



The
United
Reformed
Church

THAMES NORTH SYNOD NEWS ROUNDUP

Welcome to our News Roundup for 29 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

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

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 7:30-9:30pm 2026 via Zoom 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](#)

Limitless Festival 2026 on 5-9 August 2026 at Stafford Showground. mdoandrew@urcwestmidlands.org.uk or mdosally@urcwestmidlands.org.uk

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 & Information

New Carbon Literacy for Christian Congregations Course

Certified Carbon Literate



If you look at the Buildings and Energy section of the Eco Church Survey you will find statement 8 which says "Our Eco Church champion or team has the confidence and knowledge to carry out their role and/or has access to appropriate training or support e.g. Carbon Literacy training".

A Rocha are keen for this to be in place because it has been shown that Carbon Literacy provides people, including faith-based groups, with the resources, knowledge and tools to understand climate change, empowering them to take meaningful action. Now available for the Faith sector is the Christian Congregations Shareable Course, a comprehensive resource for delivering a full day of Carbon Literacy training tailored to people of the Christian faith.

Rooted in values such as stewardship, justice, and compassion, this course supports a low-carbon culture grounded in spiritual responsibility and collective action. Developed in collaboration with Caroline Harmon and the Church of England, the Christian Congregations course is the first of its kind, created with adaptable, pre-accredited materials and

sector specific guidance. By participating in this training, individuals and church communities gain the knowledge, confidence and collective purpose needed to reduce emissions and create low-carbon societies.

For places of worship Carbon Literacy can help embed sustainability into governance, buildings, daily practices, and outreach turning intention into measurable impact. Training has already empowered participants in faith organisations to lead change in their communities and align climate action with spiritual values and long-term climate goals.

The course is flexible and can run as a 'house group' pack over 5 weeks or two half days. Thames North Synod has arranged to make payment for those who use the training package to gain Carbon Literate Certification. You need to inform the TNS Green Team when you plan to run the course to ensure any certificates are paid for.

To access the course materials, you'll need to complete a short form and either:

- Already be certified as Carbon Literate or
- Have attended a briefing session about the course.
- For full details please get in touch with The Carbon Literacy Project at faith@carbonliteracy.com

Request for 2027 Prayer Handbook

The deadline for submitting prayers for the 2027 *Prayer Handbook* is Friday 27 February. The theme for the next edition is: **A larger belonging.**

Prayers are invited that draw us beyond tribe, nation and ideology towards God's new creation. A belonging wider than our differences and deeper than our divisions. All submissions to phb@urc.org.uk. Full information at [URC Prayer Handbook - United Reformed Church](#)

2026 Community Project Awards

The deadline for entries for the 2026 Community Project Awards is Friday 20 February. The awards are an amazing way of celebrating local work and initiatives, and supporting it financially.

Use the downloadable Word document for your entry, which includes the rules of the competition: [2026 Community Project Awards entry form](#) (Word | 905kb)

Full information and inspiration from previous winners at [Community Project Awards - United Reformed Church](#)

National Emergency Briefing



Take Action on the Climate and Nature Emergency/How to engage after the National Emergency Briefing and support science-led solutions.
[nebriefing.org](#)

26 in 26 - free poster resource on tackling poverty and injustice

Ask other people to sign up for the Church Action on Poverty service pack mailing lists. It's an easy first step on the journey!

Sign up for Church Action on Poverty news by clicking here.

Use the *Emergency Disaster* study pack, featuring the *Emergency Disaster* service pack of resources, to help your church understand why we should get alongside people who are marginalised and forgotten.

Keep an eye on the news, and write to your MP, to let them know what you think they should do about poverty in the UK.

Connect with a local community group working to combat poverty in your area. Encourage them to see what they can do to support them. If they need your hall to store free food, let them know!

Invite members of a Poetry in Prison service food project in your area to speak to your church members about the issues they are facing.

Get involved with *12 Christian Aid Week* (May 10-16) to raise money and awareness for the ways we support people in poverty, including giving, acting and praying.

Read *Anti-Slavery 101* Christian Aid Week (May 10-16) to learn more about the ways we support people in poverty.

Find out more about the impact of poverty on their local school, and encourage them to take action to support people in poverty.

Display an *Open Church* poster, share their stories and realities. Talking about poverty in your church, and the ways people in communities back, is a key step in ending poverty.

Learn from Black church leaders and theologians about how climate and social justice intersect, using resources, including a video, a discussion guide, a climate justice worship song, Everything is Yours, and the story of its creation, and a climate justice service including a sermon, and end-of-service offering.

Use Christian Aid's *Just Peace* resources which explore the conflict and the ingredients for a lasting, just peace in Israel and Palestine. Encourage your church to have a discussion and end-of-service offering.

Host a film session – *Just Peace* is a Christian Aid service, with accompanying resources to encourage your congregation to have a discussion and end-of-service offering.

Create a board or space in your church to display quotes from the Bible, and encourage your congregation to use them to tackle injustice.

26 IN 26

26 ways our church can work for justice and tackle poverty in 2026

JUST CHURCH

"Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."
Amos 5:24

Church Action on Poverty
Christian Aid

Share your progress: #church26in26

Sign up for more: church-poverty.org.uk/justchurch

Church Action on Poverty and Christian Aid have collaborated to produce '26 in 26, a poster resource for churches full of ideas for ways that you can take action to tackle poverty and injustice this year.

Get your free poster resource here



COMMUNITY ACTION PACK

2025



Every February, people across the UK make and share green hearts with their politicians to show what they love - and what they want to protect.

At the heart of Show the Love is a simple, visible act of care and leadership. It's rooted in pride for our communities, care for the places we love, and hope for the future we're building for our children. From towns and villages to cities and neighbourhoods, green hearts are a way of sharing what's at the heart of everyday life, and why it matters.

[To get your copy see here](#)

What's On

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

World Day of Prayer



This event takes place on Friday 6th March. Churches of all denominations get together to celebrate this international, ecumenical, Global Service. To find the nearest service to you, please visit the WWDP website. It may be that the service in your area isn't in a URC church, but it is good to share with Christian women and men all around the world. This year's service has been written by the women of Nigeria.

If you need any further information, please contact me – Penny Gendall , phg7782@gmail.com. I am secretary for WDP, Rayleigh, Essex.



Faith Filled Life

Learning Together

Open to all – anyone from school year 10 upwards and adults

at
Woking URC
Starting on

Thursday 5 March 2026

6.30pm – 8.30pm

8 further sessions: 9 April, 7 May, 4 June, 2 July,
13 August or 3 September, plus 2 more.

Complete a participant form available on the Synod website
www.urcwessex.org.uk/discipleship

Contact: Ruth Heine
bookings@urcwessex.org.uk
Tel: 023 8067 4513



[Access your booking form here.](#)



Limitless Festival is a vibrant summer gathering for young people, featuring dynamic ministry and a packed programme of activities, sports, events, seminars, workshops, and late night venues.

Are you 11 or over and under 18, involved in the United Reformed Church and interested in going to this great event?

For more details contact:

Rev Andrew Willetts mdoandrew@urcwestmidlands.org.uk 07828195831 or
Rev Sally Willetts mdosally@urcwestmidlands.org.uk 07828110639

We book as a group; our group information can be found here:



Contact mdoandrew@urcwestmidlands.org.uk or
mdosally@urcwestmidlands.org.uk



**Group for
Evangelism
And
Renewal**
*within the United
Reformed Church*

www.gear.org.uk

Free to Believe Conference 2026

'Come help us dream your future into birth'

Speakers: Ian Bradley, Jo Clifford, Graham Adams

Worship leader: Nicola Robinson

Wednesday 17 to Friday 19 June 2026

Highgate Conference Centre,
Northamptonshire

£275 (Same price as 2024)

Download a booking form at freetobelieve.org.uk

or email bookings@freetobelieve.org.uk



Free to Believe Conference 2026

Highgate Conference Centre, Northamptonshire

Wednesday 17 to Friday 19 June 2026

£275 (All inclusive)

Come Help Us Dream Your Future Into Birth

Taken from the hymn 'God, like a child, your open hands receptive' (Graham Adams)

Speakers:

Graham Adams

Tutor in Mission Studies, World Christianity, and Religious Diversity at Northern College within the Luther King Centre

Ian Bradley

Emeritus Professor of Cultural and Spiritual History at the University of St Andrews; Former Principal of St Mary's College, the Faculty and

School of Divinity

Jo Clifford

Playwright, performer, proud father and grandmother. Author of 100+ performed plays.

Worship Leader:

Nicola Robinson

Minister in the Leeds URC Partnership, Chaplain to the 2026 Moderator of the United

Reformed Youth, and proud companion of her dog Maisie.

Theme: Come Help Us Dream Your Future Into Birth

In the hymn which provides the title for the 2026 Conference Graham Adams asks pertinent questions and throws down important challenges for us all.

“why is little changing?” – come, help us dream your future into birth!” “God, ... urging us on to ventures yet unknown – come, re-imagine all the games we’re playing, blazing your trail until your kingdom’s grown”

It is our hope that the Conference next year will go some way towards helping you identify both your dreams for God’s new creation and how will you involve yourself in working towards those dreams?

For more Information and a Booking Form

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WE ARE A CHURCH
WITH PEOPLE
AT THE MARGINS

Join us online
to discover how



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

In partnership with North Western Synod, the Faith in Action Team is hosting four 90-minute webinars throughout 2026 exploring what it means for the URC to be A Church with People at the Margins. Starting on 16 February, the series is designed to help congregations become places where people at the margins are loved, nurtured and empowered. Jesus consistently elevated people at the margins, not by doing to or doing for, but by being with.

Rather than adding more projects to the busyness of church life, the A Church with People at the Margins" offers space to share what is already working in our churches, how to deepen impact through existing ministry, and where new opportunities for worship and discipleship might begin.

Small or big, rural or urban, coastal or estate; busy, quiet, growing, surviving or flourishing - all congregations are invited to share in this common calling: to be welcoming, inclusive, outreaching, anti-poverty, and deeply rooted as community hubs where people can find belonging, support and hope. The webinars will take place from 7-8.30pm on the following dates:

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

Each webinar will have a different focus, with a guest speaker offering insight from their own experience of marginality. You are welcome to come to one or all of the sessions – we'll share more on the content of each forum soon.

To pre-register, visit urc.org.uk/margins.

Holiday Forum in a Day

Saturday 21st March 9am - 1pm, 7pm - 9:30pm



Cultivating a Flourishing Faith



Theme Leader
Rev Leslie Newton



Worship Leader
Leo Roberts

We hope 2026 has started well and you have managed to avoid all the snow and flooding.

We write to you with news of Holiday Forum in a Day which will be taking place on Saturday 21st March 2026. You will see that we have attached a poster for you to share with friends, family and your Churches.

We hope you'll come along as it's a great way to get a taster of what's to come when we meet in August. It's also your chance to meet Leo Roberts, our Worship Leader, and also Revd Leslie Newton, our Theme Leader with his theme "Cultivating a Flourishing Faith." It certainly promises to be a great day.

We look forward to seeing you on the 21st March.

Our main Holiday Forum in August is only 7 months away, so don't forget to get your booking form in and your deposit to secure your place.

Check out the online booking form on our website

[Https://www.urcholidayforum.org.uk/wpsite/booking-form-2026/](https://www.urcholidayforum.org.uk/wpsite/booking-form-2026/)

Explore your calling...



Sign up for free!

Become a Lay Preacher

- Learn more about the AALP programme.
- Discover what Luther King and the URC can offer you.



Online via Zoom



29 January 2026
7:00pm-8:00pm



learning@lutherking.ac.uk



lutherking.ac.uk/courses/training-for-lay-people

Church Leadership Programme (CLP) Taster

Reflective Practice & Sustaining Leadership

- Explore your call through reflective practice.

- Discover how Luther King and the URC can inform your leadership.



Online via Zoom



12 February 2026
7:00pm-8:00pm



Sign up for free!



learning@lutherking.ac.uk



lutherking.ac.uk/courses/training-for-lay-people

Luther King Theological College (formally Northern College) warmly invites you, and anyone you know who may be interested, to attend our taster sessions for:

- Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher Programme (**AALP**) – **Thursday 29 January, 7–8pm**
- Church Leadership Programme (**CLP**) - **Thursday 12 February, 7–8pm**

Both sessions will take place online via Zoom and are open to anyone who would like to learn more about the programmes, including prospective students.

We are currently in the process of launching a new website over the next month or two. In the meantime, further information about both programmes can be found here:

<https://www.lutherking.ac.uk/courses/training-for-lay-people>

Zoom details (for both sessions)

Join Zoom Meeting:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88399225995?
pwd=wWEeusxuRdVIxcsCb6ZFKo6Ey6SFz3.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88399225995?pwd=wWEeusxuRdVIxcsCb6ZFKo6Ey6SFz3.1)

Meeting ID: 883 9922 5995

Passcode: 716649



Theology of Worship Group

exploring the practice and nature of worship today



"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 10th 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



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:
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

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



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/URCYouthAssembly)

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

Book your place today

Friday 29 May - Sunday 31 May 2026
Whitemoor Lakes, Staffordshire

Cost: £75 (£30 deposit required at booking)
Age: 11 (must be in Year 7) to 16 years

Thames North & Southern Synod Youth Residential 2026 “WISE WORDS”



Book by 22 Feb
www.bit.ly/residential2026



Outdoor Activities
Creative Workshops
Games
Discussion
Worship

URC Youth Leaders Gathering



27 February -
1 March 2026



Highgate House,
Northampton

£210

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!
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

URC Vacancies

Current vacancies with the United Reformed Church:

1. Head of Children, Youth and Intergenerational Discipleship
2. Regional Surveyor (RMHS)
3. Repairs & Maintenance Officer (RMHS)
4. Head of Ministries – Learning and Development

Here is the link to our job page: <https://urc.org.uk/jobs/>

Safeguarding Training 2026



UK Wide Safeguarding Training 2026

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

All training listed below will take place via Zoom

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

From the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Committee

If you would like to keep your inbox clear, please feel free to unsubscribe at the bottom of the page.

This email was sent to {{ contact.EMAIL }} You received this email because you are registered with URC Thames North



<http://urcthamesnorth.org.uk/>



[Unsubscribe here](#)