



North Western Synod **Newsletter**

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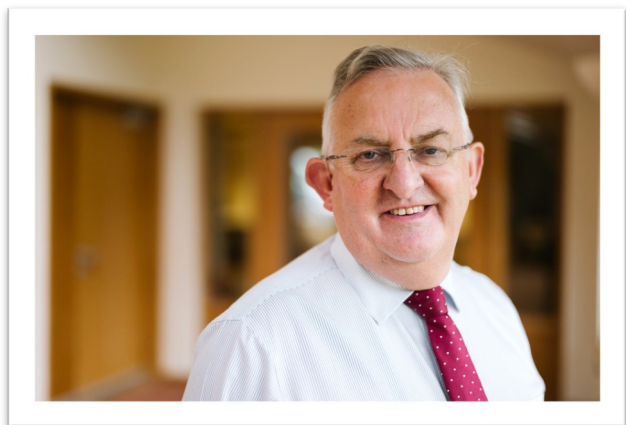
New Year's Honours List

There were some familiar names in this year's New Year's Honours List.



Bernie Stevens, an Elder and Local Leader at Cheadle Hulme United Reformed Church in Stockport, was awarded an MBE for services to the Kinder Mountain Rescue Team and to young people and the community in Greater Manchester.

Click [here](#) to read more about Bernie and his award on the Kinder Mountain Rescue Team website.



Revd David Ireland, a Minister in Oldham and Tameside, has been awarded a British Empire Medal for Services to Children's Hospices.

Click [here](#) to read more about David and his award on the Francis House Children's Hospice website.

Invitation from Carver Uniting Church

On 28th December, Carver Uniting Church held it's final act of worship in it's Church building. We had a wonderful service and shared our memories of worship and times we had spent together in the building. We followed this with a Christmas lunch. Although this is tinged with sadness we are also excited for our new lives in our new church building on the high street in Windermere. By moving, it enables us to stay together and continue to do God's work.

So as the congregation of the Carver Church is moving, we would like to invite you to join us in giving thanks for all that the Carver Church building has meant to our congregation for over 140 years. As we give thanks for all the building has meant, we also offer prayers for the future and the ongoing life of the URC and Methodist Churches in Windermere as we leave our Lake Road home for our new home at Windermere Methodist Chapel, Main Road.

We will be pleased if you are able to join us on Saturday 31st January at 2pm in the Carver building. The service will be followed by tea and cake.

If you would like to visit our new home at the Methodist Chapel it will be open from 10:30am to 12:30pm on the 31st (and on Sunday for our regular 10:45 worship).

If you are able to let us know you are attending that will be helpful—please contact Nicola at churchsecretary71@gmail.com and we will make sure we have enough cups of tea.

**Nicola Brown
Carver Uniting Church**



News from Heald Green URC

Like many congregations, Heald Green URC holds an annual Advent Appeal, selecting a different charity each year. This year, the congregation chose to support Francis House Children's Hospice in Didsbury, South Manchester. A festive social afternoon was held to raise funds, as well as the many personal donations from members. We were delighted that two groups who hire our premises on a regular basis also chose to support the charity. The Stockport Symphonic Sounds Orchestra held a concert, and one of our sewing groups donated a significant sum.

In total, we raised the amazing (for us) sum of £930, which will be used to support the wonderful work of the hospice as they care not only for children and young people with life-shortening conditions, but for their families as well.



News from Ramsden St URC



Here in the heart of Barrow we've been celebrating Anne Stevenson's achievement – having looked after this community as Secretary for many years. A big, big thank you to Anne and indeed to Heather who has picked up the reins.



We meet on Tuesday afternoons to make and jigsaw, colour and create with Lego. There is quite a lot of conversation going on and drinks and cake consumed – of course!



Here you see us busy finishing a 'Tree of Life' banner that we have created alongside the pupils at Greengate - our local Junior school.

Looking forward to seeing it up on our wall soon.

Rev'd Kate Hunt
URC Minister Cumbria Missional Partnership

Sacrament Training

Please note change of time for the Baptism training on 20th January—now 1pm to 2.30pm.

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



**SACRAMENT TRAINING ONLINE DATES
2025-2026**

Baptism - 20 January 1pm to 2.30pm

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

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).

Intermediate Safeguarding Training

Wednesday 4th March 2026 - 6.30pm to 8.30pm - Online

Combined Foundation + Intermediate Safeguarding Training

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

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

Tuesday 27th January 2026 - 2.00pm - 4.30pm - Face-to-Face at St George's URC
Northway, Maghull, Liverpool, L31 7BG

Thursday 12th February 2026 - 6.00pm to 8.00pm - Face-to-Face at Thomas Risley URC
Glover Road, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7PH

Tuesday 17th February 2026 - 6.00pm to 8.30pm - Face-to-Face at Christ Church URC Haydock
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 training will now be delivered in **ONE** session (including a short break).

The next training sessions are:

Online Advanced - Wed 25th February 2026 - 6pm-9.15pm

Online Advanced - Mon 13th April 2026 - 6pm-9.15pm

Church House Additional Training

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

Make your booking by emailing: Emma.Pearce@urc.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”

Further Safeguarding News

Annual Safeguarding Return—Portal is now OPEN!

The Annual Safeguarding Return Portal is now **open** to Synod Safeguarding Officers and Churches. As in previous years the deadline for completion is **28th February 2026**.

If you need any assistance or have any queries please contact Joanne at helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk or Tel: 08000 903 903.

Yvette has scheduled an **Annual Safeguarding Return Support Session** next Wednesday 14th January 2026 at 7pm to 8pm to offer assistance with completion of the Return. Zoom details below:

Wednesday 14th January 2026 – 7 PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89585062084?pwd=xZj1AObzOrdhfp6UBO8TjPUcE2Feml.1>

Meeting ID: 895 8506 2084

Passcode: 959457

Advanced Safeguarding Training for Ministers



Please email
carrie.kaunda@urc.org
with any questions.

Minister's Advanced Safeguarding Training

Each course will last 4.5 hours, delivered across 2 Zoom sessions

Please click the link below the relevant date to go to the booking form.

The zoom link will then be sent the week before.

Thursday 15th Jan 1-3pm and Thursday 22nd Jan 1-3.30pm
[Booking Form for Advanced Training for Ministers March – Fill in form](#)

Tuesday 3rd March 10am-12noon and Tuesday 10th March 10am-12.30pm
[Booking Form for Advanced Training for Ministers March – Fill in form](#)

Wednesday 6 May 1-3pm and Wednesday 13th May 1-3.30pm
[Booking Form for Advanced Training for Ministers May – Fill in form](#)

Monday 5th October 1-3pm and Monday 12th October 1-3.30pm
[Booking Form for Advanced Training for Ministers October – Fill in form](#)



Please click [here](#) or email carrie.kaunda@urc.org for further information.

Data Protection Training

There will be a series of online data protection training sessions taking place during the last week of January and the first week of February. Further details of dates and times can be found via the below link.

Each session will run for 1 hour 45 minutes, and evening options are available starting at 7:00 PM.

Why this training matters:

Understanding and complying with GDPR is essential to protect personal data and maintain trust within our church communities. This training will also reinforce safeguarding responsibilities, ensuring that we handle sensitive information with care and integrity.

Register now to secure your preferred date and time:

[Click here to register](#)

Interim Moderator Training

For those either serving as Steering Group Convenors or considering the role, we have a training session booked on 23rd February 2026 from 10am to 2pm at the NW Synod Office.

Please let me know if you wish to attend, lunch will also be provided (please note any dietary requirements).

This training is available to those who might consider offering to do the Interim Moderator role, as well as those simply wanting to explore it further.

Any additional questions? Email Rob Hoch at:

learningmentor@nwsynod.org.uk

Best wishes

Kerry Later | Office Manager & Moderator PA

E: office@nwsynod.org.uk

Induction of Liz Kam

Manchester and Salford Urban Missional Partnership

Would like to invite representatives from your church, including other churches
and any Community Partners that you have

to the induction of Liz Kam

to her new post to the Church Related Community Work Ministry

on Sunday, 11th January, 2026 at 2.30pm

at Trinity Community Church, The Armani Centre, Quinney Crescent,
Moss Side, Manchester, M16 7DG

Refreshments will be served.

Please send numbers to liz.kam@nwsynod.org.uk by 22nd December 2025



Directions to The Armani Centre

The Car Park to Trinity Moss Side can be reached from Moss Lane East B5219 from either Princes Road or Alexandra Road or Upper Chorlton Road. The Kath Locke Centre is on the opposite side of the Road.

Buses: 85, 86, 15

Save the Dates! - Book reading group

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 2026** 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](#).

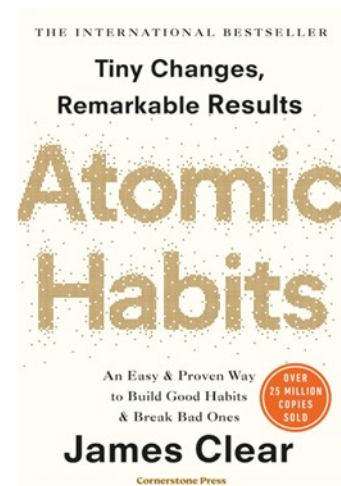
How will we read the book? Most reading groups ask you to do advance reading before you meet. Not here. In this group, *you don't need to "keep up" with the reading; just show up*. How is that possible? Each time we meet, we will nominate a group of readers. These readers will read aloud for a total 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-Yidokodilona, 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



Burns Night at New Chapel URC



New Chapel URC

Burns Night

Friday 23rd January 2026

7.00 for 7.30 pm

**New Chapel URC, Horwich,
BL6 6QN**

**Cost £20—including a 3 course
Supper**

Please bring your own drinks

Booking essential : email

safeguarding.newchapel@nwsynod.org.uk

or via messenger on our face book page

Gospel Pantomime at Bamford and Norden URC



Bamford Chapel and Norden URC
presents the gospel pantomime

**Saturday 24 January at 7 pm
and
Sunday 25 January at 2 pm**

Doctor Watt Rides Again!

He's
behind
you!

by
Addie Redmond

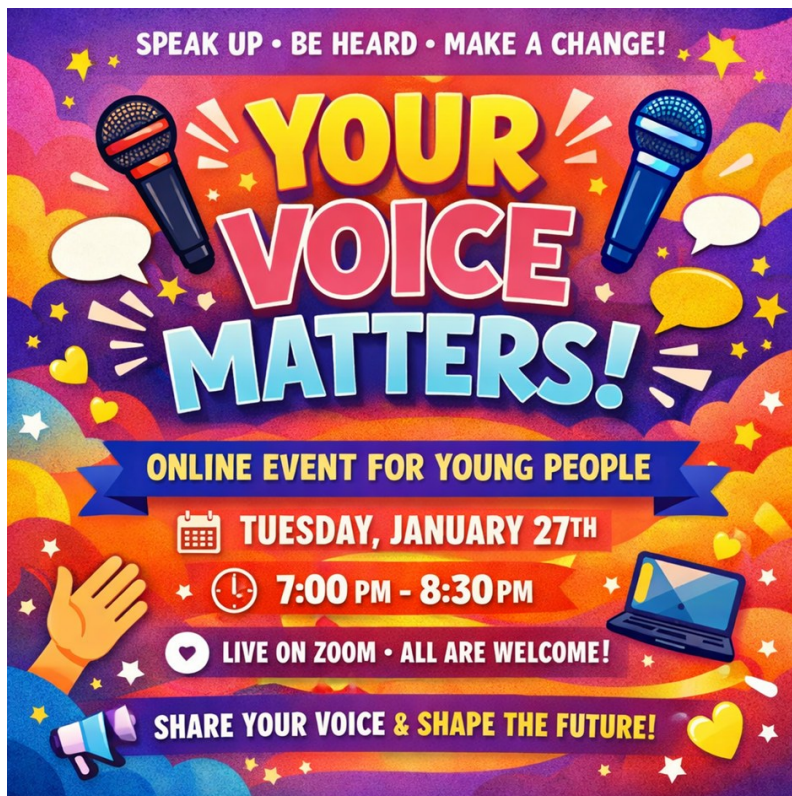
Oh no it
isn't!

**Bamford Chapel
Norden Road
OL11 5PQ**

Tickets
Adults £5 Children £3
Text to Linda
07503 942630

Website bcnchurch.org.uk

Online Event for Young People



Got something to say?

This is your space.

Join us for an **online event** where **young people** can **speak up**, **be heard**, and help shape what comes next.

- **Tuesday 27th January**
- **7:00–8:30pm**
- **Online**
- **All are welcome**

As a synod, we are looking at how we can help people in local churches be the best they can be. Whether you're full of ideas, questions, hopes, or frustrations — we want to hear from *you*.

Come as you are, bring your voice, and be part of the conversation

We will be joined by Rob Hoch, the Synod's Learning Mentor, who will be sharing some thoughts on the way ahead and taking your feedback.

Save the date & spread the word.

Please contact Leo Roberts at cydo@nwsynod.org.uk for more information and joining details.

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

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

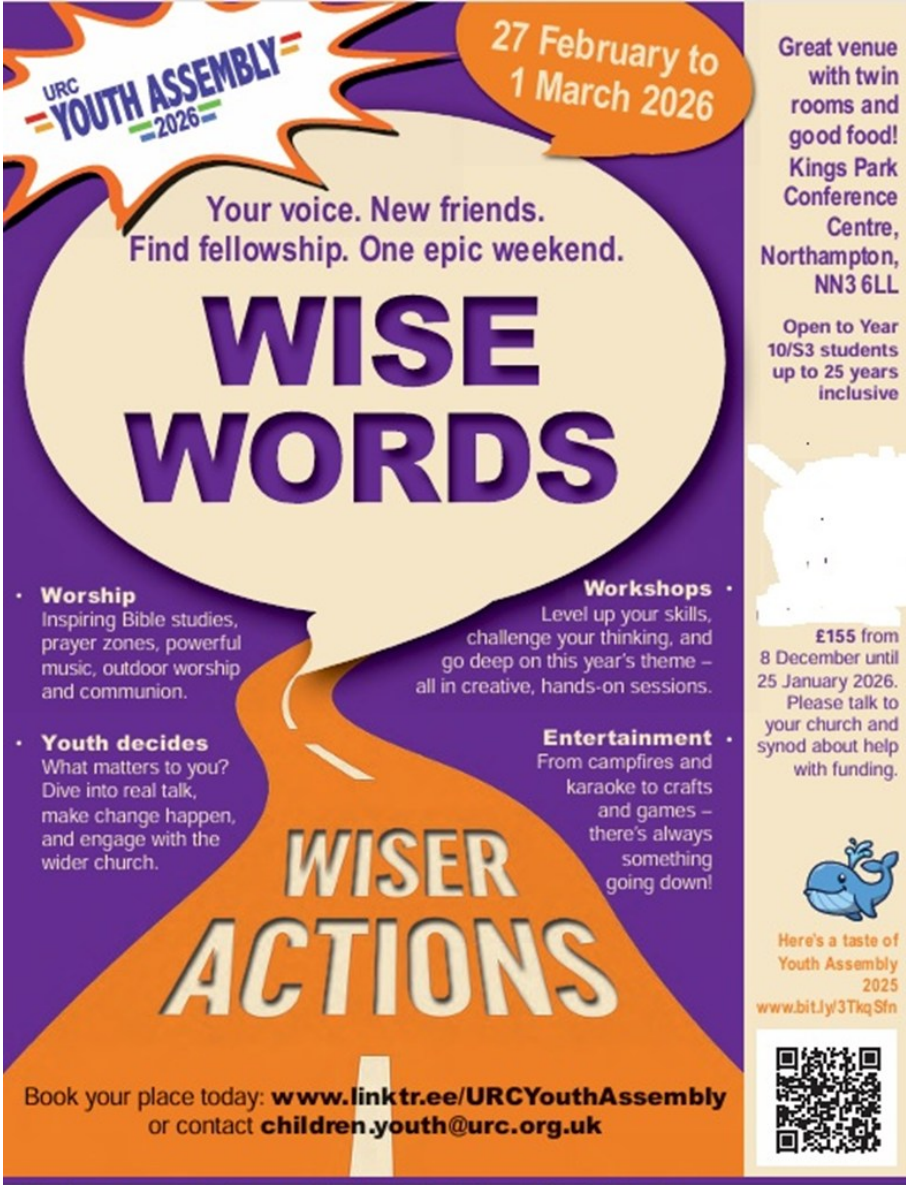
Join Zoom Meeting:

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

Meeting ID: 838 6457 3411

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

Youth Assembly 2026



URC
YOUTH ASSEMBLY
2026

27 February to
1 March 2026

Your voice. New friends.
Find fellowship. One epic weekend.

WISE WORDS

- **Worship**
Inspiring Bible studies, prayer zones, powerful music, outdoor worship and communion.
- **Youth decides**
What matters to you? Dive into real talk, make change happen, and engage with the wider church.
- **Workshops**
Level up your skills, challenge your thinking, and go deep on this year's theme – all in creative, hands-on sessions.
- **Entertainment**
From campfires and karaoke to crafts and games – there's always something going down!

WISER ACTIONS


Book your place today: www.linktr.ee/URCYouthAssembly
or contact children.youth@urc.org.uk

Great venue with twin rooms and good food!
Kings Park Conference Centre,
Northampton, NN3 6LL



Open to Year 10/S3 students up to 25 years inclusive

£155 from 8 December until 25 January 2026.
Please talk to your church and synod about help with funding.

Here's a taste of Youth Assembly 2025
www.bit.ly/3TkgSfn



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



There are still funded places available for Youth Assembly 2026 - February 27th February – 1st March 2026 at Kings Park Conference Centre, Northampton.

Attendees must be Year 10 or above.

Youth Leaders' Gathering 2026

URC Youth Leaders Gathering

£210



27 February -
1 March 2026



Highgate House,
Northampton

Keynote: Rev Dr. Ash Barker

Join together with others involved in youth work for a weekend of encouragement, reflection, challenge and sharing ideas.

On Saturday we will be joined by Ash Barker as we consider the theme being followed by URC Youth Assembly.

Wise Words - Wiser Actions

We will explore together how we can be wise in all we do with young people as we seek to grow disciples in God's kingdom.

A programme that allows time for worship, space to reflect, relate and relax. Share joys and sorrows with others as we learn together in community.

If you are working with young people aged 11-25 in any context, this is the weekend that you deserve!

REGISTER NOW

<http://linktr.ee/urcyouthleadersgathering>



Ash Barker is a Shalom Activist and Pioneering Minister with over 35 years of experience unlocking potential in urban communities. Born and raised in Melbourne, Australia, he spent 12 years serving in Bangkok's largest slum before relocating to inner-city Birmingham, UK, in 2014.

Alongside his wife Anji, Ash lives in community at Newbiggin House in Winson Green and ministers with Lodge Road Community Church (URC).

With a vision for every neighbourhood to flourish in God's love and shalom, Ash's work through Seedbeds grows local leaders and communities into fullness of life.

Ash remains committed to investing in local leaders and communities, passionately advocating for shalom, justice, and grassroots transformation.



If you are bringing young people to Youth Assembly why not enjoy a weekend of refreshment for youth workers in the luxury environment of Highgate House, just down the road from Kings Park?

If you are not bringing young people to Youth Assembly, you are just as welcome!

Spek to your Synod CYDO about grants to support the cost of attending

Running at the same time as Youth Assembly is the annual gathering for Youth Leaders.

The Synod Children and Youth Committee will pay the conference cost for any youth leaders who wish to attend.

For more information please contact Leo at cydo@nwsynod.org.uk.

FaithTalk webinar – Preparing for Easter

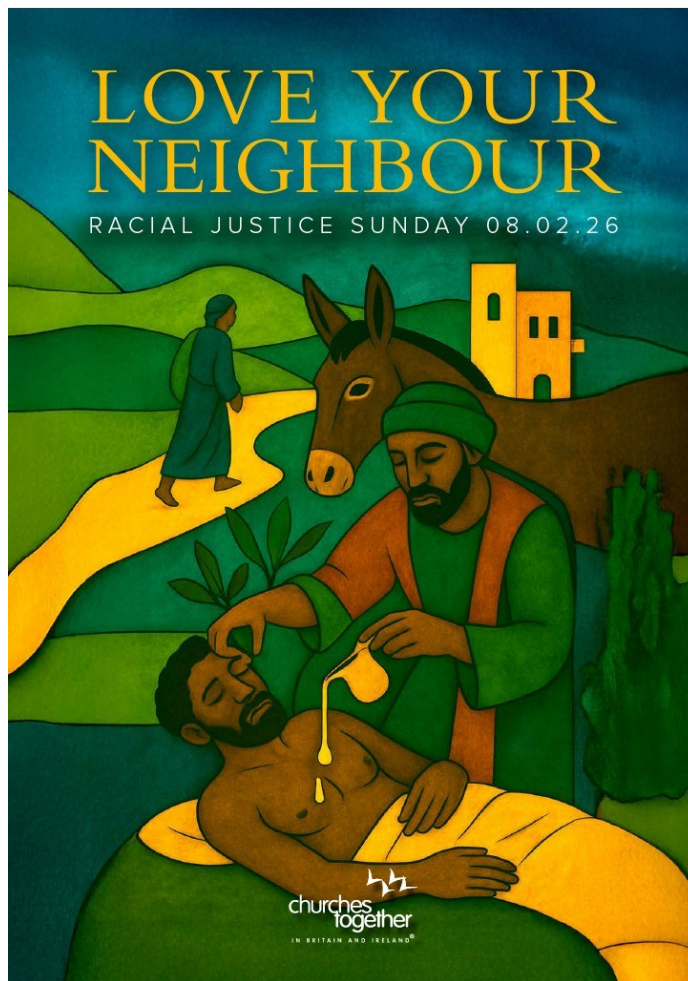


Join us on Wednesday 28th January 2026 from 7-8pm.

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](#).

Racial Justice Sunday—8th February 2026



Racial Justice Sunday is an opportunity for all churches to reflect on the importance of racial justice, to give thanks for the gifts and beauty of human diversity, and to commit to end racism and acts of discrimination.

For more information and a link to resources please click [here](#).

Faith in Action Webinars

**WE ARE
A CHURCH
WITH PEOPLE
AT THE MARGINS**

How can your congregation become a place where people at the margins are loved, nurtured and empowered?

What's working in our churches?
Where might new communities of worship and discipleship begin?

Join us for four online sessions exploring how your congregation can be more fully connected with and active within the whole community.



The
United
Reformed
Church

A church
with people
at the margins

Online, 7-8:30pm

Monday 16 February
Monday 11 May
Monday 10 August
Monday 16 November

Sign up at
urc.org.uk/margins

Could you help to influence the United Reformed Church during 2026?

General Assembly 2026

Each year, every Synod is able to send a number of representatives to the denominational meeting of the URC at Swanwick in July. This year, we are able to send 12 representatives from the North Western Synod, (which includes two who are under 26), for the meeting between **3rd – 6th July 2026** at The Hayes in Swanwick. Our representatives should be a mix of ministers and members; they will be a mix of some who have been to General Assembly before, and some who are new to it.

No special knowledge is required: you are not expected to have a deep understanding of everything going on in the United Reformed Church. You are simply asked to have an interest in the work and future of our church, and a willingness to consider, discuss and vote upon the issues which fall to be dealt with at the meeting.

Our Spring Synod meeting needs to approve the names of those whom we send in July, so if you would like to be considered as one of our representatives (or can give someone who you think would be good a 'nudge') then please let me have names by **Friday 30th January 2026**. This will enable our Nominations Committee, which meets in February, opportunity to ensure a good spread of people from our Synod is put forward to our Synod Meeting in March.

Please be aware that putting your name forward does not guarantee that you will be invited to attend, but we will let you know by the end of February.

Please send your name to clerk@nwsynod.org.uk

General Assembly Moderator 2027 - 28

Annually, General Assembly elects one individual who will serve as the moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church for one year. The moderator of the General Assembly is the national figurehead for the denomination, representing the United Reformed Church both internally and within the wider world. The moderator chairs major meetings, visits churches at home and abroad, and seeks to provide worship, teaching and pastoral care.

North Western Synod is invited to nominate up to two people for election for July 2027—July 2028: one Elder, and one Minister of Word and Sacraments / CRCW.

Please give prayerful thought as to whether you know anyone who you feel would make a good moderator. The current rules state that candidates should **NOT** be approached to seek their permission before their name goes before a Synod. This may seem strange, but it has been a longstanding rule because over the years

experience has shown that almost all candidates if asked “can we ask Synod to nominate you” will say “no”; whereas if the General Secretary approaches someone to say that a Synod has nominated them this tends to be considered a different sense of call.

If you want to read more about the process of appointing a moderator, you can do that [here](#).

If there is anyone (Elder or Minister / CRCW) whom you would like to nominate, please complete the [Nomination form](#) and return it to me by Friday 13th February 2026.

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

Useful Links



JPIT Newsletter

For the latest edition of the newsletter of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) please click below:

[JPIT Newsletter](#)



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 Liz Kam as she is inducted to the Manchester and Salford Urban Missional Partnership in her new post in the Church Related Community Work Ministry
- 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