



The
United
Reformed
Church

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The Briefing – Number 77 3rd February 2022

Dear Friends,

Meetings season is upon us. Late January and early February traditionally heralds the start of the spring series of meetings, both in local churches and within the synod. So it gives me great pleasure to let you all know that the Spring meeting of Synod, on Saturday 12th March, will be at St Andrew's Church, Skipton. You may know that it is my home church, but it was one of the churches that missed out on hosting Synod due to the Covid-19 shut down. Skipton had agreed to host in October 2020, but that meeting proved to be our first online Synod, with representatives joining through the wonders of technology. Our experience of doing this style of meeting has grown to the extent that for this coming meeting we are aiming to offer a fully hybrid meeting. By this we hope to be able to offer Synod representatives who join online the same opportunities to contribute and vote as those who attend in person. This is a huge step forward and one that the URC as a whole is embracing; acknowledging the fact that the world has changed. Similarly, the Synod appreciates that Yorkshire is a different place to what it was two years ago with churches developing different and new priorities. Synod will support churches as they navigate this new course, providing the guidance and resources as necessary to be beacons of mission.



I mentioned last time that as part of Yorkshire's response to Jubilee 2022 our **Missional Synod** initiative is at the heart of what we aim to offer this year. 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 \(urcyorkshire.org.uk\)](http://urcyorkshire.org.uk) website as well as the [Our 50th Anniversary - United Reformed](#)

[Church](#) page. As part of this initiative to raise the profile of mission in the synod, our new **Mission Advocate**, Jon Steel, has begun to upload short articles onto the synod website and Facebook page each week, as well as hosting monthly Zoom get-togethers to ask the question "What is Mission?" The get-togethers planned for the last Tuesday in the month using this regular Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/92778926887?pwd=dUJKckNDZ1NNL1BMRncvMzBFd2Q1UT09>. More information can be had from Jon via his new e-mail 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 and with it the link to articles and as a taster here's the direct link to the first one <https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/a-biblical-jubilee-for-the-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.

Disciple Development Fund

Yorkshire URC Synod Discipleship Development Fund

This fund is available to encourage and support individuals within the United Reformed Church engage with a journey of developing personal discipleship. It is available for any URC member or regular URC attender of any age who is not a Minister of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Worker.

Yorkshire Synod Ministries Committee are pleased to share with you that grants of up to £200 are now available.

Individuals can apply for help with the cost of attending an approved discipleship course, activities or retreats offered by others.

Congregations can apply for help with the cost of buying in a speaker or other resources to facilitate in-house schemes.

Please contact Kath Lonsdale, Convenor of Yorkshire Ministries, kathlonsdale@talktalk.net or 01274 315203 to apply for this grant.

Lay Preachers Planning Group news

Exploring the upcoming lectionary readings together

On **Tuesday 8th February 2022 between 10am and 11.30am**, and 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 27th 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.

For more information, please contact Kath Lonsdale via the Synod Office.

Lay preachers and Worship Leaders weekend

And looking forward – into the summer no less – Kath Lonsdale has asked that you keep the **22nd to 24th July 2022** (Friday teatime to Sunday lunch) clear if you are interested in a **Lay preachers and Worship Leaders weekend at Wydale conference centre**. The planning group are pleased to share that this weekend will be paid for by grants successfully applied for so you will only need to cover your travel costs. **There are 30 places available** and you are now invited to register your interest for this weekend with the office at office@urcyorkshire.org.uk or 0113 289 8490.

GEAR

The Group for Evangelism and Renewal in the URC (GEAR) is running another 'Refreshing Your Ministry' session on Zoom with worship, Biblical input and prayer. The first free session takes place on 10 February from 2-3.30pm, and will be led by the Revd John Proctor, former General Secretary of the URC. All active and retired ministers and CRCWS, local leaders and lay preachers are welcome to join. To register, please email Richard Bradley at richardbradley@cantab.net.



Racial Justice Sunday

We have been asked by our Racial Justice Advocate, the Revd Zaidie Orr, to remind everyone that **Sunday 13th of February** is Racial Justice Sunday. If you are planning to mark this Sunday then the good folk at *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland* has produced a resource for Racial Justice Sunday 2022.

It is the product of ecumenical cooperation and partnership between Christian church denominations, para-church organisations and groups.

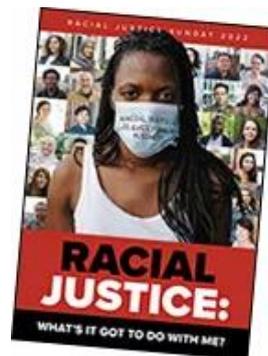
The theme for this year is:

Racial Justice: What's it got to do with me?

This is very much a call for all Christians to engage in the righteous struggle for racial justice because racial justice is everyone's business.

Below is the link for the booklet – just click it and download.

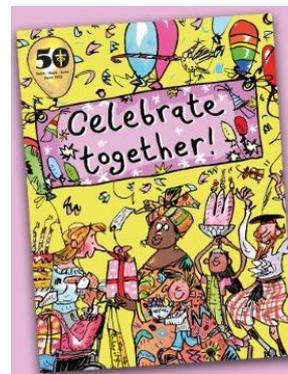
<https://ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-13-february-2022/>



URC News Update

The latest issue of the [URC News Update February 2022 \(urc-news.org.uk\)](http://urc-news.org.uk) is now available. There are lots of links to this year's Jubilee, including a special all-age book to help celebrate the URC's 50th anniversary. *Celebrate Together* is a lively, colourful picture book designed for families to share together, and is being made available free of charge for all members of, and those connected to, the URC. Order your free copies through the [URC Bookshop](#). There is also the chance to win one of three awards in the Community Project Awards 2022. The Awards are an initiative run by the URC in collaboration with Congregational, one of the UK's leading church insurance providers. For more than a decade, the awards have recognised innovative community projects that have a positive effect on local communities. The winning projects can receive up to £2,000. The closing date for entries is 26 February. [Read more](#) by clicking this link.

Ann-Marie, who edits the URC News Update (like me) is always on the hunt for stories to tell. Drop her a line at ann-marie.nye@urc.org.uk and get your good news out there.



Moderator of General Assembly Nominations

Nominations for the election of the Moderator of the General Assembly 2023-2024 are due to the General Secretary following the spring meetings of Synods – which in Yorkshire's case will be on Saturday March 12th at Skipton. More details about the procedure can be found in section 3 of C: Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of the United Reformed Church from the Manual.

https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1638/72/C_Rules_of_Procedure.pdf

If you do feel called to nominate anyone please contact the Clerk at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk and he will run through what happens. In essence an election will take place at the meeting of General Assembly this July for a successor to the Revd Fiona Bennett who will serve from the close of that meeting until the close of the 2023 meeting. It is hoped that with the role GA Moderator becoming a one year role, it will widen the number and diversity of folk who might feel that they could consider a call to this very particular piece of ministry. Last year that proved so with a sweep of very good nominations, and two absolutely excellent candidates willing to test that call with the Assembly. Many thanks in advance for any names and don't hesitate to be in touch if you have any queries about this process.

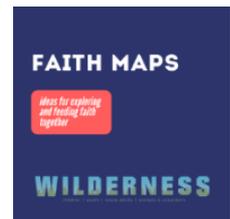
Children and Young Peoples News

CYP Newsletter

There are changes afoot in the way the CYP Newsletter is to be distributed. The latest CYP Newsletter can be found via this link <https://mailchi.mp/2db1c38fde35/happy-new-year-11295160> but in future things will be changing. The Newsletter is being moved to a new mailing provider. To continue receiving the CYP mailings giving information of what is happening in the synod for our children and young people and the CYP Newsletter, please sign up by clicking the link here: <https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/candy/> then scroll down to the section headed 'get your fix' and fill in your email address. Nothing could be more simple.

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](#), 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](#) 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.org.uk/candy/)

Hybrid Ideas Sessions

Meet up and share ideas on hybrid: worship, children's work, outreach...

Meeting ID: 841 2792 2403
Passcode: 244431

Wednesday 23rd February 7.30pm
Following our successful training sessions, Education & Learning and Children & Youth invite you to meet together. We hope this will become a regular gathering.

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The United Methodist Church
1808-1888-1888-1888

Email: jenny.mills@urc.org.uk for more information.

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 for more information.

LET US PLAY
A weekend exploring issues of spirituality and play amongst children.

March 11th to 13th, 2022



Jenny Lambourne, a member of Shiregreen URC, Sheffield, is leading a course for those who work and care for children at Cliff College, Derbyshire, in March.

Details of the course can be found at <https://www.timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk/contact> and on the Cliff College website at <https://cliffcollege.ac.uk/courses/short-courses-weekend/let-us-play>

Jenny's therapy work at the church in Shiregreen can also be found at <https://www.timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk/the-space>

Jenny is also leading a workshop at the Joined Up Conference in Sheffield on March 5th <https://joinedupconference.com.wordpress.com>

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

[COURSES | time-space4children \(timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk\)](#)

[Let Us Play - Cliff College](#)

[The SPACE | time-space4children \(timeandspaceforchildren.co.uk\)](#)

[Joined Up – Joined Up Conference \(wordpress.com\)](#)

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/>

Property and Listed Building News

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.

LISTED PLACES OF WORSHIP GRANT SCHEME

Some very good news - we heard last month 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.



Historic Religious Buildings Alliance
a group within the Heritage Alliance

And talking of listed buildings, Andrew Lonsdale, the Convenor of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group sends this message:

LISTED BUILDINGS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Managing our church buildings is one of the most difficult tasks we have. However, it does not have to be so and particularly for those churches which have Listed Buildings help and advice is always available. It is important to note that when a church is listed, all internal fixtures and fittings are included and any other buildings within the curtilage of the listed building.

The Synod Listed Buildings Advisory Committees, under the wonderful title of Ecclesiastical Exemption, were set up in the early years of the United Reformed Church to enable the different Synods to help the individual churches in their areas to work through their plans and visions to understand what changes and alterations they can make. Only when there is work to the exterior of the building and the surrounding area do the local authority planning department need to be involved. This system is different from other denominations and we have come to realise that many of the professionals including architects do not fully understand how the system works and responses from local authority or advice from professionals have not always been helpful.

Therefore, if your church is listed and contemplating large repairs or alterations the first step should be to contact the secretary of the Listed Building Advisory Committee (LBAC) for informal discussion and advice on how to take the necessary next steps, which can have the option of an informal visit, and the dates when an application must be put in. This helps the committee to better understand the proposals and the church understand the timetable and what is possible.

The LBAC is an advisory committee and following an application will recommend their decision to the Synod Property Committee.

We can meet the challenge of our buildings together.

Andrew Lonsdale – Convenor

andrewlonsdale@talktalk.net

Jane Bunyan-Murray – Secretary

Property@urcyorkshire.org.uk

URC Vacancies

The URC nationally has some vacancies that it needs filling. They include an **Administrative Assistant (Safeguarding)**, a **Digital Content Officer (Digital Worship)** and a **Programme Assistant, Children's & Youth Work**. All the details are on the URC's website so please feel free to share this link within your circle <https://urc.org.uk/jobs/> and circulate any other vacancies that are listed to those you feel may benefit from them.

Annual Church Returns

Annual Church Returns (ACR) - a very important note for Church Secretaries

On **31st January 2022** (or not long afterwards) you should have received log in details with instructions so that you can access the site to complete your church update and Annual Church Return figures.

We are aware that there has been a slight delay in launching the new online system so for that reason the site will be live until **31 March 2022**. If you are unable to complete the online update and Annual Church Return in that time, or feel you need a blank paper copy, you can either print it directly from the portal or contact Synod Office to send you a blank copy of the form.

In addition, church contacts will receive by post in the next week or so a paper document detailing the people and roles at your church. Please make any amendments straight on to the document and return it to Synod Office by **31 March 2022** so that they can update your records.

This is a new but much awaited departure for the Church in relation to gathering and recording church information. We hope that you find it seamless and if you have queries, please do get in touch with your Synod Office.

Safeguarding News

Annual Safeguarding Returns (ASR) – a very important to note for Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators

On **31 January 2022** (or not long afterwards) you should have received log in details with instructions so that you can access the site to complete your church Safeguarding Return (ASR) figures.

We are aware that there has been a slight delay in launching the new online system so for that reason the site will be live until **31 March 2022**. If you are unable to complete the ASR in that time, or feel you need a blank paper copy, you can either print it directly from the portal or contact Synod Office to send you a blank copy of the form.

This is a new but much awaited departure for the Church in relation to gathering and recording church information. We hope that you find it seamless and if you have queries, please do get in touch with Synod Office or Synod Safeguarding Officer.

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 (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 \(jointpublicissues-news.org.uk\)](http://jointpublicissues-news.org.uk)

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 or me at clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk would love to hear from you.

Covid-19 and Current Regulations

The government's "Plan B measures" were lifted on 27th January and we are now under the guidance of "Plan A", as we were at the back end of 2021. The current regulations can be found here [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance and support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) with the recommendations of the URC to be found at the [Coronavirus advice - United Reformed Church](#) page. This also has links to the latest updates, worship aid and resources, all designed for you and your churches. I would like to draw your attention to two articles from our Moderators, who wisely advise us to be careful as the government restrictions ease; [New Freedoms, Same Responsibilities: Synod Moderators' advice to congregations - United Reformed Church](#) was updated in December whilst the [Covid Plan B: Synod Moderators' updated guidance - United Reformed Church](#) is as valid now as when it was written just before Christmas.

Our key responsibility and duty of care to our congregations, members and friends. 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. Indeed, the advice from us here at Synod 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 please follow the guidance that is still available and if you need any help from us here at Synod, please get in touch.

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