



The
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Reformed
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The Briefing – Number 74 16th December 2021

Dear Friends,

Not many sleeps to go now and I hope that all your Advent journeys are proving to be uplifting, enlightening and heading towards the truth that God came down to earth in Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. The past fortnight has been a busy time for many of us in Synod and I can honestly say that the highlight for me was being part of the service which welcomed Rev Matt Stone to Ardeen Road URC Doncaster. Please bring your prayers to Ardeen Road and to Matt as they begin a new chapter in their Christian journeys.

Other aspects of busyness this past fortnight has been in understanding the latest guidance from the government in response to the increase in both the Delta and Omicron variants of the Covid-19 virus. As I mentioned last time there were some anomalies which I needed to understand and I hope that these have now been overcome in the guidance that is online in the government's own website and in the excellent guidance offered by the Synod Moderators which was updated a week ago [Covid Plan B: Synod moderators' updated guidance \(urc.org.uk\)](#). As you look at this, also look at the other resources the [Advice to churches about coronavirus from the United Reformed Church](#) pages have, from latest updates, to worship aids to resources, all designed for you and your churches. Please don't forget though to keep a close eye on the official government websites, where there are links to help with negotiating the revised regulations. The key link is this [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance and support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) website. Indeed, the advice from us here at Synod and from the URC as a whole is to abide by the regulations and perhaps even to take it a little further to ensure that those visiting your churches are confident that we have their welfare at heart.

A fortnight ago I was bemoaning the fact that the week prior to issue 72 being released had become very busy. Well looking back it seems that what was seemingly busy then has nothing on the last week of November and the first three weeks of December. Not only is the diary bulging at the seams but we are now in the season of Advent. It is this season that heralds the coming of the Messiah, not only in Jesus Christ in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago but also again in our hearts and minds as we look to God to lead us in our day to day lives. To mark the end of Advent and the start of Christmas we have an invitation to join our Moderator, Jamie, in an online Christmas Eve Communion service. The details are below and I hope many of you can join Jamie at this special time for us all.

Finally as this is the last Briefing of 2021 I need to point out that when it returns in January we will be in Jubilee Year. 2022 marks the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the United Reformed Church. There will be many activities happening at Synod and National level and I hope that you as individual churches will be able to mark this Jubilee with us as well. Our Missional Synod initiative is at the heart of Yorkshire's response and I hope to be able to bring you details of how we draw on our collective past to create a bright future for our churches. Keep an eye on the [Yorkshire Synod \(urcyorkshire.org.uk\)](#) website as well as the [United Reformed Church 50th Anniversary](#) page.



Church Links, Mission Activities and Synod Events

The United Reformed Church Yorkshire Synod



Join us on Zoom at 11.30pm
to welcome the Christ-child.

Bring your own bread and wine,
or an appropriate alternative.

For the Zoom link please email
moderator@urcyorkshire.org.uk

Come, watch with us

Dear Friends,

Fran and I send you our greetings for this Christmas season. As we make our own journeys to the manger to meet the Christ-child, I hope and pray that we will have a real sense of sharing the journey with one another. Whatever your own journey is like, I hope that you find some peace and joy along the way.

This remains a challenging time for the church, for our communities, and for many individuals and I would like to assure you of my continued appreciation for all that you do to support one another in difficult times.

I would like to extend an invitation to anyone who would appreciate it to join me for a Christmas Eve communion service on Zoom – 11.30pm on 24th December. Please feel free to share this invitation in your church families as you think appropriate. You will find a poster for this attached. Please contact me at moderator@urcyorkshire.org.uk for the link.

I have also recorded a short Christmas message on our Synod YouTube channel. Please click below to view it.
<https://youtu.be/H9n2SFsTxhY>

Every blessing

Jamie

Lay Preachers Planning Group news

The things in the pipeline are now emerging, with the first being the latest exploration of the lectionary readings. The next session is on **Thursday 13th January 2022 10am – 11.30am repeated 7.30pm - 9pm**. It will be facilitated by Rod Morrison and will be a time for participants to look together at the lectionary readings for 23rd and 30th January, 6th and 13th February in preparation for leading worship on those Sundays.


The link will come to all lay preachers nearer the date and more information can be had from Kath Lonsdale via the Synod Office.

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

This is the link to the latest Wilderness newsletter put together by the Yorkshire Synod Children and Young Peoples group <https://mailchi.mp/3b3b91b5465d/advent-is-here?e=fb33124ced>.

Please don't pass it by and as a taster here's a big question for you all



THE
WILDERNESS
children | youth | young adults | workers & volunteers
PROJECT
What can you do?

Aged 16-25? Connected to a URC church in Yorkshire?
If you have any ideas for your church's mission, and would like to give it a try, Yorkshire Synod would like to pay you (for up to 3 hrs/week for 6 months) to try out your idea.

If you've got an idea (or no idea) get in touch and talk to us: wilderness@urcyorkshire.org.uk

The WILDERNESS Project is back for 2022.

Here at the Yorkshire Synod we want to see young people participating in the mission of God in their church. More than that, we want to PAY YOUNG PEOPLE to participate in the mission of God in their church.

We know that it can be a struggle to keep young people engaged in church life, especially when so many other things are happening in their world. Often young people around the age of 16 take part time jobs, which means we see them less. The WILDERNESS Project hopes to encourage, enable and equip young people with the support and the resource to turn a passion into a project to enrich the life of their church.

Please contact Megan [here](#) for more information.

To subscribe to the Wilderness newsletter you can either find the link through the newsletter itself or even better click here [URC Yorkshire Synod \(list-manage.com\)](https://list-manage.com)

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.urch.org.uk/urch-youth-urch.html

This is the last call to book your place. Please click here

www.urch.org.uk/urchya 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.



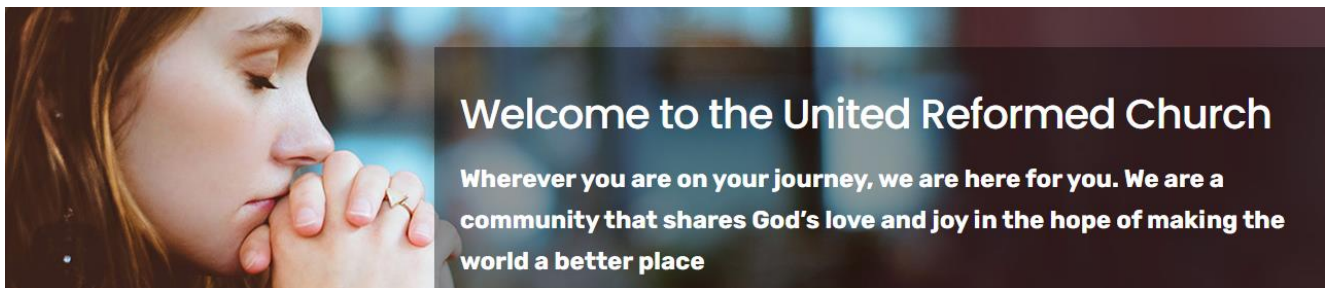
Worshipping God Together : Apart.

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

URC Website



Over the weekend of 11th & 12th December, the URC website, www.urch.org.uk, had a transformation. It has been updated and is the product of many months work by the team at Church House.

This week, the old website will be available at www.urch.org.uk/archive for older content that you need to access. Some pages on the new website are a work in progress and these will be finished in the next few weeks. Please get in touch with the Communications Team at Church House via urch@urch.org.uk if there is an **urgent** page missing, broken link or item not working.

Please remember that websites always evolve and are never finished. This new website puts visitors first, not the church structures, and some sections have changed or been reordered, in collaboration with the teams responsible for that content. Many pages that weren't being looked at have not come across.

And, unlike the old website, this one has a search engine that works! 😊

URC News Update

The latest issue of the [URC News Update Dec 2021 - Jan 2022 \(urc-news.org.uk\)](http://urc-news.org.uk) is now available. In it there is an opportunity to obtain free tickets to next year's Jubilee Service on 1st October at Westminster Central Hall. There are updates on the recent Assembly Executive, on the URC's response to Conversion Therapy, updates on Omicron as well as plenty of links into what the URC is doing across the country. Not only that but there is a link to the new look URC shop [The United Reformed Church Bookshop \(urcshop.co.uk\)](http://The United Reformed Church Bookshop (urcshop.co.uk)) which I'm told is full of all those things that you didn't know you needed. 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.

I.T. News

Church Communications Workshops



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

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.

Into next year:

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.

Safeguarding News

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

In 2022 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 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.

As we at Synod Office are also getting to grips with this change if you have any questions please 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.

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 \(urc.org.uk\)](#) 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 one 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 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**.

THERE ARE A FEW PLACES LEFT ON THE FOLLOWING DATES SO PLEASE GET IN TOUCH SOON BEFORE THEY ALL GO

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 5th Jan 2022 – 1pm to 3.30pm

Saturday 12th Feb 2022 – 10am to 12.30pm

Thursday 24th Feb – 10am to 12.30pm

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.

ECO News



The latest issue of the Joint Public Issues Team Newsletter is out. As you'll see it's been a busy month for them, and it doesn't seem to be getting any less busy either. 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)

Talking of all things ECO, we are still looking for more **Synod Green Apostles**. If you have a desire to help Yorkshire become an Eco Synod and a torch-bearer for a greener environment please get in touch. Alex Jowitt at greenapostle@urcyorkshire.org.uk or me at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk would love to hear from you.

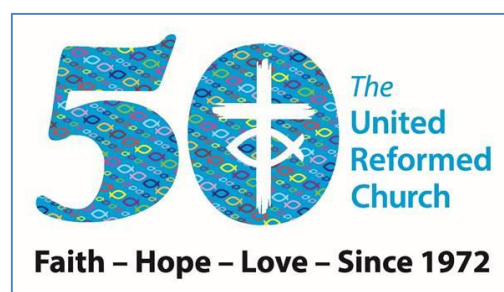
Lent Resource Packs

Education and Learning need your help to prepare **Lent materials for the 50th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church**. As you'll recall, earlier this year people were offered the opportunity to buy Lent Resource Packs. This will happen in 2022 and this time the aim is for 50 stories to be published.

The brief that has been developed 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.

Full details of the specifications are in the Briefings of 2nd December and 18th November. Please send submissions to both Email Philippa.linton@urc.org.uk and jenny.mills@urc.org.uk by the end of the year.



Please note that the Yorkshire Synod Office will close on **Thursday, 23rd December** and will not re-open until 8.30am on **Tuesday 4th January 2022**.
(Please note that due to current Covid-19 guidelines, most staff will be mainly working from home)

From all the Synod Team, we would like to wish you Peace and Joy this Christmas and in the coming New Year.

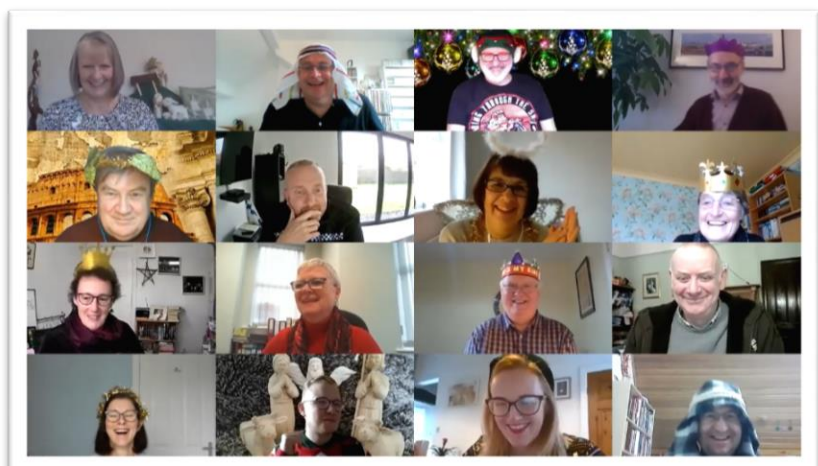


With best wishes

Jamie, Tim, Jane, Alastair, Simon, Ashley, Matt, Megan, Jon, Hayley, Rachel, Sally, and Anne

And finally in the grand tradition of Christmas television here's a repeat of last year's epic performance of **A VERY SYN-ODD NATIVITY**. It may not reach the heights of the classic movies we get to see over the holidays, but I can guarantee it will be something that you will not forget in a hurry!! Rather than following the star this Christmas, just follow this link.

<https://youtu.be/wqZCTWrk5wU>





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.

Don't forget that up to date Covid-19 (of any variant) advice can be found at any of the following links:

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](#).

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

