



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

## THAMES NORTH SYNOD NEWS ROUNDUP

### Welcome to our News Roundup for 18 December 2025.

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.



Wishing everyone a blessed and peaceful Christmas and all that is good in 2026.

## Events Diary

**Save the Date: 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](#)

**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.

## **News from here and there**

## **A Special Invitation**



In 2001, David Jonathan, called Johny, was invited as a CWM-URC Partner to work with Grassroots Luton and the Luton Council of Faiths. His mission was to promote peace, justice, reconciliation, and to develop interfaith initiatives that embraced all sections of the community and all age groups.

Since then, Johny's work has been widely recognised, earning him numerous awards and accolades.

This year, Johny was honoured to receive a special invitation to a Christmas Reception at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday, 10th December. The event was held to thank Christians from diverse denominations and backgrounds who are actively engaged in voluntary service within their local communities.

Guests enjoyed mulled wine and canapés, accompanied by music and participatory carol singing led by a small community choir.

Rev. Baroness Maeve Sherlock, Minister of State for Work and Pensions in the House of Lords, led the gathering in prayer.

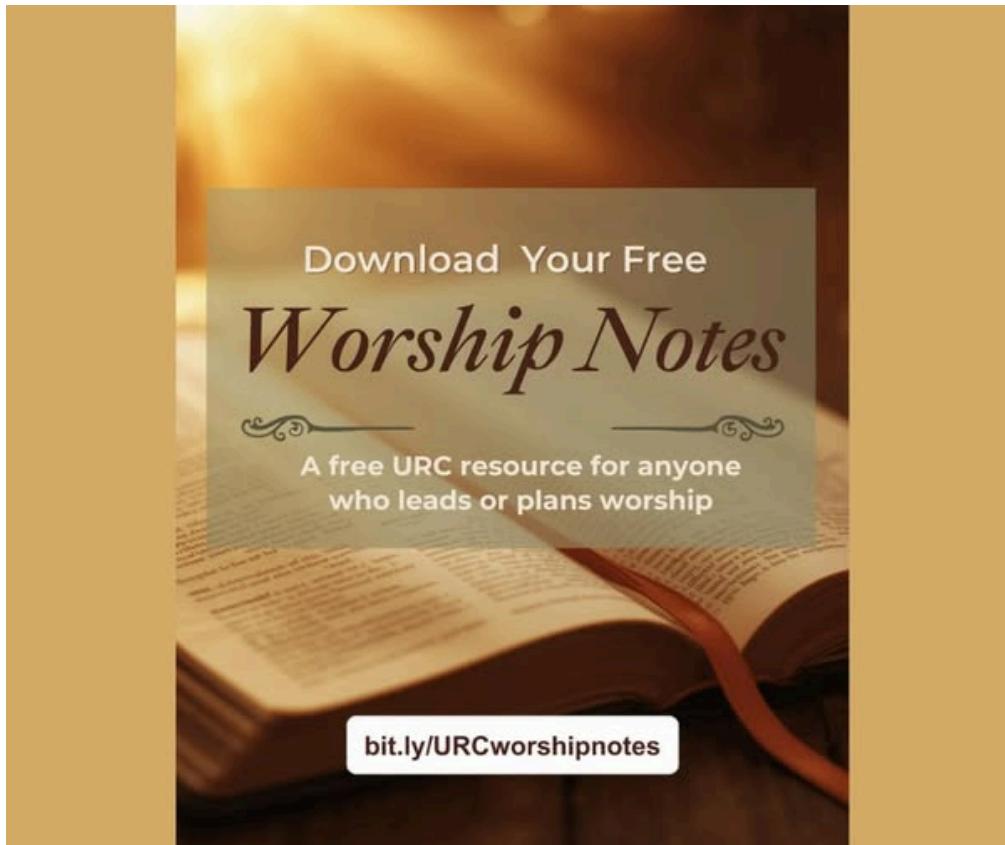
Jasmine Mitchell, winner of the 2025 Great British Bake Off, spoke about the importance of hospitality. She reminded everyone how food has the power to bring people together across divides, encouraging us to follow Jesus' example by sharing meals with others—especially in today's climate of polarisation and division.

MP Steve Reed addressed the guests on behalf of the Prime Minister, who had been delayed by a phone call with President Trump and President Zelenskyy. Reed expressed gratitude for the contributions of all those present, affirming the government's recognition of the vital role churches and faith communities play in bringing hope, wellbeing, and reconciliation to society.

Following his call, the Prime Minister made a brief appearance. Johny was honoured to spend thirty seconds with him, including a warm and welcoming handshake.

Reflecting on the occasion, Johny said:

"I feel humbled and grateful to receive this invitation. As encouraged by the Prime Minister and all those I met at 10 Downing Street, I remain committed to celebrating Christmas by loving God and loving our neighbours. May our Christmas celebrations reflect Christ's message of peace and goodwill to all humankind."



Advent and Christmas worship resources are freely, available for use on the URC website.

Each issue of Worship Notes includes:

- \*A call to worship
- \*Prayers of approach, confession and a declaration/assurance of forgiveness
- \*A prayer for illumination
- \*An all-age activity or introduction
- \*Readings and notes on these readings that could be built into a sermon
- \*Prayers of intercessions
- \*An offertory Introduction and prayer
- \*A blessing
- \*Hymn suggestions for local churches sourced from Rejoice and Sing, Church Hymnary 4, Singing the Faith and Combined Mission Praise.

To download Worship Notes for free, see [bit.ly/URCworshipnotes](http://bit.ly/URCworshipnotes)

## Christ among the Rubble



Peter Musgrave of the Vine Church says: Over the past few days I have been experimenting with a pop up mini exhibition called *Christ in the Rubble*. It is based on the situation in Palestine, where cities have been reduced to rubble and on Bethlehem where Palestinians are increasingly struggling.

I have also made a mini manger in a small box full of rubble and put some nativity figures in the box and then taken the mini exhibition to churches I am attending during advent events.

I wondered if people from other URC churches would like to make their own Christ in the Rubble exhibition. It is very easy to find images to use.

In addition I have included some links to Christ among the rubble coming out of Bethlehem

**Christ in the Rubble: A Liturgy of Lament from Bethlehem in Occupied Palestine 20 mins**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mU7GQ-F80IQ>

**Christ in the Rubble: A Liturgy of Lament (2023 Christmas Message by Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac) - ( 1 hour 20 mins)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbHzqU3ZdTs>

**Fund a National Climate Resilience Plan: protect communities from climate impact**

From floods to extreme temperatures, climate impacts risk damaging homes, health, businesses, services, and the economy. We want Government to prioritise adaptation; fund a new Resilience Plan that works with nature and includes public education, infrastructure standards, and local funding.

We believe Government plans are failing us: what we see as a lack of preparation puts the UK's life-support systems at risk and a focus on short-term fixes like concrete flood walls distract from deeper threats. We think a joined-up national strategy must include local funding, upland & urban flood prevention, community resilience, ecologically sound infrastructure, housing, health, food & water security. We believe that as risks grow, without strategic action, communities face devastation, so adaptation isn't optional and must be a policy priority.

Please sign the petition.

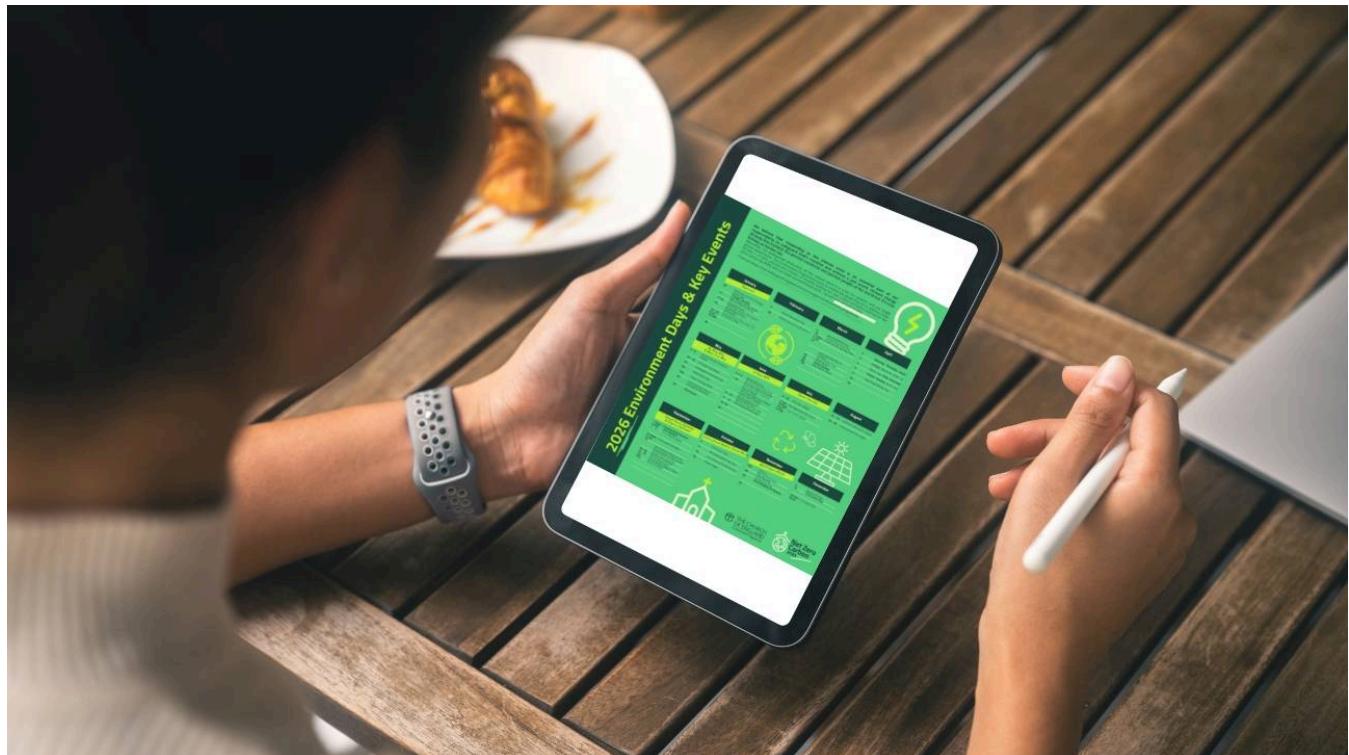
**At 10,000 signatures...**

At 10,000 signatures, government will respond to this petition

**At 100,000 signatures...**

At 100,000 signatures, this petition will be considered for debate in Parliament

## New calendar created to highlight dates and events for creation care



A new interactive calendar which marks days and weeks of the year celebrating the environment and highlighting climate change has been

published. The calendar has links to click through and learn more about the dates and events, and has also been produced in a printer-friendly version so you can share it offline too! Look at [the calendar](#).

## What's On

# 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**

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

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

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

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

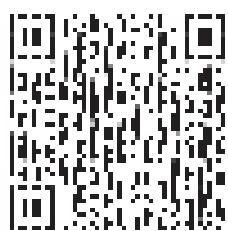
URC  
**YOUTH ASSEMBLY**  
2025

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/URC\\_YouthAssembly](http://www.linktr.ee/URC_YouthAssembly)

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

Book your place today

# URC Youth Leaders Gathering



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!**

£210



**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!**

**Speak 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

## Save the Date: 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=lprLink> or email Colleen Fraser at [modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

## Safeguarding Training 2025/2026



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

From the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Committee



## Vacancies

# Head of Ministries – Learning and Development

- London
- Full-time
- Salary: £58,648 – 62,342 or URC Minister's stipend
- Nominations deadline: Sunday 28 December 2025
- Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Monday 19 January 2026
- Interview date: Thursday 12 February 2026
- *\*In accordance with the Equality Act 2010: Part 1, Schedule 9, there is a genuine occupational requirement for the post holder to be a Christian and/or a member of the United Reformed Church or member of a Church which belongs to one or more of World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC), the Council for World Mission (CWM) Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS), Churches Together in England (CTE), Churches together in Wales (Cytun), Free Churches Group (FCG) or Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)\**
- *This role also requires a satisfactory enhanced DBS certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.*

This and other roles can be found on the URC Jobs page of the website:  
<https://urc.org.uk/jobs/>

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