**The Briefing – Number 76**

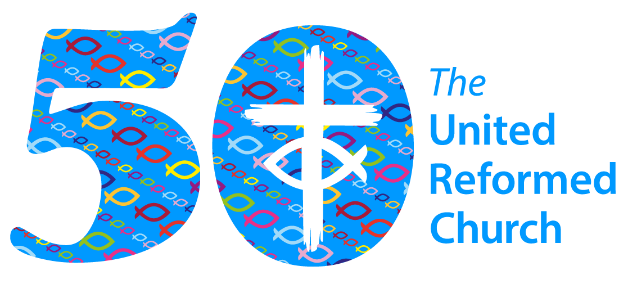
**20th January 2022**

Dear Friends,

The new year is rattling along now at a fair pace and the various activities in Synod are building up a head of steam. Following a couple of issues where I seemed to struggle to get anything new into it, this time I have been very close to becoming a proper editor in order to trim the Briefing to size. It is always good to know that what is being offered in and around Synod is vibrant and relevant and I can certainly say that what is being shown here fits that description.

You may well have seen in the media that the government’s “Plan B measures” are to be lifted and that we look to be returning to “Plan A” from Thursday 27th January. However, we must not let up our guard. Our key responsibility and duty of care to our congregations, members and friends is such that I feel it is not yet the time to return to a pre-pandemic situation. Infection rates are still high and although they appear to be dropping, it would be unwise to think it is all over. I had hoped that I could be more positive about being able to return to something like how things were prior to March 2020, but I still think that we need to maintain our watchfulness.

So please follow the guidance that is still available; on the government’s own website and in the excellent guidance offered by the Synod Moderators, which was updated before Christmas [**Covid Plan B: Synod Moderators' updated guidance - United Reformed Church**](https://urc.org.uk/covid-plan-b-synod-moderators-updated-guidance/)**.** As you look at this, also look at the other resources the URC are offering. The [**Coronavirus advice - United Reformed Church**](https://urc.org.uk/our-news-stories/coronavirus-advice/) page has all the latest updates, worship aid and 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)**](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) 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.

So here we are in **JUBILEE YEAR 2022**. As I mentioned last 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)**](https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/) website as well as the [**Our 50th Anniversary - United Reformed Church**](https://urc.org.uk/who-we-are/our-50th-anniversary/)page.

**Mission Advocate**

As part of our conversation to raise the profile of mission in the synod, our new Mission Advocate, Jon Steel, will be uploading a short article onto the synod website and Facebook page each week, as well as hosting monthly Zoom get-togethers to as the question “What is Mission?”. The link to these meetings is [**https://zoom.us/j/92778926887?pwd=dUJKckNDZ1NNL1BMRncvMzBFd2Q1UT09**](https://zoom.us/j/92778926887?pwd=dUJKckNDZ1NNL1BMRncvMzBFd2Q1UT09), the first is nest Tuesday, 25th January and more information can be had from Jon via his new e-mail [**missionadvocate@urcyorkshire.org.uk**](mailto:missionadvocate@urcyorkshire.org.uk)**.**

If you have signed up to the weekly update from website (which I would encourage you to do), you will receive a copy of it each Friday.

For those of you who don’t visit the website much, here is the link to this week’s introduction to our Synod focus on mission in 2022 [**https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/a-biblical-jubilee-for-the-synod/**](https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/a-biblical-jubilee-for-the-synod/)

The full text of this initial letter is below as a taster of what will become a regular addition to the website and a vital resource as we work towards Yorkshire’s challenge to be a more Missional Synod.

I hope you will find the stories useful and interesting week by week as we celebrate the last 50 years and look forward to what might come next in the synod. Please do get in touch with Jon if you have any feedback or ideas, or you would like to find out more about exploring mission for yourself or your church.

***A Biblical Jubilee for Yorkshire Synod***

*The rules set out for Israel in the Old Testament, include a special year called the ‘Jubilee’ which took place every 50 years (you can read about it in Leviticus Chapter 25). God had set out a ‘Sabbath’ pattern for Israel’s life (one day a week for people to rest, one year every seven years when the land was allowed to lie fallow). This culminated in the 50th year being a ‘Jubilee’.*

*During this year two important things would happen. Any land that people had sold during the previous 49 years was returned to its original owners. And if anyone had been sold into slavery (which could often happen when people were facing poverty), they would be set free. These actions must have had a huge economic and social impact at the time as they ‘reset’ the lives of people and whole communities.*

***Yorkshire Synod’s Jubilee Year***

*Last October the synod meeting agreed to treat the URC’s 50th anniversary year like a Jubilee year. As we are looking back and remembering the last 50 years, we will also take the opportunity to reset, or re-evaluate our relationships with God, ourselves, and the world around us. These relationships are the core of our mission as Christians and as churches in the world. And so ‘mission’ will be the focus of our attention, as we look at being a ‘missional synod’.*

*We are all called (as individuals, churches and as a synod) to join in God’s mission in this world. This year is a time to think again about what we are really here for (a question that we were already faced with in a rapidly changing world, even before COVID). We will be celebrating the different ways we are already responding to God’s call, but also looking for what new paths God might be inviting us to take next.*

***What will this year look like?***

*This is not a new scheme or process for you or your church to sign up to. This year will be a time for prayer, conversation and discernment for us all together, before we think about what actions we might take in our own situations. Look out for weekly stories, thoughts and ideas here on the website, about mission in the synod. I will also be following up the Moderator’s recent letter about being a ‘Missional Synod’ and I look forward to hearing more about what you are up to. Please get in touch with me first if you have something to share, or you would like to find out more – and add your thoughts or comments below.*

*In 2022, as we celebrate the last 50 years of the URC, may we also find rest, remember our dependence on God, and be set free from things that might hold us back as we look to the future.*

**Jon Steel (Synod Mission Advocate)** [**missionadvocate@urcyorkshire.org.uk**](mailto:missionadvocate@urcyorkshire.org.uk)

**Lay Preachers Planning Group news**

Here is information hot off the press for the next preparation sessions which will be held as usual on Zoom:

**Exploring the upcoming lectionary readings together**

On **Tuesday 8th February 2022 between 10am and 11.30am**, repeated between 7.30pm and 9pm, Jill Fletcher will facilitate these sessions which will be a time for participants to look together at the lectionary readings for 20th and 27thth February, 6th & 13th March in preparation for leading worship on those Sundays. The link will come to all lay preachers nearer the date and all are welcome to share in this resource.

Yours in Christ’s service

Kath Lonsdale, Convenor of Ministries (on behalf of the lay preachers planning group).

If you nee more information, please contact Kath via the Synod Office.

And looking forward – into the summer 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.

**Leading Your Church into Growth**

It has been a great sadness that the February LYCiG conference has had to be postponed, and as soon as a new date is set you will all be informed through the usual channels.

In the meantime however



**Leading Your Church into Growth**

**Taster event on Zoom!**

**1st February 2022**

We are very happy to be able to offer an online taster event. It will give you a feel of the things we will delve deeper into on our conference.

**1st February 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

Zoom Code:

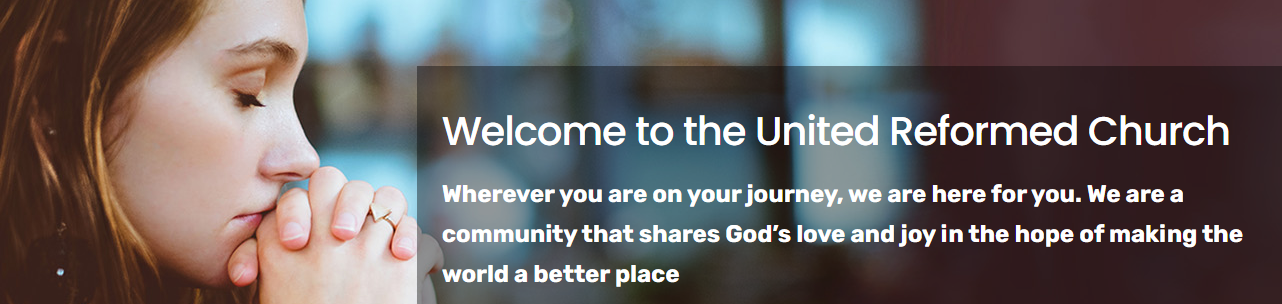
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84874075047?pwd=UndCcDNYTGNMcktaY21ocUd6T0Y2QT09>

Meeting ID: 848 7407 5047

Passcode: 685929

For more information, please contact Rev Ashley Evans at [ashleymtevans@hotmail.com](mailto:ashleymtevans@hotmail.com)

**URC Website**



Over the weekend of 11th & 12th December, the URC website, [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk), had a transformation. It has been updated and is the product of many months work by the team at Church House. It seems to be working and I haven’t come across anything amiss with it.

The old website will be available for a time at [www.urc.org.uk/archive](http://www.urc.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 [urc@urc.org.uk](mailto:urc@urc.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! 😊

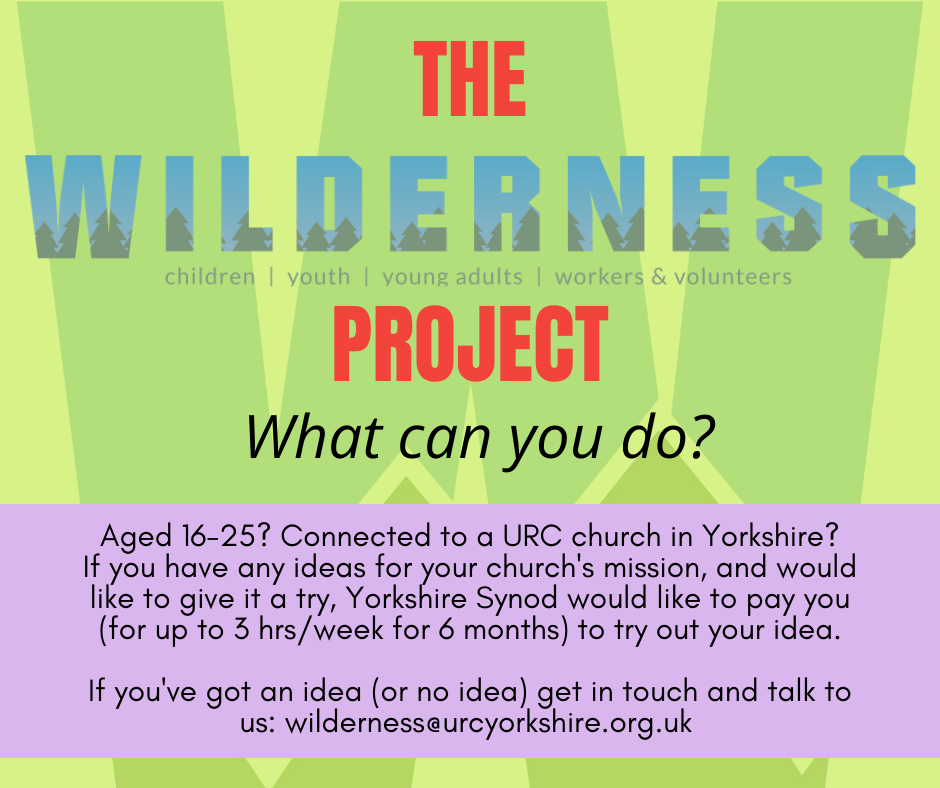
**URC News Update**

The latest issue of the [**URC News Update Dec 2021 - Jan 2022 (urc-news.org.uk)**](https://urc-news.org.uk/2JB1-1T94U-122F160E1908EEE459BX7G3A2531BF46D2BD62/cr.aspx)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 as well as updates on the recent Assembly Executive, the URC’s response to Conversion Therapy, and its response to Omicron. 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/?dm_i=2JB1%2C1SFF1%2C59BX7G%2C667YB%2C1)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](mailto:ann-marie.nye@urc.org.uk) and get your good news out there.

**Children and Young Peoples News**

**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.

**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](mailto:wilderness@urcyorkshire.org.uk?subject=The%20WILDERNESS%20Project)**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://urcyorkshire.us18.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=6386cd1d52e213399865e28c0&id=911b09bcc9)

**Hybrid Ideas Sessions**

The national Education & Learning and Children & Youth Committees have come together again to offer this open get-together to look at ideas on hybrid worship, children’s work and outreach. It will be happening on Wednesday 23rd February at 7.30pm and all are welcome from any age group who are looking to bring the virtual and the real together in their churches. The Zoom Meeting ID is 841 2792 2403 with the Passcode being 244431. For more information, please contact [jenny.mills@urc.org.uk](mailto:jenny.mills@urc.org.uk) for more information.

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**To help you out, these are the links to the four websites listed in the poster:**

[**COURSES | time-space4children (timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk)**](https://www.timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk/contact)

[**Let Us Play - Cliff College**](https://cliffcollege.ac.uk/courses/short-courses-weekend/let-us-play)

[**The SPACE | time-space4children (timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk)**](https://www.timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk/the-space)

[**Joined Up – Joined Up Conference (wordpress.com)**](https://joinedupconferencecom.wordpress.com/)

If you need any further details please contact the good folk at Cliff College via their website.

**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/**](https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/worship/)

**Property News**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Jane, our Property Officer has asked that this bit of news regarding the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme from the HRBA be passed on.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | https://gallery.mailchimp.com/9215d2d845d06a9c2417f5c88/images/012f45b7-b68f-4bbe-a977-4a70c683c01d.jpg https://gallery.mailchimp.com/9215d2d845d06a9c2417f5c88/images/1f53a9cd-4e51-4c6a-ab5a-85e606e276c6.jpg | | |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | |  | | | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **LISTED PLACES OF WORSHIP GRANT SCHEME** Some **very good news** - we heard on Tuesday evening (18th January) that the government's Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme has been extended for another three years until 31 March 2025 (this is the scheme that gives a grant to cover the cost of VAT on repairs etc to listed places of worship). This was not unexpected, but in today's financial climate is very, very welcome. | | |   For more information on how this works and the responsibilities of caring for churches which are  listed, please drop Jane a line at [property@urcyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:property@urcyorkshire.org.uk) |

**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 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 very soon 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 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](mailto:ministries.dbs@urc.org.uk) and copy them into us at [office@urcyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:office@urcyorkshire.org.uk) so that we know who may need supporting on a more local level.

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](http://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 (no 136) 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/1MV9-7MFUR-6E9EAA3AA92A0FE8MT4T0M0F13CC561F04A3A8/cr.aspx)

The Synod is 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](mailto:greenapostle@urcyorkshire.org.uk) or me at [clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk) would love to hear from you.

**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**](mailto: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)**](https://urc.org.uk/church-information-guides/3870-new-freedoms-same-responsibilities.html). **The URC’s main** [**Advice to churches about coronavirus from the United Reformed Church**](https://urc.org.uk/coronavirus.html)**. Government sites** at [**Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do) and [**guidance on what you can and cannot do**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do) and [**Find out what the rules are**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae)**.**

If you know of anything you may find useful for our churches, please contact me at [clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk](mailto: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*