



THAMES NORTH SYNOD NEWS ROUNDUP

Welcome to our News Roundup for 20 February 2025.

Please circulate this widely so that the great events and opportunities here can benefit as many as possible.

Events

Community Faith Walk in Kensington and Chelsea Monday 24 February 2025 10am W11 4SG

Preparing to Preach to an Unfamiliar Congregation Date: Tuesday, 25 February 2025 Time: 7:30 - 9pm via Zoom. Email rgoldring23@gmail.com

Talking about...Holiday Clubs 27 February 7-8pm Online Book [here](#)
URC Youth Assembly 7 - 9 March 2025 Kings Park Conference Centre NN3 6LL [Book here](#)

Holy Communion Presidency Training for Authorised Elders via Zoom, 7:30 to 9:30 pm on Monday 10 March 2025.

Contact: Julian Templeton, Training and Development Officer
Email: training@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

Discipleship Matters Tuesday 25th March and Monday 28th April. 3pm or 7.30pm The link is the same as ever
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/96647460063?pwd=dnhRWGtIK2tQdUpPUGo0OXRwTWRMUT09>

Time for Jesus - the Musical Saturday 12 April and Sunday 13 April 2025 at 7pm St Mary's Church, Church End, Hendon NW4 4JT

IOPT in Focus: Exploring Apartheid & the Occupation Wednesday 30 April 2025. For the Zoom link commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk

Thames North and Southern Synod Youth Residential 29 May-1 June 2025 www.bit.ly/residential2025

IOPT in Focus: Antisemitism Wednesday 18 June 2025. For the Zoom link commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk

News

Butterflies and Bees: spreading the pollen of peace



In Ilford's urban-dense, nature-depleted town centre, you'll find a group of people from the Vine Church Ilford, striving to spread the "pollen of peace".

Led by a team including Ruth and Peter Musgrave and Sheila Baldwin, the group are in the midst of creating a "pollinated pathway" to encourage butterflies and bees to spread within the town centre and to come from other places.

Peter, who has recently returned from a trip to Bangladesh, where he supports and draws nature inspiration from the Bangladeshi Taizé community, explains just how important butterflies and bees are in nature, and their correlation in spreading the Good News.

"Whenever you see a butterfly, it brings joy," said Peter. "Our work in the town centre follows on from our weekly gardening club, which restarts in March, where we work with our local Salvation Army on its Malachi Place project which supports homeless people, who come to help us tend to our gardens.



“Everything needs some kind of pollination to spread. We have three very small gardens in Ilford town centre, and we work to highlight the value of butterflies and bees, and pollinated plants, which flower better. We’re also growing vegetables for food and use organic seeds because modern seeds developed using pesticides won’t attract butterflies.”

Peter went on to explain the importance of butterflies and bees.

“They’re essential to the eco system. They’re essential in keeping our eco system alive. Their work supports other insects, which supports other birds, mammals and bats, which supports their food and shelter.

“The previous government allowed a pesticide to be used in Britain, after Brexit, that meant that millions of bees were killed. Now the current government is moving forward with a complete ban on bee-killing pesticides.

“When pesticides are used, the pollination sequence is interrupted. In our gardens, we use organic seeds, which brings an oasis to the town. Seeds made using pesticides do not attract butterflies and bees.”

Peter likens the process of butterflies and bees to being Jesus to those in need in our communities. His passion for nature and the winged insects dates back to when he was a young student following reports on TV about the devastating Bhola cyclone which struck the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, and India’s West Bengal in 1970. As many as 500,000 people died. The following year came the Bangladesh genocide where up to 3 million Bengalis were killed.

Peter wanted to do something to help. He turned to Tower Hamlets, which has the largest Bangladeshi community in England and Wales, where he worked for many years as a youth worker. Bangladesh is one of four regions supported by Commitment for Life, the URC’s global justice programme.

In 1989, Peter, his wife Ruth and their three children got the chance to live and work in Bangladesh working with the Church of Bangladesh (COB's) Social Development Programme. Ruth worked in women's development, and they stayed until 1994.

Between 2010-2014, Peter again worked in Bangladesh through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), where he lived close to the Taizé community then in Mymensingh town.

He has maintained a relationship with the COB and the MCC and with the Taizé Community in Bangladesh, which has moved to a rural area on COB land.

"At one of the places where the Taizé community farm, you can see outside that farming area rice growing where pesticides are used. The difference between that land and the Taizé farming area is stark," continues Peter.

"In other parts, you'll see rows and rows of banana plants. The original flowers and plants that grew there have been eradicated along with the insects that pollinated them.

"What is attractive about the Taizé community garden is that they have lovely vegetables and fruit plants, which demand your attention because they have lots of lovely butterflies and bees buzzing around.

"I guess I'm like a butterfly popping from place to place, as is the Taizé community on that site. They've planted themselves, rooted in the community and attract people and butterflies.

"For example, a Muslim man named Hussain who lives in a slum area in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, has been known to the Taizé community for 40 years. He had polio as a child and they provided support and he travelled all the way by public transport, which was not easy, to spend Christmas with the Taizé community there.

"He's attracted by what they do there and in turn the community respects him. He is a caring person and cares for people in his own area. He's like a butterfly. Filling up with the pollen from the Taizé community and then spreading that pollen in his community, like the hymn The Pollen of Peace [by Northern Ireland songwriter Roger Courtney) says 'Christ has sown the seeds of love. Let us spread the pollen of peace throughout our land'.

"As butterflies and bees get food from the plants that they need, people are nourished by the Taizé community and spread that nourishment to others in need. That's what we try to do with our gardens in Ilford." Peter encourages us all to play our part in creating a pollen of peace in our communities.

"Churches can become Eco Churches, Synods can become Eco Synods, and regardless of whether you have a garden or a patio, you can grow pollinator-friendly flowers," he said.

In 2022, Vine Church Ilford's eco work was recognised by the London Faith and Belief Forum and the church received a Sustainability Award from them. Vine Church Ilford members, Sheila and Peter, pictured, went to Westminster Abbey in November to receive the award, which included £500 to put towards the cost of the energy saving work.

[Learn how your church can become an Eco Church.](#)

[Learn how your synod can become an Eco Synod.](#) – all our synods are Eco Synods already: five already have a Bronze award.

[Learn about pollinator-friendly flowers.](#)

[Discover more URC resources on caring for creation.](#)

Images: Peter and Sheila/The Vine Church Ilford. All others, ©Peter Musgrave.



What's On

Discipleship Matters and Vital Signs



Would you like to find out more about the 'Vital Signs' resources and initiative? Vital Signs will help us embed whole-life discipling values in every area of church life. This is a great resource which I continue to encourage church leadership teams to use, and I am more than happy to help you interpret the results of the free online assessment tool.

Find out more at <https://licc.org.uk/vital-signs/>. I will be devoting our Zoom gatherings 'Discipleship matters' to promote Vital Signs and allow people to use the assessment tool at the meeting.

Next meetings are Tuesday 25th March, and Monday 28th April. 3pm or 7.30pm The link is the same as ever

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/96647460063?pwd=dnhRWGtlK2tQdUpPUGo0OXRwTWRMUT09>

Photo by [Jon Tyson](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Thames North & Southern Synod Youth Residential
Thursday 29 May - Sunday 1 June 2025
Whitemoor Lakes, Staffordshire
Cost: £75 (£30 deposit required at booking)
Age: 11 (must be in Year 7) to 16 years
Book by Feb 28th www.bit.ly/residential2025



A time of **FUN**, **LAUGHTER**, and **FELLOWSHIP** exploring the theme '**All Are Welcome**', through creative arts, bible stories, discussion and worship. Outdoor activities to include, zip wire, climbing, kayaking, raft building, team games. Come and enjoy, All are Welcome! Final few spaces available.



Join us THIS SUNDAY for a multi-faith summit for climate and nature!
Healing the Earth, Healing Ourselves
Sunday, 23 Feb 2025, 12.30-6pm GMT

Dear Faith for the Climate network,

The time is almost upon us. In just 5 days we will be convening at Friends House to set intentions, build our relationships, strengthen our resolve and light the fire in each other to take action for climate and nature! We are thrilled to be co-organising this gathering to help connect people from different faiths and to encourage them in addressing systemic environmental injustice. We're doing this with our lovely colleagues from Quakers in Britain and Christian Climate Action.

When: Sunday 23 February 2025, 12.30 – 6pm

Where: Friends House, Euston, London NW1 2BJ

[Book your spot and get more information here.](#)

Enneagram Practitioner Required

Eddie Boon, our Synod Discipleship Enabler, would be pleased to hear from any person or church that has had contact with an Enneagram practitioner in any way. Please let Eddie know via disc.enab@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

Join us for a Community Faith Walk in Kensington and Chelsea

We are excited to invite you to a special Community Faith Walk, bringing together people from all walks of life to explore and celebrate the rich tapestry of faiths in our community. This unique event will take us on a journey through several places of worship in Kensington & Chelsea, fostering understanding, respect, and unity among our diverse residents.

It will be a wonderful opportunity to learn about different faith traditions, share experiences, and build lasting connections. Whether you are a person of faith or simply interested in learning more about the diverse spiritual landscape of our community, we welcome you to join us.



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Event Details

Date: Monday 24 February 2025

Time: 10am

Starting Point: The Khalsa Jatha Gurdwara, 62 Queensdale Road, W11 4SG

Highlights of the Walk

- **Khalsa Jatha Gurdwara,**
62 Queensdale Road, W11 4SG (approx 10am)
- **Holland Park Synagogue,**
St James's Gardens, W11 4RB (approx 11am)
- **St James Church,**
St James's Gardens, W11 4RA (approx 12pm)
- **St Clement Church,**
Treadgold Street, W11 4BP (approx 1pm)
- **Latymer Community Church,** based in Notting Hill Methodist Church, 240 Lancaster Road, W11 4AH (approx 3pm)
- **Almanaar (Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre),**
244 Acklam Road, W10 5YG (approx 5pm)

There will be engaging discussions and reflections at each stop as well as opportunities to meet and connect with community members. Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

Please RSVP (no later than 21 February) by emailing pinakin.patel@rbkc.gov.uk or sending a WhatsApp or text message to **07970 958473**.

For more information, please contact Pinakin Patel, Strategic Head of Policy, Performance & Resilience (RBKC) on **07970 958473**.

Talking About... Holiday Clubs

Thursday, February 27th 7-8pm



Are you looking to make your holiday club for children more engaging and impactful? Join us for an informative session where you'll learn how to effectively use the latest holiday club material from the United Reformed Church exploring the 2025 theme: **All Are Welcome**

 Date: February 27th

 Time: 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

 Platform: Zoom

2025 URC
Children's and Youth Work
Holiday Club materials



Book your place at www.bit.ly/URCTalkingAbout

IOPT IN FOCUS

THE URC ONLINE SERIES



UNPACKING THE ISSUES

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORY



SAVE THE DATE!

WED
30 APR '25
2PM UK TIME



SESSION 2 OF 4

**EXPLORING APARTHEID
& THE OCCUPATION**
FROM NAKBA TO THE PRESENT

CHARLOTTE MARSHALL
SABEEL-KAIROS UK



FOR THE ZOOM LINK
COMMITMENTFORLIFE@URC.ORG.UK

The General Assembly has recommended that URC members and groups widen/deepen their understanding of some of the fundamental issues as to why the conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory seems so intractable.

The Interfaith Enabling Group together with Commitment for Life are hosting a series of online events, continuing with:

30 April - EXPLORING APARTHEID & THE OCCUPATION with Charlotte Marshall, Director, Sabeel Kairos UK

18 June - ANTISEMITISM with Nathan Eddy, Co-Director, Council of Christians and Jews

Please circulate where you think this might best be received. For more information and a link to the webinars please contact commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk.

IOPT IN FOCUS

THE URC ONLINE SERIES



SAVE THE DATE!

18TH JUNE '25

2PM GMT



SESSION 3 OF 4

ANTISEMITISM

A PRESENT-DAY PREJUDICE

+ A WORKSHOP & DISCUSSION

WITH
REV DR NATHAN EDDY
THE COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIANS & JEWS

FOR ZOOM LINK

COMMITMENTFORLIFE@URC.ORG.UK

**Theology of Worship Group
invites you to our next Speaker meeting on
Preparing to Preach to an Unfamiliar
Congregation**



Speaker: Revd. Dr. Richard Goldring
Secretary, Theology of Worship and Semi-Retired Minister

Chair:

Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Welch
Chair, Society for Ecumenical Studies (2011-2023); Co-chair International Reformed Anglican Dialogue (2015-2022); Emeritus Honorary Ecumenical Canon, Worcester Cathedral; Former Chair of Theology of Worship Group; Semi-retired Minister.

Date: Tuesday, 25 February 2025

Time: 7:30 - 9pm via Zoom

How do you decide what to preach upon, particularly to an unfamiliar congregation? To what extent is it helpful to use the Lectionary? Richard will reflect upon the process by which he makes such decisions, and the theological basis underlying that process. We expect his thoughts will prompt lively and enjoyable discussion!

To book, please contact Richard: rgoldring23@gmail.com

**Prayers for Premier Christian Radio
Wanted**



Prayers will be broadcast on Premier's **Prayers of Hope with Ian Britton** on Sundays at 7pm.

To submit a prayer, all you need to do is:

- 1) introduce yourself: name/ role in church/department and geographical area
- 2) Pray whatever is on your heart
- 3) No more than 90 seconds.

How to record your prayer

- 1) Find a quiet place and use the voice recorder function on your mobile phone
- 2) Keep your phone still eg flat on a table, but near to you
- 3) Record your prayer and then send the file to me by email.

Please follow this format, and feel free to submit a prayer yourself or share across your networks. Prayers received anytime between now and 28 February would be greatly appreciated.

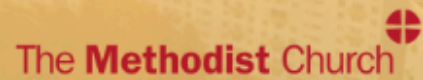
*Ann-Marie Nye
Communications Officer*

*United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9RT*

*Office: 020 7520 2715 | Mob: 07976 753 950
Email: ann-marie.nye@urc.org.uk | www.urchurch.org.uk*



JPIT Newsletter



Constituency Action Network Webinar



CAN Webinar

“Polarisation”



Working across difference and political divides to build common ground



Carolyn Merry

Director at
Place for Hope

transforming conflict • embracing difference

place for hope



Carolyn Merry will be joining us to discuss how we can have better conversations within our churches, wider communities, and with our MPs.



Wednesday 26th Feb 2025



12:30-1:30pm

The next Constituency Action Network webinar is coming up on Wednesday 26 February at 12:30pm. We will be joined by Carolyn Merry from Place for Hope, discussing how we can engage with politics meaningfully in an age of polarisation. Sign up below.

[Sign up here](#)

New Faith and Politics Webpage

Constituency Action Network

FAITH AND POLITICS

jpit.uk/can/faithandpolitics



Are you or others in your church unsure about why Christians should be engaging in politics? Do take a look at our faith and politics page, unpacking some of the theology behind what we do.

This page is a new short briefing we've put together to answer the question Why should Churches engage with politics? – a question that sometimes comes up for churches considering joining JPIT's Constituency Action Network.

[Click here to find out more](#)

JPIT Worship Resources for Lent

JPIT was invited by the Church of Scotland to write some worship resources for the first Sunday in Lent, 9 March. Based on the lectionary readings, they reflect on power and change. You can access them for free here.

[Click here](#)

Information

Synod Lay Preaching Advocate

The email address for Ola Lawal, the Synod Lay Preaching Advocate, is now lpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

Vacancies



**WELWYN
GARDEN
CITY
UNITED
REFORMED
CHURCH**

WE ARE RECRUITING

AVAILABLE POSITION

Mission Developer

18 hours per week

£30,000 pro rata

We are looking for an individual to carry out community projects; if you have a heart for mission and outreach, it is you we're interested in; contact us for a job description and application form at:

WGCUNITEDREFORMEDCHURCH@OUTLOOK.COM

Closing Date: 26/2/2025

Interview Date: 14/3/2025

URC Roles

For all URC Roles see here <https://urc.org.uk/jobs/>

Safeguarding Training

Synod Training Dates 2025

To book a place on any of the training listed below, please email safeguarding@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

In person training is TBA and will be limited due to the timescales within my role and existing cover period.

E Learning

Foundation Training and Safeguarding Coordinators Training are available as e-learning courses.

Simply follow the links below to access the courses.

Foundation Safeguarding Training

<https://www.urclearninghub.org.uk/course/view.php?id=24>

Safeguarding Coordinators Training

<https://www.urclearninghub.org.uk/course/view.php?id=70>

Zoom Intermediate Safeguarding Training

Tuesday 25th March 2025 - 6.30pm - 9.00pm

Tuesday 22nd April 2025 - 12.30pm-3.00pm

Monday 12th May 2025 - 6.30pm- 9.00pm

Thursday 5th June 2025 - 12.30 - 3.00pm

Saturday 2nd August 2025 - 10.30am - 1.00pm

Tuesday 16th September 2025 - 6.30pm - 9.00pm

Advanced Safeguarding Training

Part 1 - Tuesday 16th September 2025 - 6.30pm - 9.00pm

Part 2 - Tuesday 23rd September 2025 - 6.30pm - 9.00pm

ADVANCED SAFEGUARDING TRAINING



Who is this for?

Youth and Children Workers including volunteer leaders
Adult Workers including volunteer leaders
church Safeguarding coordinators
Ministers
Anyone else with an interest

What does it cover?

Exploring unconscious bias
Understanding how grooming occurs
Supporting those who may pose a risk to children or adults,
Managing allegations against people in the church,

Training Dates

March 5th 10.30am-3.00pm
Church House
Tavistock Place

REGISTRATION



safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk

ANY QUERIES?



carrie.kaunda@urc.org.uk

UK Wide Safeguarding Training 2025

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

All training listed below will take place via Zoom

First date	Event
14 January, 2025 1:30pm	Domestic abuse
23 January 7:00pm	Supporting survivors
4 February 7:00pm	Modern slavery
13 February 1:30pm	Elders as Trustees
4 March 7:00pm	Substance abuse
18 March 1:30pm	Refugees and asylum seekers
27 March 7:00pm	Adult safeguarding
24 April 1:30pm	Spiritual abuse
13 May 7:00pm	Online safety

Foundation Training can be accessed on the Learning Hub
bit.ly/3Txldm4



www.urc.org.uk



From the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Committee

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