

Newsletter

Important information! Spring Synod Meeting will have to be 'Virtual' again, as it was last Autumn. It will take place on the morning of Saturday April 17th 2021 and focus primarily on the needs and challenges of Local Churches as we emerge from lockdown. Further details about the plans and arrangements for Spring Synod will follow in the next few weeks.

'News you NEED to Know'

Wellbeing Workshops

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84489682928?pwd=Q244aEtGWUc5ckR5RzZXZ2tOOUxVZz09>

Meeting ID: 844 8968 2928 Passcode: 959839

Wellbeing
WORKSHOPS

Please join us on this wellbeing journey

TASTER DAY:
Tuesday 12th Jan
2021 at 1:30-3pm

5 WEEK COURSE:
26th Jan - 23rd Feb
(Tues at 1:30-3pm)

ZOOM Meeting ID: 844 8968 2928
Passcode: 959839

Color swatches: white, light blue, orange, olive green, black



News you NEED to know

Page 1 Wellbeing workshops

Page 2 Basic Safeguarding training

Page 3 Racial Justice webinar
Eco Church Connect Fifth anniversary edition
CWM Webinars

Page 4—5 Preaching Online: 10-15 Minute Sermons that Transform 1-2 March 2021

Page 6 Fairtrade Fortnight

Page 7 News from Global and Intercultural Ministries

Page 8 Black Light Course

News of interest

Page 9 Support for Missional Partnerships in Lancashire

Page 10-11 Thank you letter from Darren Holland

Page 12 GMCT Treasurer

Page 13 Milton Mount Foundation

Due to demand, additional sessions added to the Basic Safeguarding training programme

Basic Safeguarding Training is being delivered by the Synod Safeguarding Adviser and started week commencing 23 November 2020.

Due to lockdown and the ongoing restrictions, all training until further notice will be delivered via Zoom.

The two hour online training session is for ***ALL volunteers, paid workers, elders and Ministers*** within the churches who have **NOT** attended any URC Safeguarding training in the last 3 years.

The sessions are limited to a maximum of 20 people per session. Anyone who registers to attend the training will then be sent the Zoom link for the relevant training session.

Please register for one of the training sessions with the Synod Safeguarding Adviser, by emailing Julie Rafferty on: safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk

Session no	Date	Day	Time
10	09/02/21	Tuesday	7-9pm
11	17/02/21	Wednesday	1.30-3.30pm
12	25/02/21	Thursday	10-12pm
13	11/03/21	Thursday	6.30-8.30pm
14	16/03/21	Tuesday	1-3pm
15	22/03/21	Monday	10.30-12.30pm
16	31/03/21	Wednesday	1.30-3.30pm
17	20/04/21	Tuesday	7-9pm
18	29/04/21	Thursday	10-12pm

Racial Justice Webinar

A CTBI Webinar on Wednesday 10th February at 7.30pm will include input from the URC's Global and Intercultural Ministries alongside representatives from some of our partner churches. It promises to be a stimulating event, especially topical for us as we begin our journey towards being an actively anti-racist church.

Racial Justice Sunday 2021 actually falls on 14th February - Valentine's Day. Look out for worship and reflection resources available soon from Global and Intercultural Ministries Website with the theme 'What kind of love...?'

The registration link for the webinar is: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/8016115857739/WN_BvoJg_16QzCwF_ttZUqJYw

Eco Church Connect Fifth anniversary edition

A Rocha UK's Church Relations Manager, Helen Stephens shares a message to mark Eco Church's fifth anniversary.

[Eco Church fifth anniversary message from Helen Stephens - YouTube](#)

Find out more at: ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

CWM Webinars

Council For World Mission (CWM) Europe is holding a series of online webinars and presentations around the theme of 'building life flourishing communities'. The first for 2021 takes place on 8 February from 2-3.30pm where Dr Peter Cruchley on the theme 'Whiteness and anti-racist practice: from talk to action'. The URC Revd Melanie Smith, along with Revd Dr Alan Barrett and David Jonathan will take part in a panel discussion on life-flourishing activism on 22nd February from 2-3.30pm. Further webinars are scheduled for 8 and 22 March. For more information and to register, please send an [email](#) to CWM.

Preaching online: 10-15 minute sermons that transform

1st & 2nd March 2021

Lawrence Moore



Discover the whys and hows of effective preaching on the Web

You can't just take a sermon and preach it online - it won't work.
Discover why and explore how to preach effectively on the Web.

Session One: 10 am & 7pm (1 March)

1. Why we behave differently online
2. How to engage and keep attention
3. Creating a climate of commitment
4. "Less is more"
5. Ringing the changes
6. Entertain - they'll love it!
7. Interacting with your congregation
8. What's a sermon for, anyway?
9. Building credibility: "The messenger is the medium!"

Session Two: 2pm (1 March); 7pm (2nd March)

1. Preaching for transformation
2. Relationship
3. Permission
4. Content
5. "Purple Cows" and value added
6. "Tribes" and "Sneezers"
7. "Here's what I see; here's how you can be part of it"
8. The transformation Funnel
9. Constructing a sermon

Meeting ID: 925 8414 4811 (all sessions)

Preaching Online: 10-15 Minute Sermons that Transform 1-2 March 2021

The Internet - and Zoom in particular - make it easier to preach short sermons aimed at transformation. It's not a case of simply lifting a sermon you'd preach in church and preaching it online, though!

The key is recognising how the same congregation that meets in a church building to listen to a sermon will behave very differently online.

This 2-session course explores the distinctive ways in which we behave online and relates that to how we preach differently online. Each session lasts 2 hours, with time for input and discussion. There are two opportunities to join these sessions: Day time or Evening time.

DAYTIME

Session 1: 10am - 12 noon (1 March)

Session 2: 2pm-4pm (1 March)

EVENING

Session 1: 7pm - 9pm (1 March)

Session 2: 7pm - 9pm (2 March)

Join each session using the following details:

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/92584144811>

Meeting ID: 925 8414 4811

Fairtrade Fortnight, 22 February to 7 March

The Revd Dr Kevin Snyman, who leads Commitment for Life, the United Reformed Church's (URC) global justice programme, has curated the Fairtrade Foundation's online Ecumenical Service of Worship, for Fairtrade Fortnight. Created in collaboration with other Christian organisations, the service can be downloaded from the Fairtrade Foundation's website from 25 January, and is scheduled to be a key part of the Foundation's online festival – a series of digital events organised for the first time this year. The ecumenical service features a sermon from Karen Campbell, URC Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, and is part of the Choose the World You Want Festival, which focuses on how the climate crisis is affecting the future of food and those who produce it. The online festival will include panel discussions, performances and workshops involving farmers in the developing world.

Dr Snyman, URC Programme Officer for Global Justice and Partnerships, said: "Covid has ripped aside any lingering illusion of the international economic system working for the world's poorest. It offers a forewarning of the devastating disruptions to come because of climate breakdown. The temptation will be to set aside ethical trading to rescue the failing economy, but this is precisely wrong. Now, more than ever, the Church must pray, and agitate, for increased support of Fairtrade, along with complete debt forgiveness. We must place the needs of the poorest producers front and centre in a new, economic and financial architecture that makes a green, anti-racist and anti-elite recovery possible."

"The URC and its members have been important active supporters, contributing to Fairtrade's success for years," said Adam Gardner, the Fairtrade Foundation's Head of Campaigns. "In this critical year for accelerating global efforts to tackle the climate crisis – which is already affecting the livelihoods of farmers on the frontline globally – we hope that joining the festival will inspire renewed support from churches and congregations – from choosing and serving Fairtrade products, to registering or re-committing to be a Fairtrade Church."

To find more information on Fairtrade Fortnight or to download the service, visit [here](#). *Kevin Snyman will be leading a zoom service with a Fairtrade theme for St Peter's Church, Manchester on 28 February at 11 00 am. Please contact me, Angela Bogg (angela.bogg@btopenworld.com) if you would like to join this and I will send you the zoom link. You would be very welcome.*

Looking for Fair Trade resources and sermon? Look no further.

<https://youtu.be/aajaWrsKE04>

News from Global and Intercultural Ministries

1. The URC Legacies of Slavery task group has a new initiative, 'Black History Monthly' - *because Black History is too important to leave until October!*

'Black History Monthly' will take place on the 3rd Monday of each month, 7.30-8.30pm via Zoom. Starting **Monday 15th February**, each session will have a different emphasis - sometimes focusing on and discussing an article or book, unpacking a film we have watched, taking a dive into poetry from Black writers, and maybe even sharing an eye-opening quiz - discovering some of the many achievements we may not have realised are attributable to Black people. We are confident there will be something of value, interest, and enjoyment for everyone.

Monday 15th February 7.30pm

February is Black History Month in the USA, so we'll start with Ava DuVernay's Netflix Documentary about the woeful and unremitting effects over 150 years of the exception clause in the Anti-slavery 13th amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

*Currently, it's available for free viewing on **YouTube**. We'll show the trailer when we meet but try to find the time to watch the full feature **before** you join us.*

Find it by searching on You Tube for "13th documentary"

<https://zoom.us/j/99060809545?pwd=YIFOR2k2TUozbmJiWVZPSkxMQjNXUT09>

Meeting ID: **990 6080 9545**

Passcode: **264326**

For details of future sessions please email Angela Bogg, angela.bogg@btopenworld.com.

2. All Church Secretaries should have received an information pack from the **Commitment from Life** team. This gives an update on the work and an interview with Revd John Plant, Church Relations Team Lead at Christian Aid who works closely with the CfL team. Commitment for Life is Christian Aid's biggest denominational appeal, is vital for the countries it supports and puts faith into action in a very practical way. John was an Anglican parish priest before working for Christian Aid. He has a link with the North West in that he was a student in Manchester and lived in the Congregational College when Nigel Uden was there. He attended Roby URC in Longsight and recalls how passionate the church was about justice.

Angela Bogg

Black Light Course

The Black Lives Matter movement has encouraged many people around the world and in the UK to reflect more deeply on issues of race, colonialism and social justice. As a small contribution to this, the Ascension Trust and Urban Expression are offering this online course.

Who is the Black Light course for?

The short answer is ‘anyone concerned about racial injustice, the legacies of colonialism and the potential of partnership between people and churches of different ethnicities and cultures in the UK.’ We hope that Black and White Christians, members of Black-majority, White-majority and multi-ethnic churches will participate, learn together and share experiences, struggles, hopes and dreams.

Who is involved?

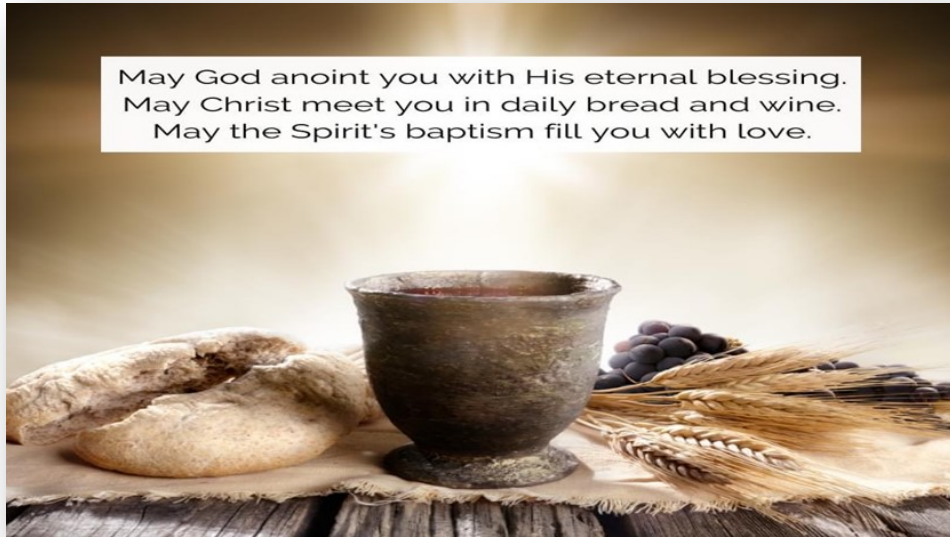
The course is created through partnership between Urban Expression and the Ascension Trust. Originally developed and run in London in the 1990s, in Brixton and in Islington, by course leaders Les Isaac (The Ascension Trust) and Stuart Murray Williams (Urban Expression). Now updated for 2021 the speakers and hosts come from different places and contexts, offering expertise in different areas – some taught on the original course and others are new voices.

The course will run on Thursday evenings through April to June: 29 April, 6 May, 13 May, 20 May, (mid-course break), 3 June, 10 June, 17 June, 24 June. There are eight evenings, spread over nine weeks with a break in the middle. Each evening will run from 7pm to 9pm and will start and finish promptly. The Zoom meeting will be open from 6.45pm to enable everyone to settle in and chat beforehand.

Details of the programme, presenters, cost and booking information can be found on the course website. Click the link [Black Light Course | Home](#)

'News of interest'

Support for Missional Partnerships in Lancashire



You are invited to the Partnership Online Communion in February 2021

Please join me for communion and fellowship around Jesus' table.

16th February @ 10am- Lancashire West Missional Partnership
18th February @ 10am- Lancashire North Missional Partnership
19th February @ 10am- Lancashire South Missional Partnership
24th February @ 10am- Lancashire East Missional Partnership

If you would like to join us, and you haven't signed up for the Coffee mornings/
Communion before, please drop me an email, in order for me to send you an invite

Daleen.TenCate@nwsynod.org.uk

Thank you letter from Darren Holland

I would like to begin by saying a huge and heart-felt thank you for your kindness and extravagant generosity shown through the messages, prayers, good wishes and gifts that I have received. It has been truly overwhelming - especially as I'm only a Methodist!

Three and a half years has never felt so short a time as this one, which means, I suppose, that some of it must have been fun!

It has been a privilege to be able to share this time with you and to work alongside you. Some things have gone well, others not so much. Some of you have very kindly expressed sadness at me going, others may be breathing a sigh of relief and saying 'At last!' while yet others are asking when was I ever here!

The reality of life, and ministry in particular, is that people come and go all the time. I am not worried or concerned about whether anyone will remember me at all but I do hope and pray that you will continue to hold on to the faith that unites us and remain open to the Spirit who stirs in us the possibility of perceiving and engaging with the new things that God is consistently revealing.

I shared at my final zoom coffee morning some favourite words from Isaiah 43.18-19: **'Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.'**

This has been a year like no other, we've been restricted or limited on the one hand, whilst open to new ways of doing things and new opportunities on the other. It has been a year that has highlighted the stark inequalities in our communities while at the same time presenting to the church a rediscovery of what it means to be Jesus-shaped in a digital age. As the furloughing, redundancies, rise in debt and growing poverty have blighted many areas of our nation, Christians along with peoples of other faiths and none have found common ground in pooling resources and working together to address many of the consequential needs and offering support to those for whom this time has been intensely difficult.

We have seen and heard of terrible things and yet when we look more deeply we see entwined and breaking through the constant signs of hope that shine like lights in the dark places.

During Advent we remember and ready ourselves again to receive and honour the God who is with us – Emmanuel. We celebrate the birth of Jesus and remind . Seek

ourselves that it was no stately birth but one depicted in humility, in exile, even at times in fear and yet over it all the message of the angels resounds: 'Do not be afraid'.

Whatever next year brings with its uncertainties and challenges hold on to the present hope that we each have in Christ and that has been firmly set in us out the new thing that God is doing in and through you, and inviting you to participate in. Trust that even though you cannot see where to plant your foot as you step forward that God will guide you, and even if you trip, stumble or fall, the Spirit will be there to support you and set you back on the path God calls you on. And please remember as a little football team along the River Mersey often reminds us 'You'll never walk alone'.

I pray however you are spending the next couple of weeks that you will know the nearness of our God, the peace of Christ and the comfort and wisdom of the Holy Spirit and that even in these strange times we will each experience something of the joy that walking with Jesus brings to us.

My thanks again with prayers for a happy and peaceful Christmas and every blessing in 2021.

Darren



Charity Number: 503258

Greater Manchester Churches Together is looking for a treasurer to join its board of trustees.

About us:

Since its foundation in 1918, initially as a District Council of Churches, GMCT has been a pioneer of Christian unity in the UK. We are proud to have a broad membership of churches, both traditional and new, and are always seeking to diversify our membership to reflect the range of Christian traditions present in Greater Manchester.

We are a member of Churches Together in England and work to encourage consultation between our member churches while seeking to resource and encourage local unity groups across the region. We have close to fifty local groups that operate a range of projects around Greater Manchester. The Church leaders meet regularly and share matters of joint concern, which enables a united voice on a range of issues.

We are in the process of establishing a new project that will enable a unified response from the churches towards some of the challenges that face our local communities as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. It is hoped that this will play a significant role in strengthening and rebuilding communities, working in partnership with other groups and the local authority.

The role:

Our current treasurer is seeking to retire, and we are searching for a replacement to take over the role and ensure a smooth transition can take place. The role entails an estimated 5 hours of work a month (maximum) which consists of: processing a small number of payments, bookkeeping, preparing reports and the budget to present at Trustees meetings, and sending annual subscription requests to our eleven member denominations.

Trustees meetings are quarterly, currently taking place during the working day, and online by Zoom.

We would welcome applications...

We are looking for an individual with experience of bookkeeping, ideally who is sympathetic with the Christian faith and the charitable objectives of GMCT.

For further details, or to arrange an informal conversation with the current treasurer, please contact Graham Baker at gmct.facilitator@gmail.com.

MILTON MOUNT FOUNDATION (Registered Charity No. 306981)

Secondary Education

The Milton Mount Foundation offers bursaries to assist with the cost of secondary school fees to the children of Congregational and URC ministers, and also to the daughters of members of these churches.

Subject to the availability of sufficient funds, it may also be possible to provide grants to assist with the cost of school uniform and educational trips for ministers' children at both state and fee-paying schools.

Higher Education

Bursaries are offered to daughters of Congregational and URC ministers **starting their first undergraduate degree** in autumn 2021. Bursaries are also offered to those beginning a **first postgraduate degree**, for up to three years. Subject to sufficient funds being available, similar grants may also be available for sons of ministers

For further information and application forms, please contact the Secretary, Mrs Rosie Hopkins, at miltonmountfoundation@gmail.com or on **01252 715087**.

The closing date for all applications for the 2021-22 academic year is **10 May 2021**.