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The Briefing – Number 72

18th November 2021

Dear Friends,

This past week has become a much busier one than I had anticipated. I have had meetings in the Synod Office, at Church House and deadlines for various activities have been changed as circumstances have dictated. Events and challenges have cropped up which have asked questions of me and I hope that I have been able to rise to answer them. The rest of November seems to be the same; I will be attending Assembly Executive between 22nd and 24th as part of the Synod team as it meets at High Leigh in Hertfordshire, the Yorkshire Synod Council meets at the end of the month and between now and early December the diary is filling up very fast.

I'm telling you this as I admit that there have been times when I felt I couldn't see the wood for the trees and I'm sure that many of you have been in similar positions. However what I hope to be able to offer you in this Briefing is some sort of path to help us discern the way for you and for your churches. As well as the usual advice, there are signposts to those activities that will help bring a little bit of reassurance or support in areas of your church life that may seem confused and complex. These offerings are both spiritual and practical. We continue to highlight the resources being offered by Church House through the Advent Boxes as well as challenging us to contribute to the Lent resources that will be available at the start of the Jubilee 2022 year. Of a more practical nature are the courses on Communications being brought to us as well as the Safeguarding training being planned into 2022. And if that isn't everything, there is a note on the imminent change to the way in which Church Returns are submitted.

Finally, and as I have been reminding you all for nearly 21 months now, please remain vigilant during this time of Covid-19. The virus hasn't gone away, it is still a danger to us and to our families, churches and communities so please keep vigilant and keep an eye on the advice given by the URC, by our partner denominations and by government.

So as you see there are quite a lot of trees for us to watch out for. I hope what we can offer here enables you to see the wood, the bigger picture, which is all part of our mission to spread the word about Jesus, to show our communities the love of God and to bring the Spirit into the heart of everyone we meet.

Current advice on Covid-19 is still to be found via these links, but if matters do take a turn for the worse, we will be advising churches accordingly. **The URC Synod Moderators' [New Freedoms, Same Responsibilities: Synod Moderators' advice to congregations \(urc.org.uk\)](#). The URC's main [Advice to churches about coronavirus from the United Reformed Church](#). Government sites at [Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and [guidance on what you can and cannot do](#) and [Find out what the rules are](#).**

And finally another reminder that there is the opportunity still to sign up for the weekly website based newsletter. Head to any page on [Yorkshire Synod \(urcyorkshire.org.uk\)](#), scroll to the foot and follow the instructions on the area that looks like this image. It can't be any simpler than that.

Church Links, Mission Activities and Synod Events

Lay Preachers Planning Group news

I know there are more things in the pipeline and news of these will be distributed in the usual ways. And looking forward – into next year no less – Kath Lonsdale has asked that you keep the **22nd to 24th July 2022** clear if you are interested in a **lay preachers weekend at Wydale conference centre**. More details and a booking form nearer the time.

Children and Young Peoples News

Come & See Advent Box - additional free resources

The [Come & See the Advent Box](#) for 2021 offers a range of fun, creative and reflective activities for all ages organised into four weeks to cover Advent. These additional free resources, including a church guide, are available for you to download.



Church guide with suggestions for how to make the most of the boxes and link with your worship and groups – [download PDF](#) (1.13 mb)

Stained glass window images to decorate – [download PDF](#) (305 kb)

Bunting kit to make at home – [download PDF](#) (93 kb)

Invitation card – resource coming soon!

Come and See circular logo – [download JPG](#) (3.3 mb) [download PNG](#) (180 kb)

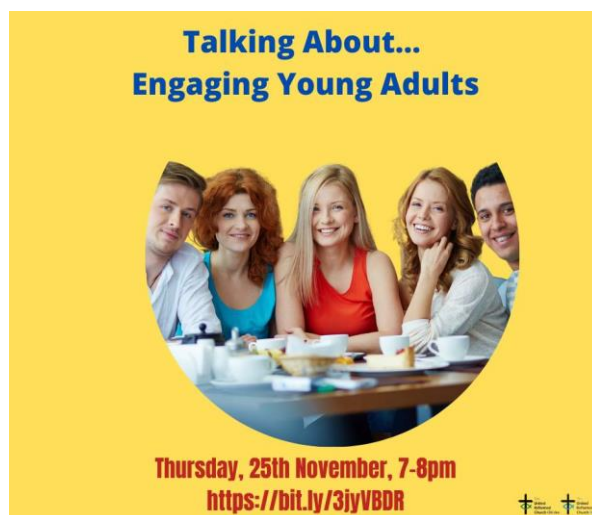
Buy the Advent Box online: You can buy the full [Come & See Advent Box](#) online from the URC Shop.

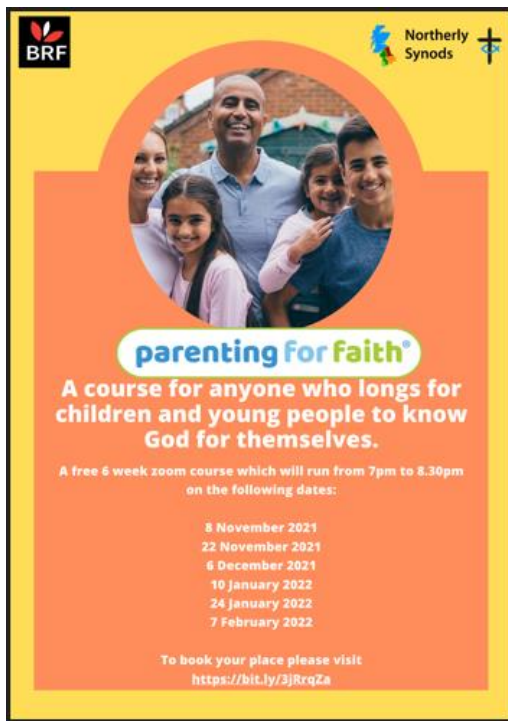
Engaging Young Adults

Staying connected with our young adults is a challenge. We've had them colouring-in and singing 'If I Were A Butterfly' since they were toddlers, as they got older we 'encouraged' them by putting them in charge of the audio-visual equipment, but now, well, now they're as big as us, they're at University, or they've got jobs, they might even have a partner and children of their own - how do we stay connected?

This session will look at exactly that and there are two guest speakers to help start the conversation: [Reuben Watt](#) is the Moderator of the United Reformed Church Youth Assembly and [Mike Walsh](#) is a Pioneer Minister in Chorlton, Manchester.

Come and listen, come and ask questions, come and share. Register for your free place at <https://bit.ly/3iyVBDR> 7pm on Thursday, 25th November on Zoom.





parenting for faith

Sharing your faith with your children can feel like a HUGE responsibility. Join us for some of Rachel Turner's brilliantly simple and practical guidance.

The sessions, under the banner of the **Northerly Synods** group, will be fortnightly on zoom, beginning next Monday Nov 8th (7-8.30pm). If you would like to join us, please book using this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../parenting-for-faith...>



URC Youth Assembly 2022

Youth Assembly 2022 is getting closer and closer! Are you or do you know a 14-26 years old? (Yes, we have increased the age for this year!). Experience worship and participate in discussions about faith and life with people your age! Not the chatty type? A silent disco could be right up your street! For more info click here:

www.urc.org.uk/urc-youth-urc.html

To book your place click here www.urc.org.uk/urcya before 1st January 2022.



Wilderness Faith Maps

This simple weekly resource is 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](https://www.facebook.com/wildernessfaithmaps), then like the page to be alerted when each weekly post arrives.



Worshipping God Together : Apart.

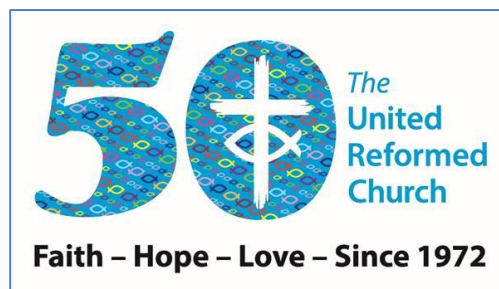
Rev Janine Atkinson's regular services and reflections are still being uploaded to the website. As always a big thank you to Janine for these incredible resources which can be found under the 'What we do' drop down heading if you fancy a Yorkshire Synod Website surf or more directly at

<https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/worship/>

General Information and Resource Sharing

Lent Resource Packs

This request has come through from Revd Jenny Mills, the Secretary for Education and Learning regarding **Lent materials for the 50th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church.**



Education and Learning request your help. As you'll recall, earlier this year we offered people the opportunity to buy Lent Resource Packs. We would like to do the same again. This time we are aiming for 50 stories and we need your help!

The brief that has been developed by Sam Richards, Simon Peters and Andy Jackson is below so see if you can help. It may be that you can offer a story but not the accompanying resources or vice versa, either way let us know what you would be willing to do. Maybe you can gather a local church/synod community together and create one of the stories and resources? It would be great to have offerings from different people, people serving the church in different ways and those with stories to tell who don't get the opportunity to share more widely.

All in all 50 inspirational stories of people from the URC overcoming challenges/issues, living out faith, hope and love are required based on a brief of approximately 700 words and if possible with an all-age and intergenerational content.

- An interesting or thought-provoking story of someone associated with the URC – link to faith, hope or love – **200 words**
- a short Bible passage or verse – **100 words**
- a prayer to say – I would suggest one that includes space for the person using the resource to personalise it by including (...) within the prayer (and explaining that in the introduction) – **100 words**
- a prayer/reflective activity - **100 words**
- discussion starter/ wondering question - **10-25 words**
- a way to engage with the theme/issues in everyday life (could be a weblink, a JPIT/WtW/C4L project or action etc) - **50 words**
- something fun or creative to do – very simple (think all ages) – could be a link to a video/song/craft/game to play etc – **upto 150 words**

Also can people supply photos of anything that might need demonstrating – basically try it out themselves and photograph the result or the stages involved.

Please get permission from the person (if living) to use their story – you could interview them - a photo of them if possible, or an image that links to their story.



Revd Jenny Mills

Secretary for Education and Learning

Email Philippa.linton@urc.org.uk and copy me in please jenny.mills@urc.org.uk with your submissions

I.T. News



CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOPS

A series of insightful, interactive sessions run by Dan Morrell and Lawrence Heath-Moore looking at all areas of church communications.

All sessions run twice on the same day: 10am and 7pm.

- Growing Your Mailing List (22nd November)
- Introducing Canva (6th December)
- Canva: Endless Possibilities (8th December)
- Using Eventbrite (10th January 2022)
- Putting it all together: social media (12th January)
- Behind the lens (17th January)
- In front of the lens (18th January)

MORE INFO AND SIGN-UPS:
bit.ly/commsworkshops

Church Communications Workshops

In this next series of workshops led by Dan Morrell and Lawrence Heath-Moore, different areas of church communications will be explored as well as finding how you can tap into some powerful resources to make your life easier, yet make your communication more effective at the same time!

Each of the sessions will be interactive and there will be space at the end to ask questions. Some of the sessions are linked, some may be irrelevant to you/your church, so come to some, come to none, come to all!

All the sessions will be recorded and may often have handouts to go with them and the workshops run twice on the dates stated at 10am & 7pm. There should be a time to suit you.

Growing Your Mailing List

Monday 22nd November 2021

Traditional emails can often look so boring, people are after a lot more! How about a

tool that helps with design of your emails, suggests content, and manages your email lists for free! This session will look primarily at **Mailchimp** as a tool for hassle free e-mail management.

Introducing Canva

Monday 6th December 2021

Tired of using Publisher? We are! Canva is an incredibly powerful tool that is free, which does a lot of the hard work for you including design suggestions and helps you with sizing your publicity too. This workshop will take you through the basics of how to use Canva and the varying ways you could utilise it in your church.

Canva: Endless Possibilities

Wednesday 8th December 2021

Thought you'd mastered Canva? Thing again! (we don't mean this in a bad way!) We just have so many exciting things to tell you about Canva that we have to spread it across 2 sessions!

Using Eventbrite, Monday 10th January 2022

Putting it all together: social media, Wednesday 12th January 2022

Behind the lens, Monday 17th January 2022

In front of the lens, Tuesday 18th January 2022

Details of these January courses in a later Briefing – so keep an eye out for the December issues.

To sign up for any of these events*, please fill in the following Google Form (preferred) or email website@urcyorkshire.org.uk: <https://forms.gle/vTnBh8YbgRybrT8B6>

*We are **not** running strict attendance; this is just to gain an idea of numbers! The Zoom link for all the sessions will be the same so once you receive the Zoom link you will be able to attend any/all.

Annual Church Returns

Annual Church Returns (ACR) - an important change to note for Church Secretaries

This year, the URC plans to introduce online Annual Church Returns. Churches will be able to submit their statistics and updated information by entering this directly onto the user-friendly URC Church Update portal – this will be open to receive updated ACR data from churches during January and February 2022. The information supplied will be sent electronically to Church House and this will be shared with the Synod. We will be contacting you again with further information about the portal and you will receive your individual login and password in due course. Please do contact us with any questions.

Annual Safeguarding Returns (ASR) - an important change to note for Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators

This year, the URC plans to introduce online Annual Safeguarding Returns. Churches will be able to submit their updated information by entering this directly onto the user-friendly URC Church Update portal – this will be open to receive updated ASR data from churches during January and February 2022. The information supplied will be shared with the Synod Safeguarding Officer/Adviser. We will be contacting you again with further information about the portal and you will receive your individual login and password in due course. Please do contact us with any questions.

We at Synod Office are also getting to grips with this change, so if you do have any questions I'm told you can send them to the database team at Church House at ministries.dbs@urc.org.uk and copy them into us at office@urcyorkshire.org.uk so that we know who may need supporting on a more local level.

Safeguarding News

Foundation and Intermediate Training

Due to increased demand and the need for people to be trained due to the adoption by General Assembly of [Paper T5 - SAG - Safeguarding Training Framework \(urc.org.uk\)](https://urc.org.uk/paper-t5-sag-safeguarding-training-framework) there are some new dates for online safeguarding training. Although **EVERYONE** is invited to **ALL** training please note that certain roles attract a mandatory level of training. To find out which level of training you are expected to go on please follow the link and in the paper it identifies role with the level of training required. If you struggle, let me know at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk and I'll send across the details. Fresh courses have been planned in December, January and February with courses for both Foundation (Basic) level and Intermediate level planned. However, please be aware that you will have had to have attended a Foundation course within the last 3 years before you can book on an Intermediate course.

All courses will be online and via Zoom and bookings can be made by contacting Sally at moderatorpa@urcyorkshire.org.uk.

Foundation (Basic) Training

Thursday 20th Jan 2022 – 10am to 12pm

Tuesday 1st Feb 2022 – 10am to 12pm

Wednesday 16th Feb 2022 – 7pm to 9pm

Intermediate Training

Wednesday 8th Dec 2021 – 1pm to 3.30pm

Wednesday 5th Jan 2022 – 1pm to 3.30pm

Monday 24th Jan 2022 - 1pm to 3.30pm

Saturday 12th Feb 2022 – 10am to 12.30pm

Thursday 24th Feb – 10am to 12.30pm

ECO News

Sustaining the World Module by Rev Dr Rosalind Selby

An 8-session course which looks at: science (introductory), Western Christianity's role/responsibility/task, mission, bible, theology, ethics in amongst church responses. To make the most of the course, there will be pre-reading/thinking/exercises which I anticipate take 1-2 hours each. All the pre-tasks will be available before the course starts so you could get ahead with them at any point after you have registered.

This course is running by Zoom on Monday evenings: 29 Nov, 6 Dec, 10 Jan, 17 Jan, 24 Jan, 31 Jan, 7 Feb and 28 Feb, from 7.00-8.30pm.

If you want more content details, please contact Rosalind Selby

If you want registration details, please contact Paul Barrett, the assistant registrar: paul.barrett@lutherking.ac.uk – the course number is TMM 2237.



The latest issue of the Joint Public Issues Team Newsletter has just dropped into my in box. As you'll see it's been a busy month for them, with COP26 taking place in Glasgow between 31 October and 12 November with its mixed responses to the outcomes - mostly characterised by disappointment. You can find a link to the response from our denominations below. JPIT are continuing to focus on the Nationality and Borders Bill, and this month there are new resources available for use. To catch up on this and other news click on this link [Joint Public Issues Newsletter \(jointpublicissues-news.org.uk\)](https://jointpublicissues-news.org.uk)

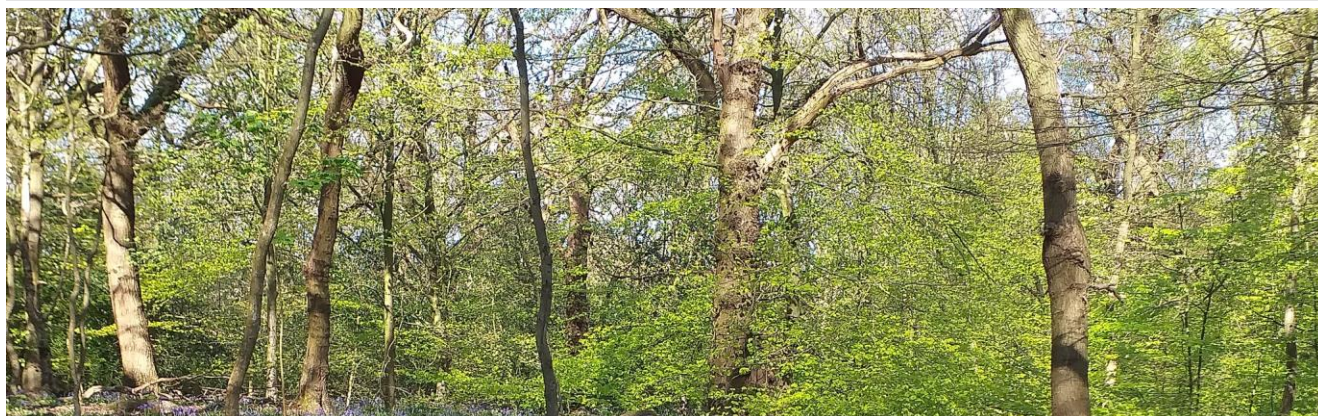
The latest issue of the [URC News Update November 2021 \(urc-news.org.uk\)](https://urc-news.org.uk) is now available. It has updates on the COP 26 conference, the Climate Crisis, the URC 50th Anniversary plans, and the great news that Herringthorpe's **Rev Matt Stone** has been named the new Chair of Group for Evangelism and Renewal (GEAR) within the URC. Not only that but there is a link to the new look URC shop [The United Reformed Church Bookshop \(urcshop.co.uk\)](https://urcshop.co.uk) which I'm told is full of all those things that you didn't know you needed, as well as The 2021 Advent Box for churches to give out to families.



This year it is called Come & See and is now available to pre-order. Ann-Marie, who edits the URC News Update (like me) is always on the hunt for stories to tell. Don't leave it to the deadline, drop her a line at ann-marie.nye@urc.org.uk and get your good news out there.

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](#).

Now that **St Andrew's Sheffield** are worshipping in person on Sundays at 10.45am their website services have been discontinued. However, all the services that were uploaded to their website have been archived and can still be accessed at www.standrewsurcsheffield.org.uk/stop-press. They include some very thoughtful Reflections by a variety of ministers and other preachers as well as an eclectic, rich and classical selection of music to complement these acts of worship.



Please don't hide these events and resources in your inboxes or within the trees hiding your own churches' woods. Please send this Briefing around your own church mailing lists as these events are for everyone, member or non-member, church-goer or non-church-goer. All these activities within and beyond Synod are designed to grow the Kingdom. Plans are always happening 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