The United Reformed Church

THAMES NORTH SYNOD NEWS ROUNDUP

Welcome to our News Roundup for 4 September 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

Celebrating Season of Creation - Reflection and Action Day for Wildlife on 5th September 10am - 4pm at St Albans URC https://buytickets.at/stalbansunitedreformedchurch/2298589

Racial Justice Event for Advocates and Activists at Lumen 10:30am on 19 September 2026. Contact Sandra Ackroyd sga322@gmail.com

Carbon Literacy Courses for Christian Congregations on Wednesdays 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th September and 7th October - 6:30pm to 8:30pm. To book a place visit: https://buytickets.at/stalbansunitedreformedchurch/2298655 or Tuesdays on 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th September and 6th October - 6:30pm to 8:30pm ; sign up via this Eventbrite link: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/carbon-literacy-for-congregations-online-creation-time-2026-tickets-1991352776761
Final booking date 27th August 2026

Meeting on AI Generated Complaints on Thursday 10 September, Online
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82757997549?pwd=lqfrAv7mUpfd8UpVCWiBXOxVuA7TaE.1
Meeting ID: 827 5799 7549
Passcode: 214109

LCRF Annual Speaker Meeting "Roots and Refuge" Brother Johannes Maertens on Thursday 17 September 2026 at 6.30pm (doors open at 6pm)at Wesley's Chapel EC1Y 1AU

People's Emergency Briefing Film on Sunday 4 October 2026 at 6:30pm on Zoom Meeting ID: 965 1457 5443

Join JPIT on Iona from 17-23 October 2026. Bookings are now open. Find out more here.

Church Action on Povertv Sunday on Sunday 18th October 2026, church-poverty.org.uk/sunday

Leading your Church into Growth (LyCiG) Conference from 23-25 November 2026 at Highgate House. Book with Eddie at disc.enab@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

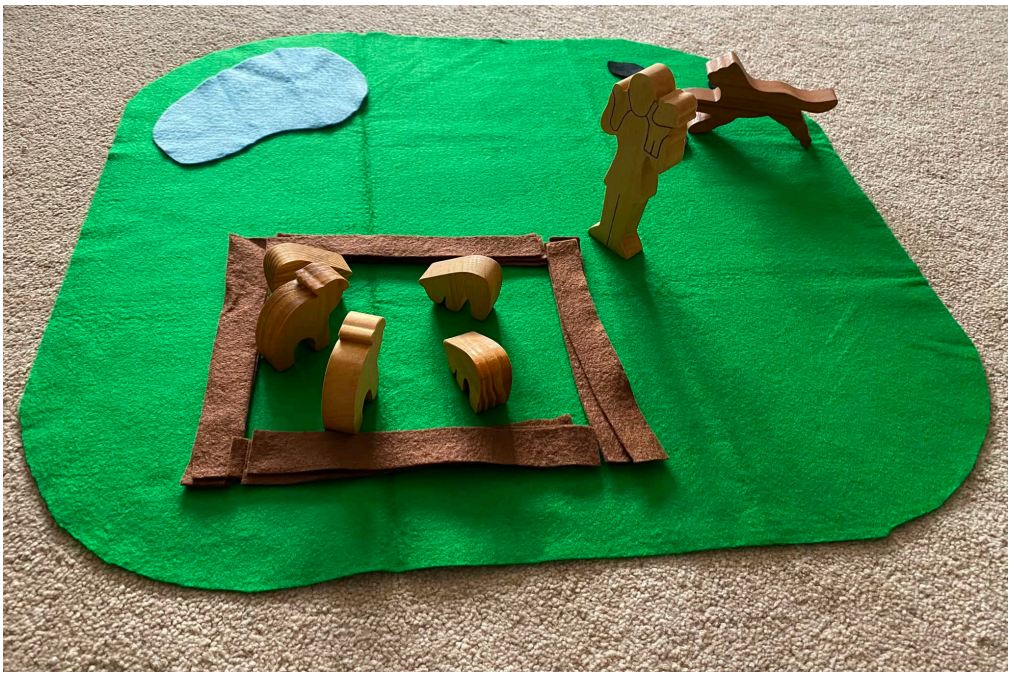
Meetings of Synod Dates/Venues -
17 October 2026 Venue: TBA
Please note: Synod meetings are usually on the 3rd Saturday of March and October.

Information and News



On Sunday 30 August, Nelmes URC (Hornchurch) recognized John Hawkins for his 61 years as organist at the church. John continues to provide beautiful music for worship every week, and also serves as Nelmes' treasurer and magazine editor. Congratulations and thank you, John!

(l-r): Emily Marshall-Jones (elder), Barry Smith (elder), John Hawkins, Rev. Brian Buschkill, Ruth McDougall (elder)



On Sunday, as part of an intergenerational morning service held at Adeyfield Free Church, Hemel Hempstead, the Moderator retold the story of the Good Shepherd using Godly Play. Members from St George's URC joined the congregation for the service. The Moderator has been a Godly Practitioner for several years. The session demonstrated how all ages can wonder at familiar parables that Jesus told.

Subsidised Godly Play training for URC members is going to be held 16-18 October 2026 at a cost of £50.

The course follows an intensive format, and attendance at all sessions is required: Friday 5.00–10.00pm, Saturday 8.00am–10.00pm, and Sunday 8.00am–5.00pm.

Find out more here!

Celebration of the Life of Tony Alderman

Zoom Link for Thanksgiving & Memorial Service for Tony Alderman
At St John's URC, New Barnet on 10 September 2026 at 2pm
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82087318827

Season of Creation - Message from a Green Apostle



Greetings from St Albans, and a happy, fruitful Season of Creation to you all.

In truth, I began the season early at the Greenbelt Festival last weekend. It was a splendid few days, and while I could share far more, here are the highlights:

- I heard the inspirational **Ruth Valerio** speak about her new book *How to Survive a World in Crisis (and Not Grow Weary of Doing Good)*. If you're feeling overwhelmed by the state of the world, it's a helpful and encouraging read, available online and in bookshops.
- I listened to the delightful **Hot Poets** perform pieces from *Wonder, Thunder, Blunder – Planet Power Poems*. Although aimed at children, their poems share hopeful stories of real actions being taken to address climate change and nature loss. Their website (https://hotpoets.org/) has videos and details of their books.
- I watched the **People's Emergency Briefing** for the third time. With this summer's heatwaves and the tragic events in Nepal, it felt even more urgent. It's not an easy watch, but as JPIT reminds us, it's something Christians need to engage with. Screenings are happening across the country, including the *yoURChurch* event on 4 October. If you'd like to host one yourself, it's very simple to arrange, and I'd be pleased to support you.

Wishing you a hopeful and meaningful Season of Creation.
Anna Barrett

Trays for Communion Glasses

There are two communion glasses trays available from St James URC Buckhurst Hill. Contact Jean Wyber at jeanwyber@aol.com

Death of Revd Janet Sowerbutts - Past Moderator, Thames North Synod

It is with sadness that we inform you of the death of retired minister, Revd Janet Sowerbutts, who died in the early hours of last Thursday morning.

Janet served at Balham & St Andrew's 1978-85; Cheshunt Chair in Pastoral Studies Westminster College 1985-90; Moderator, Thames North Province 1990-98; Upper Norwood 1998-2002; and as Ecumenical Officer, Southern Province & South Norwood 1998-2003.

Many of you will remember Janet through her many connections with this Synod and the wider URC. She will be much missed.

Please hold her family and friends in your prayers.

What's On



Celebrating the Season of Creation - Reflection and Action Day for Wildlife

SATURDAY 5th September

St Albans URC, GREENWOOD

10am – 12pm Gardening for Wildlife, talk by The Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH - tea, coffee & biscuits provided

2pm – 4pm Afternoon Retreat - Take time out to relax & reflect. Mindful prayer stations and closing with a short outdoor Forest Church Style Service

Come to both sessions or only one. FREE Event

Racial Justice Event for Advocates and Activists- Thames North Synod



You are invited to this event. Please invite others too. Sandra (Convener of Thames North Advocates) would value knowing if you would like to add your name. Thank you!

When: Saturday 19 September 2026 from 10.30am to 2.30 pm
Where: Lumen Community, 88 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RS
Lunch is included

Programme

- Worship
- Listening to experiences of ministers from overseas, now working in churches in our Synod - **Revd. Margaret Ali**
- Discussion involving all of us including our Synod Moderator about the role of Advocates in our Synod.
- 'Singing truthfully, finding words for racial justice in worship- Revd. John Campbell'
- Developing our knowledge and understanding of the URC work on Reparations, **Revd Dr. Tessa Henry-Robinson**
- Information concerning URC Global Ministries (Windrush, Jason Arday, + ?????)

We also have a poster, headed (Unconditional Love)

Contact Sandra Ackroyd **Phone**: 020 8558 5270 or 07790 792818
Email: sga322@gmail.com

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transforming conflict • embracing difference
place for hope

Place for Hope is offering the following new day courses. They are available to attendees from the United Reformed Church at no cost: just select the "partnership ticket" option.

Responding to Polarisation: October 3rd, Union Chapel, London (Book here)

- This one-day course equips learners to understand and respond constructively to growing polarisation within churches and the wider communities they serve.
- Developed by Place for Hope with input from Alison Goldsworthy, co-author of Poles Apart and lecturer at Stanford University, it combines expert-led learning with guided reflection.
- Participants will explore the causes and impacts of polarisation, develop practical approaches for bridging divides, and build confidence in navigating difficult conversations and relationships.

Rebuilding Faith Communities: Post-Incident Recovery and Culture Change, October 21, Glasgow, venue tbc (Book here)

- Designed for those leading or supporting faith communities after a serious incident, this course focuses on restoring trust, strengthening relationships, and creating safer, healthier cultures.
- Through a blend of expert input and reflective practice, participants will gain an understanding of post-incident recovery, community dynamics, and the practical steps needed to support positive culture change.
- The course aims to build confidence in leading recovery processes with care, accountability, and resilience.

One Body, Many Voices: Peacebuilding in Diverse Communities, October 22nd, Augustine United, Edinburgh

(**Book here**)

- This course supports faith and community leaders to foster inclusion and respond effectively to conflict in diverse congregations.
- Combining practical learning with personal reflection, participants will explore the causes of tension, develop skills in inclusive communication and collaborative problem-solving, and learn approaches that encourage constructive dialogue.
- The course helps leaders build confidence in creating environments where difference is valued and communities can thrive together.

Place for Hope also has a number of bitesized courses running over the next few months looking at various topics around understanding and engaging conflict. More info can be found here: https://www.tickettailor.com/events/placeforhope

Those who need assistance with the cost of travel can apply to the Training and Development Officer, email: training@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

4 October 2026: People's Emergency Briefing Film



On 1 May 2019 the UK parliament became the world's first national parliament to declare a climate and ecological emergency. The National Emergency Briefing (NEB) was a high-level, non-partisan event taking place at Central Hall, Westminster on Thursday 27 November 2025. It was a unique response to the worsening climate and nature crisis, bringing together 850 invite-only guests from politics, business, finance, culture, faith, and the media. Eight world-leading experts gave an unfiltered and concise assessment of the latest science. Where we are, where we're heading, and what we can do, in a single authoritative account.

This film of the event is being as widely distributed as possible. **yourchurch** has been asked by the NW Synod to put on a URC-wide screening during our 4 October service to ensure that people who are not able to attend a local showing are able to watch online. This is part of service to the wider church and communities, and is an example of the

way in which being an online church gives us unique mission opportunities as a church. It forms a vital part of our commitment to addressing the climate emergency as one of our 2026 mission priorities. Please make this one of your own priorities, and invite friends and families.

Safeguarding Training

Just a gentle reminder to book on to your mandated safeguarding training.
Please see below the poster which has all of the dates scheduled for this year.

You will see that there is a new **COMBINED** safeguarding module. This is the Foundation and Intermediate module in one. If you need to complete both modules, that training shortens the amount of sessions that need to completed. You are welcome to book on to the COMBINED module if you need to renew your INTERMEDIATE training. If you *only* need to complete the Foundation module please complete the Foundation eLearning (link below).
https://www.urclearninghub.org.uk/course/view.php?id=24This

In order to book on to the ADVANCED module, you **must** have completed either the COMBINED module or the separate FOUNDATION and INTERMEDIATE modules beforehand.

If you would like to book on to the advertised dates, please click on the link below and complete the form
https://forms.gle/nKrqAeM28XosXbmg7
Your place will only be confirmed once you receive a follow up email with the link to the Zoom training and slides to attend.

For the URC Safeguarding Training Framework document please click here.

SEPTEMBER
WED 16TH 6-8PM ADVANCED PT1
WED 23RD 6-8.30PM ADVANCED PT2
THURS 17TH 6-8.30PM INTERMEDIATE

OCTOBER
WED 7TH 6-8.30PM COMBINED
THURS 29TH 10-12.30PM COMBINED

NOVEMBER
WED 11TH 6-8PM ADVANCED PT1
WED 18TH 6-8.30PM ADVANCED PT2

DECEMBER
THURS 10TH 10-12PM ADVANCED PT1
THURS 17TH 10-12.30PM ADVANCED PT2

The United Reformed Church
Thames North Synod

TO BOOK ON TO ANY OF THESE TRAINING DATES, PLEASE COPY THE LINK BELOW INTO YOUR BROWSER AND COMPLETE THE FORM.

HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/IYFSRTKKWXASXU4N8

PLEASE NOTE THAT IN ORDER TO ATTEND THE ADVANCED TRAINING, YOU MUST HAVE COMPLETED THE INTERMEDIATE OR COMBINED SAFEGUARDING TRAINING BEFOREHAND.



DDC Verifier Safeguarding Training (On Zoom)

To book...

Please email

emma.pearce@urc.org.uk

This training is for all Primary Contact Church Safeguarding Coordinators, Secretaries and DBS verifiers as you act as verifiers for DBS checks within your church.

This training provides all the information for you to access the portal and conduct document verification,

The training also provides additional information on Safer Recruitment Processes for the Church.

PLEASE BOOK ONE DATE ONLY by emailing Emma Pearce emma.pearce@urc.org.uk

21st May – 1pm

9th July – 10am

8th September – 10am

8th October – 7pm

The United Reformed Church Safeguarding

www.urc.org.uk

Safeguarding Training 2026

September
Wed 16th September 6-8pm Advanced pt1
Wed 23rd September 6-8.30pm Advanced pt2
Thurs 17th September 6-8.30pm Intermediate
October
Wed 7th October 6-8.30pm Combined
Thurs 29th October 10-12.30pm Combined
November
Wed 11th November 6-8pm Advanced pt1
Wed 18th 6-8.30pm November Advanced pt2
December
Thurs 10th December 10-12pm Advanced pt1
Thurs 17th December 10-12.30pm Advanced pt2

To book for this training, please complete the booking form here
https://forms.gle/iYFSrtkkWxAsXu4N8

Safeguarding-Committee-Strategic-Plan

The URC Safeguarding Committee's 2026–2028 Strategic Plan sets out a five-year vision to embed safeguarding good practice into everyday life across the denomination, with clear goals in culture, engagement, training, and practice development. The full document may be accessed here.

S2 The United Reformed Church URC Safeguarding Training Framework

The United Reformed Church recognises that it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard others and thus needs to ensure that people holding certain roles and responsibilities are specifically equipped to protect vulnerable groups including both children and adults. 2. URC's Safeguarding Training Framework In order to achieve this goal, the URC offers regular safeguarding training for all those working with children and adults at risk as well as those they support. They need to know how to promote the welfare of those they support, reduce the likelihood of harm, abuse or neglect, and respond effectively to concerns or allegations of abuse which arise.

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/6cltwe2kpki65biriqdva/
https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/6cltwe2kpki65biriqdva/S2-URC-Safeguarding-Training-Framework.pdf?rlkey=bngnf7ctdykccbx3p6b7vp3mq&st=qe2phzp9&dl=0
.pdf?rlkey=bngnf7ctdykccbx3p6b7vp3mq&st=qe2phzp9&dl=0

See the **Safeguarding page** on the synod website here for more Safeguarding information.



Training Workshops for Supporting Intergenerational Communities

This series of training sessions aims to foster intergenerational communities, offering insights for working with young people and expanding ministries. Co-delivered by the Children and Youth Team and Safeguarding, these workshops will be conducted via Zoom.

Workshop Details:

1. **Growing Intergenerational Communities**
   - **Date:** 8th September, 7:30 PM–9:00 PM
   - **Topics:**
     - Healthy Relationships
     - Unconscious Bias / Roles
     - Creating Welcoming Environments
     - Generational Theory
2. **Developing Spaces for Under 5s**
   - **Date:** 13th October, 7:30 PM–9:00 PM
   - **Topics:**
     - Effective Communication
     - Safe, Spiritual Spaces
     - Creative Storybooks / Activities
     - Missional Opportunities in Toddler Groups
3. **Supporting Faith Development in Young People**
   - **Date:** 8th November, 7:30 PM–9:00 PM
   - **Topics:**
     - Models of Discipleship / Mentoring
     - Youth Groups in Private Dwellings
     - Engaging Young People
     - Lone Working & Risk Assessments

To participate, please email emma.pearce@urc.org.uk. These workshops are an excellent opportunity to enhance skills in fostering intergenerational relationships and faith development.



Minister's Advanced Safeguarding Training

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

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

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

The zoom link will then be sent the week before.

Thursday 15th Jan 1-3pm and Thursday 22nd Jan 1-3.30pm
Ministers Advanced Training Booking Form January

Tuesday 3rd March 10am-12noon and Tuesday 10th March 10am-12.30pm
Booking Form for Advanced Training for Ministers March

Wednesday 6 May 1-3pm and Wednesday 13th May 1-3.30pm
Booking Form for Advanced Training for Ministers May

Monday 5th October 1-3pm and Monday 12th October 1-3.30pm
Booking Form for Advanced Training for Ministers October

The United Reformed Church Safeguarding
www.urc.org.uk



UK Wide Safeguarding Training 2026

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

All training will take place via Zoom

Foundation Training can be accessed on the Learning Hub

Home | URC Learning Hub

Thursday 2nd July 10.30am-12.30pm	**Domestic Abuse**
Tuesday 7th July 1.00pm-3.00pm	**Supporting Survivors**
Tuesday 14th July 7.00pm-9.00pm	**Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Modern Slavery**
Monday 7th September 1.00pm-3.00pm	**Elders as Trustees**
Tuesday 15th September 7.00pm -9.00pm	**Online Safety**
Wednesday 23rd September 1.00pm-3.00pm	**Spiritual Abuse**
Tuesday 6th October 7.00pm.9.00pm	**Adult Safeguarding**
Wednesday 21st October 1.00pm-3.00pm	**Discriminatory Abuse**

The United Reformed Church Safeguarding

www.urc.org.uk

From the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Committee

Vacancies

All URC vacancies may be found here.

URC nominated Trustee on the Board of Westhill Endowment

The URC is looking for someone with a passion for faith-motivated community projects, inter-faith cohesion, and religious education to serve as a URC nominated Trustee on the Board of Westhill Endowment.

You can see the ad here in the 'volunteer positions' section of the URC Jobs page:
https://urc.org.uk/jobs/ with more details and all the documents (Job Advert, Person specification, Job description, Prospectus for New Trustees).

URC Representative on World Day of Prayer National Committee (Voluntary Role)

Closing date: Tuesday 15 September 2026

At the heart of the United Reformed Church (URC) lies a strong commitment to active ecumenical partnership and global Christian unity. We are looking for someone with a passion for prayer and ecumenical unity to serve as a URC representative on the World Day of Prayer National Committee for England, Wales & Northern Ireland.

The World Day of Prayer service is held annually on the first Friday in March. There are approximately 1,500 local branches which hold about 3,000 services each year. It is part of the international World Day of Prayer movement with over 100 countries and islands involved. Representatives are expected to be able to commit to an initial 3-year term, followed by a further 2 terms if willing (max. 9 years).

Why volunteer with us?
• Make a Global Impact: Connect with a worldwide movement active in over 120 countries, while helping allocate vital charitable grants funded by service offerings globally.
• Enrich Your Spiritual Journey: Immerse yourself in worship materials, theology, and lived experiences shared by Christians from countries around the globe (such as Nigeria, Costa Rica, and Italy).
• Build Ecumenical Bridges: Form deep friendships and collaborate creatively with committee members representing different Christian traditions across the UK.

• Grow Your Skills: Gain valuable hands-on experience in publishing, proofreading, workshop facilitation, Bible study leadership, and charity governance. (Mentoring and training are provided to help build your confidence!)

More information:
Job advert
Job Description
Person Specification

If you're interested in volunteering for this role or would like more information, please contact Victoria Blunt, Convenor of Nominations Committee at nominations@urc.org.uk

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