



News Update

September 2021

Get ready to celebrate the URC's 50th anniversary



The United Reformed Church (URC) will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2022. Marking our 50th year can help us to plan for the future – not only to keep pursuing our ecumenical vision, but also to plan for how we will continue to be an active, engaged and faithful Christian presence in our communities and in new ones. Watch this [short video](#) to find out what plans are in place to mark the occasion.

General Assembly round up

The URC General Assembly took place from 9-12 July online. Topics on the URC Learning Hub, action towards an anti-racist church, the Israeli and Palestinian conflict, the URC's 50th jubilee,

modern-day slavery, the future of Pilots, ministerial disciplinary process, safeguarding, and the pension scheme. A round up of all the business discussed and decisions made can be [read here](#).

URC's vaccine appeal tops £30,000

The URC's Covid-19 vaccine appeal has raised more than £30,000! Delighted by the response of generous donors, the Commitment for Life team provides an update on how the money is being spent helping vulnerable countries around the world. [Read more](#).

Worship Resources Competition

URC at 50: Worship Resources Competition



To celebrate the United Reformed Church's 50th anniversary, songwriters, composers, rappers, poets, choirs and bands are invited to submit an entry into the URC at 50: Worship Resources Competition.

There are four categories in which you can enter:

- Traditional hymn/song
- Poem
- Contemporary hymn/song
- Rap.

Full details will be available on the URC website soon.

Judges will select a winner from each category. Winning entries will be performed at General Assembly 2022 and included in a digital version of the URC at 50 celebration resource pack for local churches. Closing date for entries: 8 April 2022.

To celebrate the URC's 50th anniversary, songwriters, composers, rappers, poets, choirs and bands are invited to submit an entry into the URC at 50: Worship Resources Competition. There are four categories to enter: traditional hymn/song, poem, contemporary hymn/song, and rap. Judges will select a winner from each category. The winning entries will be performed at General Assembly 2022 and included in a digital version of the URC at 50 celebration resource pack for local churches. The closing date for submissions is 8 April 2022. Find all you need to know [here](#).

Resource pack for local churches

URC at 50 Resource pack for local churches



To celebrate the United Reformed Church's 50th anniversary, a resource pack is being designed to help local churches plan their own celebrations.

The pack will include:

- The script of 'Breaking News' – a drama about the formation of the URC in 1972, and a short film of it
- Celebrate Together, a picture book for young members
- Winning entries of Worship Resources Competition
- Suggestions for worship with resources and a service outline
- Details about the 2022 Prayer Handbook
- Calendar of Jubilee events
- Celebratory materials to help get your party started
- A quiz ... and more.
- The pack will be available by January 2022.

A resource pack is being designed to help local churches plan their own URC at 50 celebrations. The pack will include: the script of 'Breaking News' – a drama about the formation of the URC in 1972, and a short film of it; Celebrate Together, a picture book for young members; winning entries of the Worship Resources Competition; suggestions for worship with resources and a service outline; details about the 2022 Prayer Handbook; calendar of Jubilee events; celebratory materials to help get your party started; a quiz and more. For further information, [read more](#).

New discipleship development grant

The URC's Education and Learning Committee is launching a new grant to support lay discipleship development. Around £5,000 pa per group is available from the Discipleship Development Fund Large Grant Award. Find out more and how to apply [here](#).

Leave a legacy in your will

Have you thought about leaving a legacy in your will that reflects your desire to see justice in the world? Leaving a legacy in your will can reflect the values of your life. [Watch this short film](#) produced by the URC's Commitment for Life team which explains more.

Yorkshire church becomes first to receive new youth friendly scheme award



Shire Green URC in the Yorkshire Synod has become the first church to receive the new Children and Youth Friendly Church Scheme award. Launched in September 2020, the scheme replaces the old Child Friendly Church Award and is a reflective and encouraging process which any church can undertake with the support of a CYDO+ or similar to help grow their engagement with children, families and young people. Shire Green URC received its award for the work it does to support its local community throughout the week with toddler groups, after school clubs, munch-day church, girl's group as casual engagement with children and young people in the community. [Read more](#).

Support climate justice relay

The Young Christian Climate Network has embarked on an ambitious relay across the UK to raise the message of climate justice ahead of COP26. People are being asked to support the relay in a number of ways: make paper boats, arrange a meet and greet for pilgrims, plan a tributary walk and much more. Find out how you can get involved [here](#).

Plymouth shooting

The Revd Ruth Whitehead, Moderator of the URC's South Western Synod, offers a reflection and prayer following the shooting in Plymouth where six people died. Ruth says: "We acknowledge that we need to dig deep into our faith at times like this, to know that our security lies in God and the love of God for every life cut short, for every frightened community and for ever tortured mind." [Read more](#).

URC Podcast



Check out the latest episodes in the first series of *The United Reformed Church Podcast*. Topics include: money, antiracist vs not racist, Christians in the workplace, the climate crisis, coronavirus a year on, and what is Walking the Way, the URC's focus on discipleship? Tune in [here](#).

Rural officer retires



Colleagues said goodbye to Elizabeth Clark, the denomination's National Rural Officer, in July after she announced her retirement. Francis Brienan, Deputy General Secretary for Mission, said Elizabeth had "reminded us all, consistently and powerfully, of the importance of rural contexts and all that they offer."

Digital guidelines

The URC's Social Media Guidelines and Digital Charter are designed to encourage online conversations that reflect the values of the denomination. They're specifically for and freely available to all who engage with the URC's national social media channels, those run by its 13 Synods, those managed by local congregations, and those that use the URC name, logo and brand, and those that purport to portray, represent or advance the purposes of the URC. Find the resources [here](#).

Haiti emergency appeal

On 14 August, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti at Les Cayes, 75 miles west of the capital of Port-au-Prince. On 16 August, Tropical Storm Grace, flash floods and mudslides caused further devastation on the island. People who have lost everything need emergency shelter, food, drinking water and access to healthcare. If you would like to, please donate to [Christian Aid's emergency appeal](#).

Changes to safeguarding

Following General Assembly, a range of important papers, resolutions and changes have further developed the URC's commitment to embedding safeguarding across the

denomination. Paper T1 [Annual safeguarding report 2020](#) highlights important observations and facts from the annual church returns. Paper T2 [Additions to URC Structure](#) heralds the addition of safeguarding functions to the structures of the URC. Paper T3 [Safeguarding Advisory Group](#) announces the end of the Safeguarding Advisory Group and the beginning of a new Safeguarding Committee. Paper T4 [Safeguarding Policy Statement](#) details the adoption of a URC safeguarding policy statement for General Assembly. Paper T5 [Safeguarding Training Framework](#) stipulates where mandatory training is required and at what level and Paper T6 [Criminal Record Check](#) updates the roles eligible for DBS checks.

Crisis communications

Crisis communication is an essential element of disaster ministry. A little bit of preparation now can help ensure everything goes more smoothly at your church when disaster strikes. Check out the URC's Crisis Communications Plan [here](#).

Stepwise makes a difference

[Watch this short video](#) to find out through a collection of stories from participants and churches about the difference Stepwise, the URC's discipleship development programme, has made to their lives and communities.

Dental pioneer remembered



Dame Margaret Seward, a former Secretary of Richmond Hill St Andrew's URC in Dorset, and pioneer in the British dental sector, has died aged 86. She was the first Dame within the profession, the first female resident dental house surgeon at The London Hospital, the first woman to be elected to the dentists' governing body the General Dental Council, its first female president, and the first

female to be named Chief Dental Officer for England, and the second woman to be elected President of the British Dental Association. [Read more.](#)

Image: The Seward Family/Bournemouth Echo

Lundie award winners



August's Lundie Memorial Award goes to Andrew and Daniel Shaw, from St Columba's URC, Wolverhampton, who are dedicated volunteers at the Community School Swap Shop which is part of the church's eco-church work. They sort clothes, find and bag up the correct uniform and sizes for people and work at the open sessions helping people find what they're looking for. With fewer volunteers due to the pandemic, the swap shop has been extremely reliant on the dedication of the brothers who gave up much of their school holidays. [Read more.](#)

New URC Learning Hub launched

The URC Education and Learning team has created a new home for blended learning programmes in the Church - the URC Learning Hub. Blended programmes mix online preparation study with in-person sessions in order to make the best use of both digital and human resources for learning, while also allowing access from wherever participants may be located geographically. In this way the Hub will bring a greater selection of learning options to a wider church audience. [Read more.](#)

**Walking
the Way**
Living the life of Jesus today

Social media accounts to close

Walking the Way's dedicated social media accounts are closing at the end of September. But don't worry! Just follow the URC's national social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for all your Walking the Way and discipleship news.

Coronavirus: information and resources

Prayers during the pandemic

Prayers during the pandemic are weekly devotions from the URC to help bring you comfort and spiritual support during these difficult times. The prayers, which are designed for use in your private prayers, prayer groups or sermons, are available [here](#).

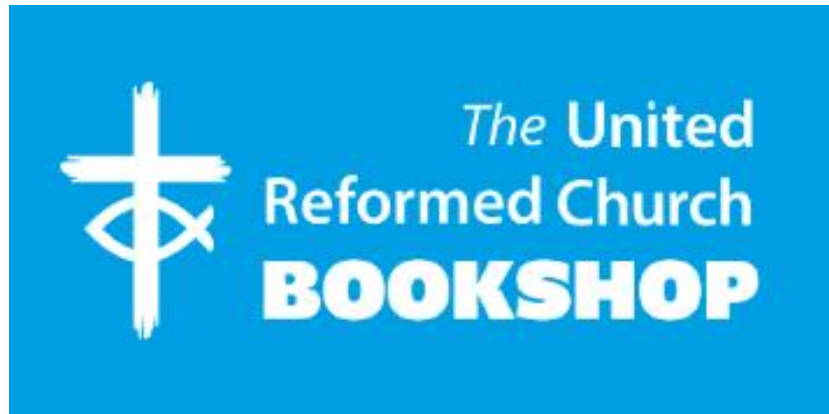
Practical resources

Visit the URC's [Coronavirus resources page](#) on the URC online store for a range of practical resources including signs, banners, badges and floor tape to remind people to stay apart and to wash their hands, or download free church resources from our website.

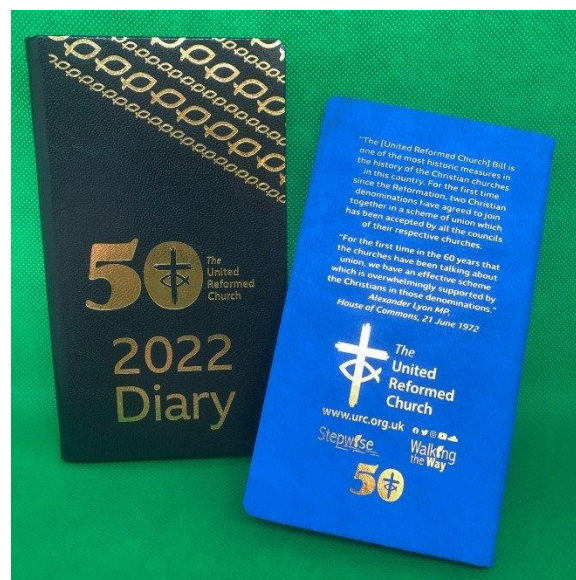
This month in *Reform* magazine



As Extinction Rebellion take to the streets again with the message "Stop the damage", *Reform* talks to one of the founders of XR, Ian Bray, a Quaker. It also reports on how churches and charities are responding to the IPCC Report, which concluded that this is our last chance to avert climate catastrophe. Also in this month's *Reform*, John Ellis casts an incisive eye over how the Church has responded to the pandemic. There are features on end-of-life wishes, young people in church, an award-winning church community project, and unpacking that tricky word 'Holiness'. Get *Reform*, [subscribe here](#).

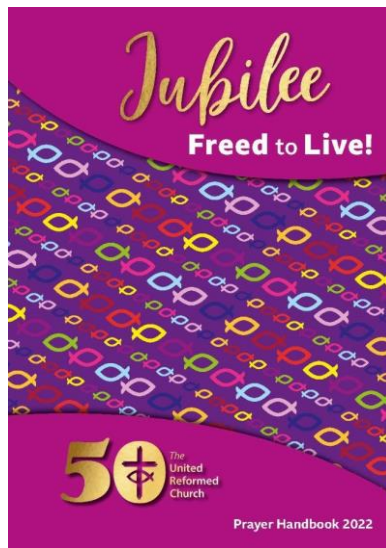


Please order online using the URC Bookshop's new easy-to-use website www.urcshop.co.uk or by calling 020 7916 8629.

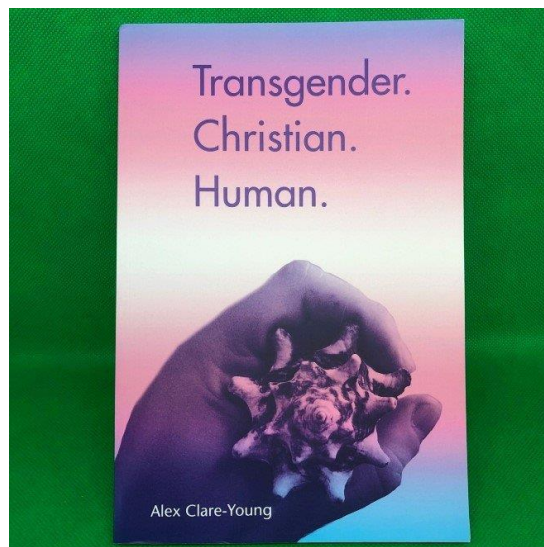


Now available - the 2022 URC Diary, 50th anniversary, limited edition. Now with year planners from 2023-2025 along with the usual notable dates for the URC and the wider Church, Assembly officers, Assembly committee details, useful addresses, Synod information, diary from August 2021 to June 2023, year planner from 2023-2025, world map and UK map. The pocket edition also includes a National Rail and London Tube map.

Available in a black or blue pocket diary or an A5 blue diary. £6.99-£9.99 +p&p. [Purchase here](#).



It is 50 years since the United Reformed Church came into being. Recognising this significant milestone, *Jubilee: Freed to Live!* is the theme for the 2022 URC Prayer Handbook. Available in A5 standard and A4 lectern editions. £5.49-£10.99 +p&p.



URC Minister Alex Clare-Young serves with the North Yorkshire Coast Pastorate and Churspacious, an online group where all are welcome. Alex is an advocate with, and for people, who identify as trans and/or non-binary. Their first book, *Transgender. Christian. Human.* is published by Wild Goose Books and is the story of Alex's life as a transgender child and adult. £7.49 +p&p.

Synod news

Southern



Many thanks to members of **Good Gym** who spent an evening sorting out the flower beds and clearing the weeds from the grounds around Geddes Place URC. Proving that giving back pays forward, the group was treated to a free Nandos by the restaurant in Bexleyheath for their efforts. Carole Jones, an Elder of the church said: "We are right by a busy bus terminus and shopping centre and we are plagued with litter every day. We try to do our best to keep the car park clean which we share with Nandos staff. However, GoodGym Bexley offered their services to deep clean and weed. The result of the work was stunning, and we are so grateful - and what a lovely bunch of people!"

National Synod of Scotland



Oakshaw Trinity Church, in Paisley, has been awarded an Eco-Congregation Scotland Silver Award. The church was commended for the way it communicates environmental messages to its congregation and wider community; holds Springwatch and Autumnwatch events that encourage all of the congregation to participate in caring for the grounds around the church; use of pledge cards to encourage members of the congregation to review their lifestyle and carbon footprint; its strong links with Christian Aid and Tearfund; its Fairtrade shop; and the visits it arranges to Dunkeld and

Dunblane to encourage learning about environmental management to name a few things. [Read more](#).

Northern



The Revd Dave Herbert, Moderator of the URC's Northern Synod has joined church leaders from a wide range of denominations across the region to urge the Chancellor to make the Universal Credit uplift permanent. [Read more](#).

Image: Housing, Community and Local Government [CC by 2.0](#)

Eastern



Congratulations to Emmanuel Church, Bungay for being the second URC congregation to receive an Eco Church gold award, and 21st congregation of any denomination in England and Wales. To gain the award, Emmanuel had to demonstrate efforts to care for creation through their worship and teaching, buildings and land management, community and global engagement and their lifestyle. To find out how to register your church and begin your eco church journey, in England and Wales visit [here](#), and in Scotland [here](#).

Mersey



St John's URC's community garden in Warrington, set up to aid mental health and isolation, reaches its two-year anniversary this month. Spare green area at the church was turned into a community garden in September 2019. Church members had wanted to make use of the green area by providing a space for the community to enjoy and to support mental health. Since the project began, the volunteers have dug a pond, created a 'wildlife' meadow,' planted flowers and vegetables and also created raised beds and planters. Helen Harvey, one of the founders of the garden, said: "It is a place for people to meet and relax. "Quite a few people say that they often stop on the way into town to have a sit in the garden and relax. "It is there for the community for however they want to use it." [Read more.](#)

What's On

Refreshing your ministry



**Group for
Evangelism
And
Renewal**
*within the United
Reformed Church*

GEAR is holding another online afternoon gathering for serving ministers, CRCWs and Local Church Leaders on 9 September from 2-4pm on Zoom. The special guest this time is Paul Woolley, CEO of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC). The URC has been working closely with LICC exploring whole life discipleship under Walking

the Way. The time together is for encouragement, worship and prayer with colleagues, with some time in break out groups. To get the Zoom link, [please email](#) the GEAR Conference Secretary, the Revd Richard Bradley. Paul is one of the speakers at GEAR's in person conference at Swanwick taking place between 23-25 November. Find more information about the conference and book [your place here](#).

Celebrate neurodiversity

People who identify as neurodiverse and who are connected to the URC are invited to attend a free online event on 27 September at 7pm to celebrate neurodiversity, share stories, experiences, hopes and dreams about how the URC might be more inclusive. Book your place [here](#).

Ecumenical scripture

The Society for Ecumenical Studies is holding an ecclesial and ecumenical reading of Scripture on 13 September from 7.30-9pm on Zoom. Speakers will share insights from Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and URC perspectives on the nature and role of Scripture. Tickets cost £5. [Book here](#).

Church at the Edge

The next Church at the Edge session, takes place on 16 September from 2-3pm on Zoom and will be led by the Revd Janet Sutton, Evangelism Coach for Ely Diocese. Janet will explore how 'Ministry on the Edge or Ministry at the Centre?' challenges the concept that the Church is now 'the centre' in any part of our society, and how a new perspective is needed to make mission fruitful. [Join here](#).

Hybrid church

As URC Training, Children and Youth with Education and Learning is offering practical help for 'hybrid church' (where worship in person and online is combined) to help enhance worship for all. Three online sessions will be available: preaching with all ages; leading multi-sensory worship; praying and reading the Bible. The sessions will take place on the following Thursdays: 30 September, 14 October, 21 October from 7.30-8.45pm. Book [your free place here](#).

Social Justice

Free Season of Creation resources



The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) and Eco-Congregation Scotland have co-produced a variety of resources for the Season of Creation. Each year, from 1 September to 4 October churches are encouraged to have a focus on the season – also known as Creationtide or Creation Time – with all the joys and responsibilities that being part of God's creation brings to us. The duo has gathered together writers, theologians, ministers and worship leaders to prepare these resources, which can easily integrate into a Season of Creation in-person, online or hybrid meeting. [Read more](#).

Join nations' climate service

Join JPIT live from Glasgow Cathedral at the Nations' Climate Sunday Service on 5 September. More than 1600 churches in Britain and Ireland who have held a Climate Sunday service will be celebrated. The team will be joining in worship, sharing our commitments and challenging government to take action. Sign up and book your [free ticket here](#).

Stand together with refugees

JPIT is gathering a group of local campaigners who are interested in taking action on the Nationality and Borders Bill, which threatens to change the way that refugees and asylum seekers are treated in the UK. JPIT hopes to hold a webinar on the subject in September. If you'd like to be included, [read more](#).

Recruitment

URC vacancies and beyond

The URC Worship Reference Group has vacancies for two lay people. The group curates existing resources, maintains a regular worship mailing and responds to requests from churches. If you would like to join the group, please email [Nominations Secretary](#) to express your interest.

The URC's Human Resources Advisory Group has a vacancy for one lay person. The group seeks someone with practical HR experience, preferably in the public or private sector rather than consultancy or academia. The group meets twice per year although it does occasionally engage in projects, investigations, or support work for members of the whole team at Church House. Please email the [Nominations Secretary](#) to express your interest.

In July, General Assembly approved a new Ministerial Disciplinary Process and instructed the Nominations Committee to seek members for **two standing panels** to operate from July 2022:

The Disciplinary Investigation Panel is an entirely new panel of up to 18 people with a remit to operate at Assembly level. It needs members of the URC with skills or professional experience in investigating, who are able to devote time to this role and are prepared to travel widely when necessary. A background in the police, fraud investigation, disciplinary investigation across other sectors will be ideal, or a forensic ability to probe and question in the pursuit of truth and to take evidential statements. Members need to represent the diversity of the church and a good geographical spread is desirable; but skills and aptitude for the role are the priority in making these appointments. Regular training will be provided.

The Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel needs members of the URC with a wide range of skills and experience. Experience as a JP or in other judicial or legal capacities, of tribunal work, together with a good understanding of URC process and the

conduct of meetings is especially relevant. A background in counselling and safeguarding fields, or multicultural and diversity issues would be an asset. This is an important but less demanding role (than the DIP). Training will be required. For both the Disciplinary Investigation Panel, and the Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel, please [email the Nominations Secretary](#) to express an interest or to suggest someone else to be approached.

Minister for Digital Worship, full time, home-based, seven-year termed appointment, minister's stipend. The Daily Devotions have become a treasured part of the life of the URC. This new role is designed to ensure that Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Services are fully integrated into the worshipping life of the URC. Find more information and [apply here](#).