



The
United
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Church

THAMES NORTH SYNOD NEWS ROUNDUP

Welcome to our News Roundup for 03 July 2020.

If you would like to keep your inbox clear, feel free to unsubscribe at the bottom of the page. Please circulate this widely so that these great events and opportunities can benefit as many as possible. Blessings.



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Updated Covid19 Guidance Documents

The following documents and templates are available on the Synod website:

"Emerging into the New Normal" - this publication updates and replaces the previous "Ready for the New Normal" publication:

http://urcthamesnorth.org.uk/_home_/emerging-into-the-new-normal.

URC Risk Assessment Template - the latest updated version and is mentioned in the "Emerging into the New Normal" publication":

http://urcthamesnorth.org.uk/_home_/urc-risk-assessment-template

Standard Hiring Agreement Template - Updated to include a new Safeguarding Statement at page 5, and a new condition 37 and Annex A - "PANDEMIC - SAFE USE OF PREMISES" - at pages 5 - 7":

<http://urcthamesnorth.org.uk/resources/standard-hiring-agreement-template>

An extensive section on **Safeguarding** during the coronavirus pandemic, offering guidance on; Shopping for others, Communicating safely online, ... starts here:

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

Do keep a regular check for updated documents and publications on the website, as documents and publications will remain under review and may be updated at any time in line with the changing situation with regard to COVID-19.



Government guidance on reopening places of worship in England

On 29 June, the Government issued its guidance on reopening places of worship in England: [COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of places of worship from 4 July](#). It will come into effect from **4 July 2020** alongside the relevant associated changes to the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(England\) Regulations 2020](#).

Critically, the Government appears to have modified its position on limiting numbers:

'From 4 July, **gatherings of more than 30 people will be permitted but only in certain public places as set out in law. This will include places of worship and their surrounding premises**. There are, however, activities where it is advisable to restrict numbers to 30 within a place of worship for public health reasons. This guidance sets out those activities as well as how to ensure your place of worship is COVID-19 secure.

Whilst engaging in an activity in the place of worship or surrounding grounds, **all parties should adhere to social distancing guidelines. From 4 July, 2 meters or 1 meter with risk mitigation (where 2 meters is not viable) between households are acceptable.**'

The following table sets out where it is advisable to limit the number of people within a place of worship due to the potential for increased spread of COVID-19.

Activity	Advised gathering limit
Communal worship, including led prayers, devotions or meditations by a Minister of Religion or lay person.	<p>Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following a risk assessment.</p> <p>Social distancing should be strictly adhered to.</p>
Marriage ceremonies	<p>Marriage ceremonies should have no more than 30 people in attendance, and social distancing should be strictly adhered to. See more detail in the COVID-19: Guidance for small marriages and civil partnership.</p>
Funerals	<p>Funerals should have no more than 30 people in attendance, and social distancing should be strictly adhered to. See more detail in the COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic.</p>
Other life cycle ceremonies: defined as 'Religious ceremonies to mark rites of passage, which are separate, self-contained ceremonies as opposed to marking a life cycle event or rite in the course of routine communal worship'.	<p>Other life cycle ceremonies should have no more than 30 people present, unless they take place during routine communal worship.</p> <p>Social distancing should be strictly adhered to.</p>

The guidance applies to places of worship when being used for a religious purpose or in preparation for a religious purpose.

Where a place of worship's premises is used by other user groups, only those activities permitted by law should take place. Businesses which cannot yet operate are listed [here](#) (such as indoor fitness, indoor soft play, indoor performances in front of a live audience).

The guidance includes detailed advice on issues such as 'Food and Drink' (which includes the elements at the Eucharist), singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments, the use of water for ablutions and baptism, supervision of young people and children attending places of worship, and much more. We urge you to read the detailed guidance very carefully indeed.

[COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of places of worship from 4 July](#)

[COVID-19: Guidance for small marriages and civil partnership](#)

[COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#)

Advice to churches about coronavirus

The United Reformed Church (URC) is offering advice and resources from a variety of sources about the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Follow this link for the latest advice and resources: <https://urc.org.uk/coronavirus.html>

Cain Has Killed His Brother | #BlackLivesMatter



"Cain Has Killed His Brother" is Lucy Berry's most recent hymn/song, written with another URC person. 'It deals with the ongoing biblical fact that we continue to kill our brothers and sisters in God'. The lyrics include an almost direct transliteration of the Cain and Abel story. Lucy suggests that perhaps some URC churches would use it as a discussion point.

The film that the song accompanies 'is not directed only against America, it has visuals of English fracture, division and failure, as well as of US conflict. It also alludes to South African, Caribbean and Australian racial fracture'.

The film is available [here](#) or via the URC Global and International Ministries webpage: <https://urc.org.uk/gim-themes.html>

- Reverend Lucy Berry is a minister of the United Reformed Church

Let's celebrate: children and young people in the URC

Children's and Youth Work Committee and URC Youth invite you to 'Let's celebrate: children and young people in the URC' on Wednesday 15 July from 7pm to 8pm. This is a General Assembly online fringe event open to everyone - follow the link below for more information:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lets-celebrate-children-and->

"Put Legs On Your Prayers" Mark 2:1-12



URC Children's and Youth Work team are delighted to bring you **Week 13** of this exciting new resource. This is available on the URC website <https://urc.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth> or from [here](#).

Families on Faith Adventures @ home is designed to support families of all generations as they experience, explore and express faith together through the week. It is a 'pick and mix' of activities, games, prayers and challenges based around a story from the Bible and draws on materials from our non-uniformed children's groups Pilots and FOFA.



Ministry on the edge - Exploring and communicating the value of chaplaincy in today's universities.

The webinar will take place on 15 July 2020 from 2:00 - 3.30 p.m.

It's free to attend and anyone engaged in HE chaplaincy, whether full or part-time, paid or voluntary, lay or ordained, is welcome to attend. It will be recorded and available on the Free Churches Group website after the event. More information and details of how to register are available [here](#).

Thames North Synod Office Plans

The Synod and Trust office staff will be working from home from now until further notice. Someone will go in a couple of times a week to deal with any post coming in, but we need to be aware that even this may not be possible in the future, depending on government advice.

We ask therefore that you contact us by email only where possible. We are still able to pick up your phone calls, but only if you leave a voicemail message, which is forwarded to us at home, from where we will get back to you as soon as possible. In the event that you do need to send documents by post, please contact either Muna Levan-Harris or Keith Berry at trust@urcthamesnorth.org.uk for all Thames North Trust matters, or Colleen Fraser at modpa@urcthamesnorth.org.uk for any Thames North Synod matter.

We will be keeping in touch with you from home, via email, the website and our newsletter, so keep a look out for our updates and messages.

You may follow this link for a number of items of information relating to Covid 19

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



“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46



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