



The
United
Reformed
Church

Yorkshire Synod
Somerset House
St Paul's Street
Morley
Leeds
LS27 9EP

Synod Moderator
Synod Clerk
Treasurer
Property Officer
Trust Secretary

Rev. Jamie Kissack
Tim Crossley
Rev Simon Copley
Jane Bunyan-Murray
Alastair Forsyth

e-Mail: office@urcyorkshire.org.uk
Website: www.urcyorkshire.org.uk
Telephone: 0113 289 8490

The Briefing – Number 55 27th May 2021

Dear Friends,

The slight lifting of restrictions back on 17th May has encouraged a great deal of thought about how we maintain our journey towards the full reopening of our premises. The inconsistencies and imbalances in the current regulations I hope are being looked at, as when one compares what is currently allowed in acts of public worship (both indoors and outdoors on church property) with what is allowed in the secular life of the country there are several anomalies. Trying to tread the right path is difficult and the Synod staff are keeping a very close eye on the regulations as published on the Government website as well as on the advice coming from the URC as a whole and its ecumenical partners. This week we have received the regular circular from the Churches Legal Advisory Service (CLAS). This is what they advise:

Updated guidance on COVID-19 and places of worship in England

The Government has published updated [*COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship*](#) in England. Its previous publication, [*'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021'*](#), set out how restrictions will be eased over time, including any restrictions on places of worship and faith activities. The decision to proceed with each step in the roadmap will be guided by data and the four tests set out in the roadmap. **A week's notice will be provided before any step is taken.**

The places of worship guidance has been published alongside industry- or venue-specific guidance, as follows:

- [Guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#)
- [Guidance for wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations](#)
- [Guidance on performing arts](#)
- [Guidance for working safely in the visitor economy](#)
- [Current stay alert and social distancing guidance.](#)

Under Step 3, the key changes for places of worship are as follows:

- Most significant life events can resume, limited to no more than 30 people. This will include events such as bar/bat mitzvot, private baptisms and naming ceremonies. Limits at weddings, wedding receptions, wakes and other commemorative events have been increased to 30 people.
- Funerals now have no legal cap on the number of people who can attend. The number of attenders will be determined by how many people the venue can safely accommodate with social distancing measures in place.
- Outdoors, most legal restrictions on meeting others have been lifted, although *gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal unless otherwise exempt.*
- Support groups and parent-and-child group gathering limits will increase to 30 people (not including under-5s).

COVID-secure rules, including social distancing requirements, continue to apply in the workplace and in businesses and public venues.

At Step 4, which will take place no earlier than **21st June 2021**, the Government aims to remove all limits on life-cycle events and other gatherings. Any relaxation will be subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research Programme, which will include a series of pilots using enhanced testing approaches and other measures to run events of larger sizes. The pilots have been selected to examine a range of settings, venues and activity types (eg, seated or not, indoor/outdoor) so that the data is generalisable and findings can inform thinking on the reopening of similar settings. The guidance will be updated in line with the changing situation ahead of that Step.

The C of E has published a series of updates to its COVID-19 guidance following the move to Step 3:

- [Weddings](#);
- [Baptisms](#);
- [Permitted Activities under national 'step' regulations](#)
- [Funerals](#);
- [Individual private prayer](#);
- [Conducting public worship](#).

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has published [Covid-19 Route Map: Step 3 Guidance](#).

Singing

On the highly-controversial issue of singing during acts of worship, the latest Guidance for England says this:

'Where singing takes place, it should follow the principles of safer singing.

- Indoors: a group of up to 6 amateur singers can perform, or rehearse for performance with social distancing being maintained at all times. There is no limit on the number of professional singers but they should follow guidance on performing arts. Performances should take place at the front of the place of worship to a seated audience. Indoor communal singing should not take place.
- Outdoors: When worship takes place outdoors, the congregation may join in with singing in multiple groups of up to 30. Congregation members should continue to follow social distancing rules. For guidance on singing outdoors outside of acts of communal worship, please refer to the [performing arts guidance](#).

The Church of England has updated the FAQ on *Is singing permitted?* in the Prayer and Worship section of its guidance.

There is a great deal to take in here and I apologise for using a third party to make the salient points. However, whilst we are all in agreement that it would be marvellous to re-open our doors to old friends and new, the way in which we do it must be done within the letter of the law (as it were), as well as with sensitivity to the feelings of our own church members and friends. What we in Synod have found is that each of you is unique and the situations you find yourselves in are unique. So if you find yourself needing to ask questions, looking for advice or searching for help, please get in touch with us at Synod so that we can be with you to support you in your decisions.

At Synod, we are looking more and more to what we can offer in the months to come. The new-look website [Yorkshire Synod \(urcyorkshire.org.uk\)](http://urcyorkshire.org.uk) has a new feature. You can sign up to receive a weekly update that highlights the new posts and points you in the direction of the resources being uploaded on a regular basis. All you need to do is visit the site, scroll to the foot of the page, enter your name and e-mail address then click OK. Please let your church members and friends know of this new facility, as we want as many people to know of what we are doing here in Yorkshire. There are many things to see and plenty of resources to draw from and as usual within the Briefing I will be highlighting the new and the important as we upload them. As ever there are plenty of events, courses and resources as we move through spring into summer. If you have any events you would like to add to our list, please send them into the office and we can put them on the website as well as on Synod Calendar and here in the Briefing.

Church Links, Mission Activities and Synod Events



An invitation to Retired Ministers, Spouses, Widows and Widowers

Mrs Kath Lonsdale and Rev Jason McCullagh on behalf of Ministries and Pastoral Committees would like to invite you to a get together with a hot lunch at
Headingley St Columba, Headingley Lane, Leeds, LS6 2DH
on **Thursday 1st July 2021 11am - 2.30pm.**

Morning Speaker; The Revd Rosalind Selby **How Green is my Bible?**

Rosalind is the Principal of Northern College, Manchester where she teaches Biblical Studies and the Church and the Environment.

She is currently serving on the URC's Environmental Task Group.

Afternoon Discussion with Revd Jamie Kissack, Yorkshire Synod Moderator **Tribes, Belonging, and the Gospel.**

What are our experiences of belonging to 'the church'?

How have they changed over the years?

What would be a Gospel understanding of 'belonging'?

For full details please contact the Synod Office by 1st June 2021

Email: office@urcyorkshire.org.uk Telephone: 0113 289 8490

Yorkshire URC Synod Office, Somerset House, St Paul's Street, Morley, Leeds, LS27 9EP

Lay Preachers Planning Group news

Exploring the upcoming lectionary readings together

Next month the Lay Preachers Planning Group are putting on two new sessions exploring the lectionary readings in June and July.

The first is on **Tuesday 8th June** at 10.30am – 12.00noon and repeated 7.30pm – 9.00pm on Zoom. Facilitated by Kath in the morning and Jill at night, this will be a time for participants to look together at the lectionary readings for 13th, 20th, 27th June and 4th July in preparation for leading worship on those Sundays.

The second is on **Tuesday 29th June** at 10.30am – 12.00noon and repeated 7.30pm -9.00 pm on Zoom. Facilitated by Rod this will be a time for participants to look together at the lectionary readings for 11th, 18th, 25th July & 1st August in preparation for leading worship on those Sundays.

This time the group are trying a repeat of the morning session at night to assess how this works for you all. As previously these sessions will be participative rather than "expert led" by an outside speaker and the links will be sent to all lay preachers nearer the dates.

If you need further information, please get in touch via the office@urcyorkshire.org.uk e-mail.

Never let it be said that there is no forward planning in Synod. Not only are the Lay Preaching planning group doing some brilliant work this spring and summer, they have also got your Autumn diaries to fill as well. They have asked Lawrence Moore to leading an overview of **Luke's Gospel** for worship leaders. The provisional dates are **2nd, 4th, 9th and 11th November 2021** between 10.00am and 11.30am, with a repeat at 7.30pm on the dates mentioned. More details as we get closer.

Safeguarding News

Verifier training.

DDC (Due Diligence Checking) – the company that provides the service to process the DBS checks on behalf of the URC are offering training slots to those local church officers who are verifiers/document checkers for their church and would like to have an input on how to process the checks. It would also benefit verifiers who may need an update in how to use the system.

There will be a URC Safeguarding Officer present at each session to assist and answer any questions.

The dates for these training slots are:

- 10th June 2021 - 10am to 11am
- 5th July 2021 – 7pm to 8pm
- 10th September 2021 – 4pm to 5pm
- 2nd October 2021 – 9.30am to 10.30am

Training will be via Zoom and if you would like to book on the training then **please email Matthew Baxter** with the session you would like to attend. His email is safeguarding@urc.org.uk.

Trustee training.

There is also specific training being provided for Trustees of local churches within the Synods to understand your safeguarding responsibilities. This training is being provided online by Farrar & Co, a firm of solicitors from London who provide safeguarding advice and assistance in all aspects of safeguarding matters. This training is being provided to all churches throughout the Northern, Yorkshire, North Western and Merseyside Synods via funding from the Synod Safeguarding Development Fund.

This is a 2 hour training session which as well as providing vital guidance, allows you to take part in discussions and look at case studies to help your understanding of your role as a Trustee for your church.

The following aspects will be covered

- Why safeguarding matters to the URC
- How to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for your church
- The Elders duties as Trustees
- How to spot, deal and report with a serious incident

The training will be delivered via Zoom and the dates for the sessions are

- Thursday 6th July 2021 – 10.30am to 12.30pm
- Thursday 15th July 2021 – 1pm to 3pm.

To book a place please **contact Matt Knowles** at matt.safeguarding@urcyorkshire.org.uk

Property News

As I mentioned on the front page, the Synod team are available to help you with all your questions regarding the latest changes to the regulations associated with buildings. Jane, our Property Officer is available to advise on the best course of action when it comes to how we begin to reopen, but as mentioned above, please keep a close eye on the Government's websites. I have commented in previous Briefings that there is some flexibility in the rules surrounding the meetings of charitable organisations. This means that in certain circumstances church or trustee/Elders meetings can take place in person. Details can be found here [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for the charity sector -](#)

[GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://GOV.UK). It is a rather complex page on the Government's website, but it may allow churches to hold Annual Meetings as the meeting fulfils the charitable objectives of the church. However, do bear in mind that you will still have to be Covid secure, following track and trace guidance, be able to ensure appropriate social distancing and have an up-to-date Risk Assessment. As ever Synod is here to help so if you need advice on this, please get in touch as Jane, our Property Officer is available for advice via property@urcyorkshire.org.uk if you need to discuss this further.

Leading Your Church into Growth



CALLING ALL CHURCH LEADERS!

We are very excited to once again be able to secure places on this very popular and effective church growth conference. We are asking that at least two, or even better three could come from each sending church to be able to get the most from this highly effective course.

The full cost is usually £225 for this residential course. UNDER 30's Free- 100% discount.

This includes accommodation and food.

We are able to offer up to **50%** discount. This means that for those who would not be able to go at the full cost, you now can!

We only have limited places at this fantastic offer

The earlier we book our places the more places we can secure. So please get back to me as soon as possible to secure your place.

For more information and booking information Please contact:

The Synod office
or
ashley@bvurc.org.uk

Yours in Christ

Rev Ashley Evans

Synod Evangelist

LEAD YOUR CHURCH INTO GROWTH

October 4th-6th 2021

Three days to inspire, encourage and equip ordained and lay leaders

Yorkshire Synod are subsidizing this course by up to 50%

The Hayes Conference Centre

To go on the journey with others.

SYNOD EVANGELIST

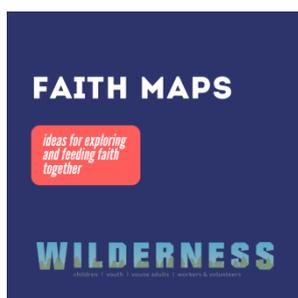
Rev Ashley Evans

07403423082

ashley@bvurc.org.uk

Again, hot of the press and well in advance, is notice of the LYCiG 2021 National Conference. For more information and booking information, contact the Synod office at office@urcyorkshire.org.uk or Rev Ashley Evans at ashley@bvurc.org.uk.

Children and Young Peoples News



Wilderness Faith Maps

This simple weekly resource provides an easy way to engage with the Bible, prayer and the world around us. Linked to a Sunday Lectionary reading, it is suitable for all ages and faith experiences, as a starting point for a discussion or for personal reflection. You can find it each week here on [Facebook](#).

Watch out for the regular short daily posts, and please add 'like' the page, to be alerted when each weekly post arrives.

If you struggle with any of the hyperlinks, please get in touch with me at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk or Jon Steel at joncyp@urcyorkshire.org.uk

IT Group News

Writing for the Web

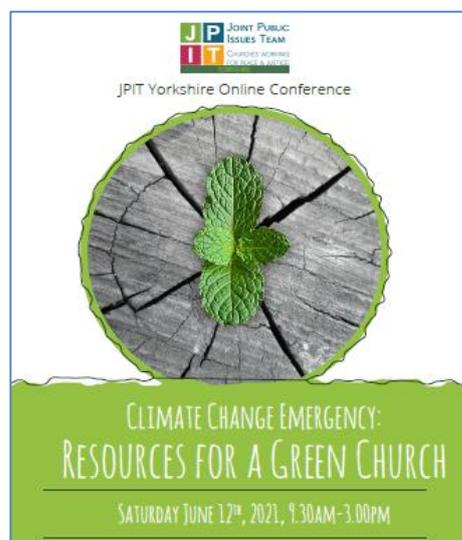
This short two-hour course is designed to help those among us who are contributing to church based websites. We will be holding it on Thursday 15th July between 7pm and 9pm and then again on Saturday 17th July between 10am and 12noon. Led by Lawrence Moore it will add another skill-set to enable us to be more effective in showing what we do as Christians in Yorkshire.

General Information and Resource Sharing

JPIT Yorkshire Online Conference Resources for a Green Church

If you think the church has an important part to play in helping people transition to new ways of living more gently with God's world, then sign up for the JPIT Yorkshire online conference being held online on Saturday 12th June 2021. The **JPIT YORKSHIRE ONLINE CONFERENCE, Resources for a Green Church** event is open to everyone and details are available on the flyer that was sent out last month and should be on the Synod website as well. *"If you think that the Climate Change Crisis really is an emergency, and that the Church has an important part to play in helping people transition to new ways of living more gently with God's world, then sign up for the JPIT Yorkshire online conference via sue.cutting1209@gmail.com*

More details on the JPIT website at [Green Conference • Joint Public Issues Team Yorkshire \(jointpublicissuesyorkshire.org.uk\)](#)





christian dance fellowship of Britain
cdfb.org.uk

CDFB Yorkshire Regional Zoom Workshop

Sat 29th May 2.30 - 4.00

We have the pleasure of Naomi Haywood leading our workshop
'Signing, praise with psalms'



Created on www.british-sign.co.uk

All welcome

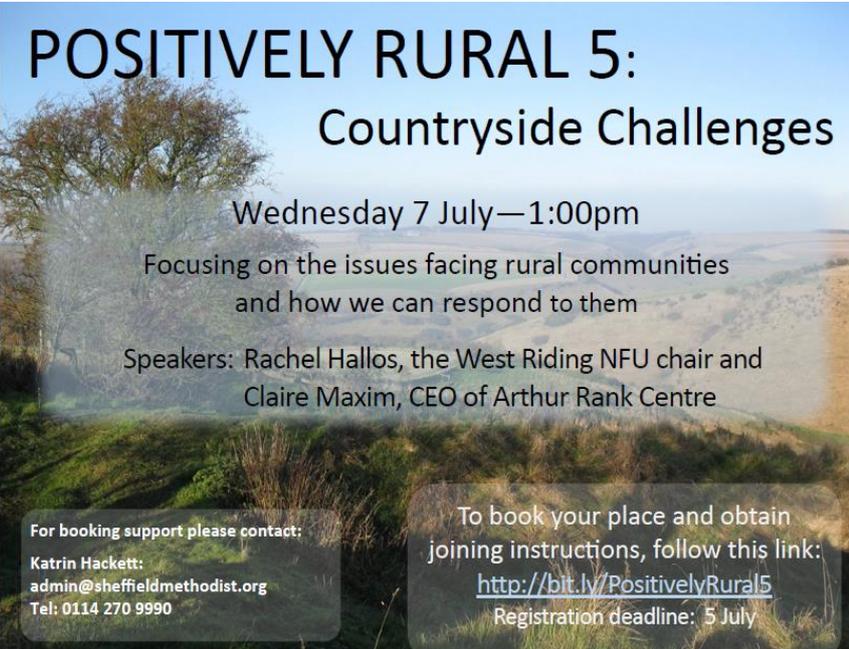
Book via CDFB website (www.cdfb.org.uk).
Cost: members £5, non-members £7. Login details emailed on payment receipt.
Any queries email: yorkshire@cdfb.org.uk

 The Christian Dance Fellowship of Britain is registered in England & Wales as a company limited by guarantee (No.5466472) and a charity (No.1115037). Registered office: Sunset Hallows, 21 Admirals Close, Watchet TA23 00D

Christian Dance Fellowship of Britain

I have been asked to highlight this event being held on 29th May between 2.30pm and 4.00pm by Revd Clare Davison. The **Christian Dance Fellowship of Britain** are an ecumenical group encouraging churches to use movement/dance in worship. Clare has sometimes brought in person workshops to the attention of Synod, and this one is the third that has been done on Zoom. It is open to all, with a young person leading.

For full details please contact Yorkshire@cdfb.org.uk and to book please do so on their website at www.cdfb.org.uk. The cost is £5 for members and £7 for non-members.



POSITIVELY RURAL 5: Countryside Challenges

Wednesday 7 July—1:00pm

Focusing on the issues facing rural communities and how we can respond to them

Speakers: Rachel Hallos, the West Riding NFU chair and Claire Maxim, CEO of Arthur Rank Centre

For booking support please contact:
Katrin Hackett:
admin@sheffieldmethodist.org
Tel: 0114 270 9990

To book your place and obtain joining instructions, follow this link:
<http://bit.ly/PositivelyRural5>
Registration deadline: 5 July

This has come through our friends in the Yorkshire Plus Methodist area (which I gather covers all the districts which Yorkshire Synod also covers plus a little more). Revd Andrew Webb, who is also minister at St Andrew's Skipton, is on the steering group and has invited those in the Synod who are interested in rural ministry to join them on Wednesday 7th July at 1.00pm. For booking support please contact Katrin Hackett at admin@sheffieldmethodist.org and to obtain joining instructions please follow this link <http://bit.ly/PositivelyRural5>.

Worshipping God Together : Apart. has become a cherished regular feature. There isn't one especially for this coming weekend as Janine is away, but previous services are still available to download from the website at <https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/worship/>

The latest edition of the URC's **NewsUpdate** has just been published. A downloadable version of it, formatted for print and for churches to cut and paste into church newsletters, is available on the URC website. Download and print your copy [here](#).

Dementia Friendly Churches Questionnaire

I have a request that churches fill in a simple questionnaire asking about dementia friendly worship and their response to it. The questions have been prepared by Mal Breeze who is a Community Minister in North-Western Synod. He has developed some dementia friendly worship resources and is now taking this wider across the Northerly Synods. Mal would be delighted to help any church across the URC which wishes to become dementia-friendly and would appreciate it if you could share the questionnaire offering his support.

If you could fill out the simple form that was sent round to church secretaries earlier in the month (adding your church name to it of course), or if you know of someone who could do it on your behalf then please send me it at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk. If the form has gone astray let me know and I'll forward a fresh one to you. The deadline for replies is July, as Mal will be organising some workshops in the early Autumn.

How to Handle Later Life

The above request from Mal links in to this book which has been written by a URC member, Marion Shoard, from Kent. Her book entitled [*How to Handle Later Life*](#) (Amaranth Books, 2017) is aimed mainly at older people themselves, although she tells us that professionals from nurses to psychologists found the book invaluable.

Marion is offering the book free to individuals in churches, lay or ordained, seeking to engage with older people. If you are involved in work with older people within your church and/or your wider community and would like a copy, do drop her a line at PO Box 664, Rochester, Kent ME1 9JB with your name, address and a cheque made out to me for £3.70 (to cover postage and packing). For any questions about my offer, email marion@marionshoard.co.uk. You can see several sample chapters, the table of contents, introduction and reviews on [Amaranth Books' website](#). [Her website](#) (at marionshoard.co.uk) provides information about my background and activities, including within the ecumenical group [Christians on Ageing](#), of which she is a trustee.

Photo requests

The URC nationally are going to be producing a calendar of church buildings for 2022, linking in with the 50th anniversary of the denomination.

The idea is to use very good photographs of our church buildings to give a flavour of our buildings from the length and breadth of the denomination. Victorian churches, post war pre-fabs, churches opened in the last couple of years – photos of all types of URC buildings are welcome.

The ideal formats are: just the outside of the buildings; landscape orientation for preference but square and portrait images are also fine. JPG or PNG file format. Black and white images are also welcome.

Please label the files with the name and location of the church (e.g. st-columbas-north-shields.jpg), no bigger than 3Mb in size and please include the name of the photographer.

Please send them to Andy Jackson at andy.jackson@urc.org.uk and if photos are sent, the photographer is granting the URC permission to use the photographs in print and digitally.

The deadline is by mid-July, as the calendar will be going to print in August.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with Andy at the e-mail above.

St Andrew's URC Sheffield has a very gifted and committed organist who has put worship resources on every week since the beginning of the first lockdown. The music is an eclectic, rich and classical selection and he now puts the text into a digital voice, which means the words are there to read yourself. The service from the previous week is immediately accessible below the new one, and earlier services are now archived and accessible too. www.standrewsurcsheffield.org.uk/stop-press

For those with local tastes I know that the **Sheffield team** have their services on their own website at <http://sheffieldurc.org.uk/> and on the Yorkshire site you can find help in preparing and participating in Online Worship at [COVID-19 Advice and Support | URC Yorkshire Synod](#).

As I keep mentioning the Yorkshire Synod has a dedicated **YouTube channel**. On it there are the **Moderators musings** and releases from **the LYCiG team, Children's and Youth, Mission** and more! The link is here: <https://bit.ly/urcyorkshireyoutube> and have a look at what has already been uploaded. If you have a google account, you will receive emails when a new video is posted. In addition there is a great deal of information on the LYCiG page on the Synod website. Now is as good a time to have a look at [Leading Your Church Into Growth | URC Yorkshire Synod](#)



And if you are interested in the JPIT conference mentioned above, I do recommend that you sign up for these newsletters, <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org> from Eco Congregation in Scotland and the other is the Joint Public Issues Team newsletter <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/whats-new/newsletter/>



If you know of anyone looking for a job within the URC family there are a couple on offer based at URC Church House in London. Deepti Upadhyaya, the HR Coordinator has been in touch to let us know that adverts for a **Content Editor** and a **Designated Safeguarding Lead** have been published on the URC's website at <https://urc.org.uk/vacancies.html>. She also asks us to freely share these adverts and the website link within your circle.

I have listed much of what I know is happening above, but it would be good for you to send across notification of any open events you are hosting in your churches. Please don't hide these events under a bushel, but let me know so that I can get it out to a wider audience; my usual deadline is Wednesday teatime. Similarly, please send the Briefing around your congregations so they know of those activities within and beyond Synod designed to grow the Kingdom. Plans are already afoot to bring more activities and good news stories to your attention, so keep an eye open for the next Briefing. All you need to do is get in touch with me at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk.

If you know of anything you may find useful for our churches, please contact me at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk and I'll circulate it here and on the website. Similarly if you need any further help, be it to do with IT, finance, property or the like we are here to help. National URC site: <https://urc.org.uk/> Yorkshire Synod: <https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/> Yorkshire Synod Twitter: <https://twitter.com/urcyorkshire> Yorkshire Synod Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/urcyorkshire> Yorkshire Young People's Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wildernessyorkshireurc/>

Tim Crossley
Synod Clerk