North Western Synod

Newsletter



Good News Stories

Learning Events

Children + Youth

Save the Date

NW Synod + Local Church Events

Wider Events

Synod + URC News and Updates

For our Prayers

View of Hurst Nook URC

Inside this issue …

Good News Stories

A Look Back at October

The first induction…

Church Leaders Emphasise Ecumenical Relationships for Social Justice

Retirement of the Revd Graham Tarn from Oldham and Tameside Missional Partnership

Fair Trade Coffee Morning at Marple URC

URC NW Synod Representatives Participated in the GIC Annual Gathering

Learning Events

Safeguarding Training

Martyn's Law Webinar:

Children and Youth

Youthscape Essentials Deep Dive

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Save the Date

NW Synod + Local Church Events

Community Organising Webinar

Christmas Wreath Making at New Chapel URC Horwich

Advent Event at Poulton URC

Christmas Fair at Worsley Road URC

Festive Afternoon Tea at New Chapel URC, Horwich

Rays Christmas Party at Rose Hill URC

Wider Events

URC Leading Your Church Into Growth Conference

Luther King Anniversary Event and Exhibition

Synod + URC News and Updates

Acorn Advent Calendar

A Conversation about the Ministry & Mission Fund

The Living Reconciliation Mediation Team- Place for Hope

Together Network - Church Urban Fund

General Assembly Moderator 2027/28

Living Wage Week 2026

Convenor of the Faith in Action Committee – URC (volunteer)

Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership Convenor

Trustee of the Milton Mount Foundation

Become a Mediator with Place for Hope

Lay Worker – Mission & Community

Useful Links

for our Prayers

A Look Back at October



Dear Friends

It has become part of my routine that I sit to write these pieces whilst I am on the train enroute there or back to London, for the monthly Moderators meeting.

As I write this the countryside full of autumnal colours is zooming past the window, I have no idea where we are, but the view is as lovely as ever. Which has made me think about how time flies. So often on these journeys I find that 'time flies', I have either been reading or writing something and then I am at my destination! Being the Synod Moderator is starting to feel a bit like that - you 'blink' and suddenly another month has passed! It is hard to believe it is 2 months since my induction and 8 months since I formally started the role.

So to look back at October, it has been a month of new experiences, challenges and an overwhelming joy as I look at all the things churches across the Synod are doing. I started the month attending the Education for Ministry 2 (EM2) retreat, at Rydal Hall in Cumbria, with EM2 ministers from across the North Western, Mersey and Northern Synods. EM2 ministers are those Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers both stipendiary and non-stipendiary, as well as Certificate of Eligibility Ministers, in their first 3 years of ministry. It was an honour to be invited and to hear their stories, of their call and how they were finding ministry. I hope I am lucky enough to be invited to another as the conversation was rich and the experience valuable. We are very blessed as a denomination as we have some exceptional people in ministry.

The Pilots fun day was another highlight - we sadly now only have two Pilots companies in the Synod (one in Bolton and one in Stockport), but they came together for a day of fun activities. We arrived in the midst of them getting to know each other by sharing a little 'potted' description they had written down. Of course myself and Sue then had to do the same to introduce each other - which was much harder than it seemed. We then joined them for a themed treasure hunt, that saw them looking around the church and grounds for clues. It was a pleasure to be there and to see the exceptional work that the Pilots Officers do to engage these young people and share their faith with the children.

I was invited to lead worship at several churches across the synod, and it has been a real pleasure meeting people and sharing in Worship. A special service was the Induction of the Revd Dr Noel Irwin to the Oldham and Tameside Missional Partnership. I am delighted to welcome Noel to the synod. There were also two retirement services this month for Revd Martin Whiffen and Revd

Graham Tarn. Thank you both for many years service within the Synod, I hope and pray you will both enjoy your retirements.

Finally, we met together for the October Synod meeting at the Lancaster University Chaplaincy - a fabulous venue at the centre of the Synod. It is the first time the Chaplaincy building was used, and it was very special, you could sense that it has been a centre of worship for many years. It was also the university open day, so as I was wearing my collar, I had some wonderful conversations with people who dropped in to 'have a look around'.

I am grateful for the gentleness with which I was treated for my first Synod as Moderator. At the start of the meeting I reminded everyone that Synod is all of those gathered as well as all who attend our churches. There is no 'Synod' as you are the Synod. I welcomed the opportunity to meet many of you for the first time, and to hear stories about what is happening in our churches.

The discussion around the Ministry and Mission Fund was rich, and we have fed your comments back to the task group. We all learnt things about how the work of the URC and Synod is financed, as well as considering what our funds could be used for. We also passed two resolutions, appointing Revd Martyn Coe as the Convenor of the Cumbria and Lancashire Area Pastoral Committee and agreeing to establishing a Pioneer Minister post in the Forest of Bowland.

At future Synod Meetings I want to share more of our stories with each other - to listen to each other and to learn from each other. Yes there are struggles, but there are also moments that bring hope and joy.

Another packed month, my prayers for you all.



Revd Mike Thomason
Synod Moderator





The first induction…

Reverend Doctor Noel Irwin, late of Luther King college, was the first minister inducted to the Oldham and Tameside Missional Partnership and that's almost enough formality.



The service, welcome and celebration were on 10th October, at Albion URC in Ashton-under-Lyne, approximately 6 weeks after he officially started working within the Partnership and longer since he began exploring and introducing himself around the various fellowships since his 'preach with a view' and call.

There was formality within the service led by the Moderator Revd Mike Thomason, reminding us all of who we are as the United Reformed Church, the expectations of both Noel in his calling and of the responsibilities of the congregations. Many people were involved to make the service well rounded and inclusive.



Revd Dr Graham Adams a long term friend and sort of mentor, sounding board and educational colleague at Luther King College delivered the message. By way of shorthand, the message was about fences versus freedom, tradition verses movement. And Noel's address, underlined the movement of the Spirit and what Noel called his four key points of ministry. The story of the call also added to the sense of newness and change that Noel's life experiences and being the first minister to the whole partnership will bring. It was great.

Friends across from many different walks of life attended, from Sale, college, Synod and across the Partnership. The Mayor of Tameside and a number of ecumenical colleagues together with Noel's family were all present to support the start of the new chapter in his and the Partnership's life.

Everyone mingled and chatted over tea and cakes after the service. It was quite difficult getting round with so many folk to talk with and the new (or refreshed) networking opportunities.

It was a joyous, uplifting and affirming day. We expect great things as we listen and follow the Spirit's lead individually, as disparate fellowships and as a united Partnership being served by 'our' one (and only) new stipendiary minister.

Revd Graham Tarn

Church Leaders Emphasise Ecumenical Relationships for Social Justice



Church leaders from different denominations across the North West of England have emphasised the importance of strengthening ecumenical relationships to promote social justice in society. The call was made during a special ecumenical gathering held under the theme, “Ecumenical Relationships: Uniting the Church.”

On 7th November, Canon Fr. Falak Sher, Rector of the Church of the Ascension, Salford, organised the gathering at the church. The event brought together church leaders from various cultural backgrounds and Christian denominations across North West England to share their insights and experiences.

Fr. Emmanuel Asi, a Pakistani theologian, delivered the keynote address. The event was jointly hosted by Aftab Alexander Mughal, Director of Minority Concern and a member of URC Westbury Gardens, Blackburn, and Sonia Edward, a human rights activist. It was well attended by clergy and laypeople from different parts of the North West.

The gathering was addressed by Revd Rogers Govender, Dean of Manchester Cathedral; Revd Canon Grace Thomas; Revd Jacob Devadason of the Diocese of Chester; Revd Raj Patta of the Methodist Church, Stockport; Canon David Onabanjo, Intercultural Mission Enabler; and Fr. Paul Benfield, a Church of England priest serving in the Diocese of Blackburn.

In their contributions, the speakers highlighted that although society is characterised by diversity, all human beings face common challenges and share a common future. They stressed that everyone deserves freedom, dignity and the opportunity to live in peace.

The speakers emphasised that working together for social justice is a shared responsibility and an important part of the Church's mission. They noted that unity among Christian denominations is

essential to addressing social challenges collectively and promoting a more inclusive and peaceful society.

They also called on churches to move beyond denominational differences and demonstrate God's love through social actions, solidarity and a shared commitment to justice, equality and human dignity.

By Aftab Alexander Mughal



Retirement of the Revd Graham Tarn from Oldham and Tameside Missional Partnership



Was it a coincidence that the service and retirement party for the Reverend Graham Tarn took place on Halloween? Perhaps not for someone who acknowledges his quirkiness and inability to conform. To be honest if it had been up to him, perhaps it wouldn't have taken place at all. But he wasn't going to be allowed to go too quietly and somewhat reluctantly agreed to something being organised.

What followed at Trinity Church Audenshaw was a service led by the Reverend Sheila Coop, with input from Val Williams, which acknowledged Graham leaving his career as an IT project manager to fulfil his calling. This was followed by 4 years of study at Westminster College leading to his ordination at a church in Sidmouth, Devon in 2008.

In 2013 Graham moved 'up north', to answer a calling to minister to the Churches of Hope at Denton and Trinity, Audenshaw. At Trinity, Graham also got involved in the Methodist Circuit, as Trinity is a Local Ecumenical Project (LEP). Subsequent changes in the United Reformed Church (URC) meant adjustments to his timetable and routine as he became a Missional Partnership Minister, so his time had to be shared among more churches.

A love of coffee and plenty of it, the love of God's word and sharing Bible Studies helped to sustain him through the ups and downs of ministerial life with the support of his wife Dawn and their son and daughter, until her death which affected and still continues to affect Graham deeply.

Other ministers in the Partnership stood and the congregation held up their hand in prayer as Sheila prayed for Graham and for the future, as he seeks God's help in working through what this next chapter in the book of his life holds.

The choice of four hymns we sang, chosen by Sheila for different reasons, one from his ordination - Lord for the years, and another one of his favourites - In Christ alone, Graham commented on during the service.

Graham received a variety of gifts and money from the Glossop & Tameside Circuit, the Missional Partnership and individuals. Not surprisingly he received two super sized coffee mugs to cope with his caffeine addiction!

Graham honestly admitted the only time he felt comfortable standing up at the front during the proceedings, was when he was speaking or reading about God in some way or other. Some of the aspects of his ministry Graham thought he may be remembered for and had enjoyed, were his love of God's word and his calling, the Cafe Style worship he introduced and leading Bible study or the Chosen series, and something he hadn't recognised as part of his ministry, his idea of beginning the Dawdles (a weekly walk with membership from across the partnership), which has continued and grown in membership.

Graham's final blessing to us was a Franciscan Prayer:

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
so that you may live deep within your heart.
May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.
May God bless you with tears, to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war,
so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain to joy.
And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference
in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done,
to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

Amen





Fair Trade Coffee Morning at Marple URC







At Marple URC we held a Fair Trade Coffee morning recently together with some members of the Stockport Fair Trade Group who brought stalls of Fairly Traded foods, crafts and Christmas cards.

With what was sold on the stalls, together with sales of coffee, tea and cakes and donations, £602 was taken.

Our MP Lisa Smart attended too and there was a good atmosphere throughout the morning.

Jill Kenna
Church Secretary
Marple URC



URC NW Synod Representatives Participated in the GIC Annual Gathering

Around 40 ministers and lay people from various United Reformed Church (URC) synods attended the national annual gathering of the Global and Intercultural Church in Birmingham from 13th to 15th October. Participants included representatives of Global Majority Ministries, the Cascade of Grace and Racial Justice Advocates (RJA). Among them were six representatives from the URC North Western Synod, who actively participated in the gathering.

The gathering brought together ministers, RJAs and Church-Related Community Workers (CRCWs). There were people whom heritage is from India, Taiwan, South Korea, Pakistan, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and other parts of the world, alongside participants from the UK. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences enriched the conversations and strengthened the sense of belonging to a multicultural Church.

Four serving ministers involved in Global Majority Ministries from the North Western Synod — Revd Gilbert Esambe, Revd Kurauone Mutimwii, Revd Maria Lee and Revd Noma Marambi — shared their experiences of working with different church communities across the north-west of England.

Celebrating diversity and confronting historical injustices

The gathering provided an opportunity to celebrate the URC's multicultural ministry and its commitment to welcoming diversity. We listened to stories and experiences from the places we come from and the communities in which we currently serve. These conversations offered valuable insights into the challenges, opportunities and realities of ministry across different cultural contexts.

Participants acknowledged the significant steps the URC has taken to encourage open conversations about difficult historical legacies, including slavery and colonisation, as well as questions of reparations, apologies, healing and how we move forward together. While appreciating the progress made, participants emphasised the need for continued honest engagement, meaningful dialogue and genuine partnerships. Such efforts must empower communities that have been deeply affected by these historical injustices. The URC was commended for the work it is already undertaking and encouraged to continue building on this progress.

Promoting inclusion and addressing institutional challenges

Although the URC has made important efforts to open its spaces to the Global Majority, discussions highlighted the continuing influence of unconscious bias, particularly the dominance of white, male perspectives within some areas of the Church's structures and decision-making processes. Participants stressed the importance of taking intentional and sustained steps to ensure that inclusion is reflected not only in the Church's stated commitments but also in its everyday practices, leadership and decision-making. The aim is to build a Church in which everyone can participate fully and feel valued.

Another important discussion focused on complaints and disciplinary procedures. Participants highlighted the trauma that such processes can cause for ministers and others involved, particularly those from Global Majority

backgrounds. They called for greater transparency, culturally sensitive procedures and appropriate mechanisms of care and support for ministers, especially those who have come from overseas to serve local churches. During one of the discussions, participants emphasised the need for complaints procedures to take greater account of the cultural backgrounds and experiences of those involved, while ensuring fairness, accountability and pastoral care.

The North Western Synod's Racial Justice Coordinators, Fozia Aftab, and Aftab Alexander Mughal shared updates on their work across the Synod and expressed appreciation for the support provided, particularly through the Racial Justice Support Group. They highlighted ongoing initiatives, including the active commemoration of Black History Month, and shared information about forthcoming events and activities across the Synod.

Participants also learned more about Black History Month through an engaging quiz organised by Veronica Daniel. Karen Campbell, Head of Global and Intercultural Church, shared updates on the ongoing work of the Legacy of Slavery project and acknowledged the contributions of groups and individuals working to make the Church a more inclusive and welcoming place for everyone.

Climate change, global conflicts and unequal media attention

The gathering also created space for conversations about wider global challenges, including climate change and international conflicts. Participants reflected on the increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather patterns being experienced in different parts of the world, from the recent hot summer in the UK to violent hailstorms in Zimbabwe. These experiences highlighted the far-reaching effects of climate change and the importance of recognising how environmental challenges affect communities differently.

Discussions also explored ongoing wars and conflicts around the world and the ways in which they are reported by the media. Participants observed that some conflicts receive extensive international attention, while others are marginalised, reduced to brief mentions or ignored altogether. This raised important questions about whose voices are heard, whose suffering is acknowledged and whose experiences are left out of dominant narratives. The conversations reinforced the importance of listening to communities directly affected by these crises and recognising the interconnectedness of global struggles for justice, peace and human dignity.

Strengthening collaboration and building an inclusive church

Throughout the gathering, participants reaffirmed the importance of celebrating the multicultural nature of the Church while actively promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. They highlighted the need to raise awareness of racial justice issues across congregations and church structures and emphasised the importance of racial justice training for everyone involved in this work. Such training is essential to equip people with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to challenge discrimination and contribute to meaningful change. Participants were encouraged by hearing about the work taking place across different synods and expressed their commitment to supporting one another wherever possible. Sharing experiences, challenges and good practice helped strengthen relationships and foster a spirit of collaboration across the wider Church.

The gathering also marked the sharing of the first newsletter of the Global and Intercultural Church. Participants welcomed this initiative, recognising its potential to improve communication, strengthen networks and provide a valuable source of information and support for those working to promote a more inclusive Church.

Overall, the gathering was a valuable opportunity to celebrate progress, acknowledge continuing challenges and renew our collective commitment to racial justice and intercultural ministry. It reminded us that building an inclusive Church requires more than welcoming diversity: it calls for honest conversations, intentional action, mutual accountability and a willingness to learn from one another.

As we continue this journey together, the challenge is to ensure that the URC becomes a Church in which people from every background are not only welcomed but also heard, valued, supported and empowered to contribute fully to its life and mission.

By Aftab Alexander Mughal & Revd. Kurauone Mutimwii

Safeguarding Training



Levels of Mandatory Safeguarding Training Matrix

Click **here** for the URC Levels of Mandatory Safeguarding Training Matrix

Foundation Safeguarding Training E-Learning Course

Please click on the following link to access the module: **Safeguarding Foundation Course**

Introduction to Safeguarding E-Learning Course

Designed for those asked to do Foundation training but who have completed safeguarding training within a professional organisation in the previous 3 years. This course does not look at the signs and symptoms of abuse - if you need this please complete Foundation training (see above). Please click on the link to access this module: **An Introduction to Safeguarding in the URC**

Online and In Person Safeguarding Training

The following courses are delivered by your Synod Safeguarding Officer, Yvette, either online or at face-to-face venues. Please book your place via **Calendar — URC North Western** or by contacting Joanne at the Synod Office - **SafeguardingAdmin@nwsynod.org.uk** - providing your full name, your church, your role and your preferred course (level, date and time).

Combined Foundation + Intermediate Safeguarding Training

- Monday 30th November 2026 – 1pm to 3.30pm – Online
  To book please click **here**

Advanced Safeguarding Training

- Monday 16th November 2026 – 6.00pm to 9.15pm (with a break) - Online
  To book please click **here**

- Tuesday 23rd February 2027 – 12.30pm to 4pm (with a break) – In Person at Mersey Synod Office, 1 Fingall Road, Liverpool L15 9JE
  To book please click **here**

- Monday 1st March 2027 – 11am to 2.30pm (with a break) – In Person at NW Synod Office, Unit 20, Sandpiper Quay, Waters Edge Business Park, Modwen Road, Salford M5 3EZ
  To book please click **here**

Contact Details

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

General Safeguarding queries - safeguarding training, DBS queries, or to arrange in person training at your church, please contact Joanne at **SafeguardingAdmin@nwsynod.org.uk**

"Safeguarding is a whole church responsibility"

Martyn's Law Webinar:

Following the success of our previous webinar in partnership with the Community Security Trust, The United Reformed Church is pleased to announce that the CST are running the session again, this time in partnership with the Security Industry Authority (SIA). This will be a practical webinar on Martyn's Law (the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025).

This session is designed to help local churches, trustees, elders, ministers and church officers understand their responsibilities under the new legislation and what steps they may need to take to comply.

The webinar will cover:

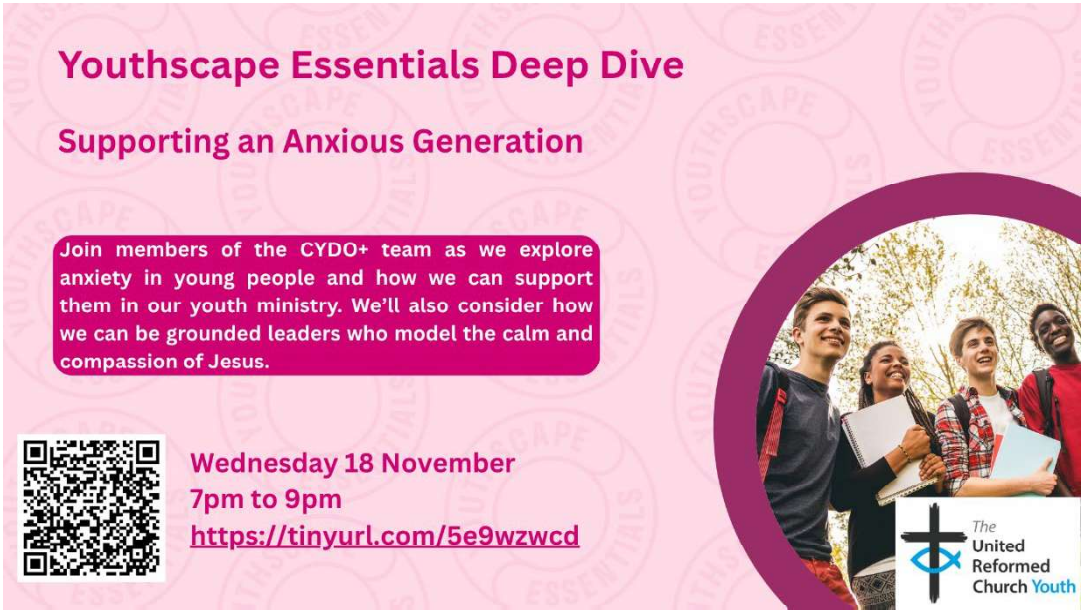
- An overview of Martyn's Law and its purpose
- How to determine whether your church or event is within the scope of the legislation
- The requirements for Standard Duty Premises, Enhanced Duty Premises, and Qualifying Events
- The role of the regulator and enforcement arrangements
- Practical examples and proportionate measures that churches can take to improve preparedness and resilience
- Questions and considerations specific to places of worship and church events

The session will be delivered by CST's SAFE (Security Awareness for Everyone) team, which shares specialist security knowledge and good practice with organisations outside the Jewish community that may be vulnerable to violence, extremism or hate crime.

Please note: SAFE webinars are suitable for attendees aged 18 and over.

For more information and to register for the Webinar please below link:
Martyn's Law – A practical walk through the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, with the SIA

Youthscape Essentials Deep Dive



To book your place please click **here**

Youth Mental Health First Aid



To book your place please click **here**

Community Organising Webinar



How can a community speak and act together to make a positive difference? And what has the church to offer into the mix?

Join Community Organising, the fourth webinar in the A Church with People at the Margin series (each session is stand alone).

- Monday 16th November 2026
- 7pm | Online via Zoom
- Register now: **bit.ly/URCCPM4**

Christmas Wreath Making at New Chapel URC Horwich

Come and make your own Christmas wreath with Liz (Busy Lizzie flowers)



When: Friday 27 November

Where: New Chapel URC, Horwich, BL6 6QN

Times: either 2:00 pm or 7:00 pm

Cost: £38 to include everything you need to make a wreath and a mince pie!

Raffle

Booking essential: email

safeguarding.newchapel@nwsynod.org.uk

or via messenger on our face book page

Advent Event at Poulton URC



Christmas Fair at Worsley Road URC



Festive Afternoon Tea at New Chapel URC, Horwich



Rays Christmas Party at Rose Hill URC



URC Leading Your Church Into Growth Conference



Leading your Church into Growth (LyCiG) has been equipping and encouraging local churches for over 30 years, helping congregations across denominations become healthier, more outward-looking, and more confident in their calling to grow.

Rooted in biblical principles and practical experience, LyCiG focuses not on doing more, but on doing things better - more intentionally, prayerfully, and effectively.

At the heart of LyCiG is its three-day conference, the main focal point for local churches and their leaders. Significantly there is a growing commitment across the URC to this shared journey of renewal and growth. It is recommended that a church sends its Minister (if it has one) plus 2 or 3 people from the church. The conference is interactive and discussion-led, creating space for teams to reflect honestly on their church life and explore practical ways forward. It centres on the seven building blocks of church growth, including:

- Praying intentionally for growth
- Assessing the quality of welcome and worship
- Reviewing provision for children and young people
- And other key aspects of healthy church life

Through hands-on activities, participants are helped to apply these principles within their own context. Alongside this, short, inspiring sessions share both biblical insights and practical ideas, giving churches confidence that growth is both possible and faithful. By the end of the conference, each church team leaves with a clear, realistic plan, renewed vision, and a sense of confidence that their church can grow.

Following the conference, churches can continue the journey through LyCiG Local, which takes the material explored at the conference and works through it at a slower pace. This enables teams to

involve more people from their congregation, deepen their reflection, and build a sustainable plan for growth, all within a clear and supportive structure.

Grants are available to help towards the cost of attending the *Leading Your Church into Growth Conference*.

Ministers may be able to use EM3 funds, while lay people can apply to the Synod for a **Discipleship Development Fund (DDF) grant of up to £300**.

If you are interested in attending and would like to explore the funding available, please contact the Learning Mentor, Rev'd Dr Rob Hoch-Yidokodiltona, and copy in Rev'd Richard Bradley, Convenor of the Mission and Discipleship Committee.

You can contact them at:

- **Rev'd Dr Rob Hoch-Yidokodiltona:** learningmentor@nwsynod.org.uk
- **Rev'd Richard Bradley:** richard.bradley@nwsynod.org.uk

Rev'd Richard Bradley
Minister of the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership

Luther King Anniversary Event and Exhibition

We are delighted to invite you to join us as we celebrate our 160th Anniversary at Luther King.

Date: Thursday 3rd December 2026
Time: 14:00-18:00 (Drop in for exhibition, refreshments from 17:00)
Where?: The Chapel @ Luther King Theological College, Brighton Grove, Manchester, M14 5JP

Since the founding of the Manchester Baptist College in 1866, Luther King and its predecessors have played a significant role in the development of theological education and ministerial formation in Britain, equipping generations of students for service in churches, communities, and beyond. This anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on our rich heritage, to give thanks for all who have contributed to the life of the institution, and to celebrate the continuing work of Luther King today as we prepare to invest in our Brighton Grove site for the future.

As part of the celebrations, we will be hosting a special anniversary exhibition drawn from our archives. The exhibition will highlight key moments in Luther King's history and the many people whose lives and ministries have been shaped here over the past 160 years. We will also be unveiling our latest architectural plans for the Brighton Grove site and sharing our vision for Luther King as we invest in its future.

I will also present a short history of Luther King, highlighting significant moments from the past 160 years and some of the influential figures who studied and trained here. The afternoon will also provide an opportunity to reconnect with students past and present, colleagues, and friends of the institution. If you have been a part of our story, or are interested in how theological education has shaped Manchester throughout history, we would be delighted if you could join us in marking this milestone.

To reserve your place, please visit our Ticket Tailor page:
Secure your tickets – Luther King @ 160: A Shared Heritage of Faith and Learning in Manchester – Luther King Theological College

We would also be grateful if you could share this invitation with others who may be interested.
We look forward to welcoming you and celebrating 160 years of Luther King together.

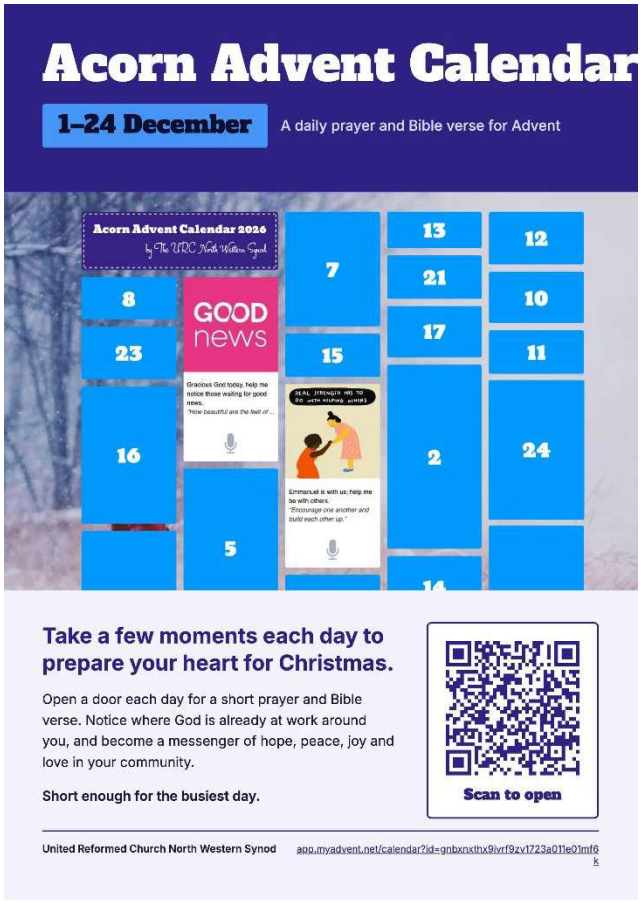
Schedule:

14:00	Exhibition opens and story-sharing begins
17:00	Refreshments served
17:15	A Brief History of Luther King and launch of redevelopment plans
18:00	Close

With warm regards

Olivia Hersey
Governance (& HR) and Marketing Officer
olivia.hersey@lkh.co.uk

Acorn Advent Calendar



Join the Advent Prayer Journey 2026

This Advent, take a few moments each day to prepare your heart for Christmas and discover where God is already at work around you.

From 1st to 24th December, the Advent Prayer Journey offers a simple daily prayer and Bible verse to help you notice Christ's presence in everyday life, deepen your faith, and become a messenger of hope, peace, joy and love in your community.

Each day's prayer is short enough to fit into even the busiest schedule, yet powerful enough to change how we see the people God places in our path.

And here's the good news!

Each URC North West Synod congregation will receive a digital Advent calendar that can easily be shared by email or posted into church WhatsApp groups, making it simple for members to join the journey together. You can preview it now, but the doors will only open on the day designated! Use the link on the poster, scan the QR code or click on: **Acorn Advent Calendar 2026**

But why stop at the church door?

Why not send the Advent calendar to your neighbours, friends, family members and others in your community? It's a simple, gentle way to share the hope of Christmas with people who may never come to church but would welcome a daily moment of prayer and reflection.

There's no pressure and no complicated programme. Just one prayer, one Bible verse and one daily invitation to notice where God is already at work.

Imagine congregations across the North West of England praying together, growing in attentiveness to God and sharing the love of Christ with the people around them.

This Advent, let's make room for Emmanuel — God with us — and invite others to discover Him too.

🌱 One prayer. One verse. One daily invitation.

Advent Prayer Journey 2026 | 1 – 24 December

Prepare your heart. Notice God's presence. Share Christ's hope.

A Conversation about the Ministry & Mission Fund

Thank you to all who attend the Synod meeting in October.

The morning was given to discussions about the Ministry and Mission Fund, and engaging with the review that is being conducted across the denomination.

The videos used in the session are available for use in Elders' and Church Meetings via the URC YouTube channel and by following the links below:

Understanding our shared covenant of ministry - YouTube

Why the Ministry and Mission Fund exists and how it works - YouTube

The Bible study used is also available to download **here**.

The Living Reconciliation Mediation Team- Place for Hope

We are excited to announce that Place for Hope's mediation service is now available to the North Western Synod. This marks the first step in the phased rollout of the mediation service across all 13 Synods of the United Reformed Church.

This is a key part of the vision and strategy of the partnership between the URC and Place for Hope: to facilitate a cultural shift in the URC so that conflict can be seen as a normal part of diverse community, and congregations are equipped and supported to navigate conflict, change, and difference well.

What does this mean?

The first phase of the rollout means that any URC faith community (congregation, leaders, individuals) in your Synod will have access to the Place for Hope mediation service free at point of delivery.

Services provided under the rollout consist of:

- Facilitated conversations: support for congregations and Synods navigating difficult conversations, tensions, and relationships in times of change. Facilitated conversations can help foster productive dialogue and prevent issues from escalating.
- Small group mediation: holding space for individuals to listen to one another well and find ways through their disagreements together.

The service isn't just for times of crisis — it's also available whenever you're dealing with a challenging situation, conversation, decision, or time of change.

How do I make a referral?

If there is a situation, conversation, or decision you are facing and would like support from the Living Reconciliation Mediation Team, please contact Claire MacIntyre (deputyclerk@nwsynod.org.uk) or Martha Hunt (martha.hunt@placeforhope.org.uk). They will then liaise with the Synod Pastoral Committee to ensure mediation is the best course of action, and that you are fully supported throughout the process.

A member of the Place for Hope team will then get in touch to conduct an intake call. Please note that the person making the referral should be someone with knowledge of the conflict.

We recommend making a referral as soon as possible as the earlier mediation can take place, the higher the chances of a positive outcome.

* Please note that in order to ensure that Place for Hope's capacity is not overwhelmed, Synods will initially have access to 3 mediation cases, with a waitlist in place for any subsequent cases *

Currently there is space for one new referral (November 2026)

Together Network - Church Urban Fund



Local wisdom. National connections. Shared ambition

As part of our approach to being a Church with People at the Margins, the Synod is a member of the Together Network. The network was relaunched this summer and the article below sets out the commitments made by members of the network, which forms part of the Church Urban Fund.

More than 35 Christian organisations have affirmed a new Together Network Covenant, establishing a shared foundation for closer collaboration, stronger churches and flourishing neighbourhoods.

As conveners of the Network, we expect around 60 organisations to have affirmed the Covenant by the end of 2026. Developed together by partner organisations, it marks a significant new chapter: connecting the knowledge, confidence and relationships that help churches make a lasting contribution to their communities.

The ambition is practical. An idea developed in one neighbourhood could inspire action in another. A connection between organisations could become a new collaboration. Experience gathered through years of local work could help shape national conversations.

The Together Network brings together local and regional organisations, national Christian charities, dioceses and other church bodies. Its strength lies in connecting partners with deep neighbourhood relationships, specialist expertise and national reach, across different Christian traditions.

To learn more please click the following link:

Church Urban Fund | Local wisdom. National connections. Shared…

General Assembly Moderator 2027/28



As you may be aware, Revd Dr Susan Durber has been elected as Moderator of General Assembly from July 2027, and there is an opportunity for synods and local churches to invite her to events during her term of office.

Susan's ordination and first 9 years in ministry were spent in Salford and South Manchester, so she has connections with North Western Synod.

Please see the letter below, from Susan, with a link to invite her to your church if you would like to do so.

Warm greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ!

I am grateful and honoured to have been elected to serve as Moderator of General Assembly from July 2027 until Assembly meets in July 2028. I hope to visit many congregations, communities, projects and events throughout the URC in those months. With the help of Rachel Fitzgerald, the PA to the Assembly Moderator and Moderator Elect, I look forward to planning a full calendar! I would be glad to receive any invitations from those who would welcome a visit.

If you would like to invite me to visit your synod, church or community, please can you fill in this Google form by Tuesday 12th January 2027:

Invitation to Revd Dr Susan Durber (GA Moderator 2027-2028)

If you have any technical issues with the form or wish to seek clarification about anything, you can contact Rachel on **rachel.fitzgerald@urc.org.uk**

Since I live at the western edge of Wales, it will be important to plan visits carefully so that I can concentrate engagements together over a block of days at a time. This means that, alongside leading worship on Sundays, I would welcome invitations for Saturday events and to weekday meetings and gatherings. I am happy to join in with things already planned, or to lead something you would welcome from me. I would be willing to lead workshops on prayer, share in Bible studies, give a talk reflecting on ecumenism today or on Christianity in our times, or exploring our particular

tradition as a United and Reformed church. I want above all to respond to the questions you are asking or the things with which you wrestle, and to listen to whatever is on your heart.

I would particularly welcome invitations to ecumenical gatherings, to any of our many LEPs, or where there is a minister who has come to the URC on a certificate of eligibility. I would love to recognise and explore how the United Reformed Church is visibly part of a larger belonging, part of the whole Church. I would also be very happy to visit small churches (like the five chapels here in Wales where I worship most often), or churches who haven't seen a Moderator of General Assembly for a while. But please, let no-one feel they can't ask!

I will have some things still to do in the year in my role as President from Europe of the World Council of Churches, and I will need to spend time at home in Pembrokeshire, both resting and preparing. I regret that it is likely that I will not be able to accept every invitation, but I am looking forward to a year of travelling and adventure with the United Reformed Church. I want to listen, to affirm, to thank and to bring hope, wherever I can.

After the 12th January deadline, Rachel and I will meet to plan the year and we hope to be in touch before the end of February to let you know whether I'm able to accept your invitation. I write already in gratitude, and with prayers for the United Reformed Church and all its people.

Yours in Christ

Susan Durber

Living Wage Week 2026

This week has been Living Wage week. The North Western Synod is proud to be part of a movement of over 16,000 employers making a difference by paying the real Living Wage - because everyone deserves a decent standard of living.

Its almost 12 months since we were formally accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. Accreditation was one of the commitments we made in our strategy “A Church with People at the Margins” to provide people with Dignity, Agency and Power starting with our employees.

The (Real) Living Wage is set independently each year based on a thorough assessment of the costs of living in the UK the rates are announced each year in October and for 2025/26 has been set at £13.45 per hour compared to the Government set National Living Wage which is currently £12.21 per hour.

As part of our commitment, we also advocate with others about the benefits of being a Living Wage Employer. It’s been good that over the last year a number of our churches have responded to our accreditation either formally through accreditation or informally also committed to paying any employees the Real Living Wage. A number of the other organisations we work with regularly are also Living Wage accredited employers - perhaps the best known to local churches being Castlefield who are the Investment Managers for many churches.

As well as the obvious benefit to staff of fair pay, over 94% of Living Wage accredited businesses report benefits to them from accreditation as a Living Wage employer, through more productive and motivated staff leading to better retention rates and advantages in recruitment.

So, celebrate Living Wage Week with us and the 1,600+ other accredited employers across North West England.

Mike Hart
Transformation Director

Convenor of the Faith in Action Committee – URC (volunteer)

The United Reformed Church

An exciting opportunity to help lead the work of the URC's newest Core Committee, Faith in Action. The Faith in Action Committee brings together the work on mission and discipleship. It guides our staff team in delivering the Assembly's work that covers evangelism and ecumenism, public issues, racial justice and intercultural church, net zero, global ministries and inter faith, ministry with children and young people, intergenerational discipleship, and lay learning. The staff team, based in the Offices of the General Assembly, is focused on serving the synods and local churches through their work.

As Convenor, you will chair the committee, support the team as they develop the Faith in Action strategy based on the 5 Marks of Mission, take its business to General Assembly and Assembly Executive, and help build a diverse, inclusive membership.

Commitment: Four committee meetings a year, two online and two in person, plus General Assembly, Assembly Executive and Business Committee meetings. Planning or follow up meetings in between. Induction, training and admin support are provided, and expenses are reimbursed.

To find out more or apply go to **https://urc.org.uk/jobs/** and scroll down to Volunteer posts where you will find more information and an application form.
DEADLINE for applications: 30th November 2026.

If you would like more information about the role or an informal conversation, please contact **jenny.mills@urc.org.uk** who is the Deputy General Secretary (Faith in Action) or Sarah Lane-Cawte at **slanecawte@gmail.com** who is the current Faith in Action Committee Convenor.

Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership Convenor



Could You Be Our Next Rochdale Bury & North Manchester Missional Partnership Convenor?

The North Western Synod Nominations Committee is seeking nominations for the role of Rochdale, Bury & North Manchester Missional Partnership Steering Group Convenor. We welcome suggestions of people with the relevant skills, experience and commitment to serve.

About the role: The Convenor will facilitate, enable, encourage and lead Steering Group meetings, as well as provide support at other times when requested and agreed with the Steering Group. They will also liaise with other Steering Group Convenors across the Synod to encourage consistency.

Meeting commitment: Six Steering Group meetings per year (approximately every two months), plus six Convenors' meetings, with timing varying according to need.

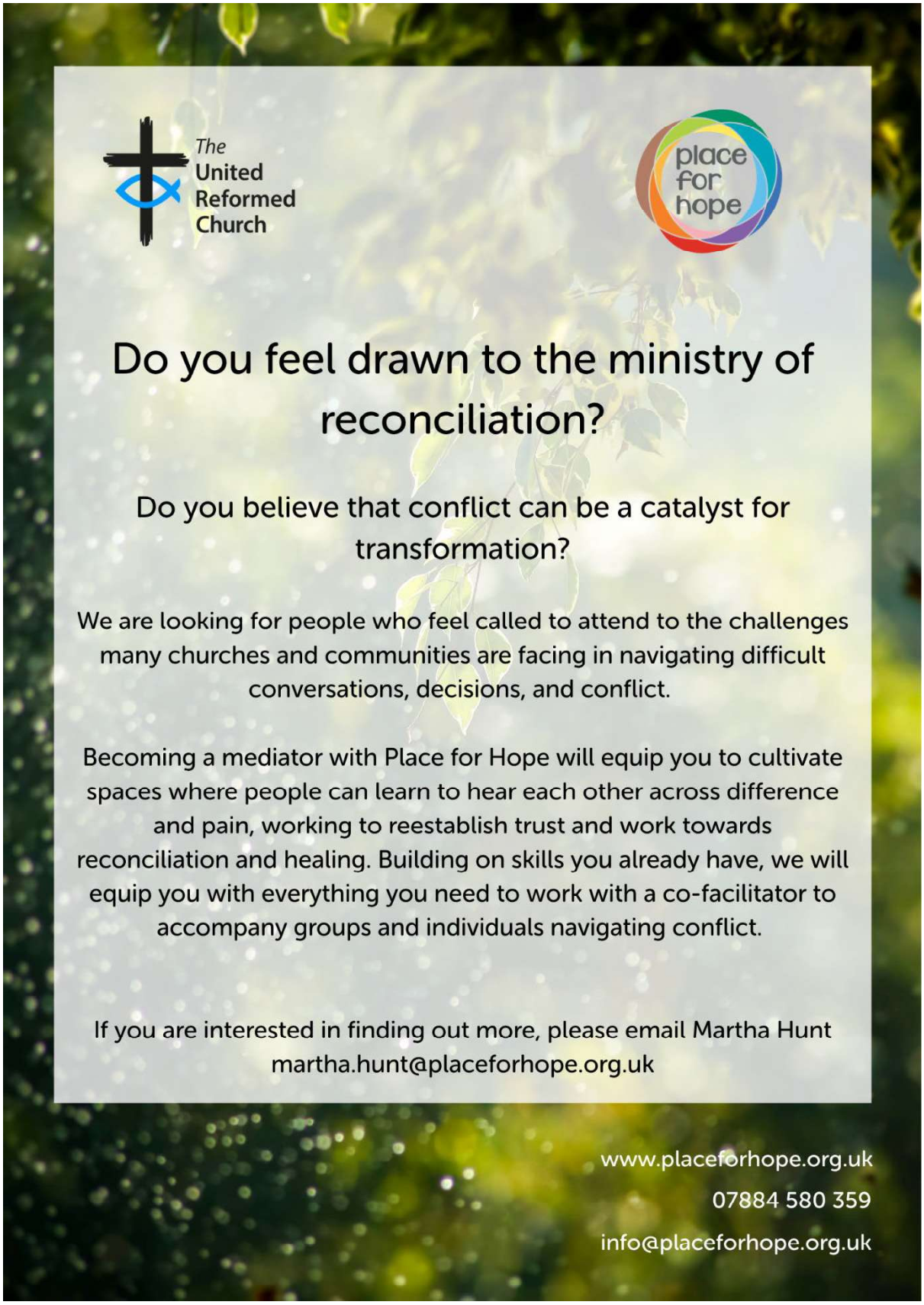
Can you recommend someone or would you like to be considered? If so please contact Claire MacIntyre - Synod Nominations Committee Secretary at **deputyclerk@nwsynod.org.uk** for further information or to submit a nomination.

Trustee of the Milton Mount Foundation

The Milton Mount Foundation is looking for a new trustee from the URC.

The advert is on the URC website: **https://urc.org.uk/jobs/**
Please go down to the Volunteer Positions section to find the advert and further information.

Become a Mediator with Place for Hope



Lay Worker – Mission & Community

Lay Worker (Mission & Community)

Keld-in-Swaledale, North Yorkshire
Full Time (35 hours per week) | Fixed Term: 3.5 Years | 37.5k per year

Keld URC, working in partnership with the URC Northern Synod and Lady Hewley Trust is seeking an enthusiastic and committed Christian Lay Worker to develop and lead mission, outreach and faith-based community involvement across Upper Swaledale. The successful candidate will develop innovative projects, retreats, youth and family activities, prayer and discipleship opportunities, environmental initiatives, and partnerships with local churches and community groups. We are looking for someone who:

- Is a practicing Christian with a passion for mission and community engagement.
- Has experience of working with volunteers, churches or community groups.
- Has excellent communication and organisational skills.
- Can work independently and collaboratively.
- Holds a UK driving licence and has access to a car.

This is a unique opportunity to help grow Christian witness and build lasting impact in one of the most beautiful parts of the country.

There is a genuine occupational requirement for the postholder to be a practicing Christian in accordance with Schedule 9 of the Equality Act 2010.

The successful applicant will be expected to live within reasonable proximity of Keld to enable effective delivery of the role.

For further enquiries and application procedure, please contact Rev Nadene Snyman at:-

teesandswaleurc@gmail.com

Closing Date: 14th December 2026
Interview Date: To be arranged

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

URC Children's, Youth + Intergenerational Work Team

For the latest news from the team, plus a link to the latest bi-monthly Newsletter please click **here**

JPIT Newsletter

Click **here** for the November 2026 Newsletter

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.

Luther King Theological College

Please click **here** for the November Newsletter

Greater Manchester Live Well

Click **here** for the October 2026 GM Live Well Newsletter

for our Prayers

We invite you to pray

- For 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