and we'd go walking together. The last telephone conversation I had with him about two weeks before he died was that as soon as he had his holiday dates to Portugal fixed, I would fix with him the dates for the week of my holidaying in Cornwall.

David was a very active Rotarian. He undertook many varied responsibilities for them and in particular became heavily involved in some of their major fund-raising activities.

He was a man of strong, deep, faith, something I particularly admired about him. The URC took its time to agree to him following the course to become a lay preacher. It was David's perseverance though that won the day. He sometimes led services in Marlow including communion services. Being a lay preacher was very important to him and it is a blessing that he was accepted to be a lay preacher with the Methodist church in Cornwall. I do believe that throughout his life, his mission was indeed to help others to appreciate God's love. Since his death I have come to realise that I have lost a true friend.

George Flett

Christian Connections in Schools

At the Maidenhead service on May 11 we will be welcoming Beth Gomm, a colleague of Wayne Dixon, to talk about 'Christian Connections in Schools'. CCiS has worked in local schools for many years and some of us will have enjoyed Wayne's worship at church in the past. 'Younger' generations from the church remember him coming into Desborough School and Cox Green, amongst others and as one said recently 'making it OK to say you believed in something'.

Beth has joined the team fairly recently and is going to explain what is going on in schools work at the moment and how churches can support their work if we have a heart for young people. Their mission is:

We make Jesus known in schools through:

- **Partnership** with local churches, individuals and Christians in schools.
- Developing good **Relationships** with individuals and schools.
- **Respecting** the beliefs of others and the school environment as a place of education.
- Being **Relevant** in communicating the good news of Jesus as it is revealed in the Bible.

Liz Robertson

Scout Group Update

Beavers, Cubs and Scouts look forward to the summer term, when they can get out and about more, although the Scouts have already enjoyed wide games in the Thicket with their torches. Some Beavers tried new activities at the County

Activity Day and the bulbs the Cubs planted at the Scout Hut gave a colourful display.

Scouts and Cubs will join forces for a camp on the weekend of 20-22 June and once again we have Family Camp on the drawing board (11–13 July).

At the end of March we gave a big thank you to Sarah (Owl) and Wendy (Wise Owl) for keeping our Beavers so active for many years, but it is good to know they are happy to continue being involved with Cubs and Scouts.



We are pleased to welcome Cub parent, Cindana (Deer), who has taken up the challenge of leading our Beaver team. As many Beavers have now moved up to Cubs we are on the lookout for more 6-8 year olds!

Alison Holton



Come and sing your favourite hymns at Rejoice and Sing LIVE

Reserve your free tickets to Rejoice and Sing Live on May 3, an opportunity to sing lots of hymns celebrating the hymnwriters, hymns and the hymn book of the URC. 19 hymns accompanied by an organ, piano or worship band, a celebration choir, talks, a panel discussion, an exhibition and cafe, with contributions from those who created the hymn book in the 1980s and 1990s. Methodist Central Hall, Warwick Lane, Coventry, on Saturday May 3. Exhibition and cafe from 12 noon, service from 2pm. Book your free tickets

<https://bit.ly/rejoiceandsing>

Some happy family news



Cwinyaa, a qualified pharmacist, married Sam Udoh on March 28 at Braxted Park Estate in Essex. We send them our prayers for a happy life together.

Some of you will remember the Laber family coming to Maidenhead when Owiny was called to be our Minister. Well, the baby who learned to walk toddling up and down our aisle has just got married!



On the Death of His Holiness, Pope Francis

Please note, this has been edited for space. The full version of this article can be found on the URC website: <https://urc.org.uk/on-the-death-of-his-holiness-pope-francis/>

The United Reformed Church, with Christians everywhere, mourns the death of His Holiness Pope Francis, and extends its sympathy to Catholics who will grieve this loss most keenly.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected Pope in March 2013 taking office after the abdication of Benedict XVI. All who are called to offices of leadership and oversight in the Church realise how demanding these roles can be; none is more demanding than that of Bishop of Rome. The toll of the office was heavy for Francis.

Within the limitations and expectations of the Papal office Francis was an agent of change who sat lightly on inherited traditions and pomp. Rejecting an ermine lined red cape before being presented to the crowds in St Peter's, Francis said to an aide "no thank you Monsignor ... the carnival is over!".

Living a simple lifestyle meant, for Francis, rejecting a move into the Papal apartments (which he said had room for more than 300 people) and remaining in a small suite in the Vatican guesthouse, taking his meals with other guests.

Francis saw his ministry, primarily, as being one who called the Church to be missionary. He wanted every element of the Church's life to reflect missionary discipleship and the building of the Kingdom.

In a speech before his election Francis stated: "when the Church does not come out of herself to evangelise, she becomes self-referential and sick". A maxim all denominations should take to heart.

He also spoke of Jesus knocking on the door, from within the Church, seeking to be let out into the world. Yet Francis was no liberal. He would speak of the reality of the Devil and remained traditional over some of the hot button topics of the age – gender and sexuality.

Francis was, in many ways, a radical when it came to the status quo. He created cardinals from far-flung places that would not normally expect to have a man in the College. When asked about gay priests he, famously, shrugged his shoulders and said: "Who am I to judge?" which begged the response – "if not you, then who?". Admittedly at a tiny pace, Francis appointed more women to the higher rungs of the Roman Curia but not anything like the speed needed to ensure balance between the sexes. He did, however, include more women than ever before in Synods and ensured they had prominent positions within them.

Francis was determined to see the strong relational bonds between religious traditions and between humanity itself. He referred to Muslims as “our siblings” and went to great lengths to improve Christian-Muslim relations, visiting the United Arab Emirates in 2019 and Iraq in 2021.

His pilgrimage to South Sudan with the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Archbishop of Canterbury was groundbreaking in its ecumenical nature and in its efforts to bring warring factions together.

He visited Lutheran churches in Sweden to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. This was a pope who understood, and embodied, the interconnected nature of all humanity and the strong familial bonds between Christians.

With Francis, big broad-stroke arguments for environmental justice belong with the simple appreciation of accessible beauty: encouraging grace at meals, and wildflowers in churches that “those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty”.

Following the election of Trump and Vance as President and Vice President of the United States of America, Pope Francis became more and more alarmed at the rhetoric and actions against migrants.

In February 2025 he wrote to the US Catholic Bishops reminding them of the migration of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt in search of a better future, the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt to escape terror, and condemning the mass deportations from America “...the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defencelessness”.

Criticising Mr Vance’s notion that Christian love ripples out in concentric circles, Francis noted Jesus’ Parable of the Good Samaritan where love is demanded for all without exception. Edgily, commending migrants to Our Lady of Guadalupe,

left the American bishops in no doubt as to where they must stand in opposition to the actions of President Trump.

Above all, Francis was a pastoral pope emphasising the mercy of God and the need to change our ways to save the planet. The selfless love embodied in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, however, sometimes led to some key mistakes in Francis' pontificate. He was, sometimes, too slow to see the reality of abuse allegations against some of his friends.

Francis' ministry as Pope was remarkable. From his simple "good evening" to the crowds on the evening of his election to the warmth that radiated from him, he caught the imagination of the world. Not since John XXIII has the non-Catholic world felt such warmth towards a Pope.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Prayers

Eternal Majesty,

we commend to you our brother Francis,
give him the rest he so sorely needs.

Faithful Shepherd,

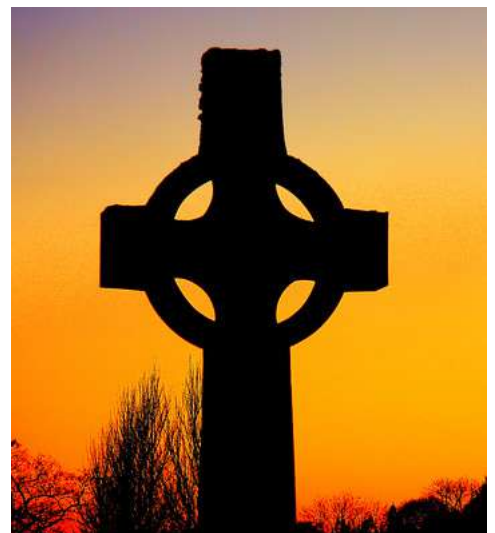
help us to model in our lives and ministry,
the mercy, radicalness, and missionary zeal of Your servant Francis,
that your kingdom will come.

Abiding Spirit,

guide the College of Cardinals as they pray, discern,
and elect a new pope,
that the ministry of oversight and leadership
embodied in Pope Francis
may bear good fruit. Amen

Source: The United Reformed Church website:

<https://urc.org.uk/on-the-death-of-his-holiness-pope-francis/>



Contact us

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