



## THAMES NORTH SYNOD NEWS ROUNDUP

**Welcome to our News Roundup for 15 January 2026.**

Please circulate this widely so that the great events and opportunities here can benefit as many as possible. Please feel free to copy and paste any of this news for your own church's noticeboards or newsletters.

## Events Diary

**There is One Body and One Spirit just as you are called to the One Hope** on 19 and 21 January 2026 at 8pm

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84436613127?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84436613127?pwd=KSPFWaQDBMKaQInlMcC0N3JUHo5KNn.1)

[pwd=KSPFWaQDBMKaQInlMcC0N3JUHo5KNn.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84436613127?pwd=KSPFWaQDBMKaQInlMcC0N3JUHo5KNn.1)

**FaithTalk webinar – Preparing for Easter** on 28 January 2026 at 7-8pm <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/faith-talk-webinars-4796784>

**Resources Day 2026 at 10am** on Saturday 31 January 2026. Hybrid - in person at Lumen and online (link to follow in the new year). Book [here](#) or with Colleen at [modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

**Preachers Circle: How to Construct a Clear Sermon** on Saturday 7 February 2026 at Lumen 10:30am-12:30pm. [To register](#)

**Authorised Elders Communion Presidency Refresher Training** on Saturday 7 February 2026 at Lumen 2 - 4pm. [To register](#)

**"How shall we sing that majesty?" Finding the right hymn for the right moment"** on Tuesday 10 February at 7:30-9:30pm2026 via Zoom [rgoldring23@gmail.com](mailto:rgoldring23@gmail.com)

**Wise Words - Youth Assembly 2026** 27 February to 2 March 2026. [Book here](#)

**URC Youth Leaders Gathering** 27 February-1 March 2026 at Highgate House, Northampton. [Register](#)

**Join JPIT on Iona** from 17-23 October 2026. Bookings are now open. Find out more [here](#).

### **Meetings of Synod Dates/Venues -**

21 March 2026 Venue: TBA

17 October 2026 Venue: TBA

**Please note:** Synod meetings are usually on the 3rd Saturday of March and October.

## Synod News

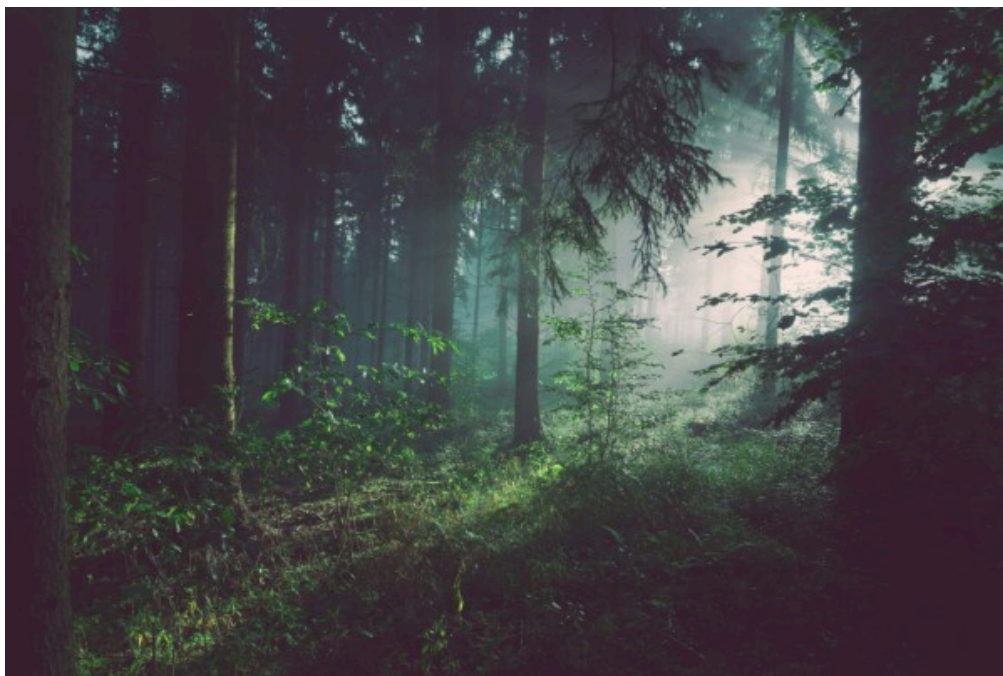


The Moderator's first preach of the year, on the subject of hope being pastoral, prophetic and political (kept them awake to hear what he was going to say on the third part!) at Ealing Green URC. Couldn't have been too controversial since they want him to go back again.



The communion table looked to be an antique dining table.

## A Message from the Green Team



### Forest Church

One way of connecting to the natural environment is to set up, or join, a forest church. Forest church is a way of being church outdoors, in natural surroundings, where people can engage with God in a different way. Forest churches are attractive to people who find they can connect more easily with God in the outdoors than in a church building. The focus is on re-connecting people with God and the natural environment. They are usually all age gatherings, meeting regularly during the year. Services involve worship and fellowship in the same way as a church in a building but often include extra activities specific to the outdoors. There is no set way of organising a forest church, it could, for example, be focused around a walk, a meal or a singalong. Neither is there a set place to meet, it can be a woodland, a park or garden. Some forest churches celebrate the Celtic festivals through the year, from Candlemas, to Mayday, Lammas and all Hallows, and then starting again with Epiphany.

If you lead, or attend, a forest church where you are, please let us know by emailing Colleen, so that we can put the information on the website. If you are interested in setting up a forest church we can suggest resources to help you do that.

*Jill Nugent*

# RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch



Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's largest garden wildlife survey. Every year, hundreds of thousands of nature lovers like you take part, helping to build a picture of how garden birds are faring.

## How to take part

1. Get your free guide and stock up on supplies, with 20% off and free delivery on food and feeders at the RSPB shop.
2. Spend an hour watching the birds in your patch, between 23 and 25 January, and record the birds that land.
3. Tell us what you saw (even if that's nothing at all)! You can submit your results online or by post.

[Find out more here.](#)

# ART



## in plain sight

### **Art in Plain Sight**

Following the ongoing success of this Thames North Synod project, there is now an opportunity for a few of our local churches to begin to be a new host venue starting in the early summer of this year. This involves a two-year programme of an A2 print of art/photo which changes every month and is displayed in an area of your building with a good level of community and congregational footfall. All the art and the equipment is provided free of charge to you.

To register an interest or to find out more then please contact our Discipleship Enabler Eddie Boon via [disc.enab@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:disc.enab@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

## What's On



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Theology of Worship Group

*exploring the practice and nature of worship today*

Exploring

Reflecting

Living

## "How shall we sing that majesty?" Finding the right hymn for the right moment"

Speaker - **Revd Dominic Grant**

Dominic is a URC minister and hymn-writer, and will reflect upon some of the theological issues at stake in choosing hymns for services of worship.

**Date: Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

**Time: 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. via Zoom**

If you have not yet registered with the Group and may be interested in attending this meeting, please contact Richard Goldring for further information: [rgoldring23@gmail.com](mailto:rgoldring23@gmail.com)



# Preachers' Circle

## How to construct a clear sermon



**Saturday 7 February 2026**

**10:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

**Lumen, 88 Tavistock Place,  
London, WC1H 9RS**

**Co-led by:  
Julian Templeton  
Training and Development Officer**

**This workshop will discuss the craft  
of sermon construction and offer  
guidance on how to:**

- **identify themes from biblical texts**
- **select a clear message**
- **use a structure to explore the message**

**Nathan Eddy  
Co-Director, Council of Christians  
and Jews  
Chaplain, Mansfield College  
Oxford**

**To register, email Ola Lawal,  
Lay Preaching Advocate:  
[lpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:lpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)**

**To register**

# Authorised Elders

## Communion Presidency Refresher Training



**Saturday 7 February 2026**

**2:00 - 4:00 PM**

**Lumen, 88 Tavistock Place,  
London, WC1H 9RS**

Elders who have been authorised to preside at Holy Communion are expected to refresh their training every three years.

This refresher will assume that Elders already have experience of presiding and wish to reflect on their practice and learn from the practice of others.

This session is for those seeking to develop what they already do. (initial training, which can be repeated, will be offered on future dates).

Co-led by:  
Julian Templeton  
Training and Development Officer

John Campbell  
Tutor and Minister

To register, email Julian Templeton  
**[training@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:training@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)**

To register



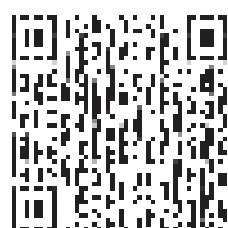
URC  
**YOUTH ASSEMBLY**  
2025

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

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

# WISE WORDS

Here's a taste of  
Youth Assembly 2025  
[www.bit.ly/3TkqSfn](http://www.bit.ly/3TkqSfn)



Great venue  
with twin  
rooms and  
good food!

# WISER ACTIONS



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church Youth

Cost: £155  
uary

27 February to  
1 March 2026  
Kings Park Conference  
Centre, Northampton  
NN3 6LL

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

# WISE WORDS



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church Youth

**Worship** – Inspiring Bible studies, prayer zones, powerful music, and 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.

Book your place  
today:  
[www.linktr.ee/URCYouthAssembly](http://www.linktr.ee/URCYouthAssembly)

**Entertainment** – From campfires and karaoke to crafts and games – there's always something going down!

Book your place today

# 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 Newbigin 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**

Register now <http://linktr.ee/urcyouthleadersgathering>. Contact your CYDO about grants to support the cost of attending Lorraine Downer

**ONLINE EVENT WITH  
FAIRTRADE CEO  
ELEANOR HARRISON  
29 JANUARY 2026  
6PM - 7PM  
ONLINE VIA ZOOM**



# Online event with The Fairtrade Foundation CEO, Eleanor Harrison. Sign-up to hear how we can 'Do it Fair' together in 2026.

**Date:** 29 January 2026

**Time:** 6 PM - 7 PM

**Location:** Online via Zoom

[Sign up here](#)

There are many small yet powerful acts of solidarity made possible through the Fairtrade movement – acts that help deliver better incomes, fair wages, and improved working conditions for farmers and workers globally. Whether it's someone writing to their MP to demand fair pay for farmers, a community group running a stall at a local fair, speaking at a school, or people actively choosing Fairtrade products.

## John Bunyan 400th Anniversary



John Bunyan's life story is rooted in the landscape of Bedford and Bedfordshire. His most famous book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, draws creatively on the buildings and fields he knew so well. Our town and countryside, and indeed the world beyond, are full of Bunyan references, which is why Bunyan Meeting House have formed a **Trails, Tours and Monuments** group to explore and revive the cultural heritage of John Bunyan ahead of the Bunyan 400 celebrations.

## **Resources Day 2026**

**Saturday 31 January 10-4pm at Lumen**

for Church Secretaries, Treasurers, administrators and property managers.

With updates on property, legal and finance matters and a special focus on what the URC's Church Life Review might mean for your church.

The event will be hybrid (online and in person). To book please fill in this form <https://forms.office.com/r/rr0w3Ts4ej?origin=lpLink> or email Colleen Fraser at [modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

## **Vacancies**

### **Temporary Lumen Centre Manager**

Thames North Synod are looking to recruit an innovative and inspiring person to manage the Lumen Centre as a key resource facility for the Synod and to grow a Christian presence and witness there as we continue to develop a vision for the building.

The Lumen Centre is located in Central London (Tavistock Place). The Lumen Centre is a building that is strategically situated to play a key role in the development of the surrounding community, building bridges with local people and other churches as well as offering opportunities for worship and discipleship.

The postholder will have responsibility for overseeing the running and use of the building, and will work closely with the Synod Discipleship Enabler, Training Officer, Children and Youth Development Officer and other Synod staff members to make the most effective use of the



building for the Synod. They will also help to continue to grow a Christian presence and witness.

This is a full-time post (37.5 Hours) requiring some flexibility in the pattern of hours worked, with a fixed term contract of 2 years at a salary of circa £35,000 - £40,000 per annum based on experience.

*In accordance with the Equality Act 2010: Part 1, Schedule 9, there is a genuine occupational requirement for the post holder to be a practising Christian.*

*This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check*

For a more detailed description of the position and application form please contact:

Colleen Fraser, URC Thames North Synod, Newton Road, London W2 5LS  
T: 020 7799 5000 and leave voicemail or 075 3185 3524

E: [office@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:office@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

W: [www.urcthamesnorth.org.uk](http://www.urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

**Closing date for applications:** 12 noon, 29 January 2026

## Safeguarding Training 2026

# UK Wide Safeguarding Training 2026

Make your booking by emailing: [Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk](mailto: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

Foundation  
Training can be  
accessed on the  
Learning Hub  
[Home | URC Learning Hub](#)



[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)



From the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Committee

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