

The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone church building with a large, ornate window. A blue silhouette of a map of the North Western Synod region is overlaid on the top right. The text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a black outline.

# North Western Synod Newsletter

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## for our Prayers ...

## Retirement Service for Rev'd Clare Downing

Cornerstone Parrs Wood Road was honoured to host Rev'd Clare Downing's retirement service on May 30<sup>th</sup>. There was a great atmosphere from the 60-plus people who attended; the hot, sunny weather also helped.

Clare reflected on Philippians 4: 4–9 with an emphasis on churches looking on the positives and trusting God as we travel on.

Rev'd Kenneth Lynch gave the "charge to the retiring Moderator" and praised Clare's leadership during her tenure of the post.

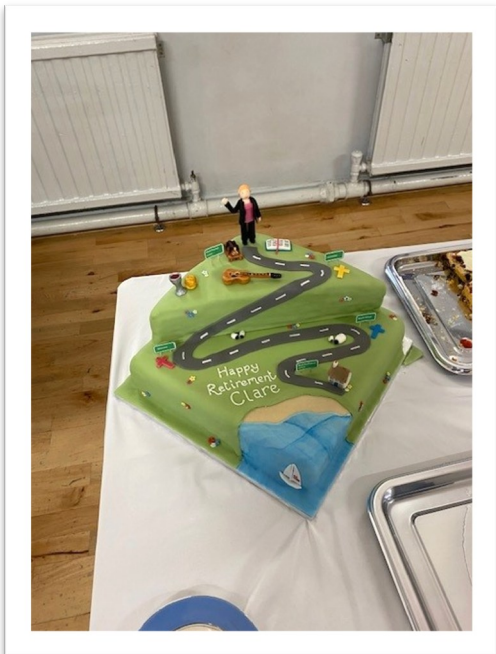
"This is not a scripture reading" was delivered by Rev'd John Downing. It outlined the range of a Moderator's tasks in the vein of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. "A time to bang heads together and a time to refrain from banging heads together", for example.

Afterwards, we were treated to scones, tea and coffee. There was a celebration cake made by Cornerstone that mapped out Clare's journey of ministry from Manchester, through Leicester and Wessex to the East Yorkshire coast.

Everyone wishes Clare well in her retirement.

### Ruth Shepherd

Elder - Cornerstone URC



## A Message from Rev'd Clare Downing

Greetings from Hornsea!

I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you to you all. Firstly, thank you for all the good wishes I have received as I finished my term as Synod Moderator. I've been reminded of just how important it is to receive encouragement, which of course means it's just as vital for me to encourage. So thank you too for being a Synod where there is so much happening which I hope that I have been able to encourage during my time with you. I hope that you will both encourage, and be encouraged by Mike as he serves you as Moderator for the next few years.

A really big thank you for the generous gift from the Synod. I've not yet decided what to spend it on, but will make sure that it is something that will be a regular reminder of you all. One little thing that I have done is bought a little glass dome, where I'm going to display some of the decorations from the cake at my farewell service – a little project for the next couple of days – see the photograph.

As some of you know, I've not quite retired yet, as I am now on my much delayed sabbatical – 2020 wasn't a good year! In a couple of weeks time I'm going to start walking the Trans Pennine Trail, which starts in Southport, where I was received as a newly ordained minister at General Assembly, and ends about half a mile away from where we are living. I'll be doing quite a bit of reflecting on the journey of ministry en route. I'll try to post a bit about the walk on Facebook, so if you want to follow me, just send a friend request. And if anyone fancies joining me for a little while as I travel near Manchester, message me.

Finally (this is beginning to sound like a letter from Paul), I would like to reiterate some of what I said at the farewell service, where we looked at a short passage from Philippians 4. Be joyful, don't get anxious, and think about the good stuff – then you will know both the God of peace, and the peace of God.



## Oasis MediaCityUK Church is in the Pink!!

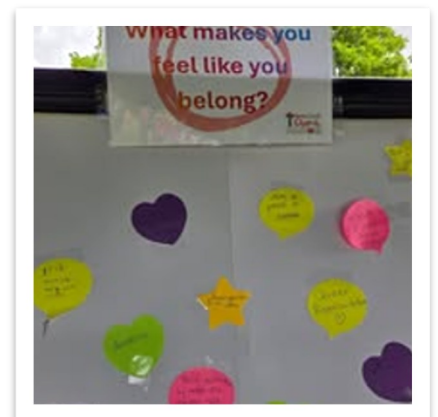
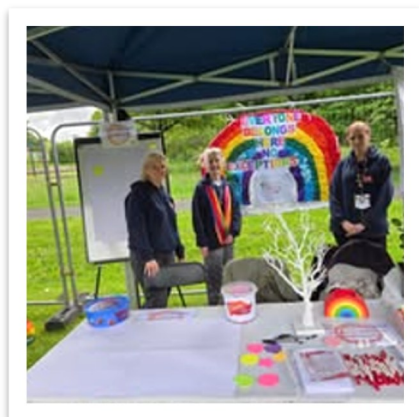


No, we haven't all got sunburnt (!), we've been to the Pink Picnic in Peel Park, Salford on 13th June for Salford's Pride event. As June is Pride month, at the Hub we've been celebrating with various events, the biggest of which was our attendance at the Pink Picnic.

Our Rainbow Group, led by our Church and Community Youth Worker, Katie, have been spending their Friday afternoons learning more and sharing together about Pride Month, and have created our Rainbow, which we took to the Picnic to show our welcome. The group also produced lots of affirming and inspirational messages which we were able to give out on the day, in return for which people who were there wrote some for them.

As minister, cards were also given out to affirm "you are loved". We also promoted Open Table church at Sacred Trinity in Salford, for those who were looking for a worshipping community on a Sunday.

A good day was had – the weather held (if a little chilly) – and lots of conversations were enjoyed. Sadly some were still about bad experiences of church (even some whose families had been targeted), but we hope it was an opportunity to show an affirming and welcoming experience. Our strapline, and the one by which we stand, was "All belong here – No Exceptions"



P.S. An unsolicited advert too – All are welcome to attend our **Community Fun Day** on:  
**Saturday 11th July from 11am to 2pm**

Lots of fun things to do and buy!! Money raised goes to support the work of the church and community Hub.

Also, Oasis are selling Rose plants specially grown to become the Oasis orange. Please click the following link: [Oasis Hope Rose - Oasis UK](#)

Plants are £20 each and the money goes to support the violence reduction work done by Oasis.

Any questions for either event, please contact Ruth on [ruth.watson@oasisuk.org](mailto:ruth.watson@oasisuk.org) or [ruth.watson@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:ruth.watson@nwsynod.org.uk)

**Rev'd Ruth Watson**

**Church Minister - Oasis MediaCityUK Church and Community Hub**



# General Assembly Moderator - Catriona Wheeler - Visit to Lancashire

On the weekend of 12-15<sup>th</sup> June, Catriona Wheeler was invited to visit Lancashire South East Missional Partnership (LSEMP) for what turned out to be an inspirational weekend for all concerned.



She arrived Friday tea-time to attend Messy Church at Kingsway & Woodlands URC, where the theme was Fruit of the Spirit. A lively event of various crafts and sharing a meal of hotdogs, pizza and fries, pancakes with fruits (decorated by the children) a sing-a-long with actions, (with children watching their parents with embarrassment), finishing with a prayer and the Messy Grace.



Saturday morning was a visit to Clitheroe URC for an Art Exhibition by 3 local schools (including our very own Barrow School) and learning about Clitheroe's Gold Eco Church achievement, culminating with a visit to their Shop of Hope.

After a brief lunch, it was on to Trinity Great Harwood LEP for an afternoon exploring Cameroonian food, culture, traditional attire, history and SINGING!



Rev'd Gilbert Esambe introduced Global Mission Day 2026, 'A New Vision for Mission in LSEMP'. An event we hope we will repeat.



Catriona led two services on the Sunday; Trinity Lancaster URC and Westbury Gardens URC, followed by a calm and awe inspiring ministry through music by the Apples of Gold worship group at North Blackburn URC.



Monday morning was a visit to the best school in the country, Barrow URC School (we know we are biased, but it is true!), where headteacher Mrs Nicola McArdle showed Catriona around the school and talked about the 150th Anniversary in September.

The final stop was at Blackburn Cathedral, looking at the Portraits of Courage hosted by Kairos Housing, featuring refugee portraits and stories across Kairos Housing, DARE, ARC and Community Harmony.

In Catriona's words, the weekend was amazing and so very varied with all that is happening in the partnership churches.



We thank Catriona for giving her time to visit us, and it was a privilege for all concerned to talk and share with her on what was her last such visit before she hands over to our new Moderator at General Assembly in July.

**Rev'd Mike Aspinall**

# Trinity URC, Lancaster, welcomes Catriona Wheeler



As part of her weekend visit to the East Lancashire Missional Partnership, the Moderator of General Assembly, Catriona Wheeler, ventured over Partnership borders to lead worship for Lancashire North Missional Partnership.

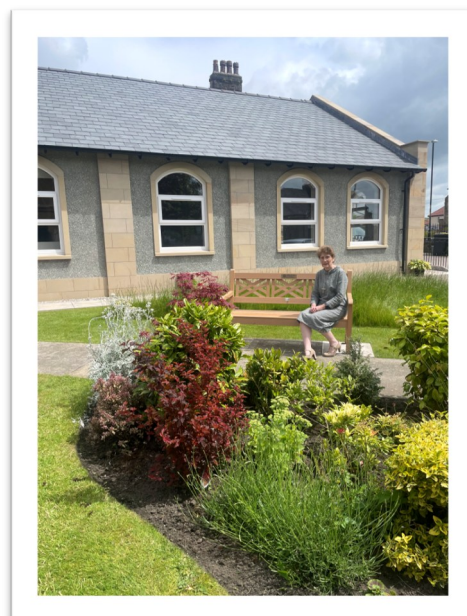
The service was held at Trinity URC, Lancaster, and members of all North Partnership churches were invited to attend. Irene John, one of the LNMP ministers, and Daleen ten Cate, Mission Mentor, were also in attendance.

Tea and biscuits were served after the service and Catriona was given a light lunch before returning to Lancashire East ready to lead another service in the afternoon.

All present appreciated Catriona's visit and wish her well in the future.

**Lynne Cadzow**

**Elder - Trinity URC**



## Global Mission Day 2026 - Celebrating Cameroon and Strengthening Global Christian Fellowship

On Saturday 13th June, the Lancashire South East Missional Partnership celebrated its inaugural Global Mission Day, an occasion filled with joy, learning, worship, fellowship, and a renewed commitment to global mission. The event was made even more special by the presence of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, Catriona Wheeler, who was visiting the Missional Partnership during the weekend.

The celebration brought together people from across the Partnership and beyond. Members of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon travelled from Manchester, Birmingham, Coventry, and other parts of the United Kingdom to share in the day. It was a beautiful expression of Christian unity, demonstrating how faith transcends geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries.

Throughout the day, participants were introduced to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of Cameroon. Presentations highlighted the country's history, diversity, and the witness of the Church in Cameroonian society. Exhibition stands displayed traditional Cameroonian clothing, artefacts, and cultural items, offering people an opportunity to learn more about the country's heritage. Guests were also treated to a variety of authentic Cameroonian dishes, which were enthusiastically received and enjoyed by all present.

One of the most memorable aspects of the day was the vibrant fellowship dance led by members of the Cameroonian Christian community. Through joyful singing, energetic dancing, and heartfelt praise, they shared an expression of faith that reflected both the resilience and hope of the Church in Cameroon. The atmosphere was one of celebration, gratitude, and deep fellowship.

For the Lancashire South East Missional Partnership, Global Mission Day represents much more than an annual programme. It marks the beginning of a long-term commitment to global awareness, mutual learning, and missional partnership. As churches in Lancashire engage with Cameroon and other nations in the years ahead, the hope is not only to support others but also to be transformed ourselves through encounter, prayer, and shared discipleship.

Global Mission Day serves as an invitation to Christians across Lancashire and beyond to deepen their understanding of the worldwide Church. It encourages believers to recognise that we belong to one global family, united in Christ and called to participate together in God's mission. As churches engage with this new initiative, they are invited to embark on a journey of learning and solidarity. Together, we celebrate the truth that the mission of God belongs to all of us, and that through global fellowship, local churches can discover new energy, vision, and hope for the future.

The launch of Global Mission Day marks an exciting new chapter for the Lancashire South East Missional Partnership. By beginning with Cameroon, the Partnership affirms its desire to stand alongside Christians around the world and to nurture a Church that is truly global in its outlook and mission.

Reflecting on the day, many participants commented not only on the warmth of the hospitality, the beauty of the worship, and the quality of the food, but also on the sense of belonging and shared purpose that

characterised the event. It was a powerful reminder that when Christians gather across cultures and traditions, they discover afresh the richness of God's Kingdom.

As we look ahead, we pray that Global Mission Day will continue to inspire deeper relationships, stronger partnerships, and a renewed commitment to God's mission both locally and globally. Through such encounters, we learn that while our contexts may differ, our calling remains the same: to love God, to serve our neighbours, and to bear witness to the hope of Christ in the world.

### Rev'd Gilbert Esambe



## Shaw and Heyside URC support for Francis House Children's Hospice



On Tuesday 9th June, representatives from Francis House Children's Hospice came to speak to our Ladies Fellowship.

They were very well received, and were presented with two cheques - one for the sale of knitted Easter chicks, and one for £450 for the sale of tickets for our local Playhouse 2 Theatre.

**Caroline Clynes**  
**Secretary - Shaw and Heyside URC**

## Connect: Food, Friendship and Faith



Following a period of prayerful discernment, the former Messy Church team at St Anne's URC recognised that, after ten fruitful years of ministry, it was time to prune and reshape the programme to make space for new growth. From this process, **Connect** was born.

We like to think that URC can also stand for "**U R Connected**" – connected to God, to one another, and to yourself. Connect seeks to create a welcoming space of belonging where both body and soul can be nourished.

On the third Friday of every month, Sheila, Joyce and Pam prepare a simple yet delicious meal, and people gather around tables to enjoy conversation, friendship, and reflection around a chosen theme.

At our most recent gathering, Jackie, one of our Elders, gave a cake-decorating demonstration. As she transformed a simple cake into something beautiful, Rev'd Daleen reflected on how creating a cake requires eggs to be broken first. In much the same way, life can sometimes leave us feeling broken. Yet from those experiences can emerge something beautiful - greater compassion for ourselves and for others, deeper resilience, and often a closer relationship with God.

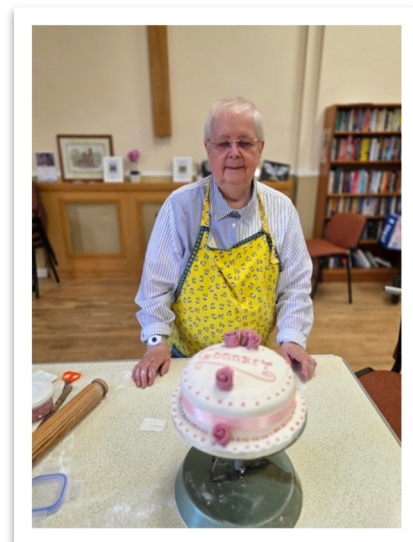
Our next Connect gathering will be "**Picnic and Praise**", celebrating the gift of music within our church family. We will enjoy performances from two talented members of St Anne's: Chris on the bagpipes and Jackie on the Wurlitzer. Music plays a significant role in the life and ministry of St Anne's, and we are blessed with a wonderful choir that enriches our worship and community life.

Why not come and join us?

**Connect** meets on the **third Friday of each month at 1.00pm** for food, friendship and faith.

**St Anne's URC**, St George's Road, Lytham St Annes, FY8 2AE

### Rev'd Daleen ten Cate and the Connect Team



## News from South Cumbria



On a beautiful sunny day, Cartmel Peninsula Churches Together celebrated Pentecost with picnics, bunting for tongues of fire, bubbles full of air – symbolising the spirit filling us and floating and flying in the spirit-fuelled wind that surrounded the early church. We completed our worship with parachute prayers both large and small helping everyone to join in.



Ramsden Street's Tree of Life banner – begun a year ago with hands created by the pupils from our local Greengate Junior School. Now finished by a team of determined sewers from the church. We've celebrated its completion with pupils from the school as they came to the church to read and chat with members from Ramsden Street and other local churches.

Sharing a Jesus puppet, we talked about the story of the mustard seed and how small things can grow amazingly – just like our reading, listening and chatting this afternoon is an important part of developing our community together. We shared a beautiful Fischy Music song – Tiny Little Seed where new life comes from the broken – how just one seed can make a difference. This happened to coincide with a visit from local councillors and community leaders on a walk round the local Ward – looking at where funds can be invested.

What a lovely God-incidence.



This year's Green Fair has been organised by our newly named group - Furness Churches' Green Group. We celebrated Big Green Week at Dalton Community Church, supporting an ever increasing group of local churches and our re:new project in their Eco Church journey. Stalls included delicious Fairtrade refreshments and products, a wonderful plant selection, delicious goodies that included Local, Organic, Animal friendly and Fairtrade produce, and an amazing Fairtrade raffle. It was great

to meet with our local MP, Michelle Scrogam, and chat with her about the small things we can all do to make a big difference.

We shared the proceeds of £411 between A Rocha and Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Seal Reserve on South Walney.

Huge thanks to everyone involved!!

**Rev'd Kate Hunt**

**URC Minister Cumbria Missional Partnership**



## Music with a Mission: Albion URC 20<sup>th</sup> June



How can music be an inspiration and instrument for God's Mission through our churches?

A group of musicians, church elders, ministers and others from across the Synod met in the beautiful surroundings of Albion URC.

The day began as the group engaged their voices with vocal warm-ups and Assembly Bangers led by Maggie McDonald, the vocal coach for the Halle choir.

The fabulous church organ at Albion Church was introduced and played by Derek Sharples.

There were presentations about a variety of musical genres and how they might support us with mission: Kurauone and Nancy introduced us to some Zimbabwean music.

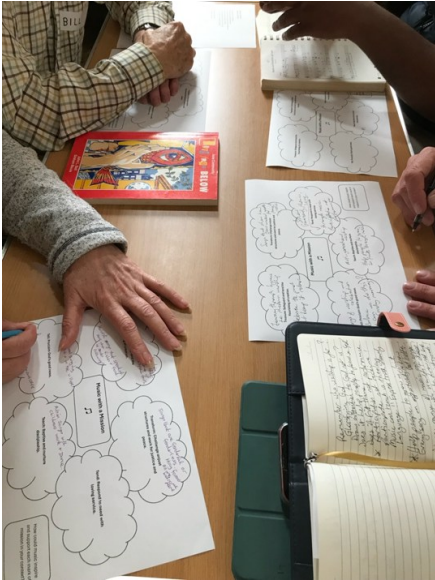
Singer / songwriter Linda Lamon played some of her music and talked about her time on Songs of Praise.



Lawrence Heath-Moore introduced us to the spirituality of some of Leonard Cohen's music.

Leo Roberts talked about music for an intergenerational church with a fun, lively song about the church being a body.





After lunch the group explored ways that music could be used to support and inspire the five marks of Mission.

It was a fabulous day, with people commenting how much they enjoyed and valued it. So a big thank you to all our presenters. However, with about 25 people present there was capacity for more. Several people had let us know that they would have liked to come but it clashed with another event or commitment. There was a lot on that weekend, so on reflection the timing may not have been the best.

This is something we would like to build on and are reflecting on holding another event early in 2027.

**Liz Delafield**

Mission and Discipleship Mentor

North Western Synod (South Area)

Stockport and High Peak Missional Partnership Convenor

Dandelion Community Management Committee Chair

## A Moment of Grace

'Mercy Begins When We Refuse to Look Away' tells the story of Kairos Housing - a small Christian charity in Blackburn with Darwen, born from the action of local churches, which provides safe homes and specialist support for asylum seekers and refugees facing homelessness and destitution. It is a story of what happens when the church refuses to look away.

At its heart is Portraits of Courage - a photography exhibition that ran at Blackburn Cathedral during Refugee Week 2026, extended by popular demand until 25th June due to an extraordinary public response. The exhibition was co-produced with sanctuary seekers themselves, guided by Dayapriya Perera, a former government photographer from Sri Lanka now awaiting his own asylum claim. The article includes powerful first-person testimonies from participants, a theological welcome from the Rev'd Canon James Lawrence of Blackburn Cathedral, and a call to churches to be communities of radical welcome. The General Assembly Moderator, Catriona Wheeler, visited the exhibition on her visit to Lancashire, as well as many URC and DARE (Darwen Asylum Seeker Refugee Enterprise) members.



*Voices of Courage, Sheriff of Lancashire, Mayor of Blackburn with Darwen , Lord Lieutenant of Lancaster*

Kairos Housing takes its name from the Greek word for a specific 'moment of grace' - the opportune time for decisive action. It was born in 2020 when one of its founding trustees, Rev'd Daleen ten Cate, a local URC Missional Discipleship Mentor, encountered a homeless asylum seeker sleeping rough in Blackburn. His initial asylum claim had failed. There was nowhere to house him. She called local churches into action and Kairos Housing was born.

Five years on, now based in Church House, in the grounds of Blackburn Cathedral, Kairos manages five two-bedroom homes across Blackburn with Darwen and is the only organisation in Lancashire housing asylum seekers facing destitution. In that time, they have provided over 17,000 nights of accommodation to over 40 individuals. They provide short-term shared accommodation and specialist support for asylum seekers and refugees in Blackburn with Darwen who are experiencing homelessness and destitution after receiving a decision, whether positive or negative on their asylum claim.

Kairos supports two groups of people, each with very different needs.

Asylum seekers with No Recourse to Public Funds are legally barred from working, renting or claiming benefits. Often surviving on park benches and in dangerous situations before being referred to Kairos, they arrive with nothing. For these guests, Kairos covers all living costs and supports fresh asylum claims.

Newly recognised refugees face a different but equally precarious moment. Upon receiving their status, they have just 28 days to leave Home Office accommodation - suddenly able to work, claim benefits and rent, but often with no idea how to navigate any of it, and carrying years of unprocessed trauma. For these guests, Kairos provides a home and claims Housing Benefit on their behalf, with guests contributing a weekly amount towards utilities.

For all guests, Kairos provides intensive casework and 1:1 mentoring alongside trauma-informed Wellbeing and Independent Living workshops, supporting each person through the practical and emotional work of building an independent life in the UK.

This depth of understanding is reflected in the team itself - over 50% of Kairos staff have personal experience of navigating the asylum process. Their mission is simple and radical: to show the love of Jesus as they provide sanctuary, build community and seek justice. The team provides housing and support to individuals of all backgrounds, identities, faiths, genders, sexual orientations and abilities, offering a radically welcoming, affirming and supportive environment where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and care. Christian faith motivates and shapes everything. The team are committed to serving with love, compassion and integrity, and prayer is offered when appropriate, but never expected.

The impact of that radical welcome is heard again and again in the words of those guests who have experienced it:

“Kairos gives hope... and hope is everything in this immigration system.”

“I cannot find the words to thank everyone at Kairos for their kindness. I thank God that there are such people.”

“Without Kairos I would be lost... I would not be able to see my bright future. Kairos is a blessing from God for me.”

“Kairos is synonymous with family for me. With Kairos, I am not afraid of being alone.”

## **THE EXHIBITION: PORTRAITS OF COURAGE**

Portraits of Courage is the public face of that mission - a photography exhibition featuring 20 sanctuary seekers living in Blackburn with Darwen. It ran at Blackburn Cathedral during Refugee Week 2026 and, due to an extraordinary public response, was extended until 25th June.

The project grew out of Kairos' weekly Wellbeing sessions. Participants were invited to tell their own stories, in their own words, on their own terms. They extended this invitation to others from the sanctuary seeking community across the borough.

Central to making that possible was Dayapriya Perera. For decades he had documented history in Sri Lanka, eventually rising to become head of the photography division for the government's Department of Information. He photographed presidents and travelled the world on official assignments. Then in 2024, threatened by a new government who demanded he betray those he had once photographed; he was forced to flee - arriving in the UK on a visitor's visa and claiming political asylum. He is still waiting.

"I am a family man. I love my wife and my two children. Being apart from them is the hardest challenge. I am here in England because I want to fight to bring my family to safety."

In the meantime, he picked up a camera again - and handed his expertise to others. Drawing on his lifetime of professional experience, Dayapriya mentored fellow participants through the photography process, enabling each person to capture and tell their own story. Each portrait panel features a QR code; scan it and you hear the participant's own voice.

In the words of Lisa Norcross, CEO of Kairos Housing: "These are not the stories of strangers. They are the stories of neighbours, colleagues and friends who make up the vibrant community that calls Blackburn with Darwen home."

Twenty powerful photographs and stories make up the exhibition. Here is a taste of just some of them. You can also purchase a copy of the exhibition book - with 100% of the proceeds going directly to Kairos Housing - at [www.kairoshousing.org.uk/portraits-of-courage.html](http://www.kairoshousing.org.uk/portraits-of-courage.html)

## **THE GOOD SAMARITAN IN BLACKBURN**

Blackburn Cathedral provided not just a venue, but a theological home for the exhibition. Within the Cathedral, in St Martin's Chapel, sits Kathryn Monks' stained glass sculpture, 'Looking for Peace'. It was inspired by a conversation with a Somali refugee living in Blackburn, who explained that all those fleeing conflict and seeking asylum were simply "looking for peace." Its deep blues of crossing ocean waters set against a glowing cross of personal fortitude capture the timeless human search for safety and rest.

The Rev'd Canon James Lawrence, Canon Missioner of Blackburn Cathedral, welcomed the exhibition with these words:

"In this extraordinary exhibition we are confronted with the faces and stories of people who live in our community. In his famous parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus made a despised foreigner a hero because of the mercy he displayed. The question is no longer 'who is my neighbour?' but 'will I become a neighbour to the person in need?' Mercy begins when we refuse to look away."

## **I FELT I HAD A 99% CHANCE OF DYING**

Darman served in the Afghan army alongside British and NATO forces, eventually qualifying as a military engineer in Bangalore in 2017.

"When the Taliban took back control I had to leave my country immediately. I had no money, and I had to hide in the mountains because the Taliban were looking for me. Eventually, after 11 days walking, I crossed into Pakistan. I felt I had a 99% chance of dying as I had no food or water, and the land was dry."

“I then went on to cross 13 different countries before arriving in England. I was jailed in four of these countries. In Italy, I was kept in an overcrowded cell with other migrants who hadn’t been fed for three days. I complained to the commander. I told him about my service to the army and UN human rights organisations, and he let us all go.”

“I want to train as a nurse now, helping vulnerable people and giving them peace, which will give me peace. Making others happy is the biggest wealth for me. We must prove our humanity.”

### **I WALKED TO MY FRONT DOOR, NOT KNOWING WHAT I WOULD FIND ON THE OTHER SIDE**

Sadiq was born in Erbil, Iraq, in 1988.

“In 1995, my mother and I had to flee for our lives. I remember running with a duvet over my head. My mother gave me this to protect me from being shot. There were bullets flying all around us as we ran through the streets. We eventually found safety in an underground shelter.”

At 25, Sadiq had to flee again.

“I walked to my front door, not knowing what I would find on the other side. It took me two months to get to the UK, fleeing across several countries by myself. I often went for days without food.”

He has now been in England for 12 years, still awaiting the outcome of his asylum appeal.

“It felt like I was living in a prison in Iraq, and now it feels like I live in a big cage here. If you do not have refugee status, you cannot work, you cannot do anything.”

“I keep going for the people that love me. It also helps me to cope when I think that I am not the only one in this situation.”

### **THE THING THAT KEEPS ME GOING IS MY FAITH**

The portraits tell stories of great courage and hope. Ramin fled Iran after a picture of an opposition leader was found in his home - enough to earn him twenty years in prison.

“When I fled to Turkey, with the help of my uncle, I left behind my family, my house, my land, my car... everything I had worked very hard for.”

He made it to the UK via Germany and the Jungle Refugee Camp in Calais. In a hotel with other asylum seekers, a friend invited him to church.

“I am now a Christian and I am happy, because I have a Christian family all around me who help me and love me. The thing that keeps me going is my faith.”

Ramin’s portrait hangs in Blackburn Cathedral alongside nineteen others. His story is one small testimony to what happens when the church chooses to be neighbour. At the bottom of his portrait, he has added a small handwritten note... “Update: I have recently received my status as a refugee! Happy I can stay!”

## **A WALL OF WELCOME**

Visitors were invited to add their own messages to a Wall of Welcome inside the Cathedral. It has not stopped growing.

“Inspiring stories from wonderful people. Welcome to Blackburn.” - David Collinge, High Sheriff of Lancashire.

“Welcome! I cannot imagine what it has been like for you. You are so loved by God.”

“You are precious, you are loved and you are welcome.”

“I hope you find peace.”

The wall keeps growing. People are coming back. People are bringing others.

## **A CALL TO WELCOME**

Kairos Housing is a practical, faithful response to the crisis facing asylum seekers and refugees in our communities. Born from the action of local churches, sustained by the generosity of supporters, and rooted in the conviction that every life has inherent dignity, it is what it looks like when the church refuses to look away.

But Kairos cannot do this alone. Our churches are called to be places of radical welcome - communities where the stranger is not just tolerated but genuinely received, where the question we ask is ‘how can we walk alongside you?’ The exhibition, the stories, and the Wall of Welcome at Blackburn Cathedral all point to something the church has always known that when we welcome the stranger, we encounter something of God.

Portraits of Courage is hoping to tour in the future. If your church would like to host the exhibition, please get in touch. Here you can find out more about the work of Kairos, read more about the exhibition, watch the behind-the-scenes documentary of the making of the exhibition, and order a copy of the exhibition book: [www.kairoshousing.org.uk/portraits-of-courage.html](http://www.kairoshousing.org.uk/portraits-of-courage.html)

These are not just photographs on a wall. They are an invitation - to see differently, to act justly, and to be the kind of community our faith calls us to be.

**Rev'd Daleen ten Cate**

**Missional Discipleship Mentor**

# Safeguarding

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 have completed training within a professional organisation in the previous 3 years**. This course does not look at the signs and symptoms of abuse - if you need this you will need to complete Foundation level training (see above). Please click on the link to access this module: [An Introduction to Safeguarding in the URC](#)

## Online + Face-to-Face Safeguarding Training

### Combined Foundation + Intermediate Safeguarding Training

**Wednesday 26th August 2026 – 1.00pm to 3.30pm – Online**

To book please click [here](#)

**Monday 7th September 2026 – 6.00pm to 8.30pm – Online**

To book please click [here](#)

**Wednesday 23rd September 2026 – 1.00pm to 3.30pm – In Person - Fairhaven URC**

22 Clifton Dr, Lytham Saint Annes, FY8 1AX

To book please click [here](#)

## Advanced Safeguarding Training

**Online Advanced - Wed 16th September 2026 - 6pm-9.15pm** (including a break)

To book please click [here](#)

## Minister's Advanced Safeguarding Training

Please click the link below for the booking form. The zoom link will then be sent the week before.

If you have any queries, please contact: [Carrie Kaunda](#)

- Monday 5th October 1-3pm and Monday 12th October 1-3.30pm – [October booking form](#)

## Church Safeguarding Coordinator Training

**Online Church Safeguarding Coordinator Training - Mon 24th August 2026 - 6.30pm-8.30pm**

Church Safeguarding Coordinator Training for those new to the role, or as a refresher for existing coordinators

To book please click [here](#)

## URC Learning Hub

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

## DDC Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) & Safer Recruitment training

For those involved in DBS verification for England and Wales our DBS Partner, [Due Diligence Checking \(DDC\)](#), runs Zoom courses in conjunction with the URC on how to use the DDC portal to conduct DBS checks, and also how this fits into safer recruitment in the URC.

The dates for 2026 are:

- Thursday 9 July 10am-12pm
- Tuesday 8 September 10am-12pm
- Thursday 8 October 10am-12pm

Please contact [Emma Pearce](#) to book a session stating your name/church and role.

## Specialist/Supplementary Training

The URC runs bite-sized two hour Zoom sessions open to anyone across the denomination on a variety of topics to complement your current safeguarding knowledge.

Upcoming sessions:

- Thursday 2nd July - Domestic Abuse - 10.30am
- Tuesday 7th July - Supporting Survivors - 1.00pm
- Tuesday 14th July - Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Modern Slavery - 7.00pm

For a list of future topics and dates please click [here](#)

Please make your booking by emailing [Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk](mailto:Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk) stating your name, church, role and course preference.

## Newsletter from the URC Safeguarding Team

To access the latest editions of the quarterly Newsletters from the URC, please click [here](#)

## Safeguarding Contacts

**Yvette Hansbury-Robinson** - Synod Safeguarding Officer - [safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk)

**General Safeguarding Queries** - relating to safeguarding training and/or DBS, please email the Safeguarding Team on [helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk)

## Sacrament Training



Please note the following dates for Sacrament Training. If you are due for reauthorisation, please take note of the following training dates:

Tues 6th October - 2pm - Communion

Tues 20th October - 2pm - Baptism

Tues 20th October - 7pm - Communion

Tues 10th November - 2pm - Funerals

Tues 10th November - 7pm - Communion

Tues 24th November - 2pm - Weddings

For those who have had three or more authorisations for communion or baptism, we will be offering a short video (coming soon) which will satisfy the requirement for reauthorisation. If you have had fewer than three

communion or baptism sessions, the live Zoom session is required.

If you have had more than three communion or baptism sessions, and you prefer to participate in the live Zoom, you are welcome. When you RSVP for sacrament training, please indicate the number of trainings you have had already.

To book, please click [here](#) which will take you to the Events Calendar.

# Ministry, Theology and Practice

More information about the programme can be found here:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/ministrytheologypractice/>



## MTh/PGDip/PGCert in Ministry, Theology and Practice for pastoral practitioners who want to reflect on ministry today

- Study congregational life, preaching and leadership in a changing world
- Expert tuition and a supportive learning environment
- Part-time, mixed-mode delivery with face to face opportunities in either London or Glasgow

### Students say...



"I was seeking opportunities to think theologically about what God might be doing in the church and world now and into the future. This programme is certainly meeting my needs."



"An opportunity to reflect on my own ministry journey and current context, with critical eyes and kindness of heart. A wonderful opportunity to 'see again'."



"This programme promotes academic excellence alongside ministry development. It supports inclusivity and will be helpful to ministers from different backgrounds."

**"This course has been a source of life for me and my congregation."**

# Study at Glasgow University to develop the next stages of your ministry

## Ministry, theology and practice



**APPLY NOW FOR SEPTEMBER 2026**



Full fee Dr Williams's Glasgow bursaries are available for qualifying students from the dissenting traditions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.\* Those exercising ministry in the Church of Scotland may be eligible for other forms of support.



**More information?**

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/ministrytheologypractice/sally.nelson@glasgow.ac.uk>



This programme is offered collaboratively between the Dr Williams's Trust, the University of Glasgow and Trinity College Glasgow.

\*See the University website for bursary details



## Holiday Club Materials and Grants



online from  
May 2026

Come and join the adventure  
with **Wisdom Quest** from URC Children and  
Youth  
Journey through the bible on a quest for some  
wise words.

Including group challenges, stories, prayers,  
craft, activities and much, much more.  
Additional material for other age groups.  
All materials can be found here  
<https://bit.ly/URC-holidayclub>

Grants for holiday clubs available:  
[urc.org.uk/grants-funding-opportunities](https://urc.org.uk/grants-funding-opportunities)



This year's URC Holiday Club materials from the Children, Youth and Intergenerational team (CYI) are available at:

[Holiday Club Materials - United Reformed Church.](#)

With the theme **Wisdom Quest**, these are free, downloadable resources for those running holiday clubs for children aged 5–11. (Plus appendices for intergenerational, toddlers, 11–14s and vintage holiday clubs.)

Tying in with the CYI theme for the year, **Wise Words**, begin the quest of searching for God's wisdom, in words, actions and lives. Throughout the Bible we find words to live by, including the 'I am...' statements of Jesus. Explore some of these stories while thinking about how to share our wisdom with others.



### Grants

The Children, Youth and Intergenerational Committee supports churches in running holiday clubs by offering a grant of either £50 or £100 towards the costs of resources, snacks, decorations, equipment etc.

Apply at: [Children & Youth work grants - United Reformed Church](#)

## Community Screenings and Call to Action

*The People's Emergency Briefing* is a 50-minute documentary film that presents the latest evidence on the climate and nature crisis in the UK. Hosted by Chris Packham, it features nine leading UK experts detailing how the crisis threatens everyday life, from food security and extreme weather to the cost of living and health.

The film is designed to inform the public and spark actionable community discussions on local and national resilience.

Following a landmark briefing in Westminster to politicians and peers, the project was released for community screenings across the UK.

The film will be screened at **Clitheroe URC** on **7<sup>th</sup> July 2026** at **7pm** hosted by the Repair Café and Ribble Valley Climate Action Network.

Please register [here](#), use the QR code below or email [ribblevalleycan@gmail.com](mailto:ribblevalleycan@gmail.com).

### *If you care about:*

- local flooding*
- air pollution*
- the cost of living*
- food prices*

### *you might want to catch this.*



Scan for more information

### **People's Emergency Briefing Film**

Screening at United Reformed Church,  
11 Castle Gate, Clitheroe, BB7 1AZ

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 7pm**

Free entry - everyone welcome!



Scan here for tickets or email  
us at  
[ribblevalleycan@gmail.com](mailto:ribblevalleycan@gmail.com)



Hosted by Ribble Valley Climate  
Action Network (RVCAN)

## Safety in Church Buildings

There has been an increase in local churches seeking support on building and people safety .

In response some guidance has been added to the URC website:

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

There is also some further information and links on the North Western Synod website - including some links to updates about Martyn's Law - please click on the link below, scroll down to Property and select the 'Safety in Church' section.

[Trust and Property — URC North Western](#)

## A request for some help from Revd Ruth Watson

A personal request as mentioned at the March Synod meeting. My son is currently completing a Master's Degree in Psychology and is writing his dissertation. His theme is "The Impact of Mental Health Labels on Perceptions of Criminal Offenders" and he is looking for volunteers to complete a questionnaire to explore this area. It is not specifically religiously based, he just needs as many as possible to complete the survey so he has data to analyse. All responses are anonymised.

If you would like to take part (or know of anyone who would be interested), please contact Ruth Watson at [ruth.watson@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:ruth.watson@nwsynod.org.uk) or on 07811 859 706 and I will send you the link. He needs all responses by the end of July.

Thank you

Ruth

**Revd Ruth Watson**

## NW Synod World Church Committee



On Tuesday 16th June, the NW Synod World Church Committee shared worship on google meet with the our global partner, the Chiayi Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). It was good to be joined by our new Moderator. There were 7 members from the synod meeting with the ecumenical group of the Chiayi presbytery which included Yao-Yi and Kelly who have visited us.

The worship involved both our Taiwanese friends and our group members. The worship included a video and a talk by Rev'd Sam about the Geopolitical Security in the Taiwan Strait. We learnt that it is thought that China is reluctant to use military force because not only is Taiwan conflict ready but the international community would be against them. China is using more subtle ways of taking over by threatening oil and gas supplies and infiltrating the parliament.

Rev'd Sam shared about the work of the Chiayi Presbytery Church and Society Committee and he talked about stepping down from the pulpit and leading his brothers and sisters into action. He explained that they organise defence and security training courses which combine disaster preparedness, personal safety and social action empowerment in response to the security situation in the Taiwan strait. Previously they had rapid response mobilisation during typhoons and earthquakes. They can learn from these experiences and deepen their skills.

Quoting Rev'd Sam "Through love and suffering we become a sign of hope".

Pray for Taiwan and for the PCT; for strength and for peace.

**Barbara Redmond - Global Partnership Coordinator**

## Hanging File Folders - looking for a new home!

John Piper has contacted the Synod Office to let us know that he has 2 boxes of unused hanging file folders if anyone can make use of them.

If so please email John at [john.piper30@ntlworld.com](mailto:john.piper30@ntlworld.com)

## Talking NW Synod - From Battlefields to the Moderator's Chair: Rev'd Mike Thomason's Journey



Friends, meet Reverend Mike Thomason, the newly appointed Moderator of the North Western Synod, in the latest episode of the Synod podcast series.

In this episode, Mike recounts his journey from Salford and army chaplaincy to local church leadership, sharing stories from Iraq, Afghanistan, and community ministry.

He outlines his pastoral, presence-centred approach to leadership, the synod's challenges and plans for review, and a call to shift from maintenance to mission - urging churches to engage their local communities and pray for his ministry.

Please click below link to listen:

[From Middle-Eastern Battlefields to the Moderator's Chair: Rev. Mike Thomason's Journey | Talking NW Synod](#)

## Request from the Dandelion Community

Hello from The Dandelion Community in Wythenshawe.

As part of ongoing renovations and redecoration at our community hub we would like to give our floors a really good clean.

If any church has an electric rotary floor scrubber / buffer we could borrow (see example picture below) we would be very grateful.

Please contact Mike at [dandelion.hub.coordinator@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:dandelion.hub.coordinator@nwsynod.org.uk).

Many thanks

Mike

**Rev'd Mike Walsh**

**Coordinator at The Dandelion Community**



## Useful Links



### Jobs & Volunteer Opportunities at the URC

For more details please click [here](#)



### URC News Update

Please click [here](#) for the latest updates from around the URC



### URC Children's, Youth + Intergenerational Work Team

For the latest news from the C Y W & I Team, plus a link to the latest bi-monthly Newsletter please click [here](#)



### JPIT Newsletter

Click [here](#) for the June 2026 Newsletter

May 2026

# Daily Devotions

from The United Reformed Church

## Welcome to Daily Devotions from the URC

Each morning the URC sends out a reading, reflection and short prayer which helps us to focus on our journeys of Christian discipleship. Please click [here](#) for more information.



[Luther King Newsletter: June 2026](#)

## for our Prayers

We invite you to pray:

- 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
- For the continued growth of church mission