

North Western Synod Magazine



Good News Stories
across our synod

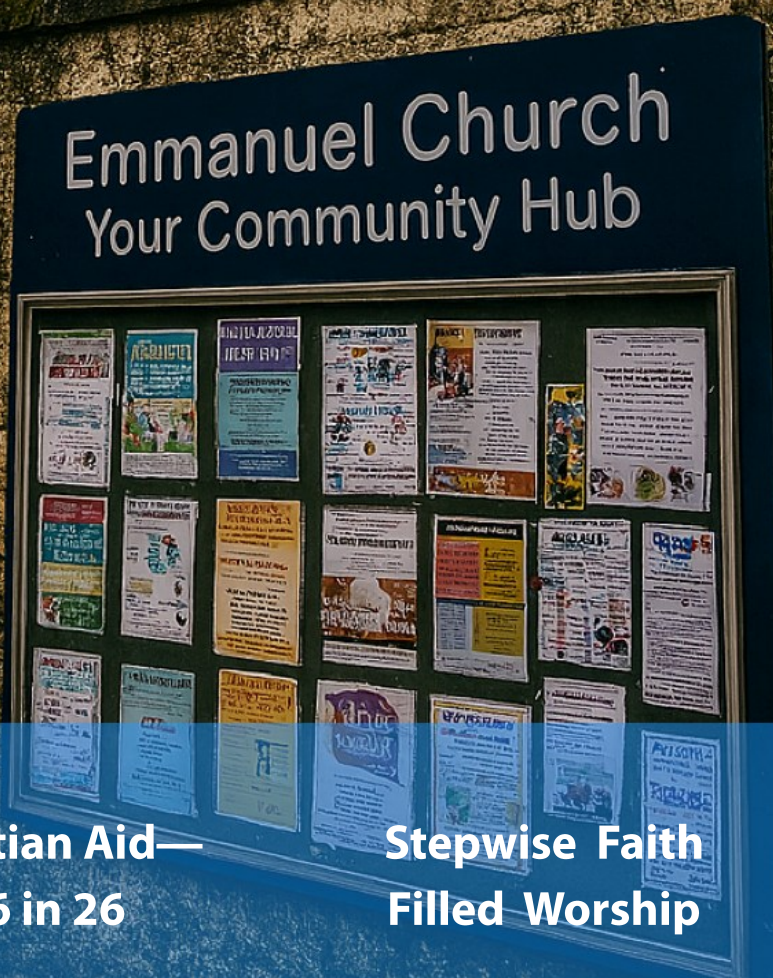
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in your area

Children and Youth
news and events

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events for your diary

Synod and URC
news and updates

for our
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Retreat**

**Christian Aid—
26 in 26**

**Stepwise Faith
Filled Worship**

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Penwortham URC - A New Program of Community Events led by our Family Worker



Over the last 10 months Penwortham URC has seen a significant increase in community involvement and participation with their new community events organised and led by their Family Worker - Katie Drew, with lots of help from the Elders, congregation and volunteers.

We have started a new musical themed baby and toddler group. At 'Tiger Tots Music Club' we sing nursery rhymes, popular songs and hymns. Children are taught and encouraged to play simple rhythms and sing along. Adults are also encouraged to sing along too. With over 54 people attending the first session we have seen there is a demand for a welcoming, community driven group where we put kindness first. We have created a great community atmosphere for young families and their carers.

Messy Church has also grown in numbers since the relaunch began in April 2025. We had over 80 people attend our Messy Church in September. It was amazing to see the church full during worship and song. We have also seen that people who have attended Tiger Tots have then attended Messy Church and want to join in at other events at our church.



We have lots of exciting events planned over the Christmas period including a Christmas Wreath making workshop, a Christmas Fair and coffee morning, a Christingle Service and a Carol Service featuring a performance from our new Community Choir - run by our Family worker.

The Community Choir started in February and was one of the first activities organised by our Family Worker. We have seen the numbers increase to now over 23 members with an age range of 27 - 82. Our choir is free of charge and we make sure to provide refreshments. The aim of our choir is to focus on the health benefits of singing. Community group singing is proven to reduce loneliness and foster and encourage friendships - already we have testimonies from our members who have felt less alone since joining our group and have also now started attending other events at our church.



News from Hallfold URC

Hallfold URC marked Safeguarding Sunday by encouraging its younger members to think about the ways we keep safe, especially items we might wear to protect us.

It turns out that bubble wrap is not a popular choice of apparel. Although the items available were fun to try on, the children thought that making sure they were always protected might be uncomfortable. The lesson the adults took from this was that safeguarding is essential even though it might make us uncomfortable at times.



The more mature members then listened to a sermon on 'the woman at the well' focusing on how we as a church can empower women following Jesus' example. This included a talk about the United Nations 'Orange the World' campaign to eradicate violence towards women and girls, including some of the alarming statistics the UN has gathered on the numbers of women and girls intentionally killed each year.

UN Women is encouraging people to take part in 16 days of activism from 25th November – 10th December and has lots of information on the UN Women and UN Women UK websites.

Click [here](#) to read more.



Bullseye for Revd Jim Williams and Henry



Revd Jim Williams (Lancashire West Missional Partnership Minister) and his son Henry fulfilled a lifelong ambition to appear in the famous (or at least well-known) classic quiz show *Bullseye*. Though filled with laughter, darts, and light-hearted prizes, the show quietly carried lessons that speak to the deeper journey of life. Revd Jim and Henry won £2,000 for Street Life Charity in Blackpool, a youth work charity providing emergency shelter to vulnerable and homeless young people aged 16-25 in Blackpool and surrounding areas. Revd Jim and Henry used the opportunity to tell his story of his calling, from “bomb-builder” to becoming a vicar.

Revd Jim reflected in his Christmas letter on the Theology of Bullseye and explored its gentle wisdom

and see what this strange pulpit teaches about purpose, choices, and grace.

1. Step Up and Take Your Throw

In *Bullseye*, contestants stand before the dartboard with a simple invitation: *aim and throw*. Life offers us the same invitation. Each day we are handed a “dart”—our choices, our intentions, our talents—and asked to step forward boldly. We do not always hit the centre. Sometimes our aim wavers. Sometimes we miss altogether. But the show reminds us that true courage is simply in showing up and trying. We are not judged for perfection but for participation. Growth begins when we dare to take the throw.

2. “Look at What You Could’ve Won”: Lessons of Reflection

One of the most memorable lines in *Bullseye* came when a contestant failed to win the star prize: “*look at what you could’ve won!*” Often this was said gently, always humorously, but it carries a deeper message. All of us have moments when life shows us opportunities we missed—dreams we didn’t pursue, chances we let slip, kindness we failed to offer. The point is not to shame ourselves, but to learn. Regret can be a teacher. It invites us to aim more truly the next time. The phrase becomes not a rebuke but a call to intentional living.

3. Gratitude for the Everyday Prizes

Bullseye was famous for its humble prizes - tea sets, vacuum cleaners, decanters - gifts that seemed ordinary but useful. In a world obsessed with extraordinary achievements, these simple prizes remind us that real joy is often found in the everyday blessings: friendship, health, a warm home, meaningful work, shared laughter. Spiritual maturity is the ability to say, “This is enough. I am grateful.” When we learn to appreciate small gifts, we discover that life is rich beyond measure.

4. The Star Prize Gamble: Faith and Discernment

At the end of the show, contestants could risk everything they'd won for the hope of a greater reward. This "star prize gamble" is a picture of life's crossroads. Sometimes we are called to take courageous risks—to leave comfort behind in pursuit of purpose or calling. Other times, wisdom says, "Hold on to what you have." Faith is not reckless; it is discerning. The gamble teaches us to listen carefully to what truly matters and make choices with both courage and peace.

5. A Final Word: Joy Is Sacred

Freddie Flintoff's humour, Bully's cheerful presence, and the spirit of fun gives the show its heart. And so it teaches us one final truth: joy is not trivial. Joy sustains us. Joy heals. In the seriousness of our daily responsibilities, we must not forget to laugh, to play, to delight. May we step up with courage, aim with purpose, learn from our misses, give thanks for our blessings, and never lose our sense of joy. For truly, **you can't beat a bit of Bully.**

The game can be found on ITVX. Originally aired 16/11/25 8pm.

Good News from DARE (Darwen Asylum seeker Refugee Enterprise)

Welcome to our New Operations Manager



We are delighted to introduce Gemma Garcete, who joined DARE as our new Operations Manager on 1st October 2025. Gemma brings a wealth of experience perfectly suited to our diverse community, with a background in teaching ESOL, managing a foodbank and being a youth and family worker in a number of churches. Her passion for connecting across cultures is evident in her love of languages - she speaks three or four fluently - and her rich life experience of living in four different countries. Her combination of practical

management skills, cross-cultural understanding and genuine compassion makes her an ideal fit for DARE's mission. We're thrilled to have her on board and look forward to the fresh perspective and energy she brings to our community.

Building Trust, Breaking Fear: PCOs and the Teddy Bear's Picnic

Taking advantage of the half term break, the DARE Community based at Central United Reform Church in Darwen hosted a special Teddy Bear's COP Picnic on Wednesday, 29th October. This event served two wonderful purposes: it provided a great half term activity for local families and was held in place of our regular parent drop-in, specifically to welcome the children whose parents usually attend while they are at school.



The picnic's most important mission was to promote a welcoming face of the police force and break down any fears of interaction with the police and uniformed services. This goal was especially vital for the families and children supported by the Darwen Asylum Refugee Enterprise (DARE). The presence of our Police Community Officers (PCOs) was key; the event offered a joyful, safe, and non-threatening environment for officers to mingle with children and families. This casual setting successfully helped to humanise the police force, fostering positive relationships and establishing a foundation of trust in the neighbourhood.

As we watched barriers dissolve between uniforms and families, we were reminded that "perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). This simple picnic became a living example of Christ's call to hospitality and trust-building, demonstrating how small acts of welcome can transform perceptions and create lasting bonds within our community.

A Feast of Fun and Fellowship



The atmosphere was electric with fun activities. The children loved the lively round of 'Pass the Parcel' and the engaging teddy bear hunt around the church. A particular highlight was the opportunity for children to try on police uniforms and sit in the police patrol vehicle, bringing squeals of delight as they imagined themselves as officers for the day.

Attendees enjoyed an abundance of food, including pasta, cakes, sweet treats, and even a fun popcorn machine. This plentiful spread was a gift from our generous community. DARE, which hosted the event and is founded on principles of Hope, Peace, Inclusion, Safety, Love, Kindness and Respect, meant that everyone felt truly welcome at the event.

The Heart of the Event: Volunteers and Generosity

The overwhelming success of the Teddy Bear's Picnic was a testament to the incredible generosity and tireless dedication of our volunteers and local donors.

- **Teddy Bear Donations:** The day was made extra special by the generous donations of teddy bears from the local community. We were particularly touched by the story of a local teenager who delivered her treasured collection of teddies, all freshly washed and ready to be given a new home with the children taking part.
- **Volunteers and Food:** The kind donations of food and supplies provided a wonderful feast, while our event volunteers worked incredibly hard—setting up, running the games, serving food, and ensuring every child had a fun, memorable, and safe experience.
- **URC Mission Enablers Fund:** Providing funds for casework and craft resources.

This event was a powerful illustration of Christian fellowship and our commitment to building a more inclusive and trusting community. A huge thank you to every volunteer and donor for helping us create such a memorable and positive day.



News from Bury Churches

Churches across Bury have come together with The Salvation Army to launch the 2025 Toy Appeal, a community initiative designed to support families who are struggling to afford the basics of life.

The Rock shopping centre in Bury has partnered with the initiative, generously providing a central donation point for members of the public to drop off new, unwrapped toys. Additional collection points have been set up at Asda Pilsworth, as well as in several local businesses and churches across the area.

Pictured are Captain Cor van der Woude of The Salvation Army and Daniel Harris, minister with the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership and co-chair of Bury Churches Together.

Donated toys will be distributed to families through NHS health professionals, schools, and other local agencies. Reflecting on the impact of the appeal, one health professional expressed gratitude, saying: "Thank you so much for this — it is fantastic news for the families of Bury."

Rev'd Daniel Harris commented: "It's deeply concerning to see families struggling for the basics in life. By working together, churches, businesses, and community partners across Bury are making sure that children in need are remembered and supported this Christmas."

The 2025 Toy Appeal runs until 12 December 2025, and organisers are encouraging residents to give generously to help bring joy to children across the borough.

Rev'd Daniel Harris is a minister with the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership and co-chair of Churches Together in Bury.



News from Through the Roof



Christian disability charity, Through the Roof, recently registered the 1,000th Roofbreaker, and are inviting all churches and Christians to join this growing initiative. The celebrations coincide with the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December 2025.

Supported by 3 years of funding from Benefact Trust, Through the Roof provides resources, training and support to volunteer disability champions – or Roofbreakers (named after the Bible account in Luke 5) – to journey alongside disabled people in UK churches.



The 1,000th Roofbreaker was Clive at the FIEC Leaders Conference in Blackpool. Clive has a wonderful daughter, Chloe, who is a wheelchair-user with a learning disability. Chloe has taught Clive many things – including that we're ALL made in God's image!

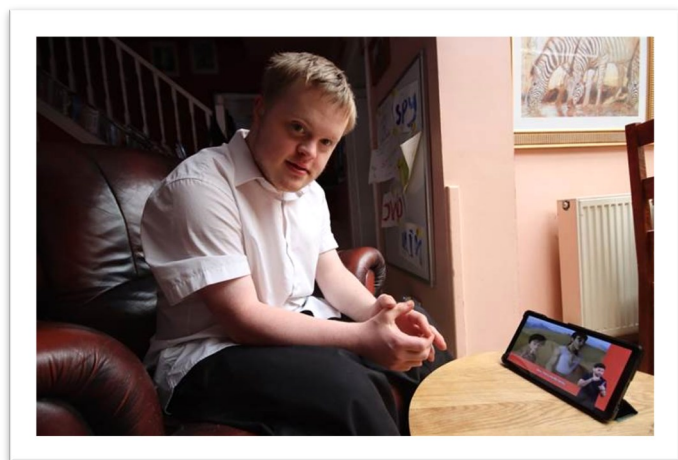
Join us and show you are positive about disability inclusion: become a Roofbreaker [here](#).

Read more [here](#).

Luke 5 Award from Oscar who can access the Bible by himself!

19-year-old Oscar has Down Syndrome and is Deaf; he is also a follower of Jesus.

Oscar loves the stories of the Bible, but because he can't hear and is unable to read due to his learning disability, he had never been able to access the Bible by himself. Now everything has changed... Oscar's favourite Bible animation series, Superbook, has been made available with British Sign Language translation!



To celebrate this, Oscar and his mum nominated CBN, makers of Superbook, for a Luke 5 Award for Disability Inclusion. CBN were so thrilled, that they made **this fantastic video with Oscar and his Mum!**

Read more of Oscar's story online [here](#).

Welcome deaf people to church: see Through the Roof's [Deaf Awareness Video](#).

'Le Valli Valdesi' - The Waldensian Calendar for 2026

The Waldensian Church is the Protestant Church in Italy and a long-standing partner of the United Reformed Church. The church produces an annual calendar, for 2026 it includes photographs of the Waldensian Valleys by Alessandro Colucci, a message from the Moderator of the Waldensian board, and descriptions of twelve historic churches of the Valleys.

With the calendar will be the directory of the Waldensian and other churches in the Federation of the Protestant churches.

£18.00 each (including postage and packing)

Special deals: £32 (incl. p&p) for two or £46 (incl. p&p) for three posted to the same address; £14.50 each if you can collect it in Chorlton, Manchester

Please send your order with a cheque, payable to the URC Waldensian Fellowship, to:

George Morton, 4 St. Annes Road, Manchester M21 8TD

Alternatively, send the order by email to g.morton50@ntlworld.com and the payment to the Fellowship bank account (United Reformed Church Waldensian Fellowship, sort code 20-01-96; account no. 60088390).

Encourage interest in the Waldensians by sending one or two to your friends!

We can send a calendar as your gift - send us the address/addresses with your order.

Please supply _____ 'Le Valli Valdesi' calendars for 2026

Name

Address

.....

.....

..... **Postcode:**

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ *(delete if paying directly to the bank account)*

Sacrament Training

Please contact Kerry to book your place at office@nwsynod.org.uk



SACRAMENT TRAINING ONLINE DATES 2025-2026

Baptism - 20 January 12pm to 1.30pm

Funerals - 17 February 12pm to 1.30pm

Weddings - 24 March 12pm to 1.30pm

TRAINING WITH
REVD ROB HOCH-YIDOKODILTONA

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



Safeguarding Training



Please click [here](#) for the amended URC Levels of Mandatory Safeguarding Training Matrix (England).

Safeguarding Foundation E-Learning Course

Please click on the following link to access the module: [Safeguarding Foundation Course](#)

Introduction to Safeguarding E-Learning Course

Designed for those who are asked to do Foundation Level training **but who already come with a background in safeguarding and have completed training within a professional organisation in the previous three years**. This course does not look at the signs and symptoms of abuse - if you need information on this you will need to complete Foundation level training (see above). Please click on the link to access this online course:

[An Introduction to Safeguarding in the URC](#)

Online + Face-to-Face Safeguarding Training

The following courses are delivered by your Synod Safeguarding Officer, Yvette, either online or at face-to-face venues. Please book your place by emailing Joanne at helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk providing your full name, your church, your role and your preferred course (level, date and time).

Combined Foundation + Intermediate Safeguarding Training

Combines both Foundation and Intermediate modules **instead of** completing the E-Learning Foundation course **and** the Intermediate course.

The next training sessions are:

Wednesday 21st January 2026 - 1.00pm to 3.30pm - Face-to-Face Combined – Blacon URC
121 Saughall Road, Blacon, Chester, CH1 5ET

Monday 26th January 2026 - 2.00pm - 4.30pm - Face-to-Face Combined - St George's Maghull
Northway, Maghull, Liverpool, L31 7BG

Thursday 12th February 2026 - 6.00pm to 8.30pm - Face-to-Face Combined – Thomas Risley URC
Glover Road, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7PH

Tuesday 17th February 2026 - 6.00pm to 8.30pm - Face-to-Face Combined – Christ Church Haydock URC
West End Road, Haydock, WA11 0AX

Monday 2nd March 2026 – 6.00pm to 8.30pm – Online

Monday 16th March 2026 – 1.00pm to 3.30pm – Online



Advanced Safeguarding Training

Advanced Safeguarding training is delivered online over 2 x 2 hour sessions.

The next training sessions are:

Online Advanced - Wed 25th Feb 2026 - 6pm-9.15pm
Combining Modules 1 + 2

Online Advanced - Mon 13th April 2026 - 6pm-8pm - Module 1

Online Advanced - Mon 20th April 2026 - 6pm-8pm - Module 2

Church House Additional Training

Church House **ADDITIONAL** training dates for 2026 can be found [here](#).

You can book by emailing Joanne at helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk stating your name, church, role and course preference.

URC Learning Hub

For more information about the courses and resources available on the URC Learning Hub please click [here](#).

Newsletter from the URC Safeguarding Team

The quarterly Newsletters from the URC Safeguarding Team contain useful information and updates on all things Safeguarding. To access the latest editions please click [here](#)

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

“Safeguarding is a whole church responsibility”

Church House Additional Safeguarding Training

Please book by emailing helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk stating your name, church, role and course preference.



Foundation Training can be accessed on the Learning Hub
[Home | URC Learning Hub](https://www.urc.org.uk/home/urc-learning-hub)

UK Wide Safeguarding Training 2026

Make your booking by emailing: Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk

All training listed below will take place via Zoom

First date	Event
Tuesday 13 January 7:00pm	Domestic abuse
Monday 26 January 7:00pm	Safeguarding for Pastoral Workers and Elders supporting survivors
Thursday 5 February 1:00pm	Refugees and Asylum Seekers Including Modern slavery
Tuesday 24 February 7:00pm	Elders as Trustees
Thursday 5 March 1:00pm	DDC Verifiers training and safer recruitment
Monday 23 March 1:00pm	Substance abuse
Tuesday 21 April 1:00pm	Online Safety
Wednesday 13 May 1:00pm	Safeguarding for Ministers supporting survivors
Tuesday 19 May 6:30pm	Spiritual abuse
Thursday 28 May 1:00pm	Adult safeguarding



The United Reformed Church
Safeguarding

www.urc.org.uk



From the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Committee

Christmas at the Margins - An Advent Bible Study Group

Please contact liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk; Stephanie.Atkins@nwsynod.org.uk or Kmutimwii@nwsynod.org.uk for more information.



Christmas at the margins

An Advent Bible Study with the Greater Manchester South Missional Partnership.

How does the message of Christmas reach those at the margins, in the scriptures and now?



Week 1: Mary.

For each person.

Tuesday 2nd December

1:30pm, in person.

Wednesday 3rd December

7pm Online

Week 2: The Shepherds

For our communities.

Tuesday 9th December

1:30pm, in person.

Wednesday 10th December

7pm Online



Week 3: The Maji

For the whole world.

Tuesday 16th December

1:30pm, in person.

Wednesday 17th December

7pm online



In person gatherings take place at Heald Green United Reformed Church, Wilmslow Road, SK8 3BH.

For online gatherings use these zoom details or contact us for the link.

Meeting ID: 816 2019 9950. Passcode: 531449

Contacts: liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk Stephanie.Atkins@nwsynod.org.uk

Kmutimwii@nwsynod.org.uk

Waiting for the light: advent online retreat



Waiting for the light: advent online retreat

2nd December 2025 07:30 to 6th December 2025 21:00

Venue: Online

Ticket: Free

There will be three sessions each day:

07.30-08.00: a portion of a psalm, leading into silence

12.00-13.00: a shared [slow reading](#) of one of the readings of the day (lectio divina) followed by a little sharing

19.30-21.00: sessions led by a variety of people, to include Neil Thorogood, Andrew Brown and Jacob Bali

For previous online retreats some people have attended all the sessions, weaving the rhythm of the retreat into their week, and others have dipped in as they are able. Sessions will be sufficiently self-contained for this to work as a “retreat in daily life” for whatever sessions people can make.

All the sessions will be on the same Zoom link.

Please book [here](#) - after which you will be sent the zoom link for all the sessions.

Stand with Refugees



During the first weekend of December, 5th-7th, individuals, groups and organisations are invited to join in with creating public displays of orange hearts – a symbol of compassion for people fleeing war and persecution – in thousands of different ways in local communities.

You could:

- Order free posters for your church and church members to display
- Pray for the campaign in your service on 7th December
- Organise a community event, from carol singing to giving out orange heart biscuits
- Meet your MP to show your support for refugee families to be able to reunite

To learn more about the things you can do, click on the link below:

<https://jpit.uk/.../asylum-and-migration/stand-with-refugees>



Joint Advent Carol Service with Bethlehem



Sunday 7th December - 6.30pm

Come to Bethlehem this Christmas – and bring your family!

yourchurch is joining the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem for an Advent Carol Service on **Sunday 7th December at 6.30 pm on Zoom**. The service will be led by Revd Ashraf Tannous, Pastor of the Church.

Join using the **Meeting ID: 965 1457 5443** and the **Passcode: YourChurch**, or click on the link: <https://bit.ly/2Tf1EUk>

A collection will be taken for the work and ministry of the church, which currently receives no income because of the political situation (see the attached letter).

We look forward to seeing you there!

**The Evangelical Lutheran
Christmas Church**
Bethlehem



**كنيسة الميلااد
الانجيلية اللوثرية**
بيت لحم

20/11/2025

Dear Partners and Friends,

Warm greetings from our Churches —where shepherds once knelt and angels sang. Where the savior was born, where the star of Bethlehem lighted the area and the whole world. Where the living stones announced and still announcing the birth of the King of Kings, Lord of Lords and prince of Peace. Yet, we still wait. We wait for peace in our land, for healing in our hearts, and for Christ, who comes not only in a manger but in every act of compassion and every whisper of hope.

As we enter this Advent and Christmas season, may it awaken in us a deeper longing for Emmanuel—God with us. And may we become bearers of that light, even in the darkest places and time.

This year, like the past two years since the onset of COVID-19, our community continues to face immense challenges. The ongoing political situation, movement restrictions, lack of work permits for Palestinians who once worked in Jerusalem, and the sharp decline in tourism have left many families without income. The needs are great, and the pain is real—but so is our hope.

We pray that this Christmas—the birth of the Prince of Peace—will bring peace (Just Peace) to our land, so we may live in safety and dignity, with our full human rights. Enough destruction. Enough killing. Our hearts long for a life of peace, a future built on hope, and a community rooted in love and harmony. In the face of suffering, we still believe that love can heal, and that together we can sow seeds of compassion in every heart.

With prayer and faith, we are launching a small fundraising effort and appeal to support our church families and bring joy to the children of our Sunday School through Christmas gifts. We also hope to cover essential church expenses and ensure its sustainability. Additionally, we plan to organize Christmas activities that will allow our children and their families to feel the spirit of the season and experience moments of joy and celebration.

Your generosity—no matter the amount—can make a meaningful difference. Together, we can bring light and warmth to hearts that have endured so much.

For more information please contact us at the following emails, christmas.lutheran@gmail.com; ashraftannous@gmail.com.

With gratitude and hope,

Rev. Ashraf Tannous

Pastor of the Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem

Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour

P.O. Box 162 - Paul VI St
Bethlehem
Tel: +972-2-2742312

Email: christmas.lutheran@gmail.com
www.bethlehemchristmaslutheran.org

ص.ب. 162 شارع بولص السادس
بيت لحم
تلفون: +972-2-2742312

20s - 40s Gathering

20s - 40s GATHERING

Interested in a day of faith, friendship, food and fresh perspectives? At the 20s - 40s gathering you'll be able to engage in Bible study and discover fresh insights on Paul, reflect on what it means to be part of the URC, have social time to connect with friends, and worship to close the day.

INFORMATION



13 Dec



9am-6pm



Westminster
College

Sign up now!



Register here

<https://shorturl.at/Fqipk>



Father Christmas will be at New Chapel URC!

Father Christmas

will be at

New Chapel URC, Horwich, BL6 6QN

on

Saturday 13 December

from

10:00 to 12:00

£2.00 per child (includes a gift, drink and biscuit) payable by cash on the day

Booking essential – please email safeguarding.newchapel@nwsynod.org.uk or message via our Facebook page.



Joint URC - Pfalz Advent Service

The annual online Advent Service with the URC's partner churches in the Pfalz region of Germany will be on Sunday evening, 14th December, 6.00 to 7.00 pm.

The service will be in English and German (with subtitles).

This is an excellent opportunity to meet with our German friends, with the facility for conversations during the service in break-out rooms. It will be hosted by the URC's online church, yo**UR**Church.

Join using the **Meeting ID 965 1457 5443** and the Passcode **YourChurch**, or click on the link: <https://bit.ly/2Tf1EUk>



Save the Dates!

What's the event? A book reading group. As we think about our New Year's Resolutions, **James Clear's *Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results***, delivers an inspiring and highly accessible blueprint of stories and principles for achieving our goals.

Who is this for? Anyone who wants and has struggled to achieve their goals in ministry, vocation, or personal life, but especially for lay and ordained who want to see whole life growth in evangelism, social justice, mission, spirituality, and community building.

When and how do we meet? By **Zoom**, on the **second Tuesday of each month**, beginning on **13th January 2025 from 12:00 to 1:30p.m.**

We will meet again at the same time on **10th February, 10th March, 14th April, 9th June and 14th July.**

To be compliant with copyright law, each member of the group is asked to get a copy of the book, listed at **£8.99** on **Amazon** which is linked [here](#).

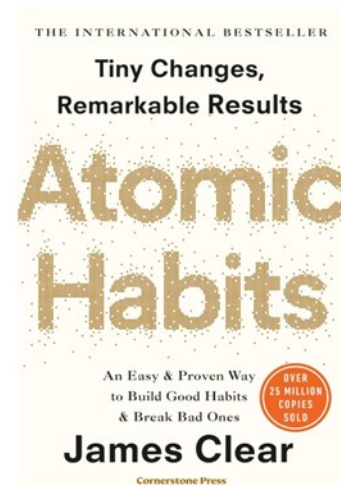
How will we read the book? Most reading groups ask you to do advance reading before you meet. Not here. In this group, *you don't need to "keep up" with the reading; just show up.* How is that possible? Each time we meet, we will nominate a group of readers. These readers will read aloud for a total of about 35-40 minutes. We will take a ten-minute wiggle break and return to talk about what questions or possibilities the reading has raised for us.

Want to know more about James Clear? Go to this YouTube for his TedTalk:

<https://jamesclear.com/atomic-habits>

More information? Contact Rob Hoch-Yidokodiltona, Training and Learning Mentor for NWS at learningmentor@nwsynod.org.uk

Please book your place with Kerry at the Synod Office at office@nwsynod.org.uk



Stepwise Faith Filled Worship 2026

Please contact Liz Delafield @ liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk for further information and to book your place.

For more information about the themes and topics covered please click [here](#) and read about:

2. Faith Filled Worship



Stepwise Faith filled worship 2026

- Want to develop your skills as a worship leader or preacher?
- An opportunity to work with the Mission and Discipleship Mentors, and other worship leaders.
- Explore different forms of worship.
- This course is the main URC pathway towards becoming a locally recognised worship leader.



- The course will take place via zoom, with an in person awayday towards the end of the course.
- 1 session per month, on 4th Monday of each month 7pm, starting on 26th January.
- 12 sessions in total. See the course outline for details.
- Let us know that you are interested by 18th December 2025 so we can register you for the course.
- If you are interested but these arrangements are not suitable, let us know as there may be other opportunities.



Contact
liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk to
register for this course.

FaithTalk webinar – Preparing for Easter



Join us on Wednesday 28th January 2026 from 7-8pm.

We will gather to chat about ways we can engage those around us in the Easter story, and its power to transform lives. Do join us for the conversation, ready to share ideas and resources that you have used.

Please register for the webinar [here](#).

Online Acorn Retreat



Stories of God at Work in the North-Western Synod

Wednesday 28th January | 7:30pm–9:00pm

With **Michael Harvey, Lawrence Moore & Richard Bradley**

Come and be refreshed, encouraged, and surprised by how God is moving through ordinary people taking simple Acorn steps.

This online retreat will gather participants from across the URC North Western Synod to share **real stories** of transformation—moments of courage, unexpected conversations, holy coincidences, and the gentle power of God working through everyday lives.

Led by **Michael Harvey, Lawrence Moore, and Richard Bradley**, the evening will be filled with **humour, joy, and plenty of hope** as we hear what the Spirit is doing in and through us.

Whether you're new to Acorn or have been practising it for months, this is a chance to:

- Be inspired by testimonies from Acorn groups
- Celebrate God's faithfulness across the Synod
- Find fresh courage for your own next step
- Enjoy community with others on the journey

All are welcome — come expectant, open, and ready to be encouraged.

Online Acorn Retreat

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83864573411>

Meeting ID: 838 6457 3411

If possible, please let Michael know you plan to attend @ michael@unlockingthegrowth.com

NWS Table Talk

For more information or to book your place, please contact Kerry at office@nwsynod.org.uk.

Table Talk in the NWS

As a part of NWS Table Talk series, please join Rob Hoch-Yidokodilona, Training and Learning Mentor (NWS) and AALP Tutor for Luther Theological College for a conversation on the topic of Pulpit Talk for Climate Justice and Creation Repair.



Thursday, 29 January,
11am - 12:30pm
in person at the Synod
Office or online by Zoom

RSVP office@nwsynod.org.uk

26 in 26



“Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like an ever flowing stream” (Amos 5:24)

Could your church further strengthen your commitment to social justice in 2026?

Church Action on Poverty and Christian Aid are inviting you to be part of their joint project “26 in 26”

They’ve produced an interactive poster resource for churches, suggesting 26 practical actions that your church could take next year, to deepen your understanding of a range of issues and to make regular action an ongoing part of your church life.

You can order the poster at [26 in 26 Campaign](#)

Mike Hart

Transformation Director

Place for Hope & the North Western Synod

This video introduces a new partnership between the North Western Synod and Place for Hope offering free mediation, facilitated conversations, and one-to-one conflict coaching to help churches handle disputes, long-standing hotspots, and difficult conversations constructively.

Listeners learn how the service works, how to refer a case (contact the Deputy Synod Clerk - Claire MacIntyre or the Programme Lead - Martha Hunt), the confidential process, and the benefits of early intervention to restore relationships and strengthen church communities.

Click [here](#) to watch the video.

You can also listen to it as a podcast - click [here](#).



Buying community energy locally EDM and new report

Fancy sending your MP an email, asking them to sign the Early Day Motion (discussion in Parliament) on enabling the local purchase of community energy? There is still time.

In a nutshell, it means that if a church (or any group or individuals so inclined) installs solar panels (or a wind turbine, etc) and generates more energy than it needs or can store, it should be able to sell that to other local groups, rather than having to sell it back to the national energy company, enabling the energy market to be transformed by offering more choices for local energy producers.

You can [check here](#) to find out if your MP has already signed it. A good range of political parties are represented.

For more [background](#), you can read this article, which urges for 'regulatory enablement', and concludes with:

Overwhelming public support, rapid uptake, and oversubscription to the CEF has demonstrated the nationwide appetite for new community energy projects. The report recommended that substantial regulatory reform, namely the introduction of a right to local supply for community energy schemes, is needed to unlock serious and sustained growth. This would make it possible for community energy groups to sell electricity generated by their schemes directly to local households and businesses in their areas. Whilst government funding has unlocked small incremental increases in the growth of community energy, this would no longer be needed if community energy groups were enabled to stand on their own two feet in the market.

As usual, you can find your MP's email address by typing in your postcode [here](#). Your email **must** include your home address (so that the MP knows that you are one of their constituents) and preferably only one paragraph that states that you would like them to sign the Buying Community Energy Locally EDM (Early Day Motion) 2151, and what this might mean to you personally, or your church, or your synod, or the wider community, in allowing community energy schemes to grow, enabling us to make our Christian priorities of caring for the environment and our neighbours more of a reality (using your own words ideally!).

As Steve puts it very helpfully, 'Those whose MP refuses to sign or says they cannot due to Parliamentary protocols etc should then ask, 'Could you please let me know whether you agree with the EDM in principle?' and any responses to that question shared with us please.'

From the Green Apostle Team

Weaving Trust

Weaving Trust

**Make collective
action possible**

citizensUK

UNIVERSITY OF LANCASHIRE
Students' Union

Imagine spending an afternoon having four conversations with people you've never met (and if you're being honest probably people you would be unlikely to meet in your day-to-day life). Proper conversations, not social chit chat, but about real issues that matter to you and your community for by the fourth round lasting for almost a quarter of an hour.

One of the commitments we made in the strategy "A Church with People at the Margins", was to work with local chapters of Citizens UK engaging in their work supporting community organising in local neighbourhoods on issues of importance to bringing Dignity, Agency and Power to people from all backgrounds and communities.

A fortnight ago during Inter-Faith week, as part of this work with Lancashire Citizens, I was in 53 Degrees in Preston to support the Students Union and the University Chaplaincy hosting a "Weaving Trust" event, inviting people from all faiths and none to a series of conversations with strangers who they'd never met before. Over a couple of hours through over one hundred one to one conversations, the fifty plus invitees shared their pride in their community but also listened to their companion's sense of belonging in their community. Together they explored the issues for their community and the opportunities to make a difference for them and for each other's communities.

Four conversations each with four different people – opening up but also listening closely – from the outside of the circles of chairs you could hear the noise that wouldn't let up until the time bell rang. Inside as those involved reported, they were focused one to one on each other and their stories, shared and different.

How different is this deliberative opening ourselves up to alternative views and perspectives from the echo chamber of social media, which through its algorithms, works to reinforce your particular viewpoint as opposed to providing an alternative perspective or at least a broader picture of the hopes of others.

As I reflected on the experience, I also began to wonder how we might use this sort of event in our churches and communities. How could we enable a series of one-to-one conversations between a diverse group of people to promote better understanding across the different parts of our communities both faith and more widely. How might that lead to better understanding between our churches and other organisations active in our neighbourhoods.

Mike Hart

Transformation Director

Request for Tech-Savvy Volunteers



Tech-Savvy Volunteers Wanted! **Join the North Western Synod Hybrid Tech Team**

Do you enjoy working with technology and helping people stay connected? The North Western Synod is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to become part of our Hybrid Synod Meetings Tech Team — supporting our gatherings so that both in-person and online participants can engage fully and seamlessly.

What you'll do (don't worry, we'll train you!):

As part of a team of 3–4 volunteers on each shift, you may take on roles such as:

- Monitoring the Zoom Waiting Room and admitting participants
- Spotlighting speakers and managing views
- Responding to technical questions or issues in the chat
- Launching polls and managing breakout rooms
- Running PowerPoint presentations
- Muting/unmuting participants
- Keeping track of questions and comments from online delegates
- Informing the Moderator of activity on Zoom in real time

We're looking for people who are comfortable using Zoom, enjoy being part of a supportive team, and like the satisfaction that comes from making things run smoothly behind the scenes.

What we offer:

- Full training — you don't need to be an expert already
- A friendly, collaborative team
- A vital role in helping the Synod stay connected and inclusive

If you enjoy using tech to help people communicate and participate, we'd love to hear from you.

Interested?

Get in touch with us to find out more or to volunteer:

Lawrence Heath-Moore
Tel: 07813 842202
Email: Lawrence.moore@nwsynod.org.uk

Come build community, support our mission, and help shape the future of hybrid Synod meetings.

We can't do it without you!

Community Hub Co-ordinator: The Dandelion Community



Job Description

Job Title:	Community Hub Co-Ordinator
Location:	The Dandelion Community, Oatlands Rd, Woodhouse Park, Wythenshawe, Manchester M22 1AH
Hours:	30 hours p.w. normally Monday - Friday but flexible to include evening & weekend working
Salary	£28,000 p.a. (£35,000 FTE) + Contributory Pension Scheme
Holidays	Equivalent to 31 days including bank holidays
Contract:	Initially fixed term to 31 st December 2026 with possibility of extension
Reporting to:	Chair of Dandelion Management Committee (Liz Delafield)

Introduction

The Dandelion Community is a partnership between the United Reformed Church and local community organisations in Woodhouse Park, Wythenshawe. As part of the mission of local United Reformed Church, the church buildings are used extensively by the partners in the Dandelion Community to support the wellbeing of people in the local community.

At present the buildings are managed by a Mission Project of the United Reformed Church's North Western Synod. Our ambition is to transfer the responsibility for the management of the buildings and the church's community outreach to a new charitable organisation established jointly with local community partners by the end of 2026.

Role Purpose

This post provides the day to day operational management of the Christian Community Hub ensuring that it both provides both a safe environment for staff, volunteers and users, but also is a vibrant and welcoming place for all.

The post holder will be responsible for the operation and development of process and procedures necessary to ensure the smooth running of the Hub, build on positive and supportive relationships between the church, community partners, staff and volunteers.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- Coordinate the day-to-day operations of the Dandelion Community Hub ensuring adherence to operational procedures and policies and the safety and security of staff, volunteers and users of the Hub

Representation and Engagement

- Engage with users and partners, gathering local insight to shape future activities
- Work collaboratively with existing and potential partners and stakeholders so they have a presence and can contribute to the programme of activities and events in the Hub
- Represent Dandelion Community when working in the community with statutory agencies, local residents, stakeholders, and partners

Hub Management and Operations

- Act as the responsible person for the building
- Ensure the building is safe and secure with any maintenance issues reported and managed
- Maintain a calendar of all bookings and other activities within the centre
- Ensure risk assessment forms are completed and updated for all activities in the Centre
- Ensure all materials and resources are maintained and up to date
- To work alongside the Dandelion Community Management Group to ensure safeguarding, health & safety, and data protection policies and procedures are implemented and work well

Staff and volunteers

- Support the recruitment of volunteers for the Hub
- Ensure appropriate induction arrangements for all staff and volunteers in the Hub
- Securely maintain a database of staff and volunteers using the hub

Accountability

- To meet regularly with the Chair of the Management Group
- Record and report on activities within the centre including both qualitative and quantitative information
- To produce short reports and presentations for Dandelion Community Management Group and other partners, when required
- Undertake any other tasks deemed necessary for the successful completion of the post

Communications

- Promote the Hub and church's community programmes through appropriate media outlets
- Act as a public face of the Hub in community and stakeholder meetings
- Maintain good internal communication with church leadership, staff, and volunteers

Person Specification

Skills and experience:

1. Previous experience in an operational management role in a church and/or community setting or similar environment
2. Facilities management knowledge and experience
3. An experienced team player who is experienced in leading and developing a mixed team of volunteers and paid staff
4. Well organised with a keen eye for detail and the ability to plan, set priorities and meet deadlines
5. Experienced in working with not-for-profit social enterprises and charities as well as statutory services and businesses
6. Excellent interpersonal skills, and ability to communicate with people from a wide range of diverse backgrounds
7. Computer literate with budgetary and day to day financial management skills, Microsoft Office ability and comfortable using social media

Personal Qualities

8. Self-aware and with a strong understanding of and commitment to the ethos, vision & values of The Dandelion Community as a Christian Community Hub
9. Self-motivated, able to prioritise successfully, and resilient, dealing calmly with unexpected difficulties
10. Flexible and open to feedback and change with an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses and the humility to learn from colleagues
11. Positive, outgoing and a team player
12. Desirable: relevant lived poverty experience

Please email Claire MacIntyre at deputyclerk@nwsynod.org.uk to register your interest in this vacancy

Closing Date for applications: 5th January 2025

Appointment will be subject to satisfactory references and an enhanced DBS Check

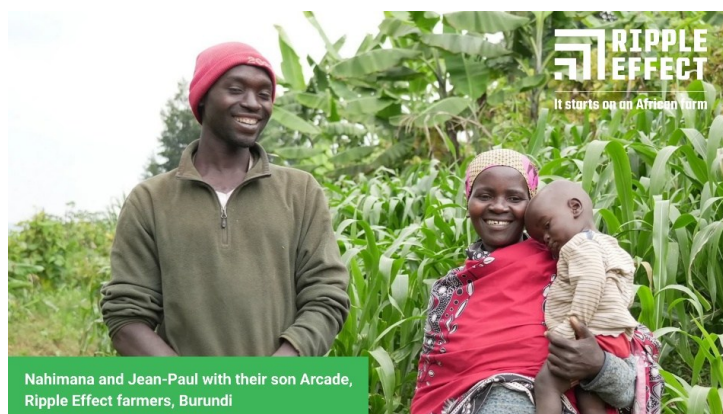
Useful Links

Staying Safe in Church Buildings

Public concerns about safety in public spaces, including churches, have increased, following terror attacks and numerous hate crimes. In light of recent events, understanding the threat faced and the ways it can be mitigated can help keep everyone safer. It is essential that we get familiar with various resources that are accessible to the general public in order to prevent or minimise the effects of hate crimes and attacks. Please click on the following link for further information:

[Staying Safe in Church Buildings - United Reformed Church](#)

Your Church can help children in Burundi to flourish this Christmas



We know how busy Christmas can be, and every moment of your church's time is precious. That's why Ripple Effect has put together simple, ready-to-use resources to help your congregation get involved: a Christmas service presentation, a poster and Nahimana's story and prayer guide.

By downloading these resources, your congregation can learn about families like Nahimana's in rural Burundi - helping them

learn climate-smart farming, grow nutritious food for their families, and build sustainable livelihoods. Even a small action can create a ripple of hope that lasts well beyond the festive season.

Click [here](#) to find out more and download your free resources today.

What a great way to show love to our neighbours across the globe this Christmas!

Please get in touch with Ann Hatton @ ann.hatton@rippleeffect.org if you would like any further information.

Jobs and Volunteer Opportunities at the URC

To find out about the latest job and volunteer opportunities at the URC please click [here](#)

for our Prayers

We invite you to pray:

- For Revd Dave Fraser as he is inducted to the Greater Manchester South Missional Partnership
- For the continued growth of church mission
- For the Churches who are facing difficult decisions about the future of their fellowships and buildings
- For those involved in the discussions about the future of ministry in the North Western Synod
- For your Ministers as they consider how best to support you