

North Western Synod Newsletter

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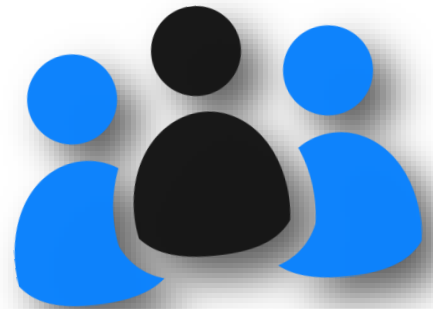


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Thanksgiving service—Blackford Bridge



The final chapter of Blackford Bridge URC's story unfolded on a poignant weekend in January 2025. The church welcomed its congregation one last time for a series of thanksgiving services, creating a space for members to share cherished memories and bid farewell to the beloved building that had been their spiritual home for generations.

Our esteemed moderator, Rev'd Clare Downing, delivered a touching sermon on Saturday. She reminded us of a profound truth: every church, planted with love and purpose in its community, must eventually complete its ministry. While it's deeply moving that this transition falls to our generation, she assured us that this "ending" creates fertile ground for God's new beginnings. Sunday witnessed a more intimate service on Sunday, led by Rev'd Anne Stokes, with a wonderful sharing of communion.

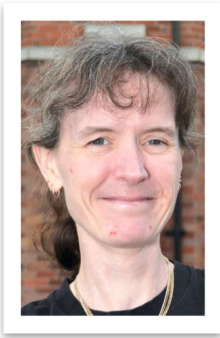


The weekend drew dear friends from across the country. Rev'd Nigel Uden, who once served as a student minister of the former pastorate, graced us with a final, magnificent performance on the church organ. Rev'd Ruth Wollaston shared heartwarming recollections of her ministry, while Peter Cole—representing the last of three generations of Coles who worshipped here—offered touching reflections. Through both formal testimonies and warm conversations that followed, a beautiful theme emerged: the story of a loving God who faithfully accompanies us through life's journey, in both joyful and challenging times.

We extend our deepest respect to the final generation of faithful members who shepherded their beloved church to its close. We give thanks for their unwavering witness in the community, and our prayers go with them as they embark on new paths of worship and discovery. May God continue to guide and bless them in the chapters that lie ahead.

Items looking for a new home: Baptismal font, communion table, piano, various cups and crockery, bookshelf, tables, hymn books. For more details please email Rev'd Daniel Harris on daniel.harris@nwsynod.org.uk

Ruth Watson's Sabbatical Reflection



We were richly blessed on Tuesday, 28 January, with Rev. Ruth Watson's sabbatical presentation, "Where Words Fail" — around twenty people attended, with half in person and the other half on Zoom.

Ruth began by asking us to think about where we were when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, or the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017, or the 2007 London attacks — except for the first incident (a few of us weren't born yet), all of us could remember where we were. The next question stumped the group: "Do you remember the hymn you sang on the following Sunday?" None of us recalled that bit of our faith story.

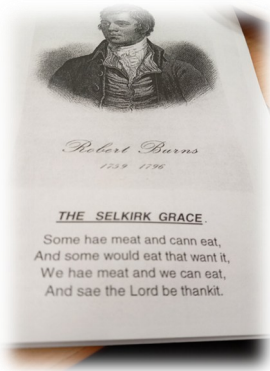
But that wasn't really the point of the question, because in fact many of us had memories of music, lots of music actually, that we associate with these events, including for example Elton John's "Candle in the Wind" (1997) following Princess Diana's death. Where popular music helped a nation and different generations grieve, church music tended towards the familiar and often dated "praise of the privileged" while leaving the more uncomfortable emotions of the human community unnamed and unexpressed.

Ruth pointed to the psalmist as our guidebook for the depth and emotive range of how people of faith might express their questions and their pain — as well as their joy. In addition to thinking through the Book of Psalms, Ruth shared how her sabbatical journey with the so-called authors of "Devil's Music" (Metallica, Ozzy Osborne, among others) can challenge and inspire our singing traditions. Ruth quoted from Martin Luther (or some other worthy, we're not sure who deserves credit): "Why should the devil get all the best tunes?" Ruth challenged us to be bold and ready to embrace the whole of the human experience rather than only the bits that make us happy. Thank you, Ruth!

Would you like to read Ruth's written report? Please email Kerry Later at office@nwsynod.org.uk.



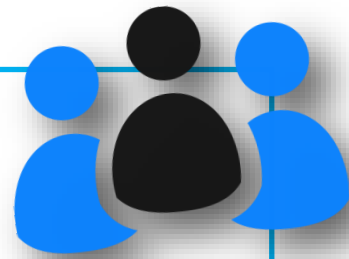
St. George's Carlisle Burns Supper



Slightly later than planned due to the recent storms, members and friends of St. George's URC in Carlisle enjoyed a Burn's Night Supper. This is part of an intentional ministry to offer regular events throughout the year which provide food and friendship. The haggis, neeps and tatties were all cooked to perfection by members Moira and John Wales followed by a choice of puddings and a quiz to test people's local knowledge.



Save the Dates



- Stepwise 2025 - 3rd Feb 2025 - by Zoom - 'Continuing Your Stepwise Journey'
- Conversations at the Crossroads - 8th Feb 2025 at 10am - Luther King House M14 5JP
- Youthscape Essentials - starts 25th Feb 2025 for 10 months at 7pm to 9pm—Online
- Spring Ministers Away Day—1st March 2025—The Storey, 2 Meeting House Lane, Town Centre, Lancaster, LA1 1TH
- Sacrament Training - 5th Mar 2025 10am-2pm - Online
- Youth Assembly 2025 — 7th-9th March 2025—Kings Park Conf Centre, Northants
- URC Youth Leaders Gathering—7th to 9th March 2025—Highgate House, Northants
- Sacrament Training—1st Apr 2025 10am-2pm—Online
- 1T4 at Whitemoor Lakes in Staffordshire—2nd-4th May 2025

CONVERSATIONS AT THE CROSSROADS: WHAT NOW FOR LAY LEADERSHIP IN THE URC?

This event on **8 February at Luther King House, 10 am - 3 pm**, is absolutely key to the work the Mission Mentors will be doing during 2025. It plugs into the URC-wide initiative of the same name that comprises the next stage of the Church Life Review. Rolling this out as the 2025 Elders' Enrichment programme and including all the lay leadership (worship leaders and lay preachers) puts the North Western Synod firmly ahead of the pack!

We're very excited about it because it is going to be a stimulating, enjoyable day - enriching, as it says on the tin. Lunch will be provided, so there IS. such a thing as a free lunch! However, it's not going to be as good as it could if you're not there!

We've 60 places, 24 of which are filled so far. Please take the 7:30 minutes it will take you to watch the video we've put together, telling you everything that you'll be letting yourself into, and seriously and prayerfully consider booking with Kerry (office@nwsynod.org.uk) by **Monday 3 February**, But don't take too long about it - - the places will go quickly!

Lawrence



Safeguarding Training

Safeguarding is
Everyone's
Responsibility

Foundation Safeguarding e-Learning

Any person with a role in a URC church that has not completed URC Safeguarding Training in the last 3 years is required to complete the **Foundation** e-learning module as a minimum, ideally individually. However it can be facilitated in small groups if people do not have access to the internet, a computer / device or both.



You must have completed **Foundation** Training before you can complete **Intermediate** Training.

Follow this link for the **Foundation** e-learning module: [Foundation Safeguarding Training](#)

Online Intermediate Training

6pm - 8pm - Tuesday 11th February 2025

12.30pm - 2.30pm - Wednesday 19th March 2025

To book please contact Joanne Hever at helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk. If any churches would be interested in hosting a training session please get in touch.

Advanced Safeguarding Training

New dates for online training sessions to be confirmed for 2025.

Advanced Safeguarding Training is : **Mandatory** for people who are leading groups involving adults and/or children in churches. **Recommended** for Church Safeguarding Coordinators and all other people in leadership roles. In addition, anyone who has completed the **Intermediate** Safeguarding Training is very welcome to attend.

Safeguarding Returns:

Please can we remind you that the deadline for the Safeguarding Return is **11.59pm on Friday 28th February**. If you need any assistance with completion, please contact Joanne Hever. Thank you in advance for your help.

Please click [here](#) for Church House **ADDITIONAL** training for anyone who is interested in **Verifier and Safer Recruitment Training**.

Safeguarding Contacts:

Yvette Hansbury-Robinson —Synod Safeguarding Officer— safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk

General Safeguarding Queries — relating to safeguarding training and/or DBS, please email the Safeguarding Team on helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk

DDC Verifier and Safer Recruitment Training 2025

Please contact Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk to book a place



Please email
Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk
to book

DDC Verifier and Safer Recruitment Training 2025

Feb 6th 10.30am

May 8th 7pm

September 10th 1pm

November 20th 7pm

This two-hour training will be provided on Zoom by Matt Tuckey from DDC and Carrie Kaunda from the URC central safeguarding team. The training goes through the DDC system and will give you all the information needed for submitting DBS checks in your church as well as vital information for recruiting both paid staff and volunteers.

If you are a verifier in your church or have any role in recruitment you need to attend this training.

Please note all Church Safeguarding Coordinators are now verifiers.



www.urc.org.uk



Sacrament Training Dates

Note: These training sessions will now be held online.

To book a place please contact Kerry office@nwsynod.org.uk



SACRAMENT TRAINING DATES

Sacrament training (Baptism & Communion) 5th March 2025 10am - 2pm ONLINE MEETING

Sacrament training (Baptism & Communion) 1st April 10am - 2pm ONLINE MEETING

TRAINING WITH
REVD ROB HOCH-YIDOKODILTONA

PLEASE CONTACT KERRY TO BOOK OFFICE@NWSYNOD.ORG.UK

Minister's Away Day—1st March 2025

Please contact Claire Macintyre at deputyclerk@nwsynod.org.uk to book your place

MINISTERS AWAY DAY

1st March 2025

10AM TO 3:30PM

THE STOREY

MEETING HOUSE LANE, LANCASTER, LA1 1TH

The day will include Autism Awareness Training with Claire Williams; Lecturer in Practical Theology at Regents Theological College, as well as a visit to Lancaster Castle

To book your place please email Claire Macintyre at deputyclerk@nwsynod.org.uk

What is on Offer with Stepwise in 2025

Contact liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk for more information and the Zoom link

Why not enrich your faith with Stepwise in 2025



- **Monday 3rd February: Continuing your stepwise journey:** For those who have already done a stepwise course. A chance to catch up with other participants, find out about the different Stepwise streams and explore your next steps.
- **Zoom Meeting ID 882 4530 2761**
- **Passcode 126866**

Contact liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk for more information and the zoom link. If you want to do a `Stepwise course but can't make the session please get in touch.

Stepwise
The logo for Stepwise, with the word "Stepwise" in a purple serif font. A purple footprint icon is integrated into the letter 'i' in "wise". Below the text are three wavy lines representing a path or ground.

The logo for The North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church. It features a black cross with a blue 'X' shape inside it. To the right of the cross, the text "The North Western Synod" is in blue, and "of the United Reformed Church" is in black.

The North Western Synod
of the **United Reformed Church**

Theology Reading Group

If you're thirsty for some deep reading in small portions with a supportive community, consider joining the new Theology Reading Group which will be meeting on the second Tuesday of every month, beginning on **Tuesday, 8th October, from 12pm to 1:30pm** by Zoom.

Zoom Meeting: Theology Reading Group

Every month on the Second Tues, until 8th April 2025

- Feb 11, 2025 12:00 PM
- Mar 11, 2025 12:00 PM
- Apr 8, 2025 12:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87627415144?
pwd=fqqIZa8wq7urkRYSgPFIIxRAZhbRxJ.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87627415144?pwd=fqqIZa8wq7urkRYSgPFIIxRAZhbRxJ.1)

Meeting ID: 876 2741 5144

Passcode: 476014

To start we will be reading, during the session itself (no advance reading required) from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* which can be purchased from Amazon [here](#) for around £27 in paperback or £24 as Kindle. *Please do get this translation, as we will engage in group reading before sharing our responses, questions, and take-aways from each session.*

This is for anyone who wants to take seriously the reality of Christ and Christ's reconciling work in our world.

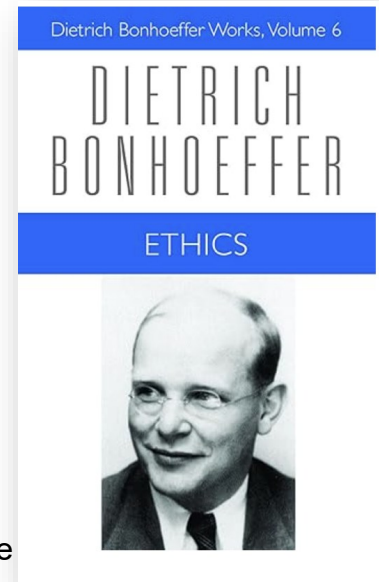
We will read aloud as a group and then, share our reactions (as we are willing) to the reading in about 3 minutes or so each, before opening to more general conversation.

Interested?

Please confirm your planned attendance by emailing me, Rob Hoch-Yidokodilona at learningmentor@nwsynod.org.uk

"Christ did not, like an ethicist, love a theory about the good; he loved real people. Christ was not interested, like a philosopher, in what is "generally valid," but in that which serves real concrete human beings. Christ was not concerned about whether "the maxim of an action" could become "a principle of universal law," but whether my action now helps my neighbor to be a human being before God. God did not become an idea, a principle, a program, a universally valid belief, or a law;[102.] God became human."

— **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**



100th Anniversary Celebration at Revidge Fold URC

Please RSVP to Maurice & Elizabeth Bradley by 1st February.

Tel: 01254 665 541 or Email: mjembradley@gmail.com



On Saturday
22nd February
there will be an
exhibition from
10:00-3:00pm
with
refreshments
about the history
and witness of
the church

100TH

Anniversary Celebration

for the final service at

Revidge Fold United Reformed Church

Sunday 23rd February 2025

at 2:30pm - Refreshments after the service

Shear Brow,
Blackburn, BB1 8DS

RSVP: - MAURICE & ELIZABETH BRADLEY

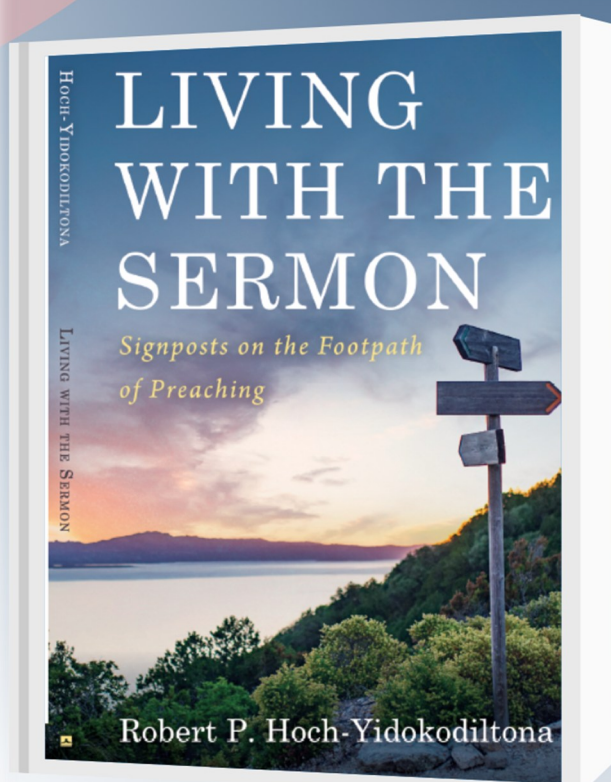
tel 01254 665541 or email:
mjembradley@gmail.com

BY 1/2/2025

Living with the Sermon—Book Launch

BOOK LAUNCH

Please join Rob Hoch-Yidokodiltona and the LKC community on Tuesday the 25th February as we explore together the footpath of preaching. We will gather in the chapel at 7pm and the programme will start at 7:30pm



In Rob's newly published Living with the Sermon, we will find a friendly companion to the preaching life.

There is, according to Rob a "wink and peek" to the preaching life, some playful mischief, some mystery--and yet, in a practical spirit, down-to-earth signposts to help along the way.

"A book with real heart, bringing the reader on an intellectual and spiritual journey towards becoming a more skillful and thoughtful preacher"

Adam J. Scott, Principal,
Northern College, Manchester

Rob is associate tutor for Northern College's lay preacher programme and training and learning mentor for North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom.



Odd Arts: Here and Now Radicalisation

To book a place please contact Kerry at Office@nwsynod.org.uk by 13th March, also letting us know of any dietary requirements. Please click the [link](#) here for more information.



A W A Y D A Y W I T H

Odd Arts: Here and Now Radicalisation

Invitation open to Ministers and Lay Leaders



**Venue: The Village Hotel, Captain Clarke Road Hyde
Cheshire SK14 4QG**

When: Thursday, 20 March 2025.

Start time: 10 a.m with Odd Arts programme to begin at 10:30am.

Lunch will be served and this will be followed with a debriefing session
(led by Revd Dr Rob Hoch-Yidokodiltona)

finish time: 2 pm.

Limited places (26) first come, first served.

To book a place please contact Kerry Office@nwsynod.org.uk by 13h March also letting us know of any dietary requirements.

Odd Arts: Here and Now Radaclalisation

Chorley URC - Ladies Pop-up Shop + Fun Fashion Show

For tickets and more information please contact Pat - 07989 876 623 - www.chorleyurc.com



Ladies Pop-up Shop & Fun Fashion Show!

**SHOP YOUR FAVOURITE HIGH STREET BRANDS
AT UP TO 70% OFF!**

Colours.
[FUN]DRAISING
FASHION SHOWS



Friday 21st March 2025
Chorley United Reformed Church
In aid of The Hollinshead Centre

Chorley United Reformed Church, Hollinshead Street, Chorley, PR7 1EP

Doors open 6.30pm, show starts 7pm

Tickets: £5

Tickets to be purchased in advance

Refreshments available

Raffle: FABULOUS prizes to be won at the show!

For tickets and more information please contact:

Pat - 07989876623 - www.chorleyurc.com



Providence Talks

Mellor Road, New Mills, SK22 4DP

Wednesday February 12

CATHERINE BARTON

**Refreshing Borneo;
Palm Oil, People and Policy**

**The creator of Chester Zoo's
Sustainable Palm Oil Communities
Project comes to Providence to talk
about her work in calling for changes
that will ensure more responsible,
deforestation-free supply chains.**

*Talks start at 7.30 and are followed by a chance
to meet the speaker over light refreshments*

FREE ADMISSION

www.providencechurch.co.uk

Providence Talks

Mellor Road, New Mills, SK22 4DP

Wednesday March 12

LEV EAKINS

**The Gospel of Mark:
Earlier than we thought**

**Lev Eakins argues that
the gospel of Mark should be
dated closer to the 40s than the 70s AD.
If true, this has some exciting
implications!**

*Talks start at 7.30 and are followed by a chance
to meet the speaker over light refreshments*

FREE ADMISSION

www.providencechurch.co.uk

Youthscape Essentials

Running 10 monthly online sessions from Tues 25th Feb to Mon 24th Nov 2025, 7pm to 9pm

For further information please contact cydo@urcmerseysynod.org.uk or click [here](#).

To book your place click [here](#) and enter the course code **1245085**

You are invited to Youthscape Essentials, all round training for every volunteer youth leader.



We are going to learn and pray in a community with a shared heart and hope for young people and for God.

Each of the 10 sessions includes:

1 insight into youth culture to explore

1 practical skill to try out together

1 area of Christian character to reflect on

We always start with the voice of a young person through a special recorded video, and we close by being sent out in hopeful prayer.

Whether you have been involved in youth ministry for years or you are thinking of getting involved, Youthscape Essentials is the place for you.

Running online, monthly, from Tuesday 25th February to Monday 24th November 7pm to 9pm.
For a list of dates please contact cydo@urcmerseysynod.org.uk.
To book go to <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/yse/register> or use the QR code and enter course code **1245085**.



Youthscape Essentials is an innovative course for volunteers and paid youth leaders that increases your skills and understanding about working alongside young people today. Whether you're running a community project, a church youth group, or occasionally helping out on a Sunday morning, the course is designed with you in mind! It's not about the numbers of young people attending, it's about putting God at the centre of your youth ministry.

It's 10 sessions covering 30 topics. The topics are divided into Insights into Young People, Skills for Youth Work and Developing Character. You'll listen to young people, learn from professionals, participate in practical exercises and take time to deepen your own faith. It makes no assumptions about your experience, age or background. It's accessible to those starting out as volunteers, but deep enough to stretch those who have been working alongside young people for longer.

Join with participants from the 5 northerly synods as we reflect and learn together through 2025. Each session is standalone, but we would like you to join in with as many sessions as you can. For more information on the course, click [here](#) and to book your place click [here](#) and enter the course code **1245085**.

Youth Assembly 2025

Book your place at www.linktr.ee/URCYouthAssembly

There is still time for young people at your church to book their place at Youth Assembly.

This year both the dates and the venue have changed. We are now meeting at Kings Park Conference Centre in Northampton (a coach will be arranged from Northampton train station to the venue) and we are meeting 7-9 March 2025.

The synod will pay the conference cost for any young people who may wish to come along and join other young people (year 10 and above) from all across the denomination.

Of course, they won't come if they don't know about it – so please share the information with them, and encourage them to book. Further details, and online bookings can be found at <https://linktr.ee/URCYouthAssembly>



URC
YOUTH ASSEMBLY
2025

All are
welcome
Arrive as strangers, leave as friends

7-9 March 2025
New venue with twin rooms and menu choices
Kings Park Conference Centre, Northampton, NN3 6LL

**A fun weekend to have your say, make friends
and find fellowship**

Worship - Bible study, music, prayer spaces,
late night communion

Youth Decides - discussion on issues that matter to us -
leading to action and engaging the wider church

Workshops - grow your skills and thinking
while exploring the theme

Entertainment - campfire, karaoke, sports, games and more

£120 early bird until 1 December / **£150** from 2 December
until 2 February 2025

Please talk to your church and synod about help with funding.
Open to Year 10 / S3 students up to 25 years inclusive.

Book you place today:
<https://linktr.ee/URCYouthAssembly> or contact children.youth@urc.org.uk

Here's a taste of Youth Assembly 2024
Just scan the QR code, or visit:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1npXCWKIO0

For all young people with a connection to the United Reformed Church including:



URC Youth Leaders' Gathering: 7-9th March 2025

THE CONFERENCE

URC YOUTH LEADERS

£150PP
ALL
MEALS
INC.

Gathering for a time of learning together, supporting one another and sharing ideas.

07 - 09 MARCH 2025

HIGHGATE HOUSE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
ARRIVALS FOR SUPPER AT 7PM



KEYNOTE:
**ALI
CAMPBELL**



to book follow the link: linktr.ee/urcyouthleadersgathering

URC YOUTH LEADERS' GATHERING 2025: Gathering for a time of learning together, supporting one another and sharing ideas. Taking place from **7th to 9th March 2025** at Highgate House, Northamptonshire, this is an opportunity for Youth Leaders to gather together during the Youth Assembly weekend at an all-inclusive cost of £150.

The Synod Children's and Youth Work Committee will pay the conference cost for any youth leader from NW who wishes to attend.

For more information and to book a place, visit www.linktr.ee/urcyouthleadersgathering

Holiday Club Material 2025: The Clubhouse

The next Holiday Club from the URC Children's and Youth Work team will be released by the end of January 2025 on www.bit.ly/URC-holidayclub

Based on the 'All Are Welcome' theme, it will explore five New Testament stories through song and story, craft and discussion, eating, praying and playing together.

As always, it will include appendices to help you adapt the materials for under fives, 11 to 14s, vintage holiday clubs or for an intergenerational event.

Grants for holiday clubs available: www.urchurch.org.uk/grants-funding-opportunities

Grandparents' Toolkit

GrandFaith

Being a grandparent can be a joyful chapter of life. Sharing your faith with your grandchildren can be a part of this, but it can be challenging.

Join us on this four week course. We offer you tools and skills to equip you to share your faith with your grandchildren.

This **free** course runs for four weeks -

- Wednesday, 26th February 7pm - 9pm
- Wednesday, 5th March 7pm - 9pm
- Wednesday, 12th March 7pm - 9pm
- Wednesday, 19th March 7pm - 9pm

Use the QR code or the web link to book:

<https://shorturl.at/nkiQQ>



Are you a Grandparent? Are you interested in exploring how you might support your grandchildren in their own faith development?

If so, this 4 session exploration of the topic will be right up your street!

Book your place at <https://shorturl.at/nkiQQ>

Everyone is welcome - feel free to share with colleagues, friends, and grandparents you know



For Your Prayers

In each newsletter we would like to share people's situations and Churches who you might remember in your prayers. If you have any prayer requests to include in this section, please send them to office@nwsynod.org.uk

This week we invite you to pray for:

- The continued growth of church mission
- For the Churches who are facing difficult decisions about the future of their fellowships and buildings

Livestream details for the Revd Jack McKelvey's Service of Thanksgiving:

Cornerstone United Reformed Church is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Revd Dr Jack McKelvey

Time: Feb 10, 2025 12:00 London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86915273300?pwd=wEMbhWAYyT0st9Lf7pWenCnmMOI2E7.1>

Meeting ID: 869 1527 3300

Passcode: 431017

