

North Western Synod Newsletter

The Millennium is
CHRIST'S 2000th BIRTHDAY.
Worship Him here - now.

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Learning Events

Children + Youth

Save the Date

NW Synod + Local Church Events

Wider Events

Synod + URC News and Updates

For our Prayers

BANK TOP
UNITED
REFORMED
CHURCH

Sunday Worship 10.30am
HOLY COMMUNION
Monthly - Second Sunday

MINISTER: J. & MOORE, 34, BOXTON
CHURCH LANE, BOXTON

View of Bank Top URC, Bolton

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for our Prayers ...

Outdoor Church at Heald Green URC

A small group at **Heald Green URC** are developing an Outdoor Church. The vision is for a new expression of church that engages with God through nature.



The first gathering was on 8th March. We planted seeds and made bird feeders. We spent time reflecting on the new signs of life and hope that were emerging around us.



Whilst it was a small group, everyone was deeply enriched. Maybe some seeds were planted that will flourish- in more ways than one.

Outdoor Church at Heald Green URC

Our next gathering will be on **Sunday 10th May 3pm-4pm**.

Do join us and invite anyone who might want to come. The beekeeper is coming and there will be an opportunity to visit the church beehives.

Future sessions are planned for later in the year too. We plan to meet once every 2 months:

- July 12th
- September 13th
- November 8th

Prov 16:24 “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”

OUTDOOR Church

Join us for all-age, creative worship and activities exploring the wonders of bees and how these tiny, God-made creatures can inspire and challenge us.

Sunday 10th May 2026 3-4pm

The Church Garden, Heald Green URC, Wilmslow Road, Heald Green, SK8 3BH

All Are Welcome.

Activities this month:

- Meet a beekeeper and learn about the bees living in the church beehive.
- Mini-beast Survey
- Make a bug hotel or bee watering station to take home.



Free event, no booking required.
Wear appropriate clothing for the weather.
For more information contact
Alison Haigh: alisoncmhaigh@gmail.com.



Retired Ministers, Widows and Widowers Lunch



On Monday 20th April a lunch was held at Luther King House for our Retired Ministers, Widows and Widowers. This has now become an annual event and is appreciated and enjoyed by all who attended.

The staff at Luther King House really look after us all very well.

Members from Area Pastoral Committees volunteer to attend to wait on our guests; it is a way of saying thank you for all they continue to do for the churches even in their retirement.

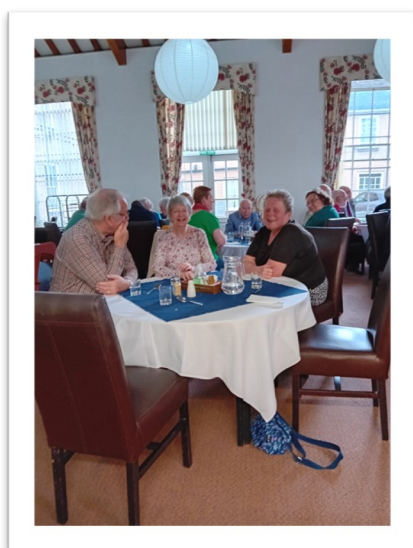
This year the South Area was joined by Helen Mellor, Convenor of the Central Area Pastoral Committee and the newly retired Revd Ruth Wollaston.

We also had two Moderators in our midst! The Revd Clare Downing and The Revd Mike Thomason, our newly elected Moderator, both of whom circulated and I believe were able to have a word with everyone, whilst still managing to enjoy their lunch!

The Revd Doctor John Parry had been charged with presenting Clare with a gift, and unusually for John he actually had some nice things to say about Clare – sorry John!!

Hilary Grierson

Convenor – South Area Pastoral Committee



News from Barrow URC Primary School

Bethany Children's Home Visit – Easter 2026

Over the course of a week, from Saturday 28th March to Easter Sunday, our team – Nicola McArdle (Headteacher), Helen Porter (Deputy Headteacher), Anne Moir (Teaching Assistant) and Finley McArdle – had the privilege of spending time at Bethany Children's Home in Tanzania, alongside the primary and secondary schools.



From the moment we arrived, we were warmly welcomed into a community built on care, resilience and faith.

Throughout the week, we immersed ourselves in daily life, supporting the children and staff in a variety of ways. In the schools, we spent time in classrooms, working alongside pupils and teachers, sharing ideas and learning

from one another. It was a powerful reminder that education transcends borders; despite differences in resources, the commitment to learning, curiosity and joy in the classroom were ever-present.

During our time in school, we also had the opportunity to lead a teacher training session focused on the use of AI in education. We explored practical ways staff could use AI to support their daily teaching, particularly in reducing workload and supporting English grammar and punctuation. The session was very well received, with staff engaging thoughtfully and recognising its potential to make a real difference to their practice. It was especially encouraging to hear that Headteacher Emma has already begun using these tools and has found that they have saved her a significant amount of time.

Since our visit in April 2025, we have been moved to continue supporting the vision to build a girls' secondary school. Over the past year, we have raised approximately £13,000, contributing towards the development of the library building and the provision of school uniforms. It was incredibly special to visit the library during our time there and see first-hand the impact of this support.

At Bethany Children's Home, we experienced the importance of community and routine. Time spent with the children – whether through conversation, shared activities or simply being present – highlighted the strength of relationships and the deep sense of belonging that has been created. The home is not just a place of care, but a place of love, stability and hope.

Easter Sunday provided a particularly meaningful conclusion to our visit. We began the day early, helping to serve breakfast to the children – a simple but joyful moment, sharing donuts together. We then supported preparations for the Easter feast before leading the Easter services. The involvement of the choirs, whose performances were uplifting and heartfelt, created a powerful atmosphere of reflection and celebration. It was a fitting way to bring the whole community together.

As we reflect on our week, we do so with humility. While we travelled with the intention of supporting and contributing, it is clear that we have taken away far more than we could have given. We have been reminded of the importance of gratitude, the strength found in community, and the impact of kindness in its simplest forms.

This experience has encouraged us to reflect on our own practice, both personally and professionally. We return with a renewed appreciation for the opportunities and resources we have, alongside a deeper understanding that meaningful education and care are rooted not in materials, but in relationships, commitment and compassion.

Above all, we leave with a deep sense of respect and admiration for the staff and children at Bethany. Their warmth, resilience and generosity have left a lasting impression on us all. It has been a privilege to share in even a small part of their lives, and a truly special way to mark the Easter period.

Nicola

Mrs Nicola McArdle - Headteacher
Barrow URC Primary School



Safeguarding



Safeguarding Training

Please click [here](#) for the amended URC Levels of Mandatory Safeguarding Training Matrix (England)

Safeguarding Foundation E-Learning Course

Please click on the following link to access the module: [Safeguarding Foundation Course](#)

Introduction to Safeguarding E-Learning Course

For those who have a background in safeguarding and have completed training within a professional organisation in the previous three years: [An Introduction to Safeguarding in the URC](#)

Online + Face-to-Face Safeguarding Training

Combined Foundation + Intermediate Safeguarding Training

Tuesday 5th May 2026 – 6.00pm to 8.30pm – Online

To book please click [here](#)

Monday 18th May 2026 – 11am to 1.30pm – Face to Face at Trinity URC, Lancaster

Bowerham Road & Ulster Road, Lancaster LA1 4AH

To book please click [here](#)

Wednesday 3rd June 2026 – 1.00pm to 3.30pm – Online

To book please click [here](#)

Intermediate Safeguarding Training

Saturday 23rd May 2026 – 10am to 12.30pm – Face to Face at Bamford Chapel + Norden URC

Norden Road, Bamford, Rochdale, OL11 5PQ

To book please click [here](#)

Advanced Safeguarding Training

Advanced training will now be delivered in ONE session

Online Advanced - Wed 13th May 2026 - 6pm-9.15pm (including a break)

To book please click [here](#)

Online Advanced - Mon 15th June 2026 - 6pm-9.15pm (including a break)

To book please click [here](#)

URC Learning Hub

For more information about the courses and resources available on the URC Learning Hub please click [here](#)

Specialist/Supplementary Training

The URC runs bite-sized two hour Zoom sessions open to anyone across the denomination on a variety of topics to complement your current safeguarding knowledge.

Upcoming sessions:

Thursday 14th May	1:00pm	Safeguarding for Ministers supporting Survivors
Tuesday 19th May	6:30pm	Spiritual Abuse
Thursday 28th May	1:00pm	Adult Safeguarding

Please make your booking by emailing Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk stating your name, church, role and course preference.

Minister's Advanced Safeguarding Training

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

The zoom link will then be sent the week before.

- Wednesday 6th May 1-3pm and Wednesday 13th May 1-3.30pm – [May booking form](#)
- Monday 5th October 1-3pm and Monday 12th October 1-3.30pm – [October booking form](#)

If you have any queries, please contact: [Carrie Kaunda](#)

Newsletter from the URC Safeguarding Team

To access the latest editions of the quarterly Newsletters from the URC, please click [here](#).

Safeguarding Contacts

Yvette Hansbury-Robinson - Synod Safeguarding Officer - safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk

General Safeguarding Queries - relating to safeguarding training and/or DBS, please email the Safeguarding Team on helpdesk@nwsynod.org.uk

Youthscape Essentials – All-Round Youth Work Training

A pink-themed poster for 'Youthscape Essentials' training. The text is arranged in a list-like format. On the right side, there is a circular photograph of four diverse young people (three men and one woman) smiling and looking upwards. Below the photo is the logo for 'The United Reformed Church Youth', which consists of a stylized cross with a blue eye-like shape in the center. The background of the poster has faint, repeating circular patterns with the words 'YOUTHSCAPE ESSENTIALS' and 'STOCKSBRIDGE'.

Youthscape Essentials

All Round Training for youth work volunteers

Introductory Day (in person)

Saturday 9th May 10am to 4pm

Christchurch, Manchester Road, Stocksbridge S36 1DY

Online Sessions

Option 1 (7pm to 9pm)

June 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd

Online Sessions

Option 2 (10am to 12pm)

May 30th, June 6th, 13th, 20th

Final Day (in person)

Saturday 27th June 10am to 4pm

Christchurch, Manchester Road, Stocksbridge S36 1DY



To book use QR code or link below
<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/yse/register>
Course Code: 2436385



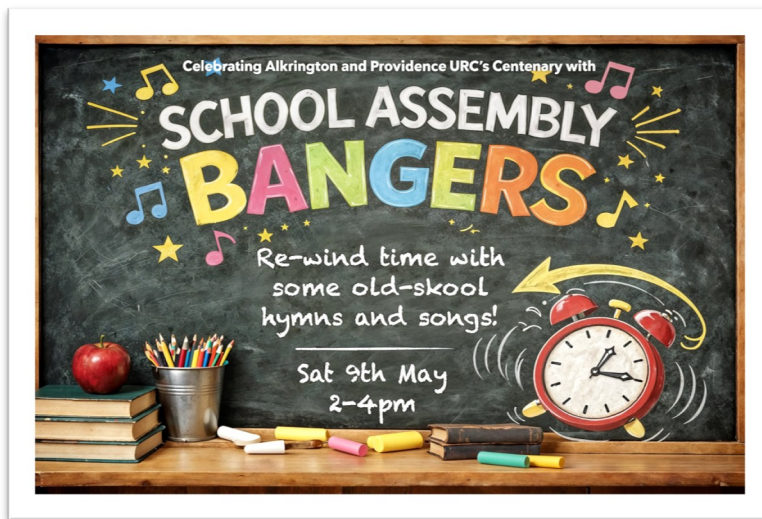
Join members of the CYDO+ team of the United Reformed Church for Youthscape Essentials - an engaging and practical training course for anyone involved in youth work or thinking about getting started. This course helps you grow in confidence, understanding and skill to support young people in your context.

Through the course you'll explore insights into youth culture, develop core youth work skills, and reflect on your own leadership and faith — all rooted in Scripture and shaped by current research. The flexible format means some sessions will be in person (Saturday 9th May and Saturday 27th June in Stocksbridge) and others online, with options to choose evenings or mornings to suit your schedule. Whether you're new to volunteering or want a refreshed foundation for your ministry, this course will equip you to work with young people more confidently and intentionally.

Click <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/yse/register> to book and use **Course Code 2436385**.

Leo has 3 spare places in his car – contact him if you'd like to attend and get a lift!

School Assembly Bangers: A Fun-Filled Musical Afternoon for Families



Families are invited to join an energetic and joy-filled afternoon of music at **School Assembly Bangers**, led by the enthusiastic and much-loved Maggie McDonald.

The event will take place on Saturday 9th May, from 2:00pm to 4:00pm, at Alkington & Providence United Reformed Church in Middleton.

School Assembly Bangers promises to take us down memory lane with a lively session packed with classic hymns from our old school days. Maggie McDonald, an acclaimed mezzo-soprano — whose remarkable voice has graced even Windsor Castle, where she has performed for the Royal Family — will lead us through a repertoire of well-loved tunes that are guaranteed to get everyone singing, clapping, and moving.

This community-focused event aims to bring families together in a relaxed and welcoming environment, encouraging creativity, confidence, and connection through music. There will be something for everyone to enjoy.

No prior musical experience is needed—just bring your voices, your energy, and your sense of fun. Get ready to sing your heart out!!

Event Details:

- **What:** School Assembly Bangers
- **Who:** Led by Maggie McDonald
- **When:** Saturday 9th May, 2:00pm – 4:00pm
- **Where:** Alkington & Providence URC
- **Audience:** Anyone and everyone!



Celebrating 90 Years of Pilots

Are you associated with or have ever been associated with Pilots in any way? Then have we got news for you!!

Pilots is celebrating 90 years on

**Saturday 16th May 2026
at Yorkshire Sculpture Park**



The event is open to **ALL** people who have any memories of Pilots.

Please come along and share your stories or just to meet up with old friends and new friends.

Pilots is still alive and kicking and we want to acknowledge all the young people who have been part of the last 90 years - and those who are currently Pilots.

The event is free but numbers would be appreciated very soon as it is so close.

Please contact me for more information:

Anne Hatch

Synod Pilots Officer

Email: annehatch48@virginmedia.com or Tel: 01204 521800



Farewell and thank you to the Revd Jonnie Hill

A farewell and thank you service will take place at **Marple URC Church** on **Sunday 17th May at 2:30pm** for the Rev'd Jonnie Hill.

Jonnie has worked with East Cheshire and Derbyshire Borders for the past 3 years and is now stepping back from that ministry.

The service will be followed by tea and cake.

Please contact Rev'd Margaret Dexter-Brown for numbers for catering:

margaretdexterbrown@icloud.com



Farewell Service for the Revd Clare Downing



The United Reformed Church North Western Synod
invites you to

**The Farewell Service for the
Revd Clare Downing
North Western Synod Moderator**

30th May at 2pm
Cornerstone URC

261-267 Parris Wood Road
Burnage
Manchester
M20 6EE

Please RSVP by 15th May
to Kerry Later office@nwsynod.org.uk

The Big Sing at Albion URC



The BIG SING!

Albion United Reformed Church - Sunday 21st June 2026 - 6-8pm

Good news! It's not often these days that we get the opportunity to sing with a large crowd of worshippers, but that's exactly what's on offer on the first day of summer.

Mersey Synod's Café Jam will be leading a BIG SING on Sunday 21st June at Albion United Reformed Church (Stamford Street East, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 6QQ). Starting with cake and hot drinks at 6pm, it will be an evening of singing a wide variety of hymns and songs – some old, some new, some lively, some quiet, some folk-style. With an interval at around 7.10pm with further cake and refreshments, the service will end at 8pm.

There is limited parking at the church, ample parking in the surrounding streets, and a nearby car park.

Get your tickets today and invite friends, neighbours and family for the chance to celebrate our God in song together!

Please book via the following link: <https://bit.ly/3NmWod5>

Induction of the Revd Mike Thomason

Save the date - We hope that many of you will be able to join us at Worsley Road URC in Swinton on Saturday 5th September 2026 for the induction of Revd Mike Thomason as Moderator of the North Western Synod.

Worsley Road URC
310-312 Worsley Road
Swinton
Manchester
M27 0EF

Further details to follow.



The Big Give Earth Raise



For one week only, your donation to A Rocha UK will be doubled!

22nd April - 29th April, 2026

Earth Raise is a seven-day online match funding campaign dedicated to helping charities playing a vital role in tackling pressing environmental issues, run in partnership with Environmental Funders Network (EFN)..

For more information click [here](#)

For A Rocha UK, the focus of this week will be:

Restoring Homes for Nature

At a time when UK habitats are being lost and wildlife is declining, this campaign offers hope. By restoring woodlands, wetlands, and wildflower meadows, A Rocha UK and our local partners are giving nature a chance to recover and communities a place to reconnect with the natural world.

Your gift will help:

Restore vital habitats for declining species

Support nature-based solutions to climate change

Create thriving spaces for people and wildlife

Together, we can double the difference for nature.

With gratitude

The A Rocha UK Team

'A Million Acts of Hope' Week of Action



13th May to 20th May is **A Million Acts of Hope** week of action, and we want to share your stories during that week. We're encouraging you to send us your photos and short videos *now*, showing hope in action in your community, so we can *amplify* them during the week of action across our national social media channels using the hashtag [#AMillionActsofHope](#).

There's far more that connects us than divides us and we'd like to highlight that.


For full details click the link below:

[Drown out division with A Million Acts of Hope - United Reformed Church](#)

GMCT Pentecost Praise

**GREATER MANCHESTER
CHURCHES TOGETHER**

PENTECOST PRAISE



**SATURDAY MAY 23RD
3.00PM**

**SALE SALVATION ARMY
27 Ashton Lane, Sale
M33 6NP**

Manchester & Salford Whit Walk



Manchester & Salford Whit Walk 2026

An Ecumenical Walk of Witness

Spring Bank Holiday Monday, 25th May

9.30am Assemble in Cathedral Gardens (behind the Cathedral)

10.00am Procession to St Peter's Square via Deansgate

10.45am Act of worship

11.30am Return procession to Manchester Cathedral

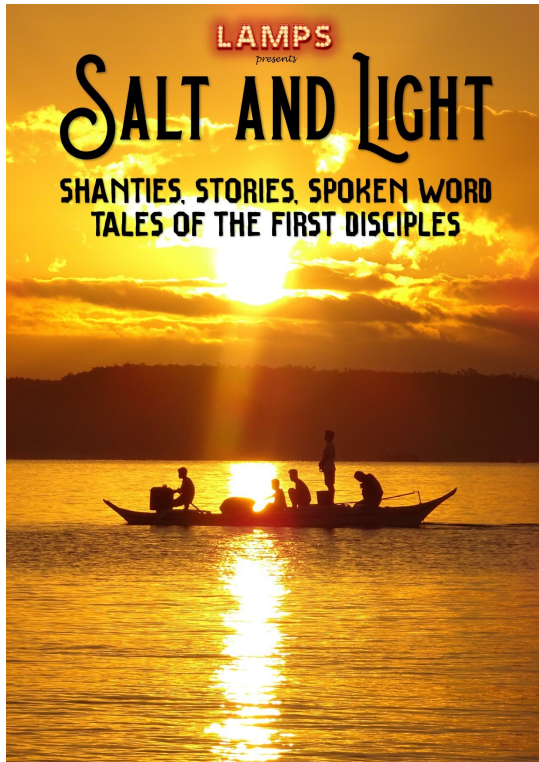
Find us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/ManchesterSalfordWhitWalk/



Rev Kate Bottley will be speaking at the worship in St Peter's Square after the procession.

The LAMPS Collective - Salt and Light



If your church is aiming to reach out to your community with the good news of the Gospel in powerful, creative ways this Autumn, Christian theatre company The LAMPS Collective would love to help you do that!

Our fabulous new outreach play ***Salt and Light***, which delighted audiences at Spring Harvest in 2023, is perfect for those asking the big questions. Who is this Jesus? *What* is he? And what (if anything) does that mean for me and my life?

“Phenomenal standard of acting”.... “The writing was second to none”... “Exquisite harmonies”... “One of the best pieces of theatre I think I have ever seen!” (Spring Harvest audience 2023)

Set in the small fishing community of first century Capernaum and packed with vivid storytelling and great music, ***Salt and Light*** examines the different responses within one family to the charismatic new rabbi walking their shores. It’s an ideal springboard for discussion or simply a great opportunity for church members to invite people along who don’t normally come to church.

Performances are available in **September 2026**. We bring everything you need (actors, staging, lighting, sound). All you need to provide is a space and a warm welcome!

A performance of ***Salt and Light*** lasts about an hour and twenty minutes and is suitable for ages eleven up. You can see clips from the show here [Salt and Light - Lamps Collective](#)

For more information about payment models, any questions or to book a performance please email our bookings co-ordinator - Gillian on bookings@lampscollective.com.

Chaplaincy Support & Communications Worker



Chaplaincy Support & Communications Worker

Location: Treforest Campus (with travel across sites)

Hours: Full-time (including occasional evenings and weekends)

The Chaplaincy360 is currently seeking to appoint a full-time Chaplaincy Support and Communications Worker.

Expressions of Interest and for Further information:

Rev Michelle Romaniw michelle.Romaniw@southwales.ac.uk

Tel: 01443 654060

About Chaplaincy 360

Chaplaincy 360 is a values-led chaplaincy offering holistic pastoral, spiritual, and community support across the University of South Wales. Rooted in inclusive, multi-faith engagement, it fosters belonging, supports wellbeing, and encourages respectful dialogue across cultures, faiths, and worldviews.

About the Role

This is a varied and rewarding role combining **administration, communications, and digital engagement**. You will support the Chaplaincy's mission by ensuring its work is well-coordinated, visible, and impactful across both physical and digital spaces.

Key Responsibilities

- Provide administrative support to Chaplaincy leadership
- Coordinate meetings, events, and chaplaincy activities
- Create and manage engaging digital content (website and social media)
- Support student engagement, wellbeing initiatives, and community-building
- Assist in the day-to-day running of the Chaplaincy centre (Meeting House)
- Work collaboratively with staff, students, and volunteers

About You

You will be:

- Committed to pastoral care and faith-based values
- Highly organised with strong communication skills

- Confident working in a **multi-faith, multicultural environment**
- Digitally capable, including social media and content creation
- Empathetic, discreet, and collaborative in your approach

Desirable:

Experience in social media management, video editing, or pastoral/community work.

Why Join Chaplaincy 360?

You will be part of a welcoming, inclusive, and values-driven community, contributing to the wellbeing and spiritual life of students and staff across the university.

Development Opportunity

This role offers the opportunity to develop pastoral skills further, including supervised pastoral experience as part of your professional development.

April 2026

Urban Outreach Bolton are recruiting



Does the thought of working for a Christian charity appeal to you?

Do you want to make a positive difference to the lives of people who are really struggling?

We are looking for 2 compassionate, highly motivated and skilled individuals to join our **Adult Services Team** in our Eve's Space Project and our **Children and Families Team** in our RUNA Project.

For more information, details of the job descriptions, application forms and application guide please click [here](#)

If you would like to discuss these roles further, you can get in touch with **Nicola Gillard** (Chief Operations Officer) on Tel: **01204 385848** during office hours or email on nicola.gillard@urbanoutreach.co.uk

We are unable to consider expressions of interest sent by letter, email or via social media, all applicants will need to complete the job application form available via the above link. The closing date and time for applications is **Tuesday 12th May 2026 by 5pm.**

Trustee Vacancies for the Leprosy Mission



This is a strategic and exciting time to join The Leprosy Mission; we have a strong and committed group of Trustees who bring a wealth of experience and expertise to support the governance and future direction of the organisation. Sadly we have a number of trustees, including myself, who are nearing the completion of their tenure.

Following a recent review we are seeking to appoint five Trustees, more details can be found [here](#).

As you know we are an explicitly Christian charity. The ethos, function and decision-making of the Board is in keeping with the teaching and ministry of Jesus. Trustees must therefore be committed and mature Christians, able to demonstrate a personal commitment to Jesus Christ which is reflected in their devotional life and involvement in a Christian community.

Joining our Board provides an excellent opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of people affected by leprosy and to gain valuable experience in being part of a forward-thinking team.

So, please do share this opportunity and join me in prayer that God will bring the right people forward to join the Trustee team.

With kind regards and blessings

Anne Fendick

Chair – Board of Trustees

Useful Links



Jobs & Volunteer Opportunities at the URC

For more details please click [here](#)



URC News Update

Please click [here](#) for the latest updates from around the URC

25 years of delivering life-changing mental health support across Lancashire.



Upcoming training & events - Lancashire Mind

To find out more about suicide prevention training with the Orange Button Community Scheme click [here](#)

Public Issues

Churches working together for peace and justice



jpit.uk

JPIT Newsletter

Click [here](#) for the April 2026 Newsletter

April 2026



What's new at Luther King?

For the latest Newsletter please click [here](#)

Daily Devotions

from The United Reformed Church

Welcome to Daily Devotions from the URC

Each morning the URC sends out a reading, reflection and short prayer which helps us to focus on our journeys of Christian discipleship. Please click [here](#) for more information.



Christians on Ageing

Please click below for the latest Newsletter:

[**Christians on Ageing - March Newsletter**](#)

for our Prayers

We invite you to pray:

- For the Churches who are facing difficult decisions about the future of their fellowships and buildings
- For those involved in the discussions about the future of ministry in the North Western Synod
- For your Ministers as they consider how best to support you
- For the continued growth of church mission