



Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration





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Stonebridge House
Kenilworth Road
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CV7 7LJ

T: 01564 730 900

E: urc@edwardsinsurance.co.uk

www.edwardsinsurance.co.uk



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Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration of The United Reformed Church's 50th Anniversary

Methodist Central Hall Westminster, 15 April, 2023

*Please say or sing the words in **bold**. The words for the service appear both in this booklet and on the screens and televisions around the hall.*

Before the service, we will see a selection of 50th anniversary images and videos, and the Anniversary Choir will sing.

The Gathering

A trumpet will sound. Please rise in body or spirit.

Bible Reading: Leviticus 25:8-12 (selected verses)

Phillipa Osei and Heather Moore

'You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; ...

'... And you shall hallow the 50th year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: ... it shall be holy to you ...'

Introit

The choir sings Let All the World in Every Corner Sing, words by George Herbert, music by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Presentation of the Bible

During the Introit, the General Assembly Bible will be placed on the communion table by Simon Loveitt, accompanied by the Revd Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, the Revd Fiona Bennett, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, and the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, Moderator-Elect of the URC General Assembly.

Bread and wine will be placed on the communion table by the Revd Sarah Moore.

Welcome

In this Jubilee celebration,
as we make this year holy,
we share in the *biblical* hope of jubilee;
that all Creation will be honoured,
for it belongs to God,
that those enslaved will be freed,
that debts will be dropped and sins forgiven.
This is our hope and joy!

Hymn: Blessed City, Heavenly Salem

Rejoice and Sing, *number 559*. This hymn was sung at the first service of The United Reformed Church in 1972.

During the hymn, candles representing each of the URC's 13 Synods in England, Wales and Scotland will be placed on the map by our Synod Moderators or a representative of the Synod.

**Blessèd city, heavenly Salem,
vision dear of peace and love,
who, of living stones art buildèd
art the joy of heaven above,
we, with all thy holy people
glorious to thy glory move.**

**Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the Head and cornerstone,
chosen of the Lord, and precious,
binding all the church in one,
Holy Zion's help for ever,
and her confidence alone.**

**All that dedicated city,
dearly loved of God on high,
in exultant jubilation
pours perpetual melody,
God, the One in Three, adoring
in glad hymns eternally.**

**To this temple where we call thee,
come, O Lord of Hosts, today;
with thy wonted loving-kindness
hear thy people as they pray;
and thy fullest benediction
shed within its walls for aye.**

**Here vouchsafe to all thy servants
what they ask of thee to gain,
what they gain from thee for ever
with the blessed to retain,
and hereafter in thy glory
evermore with thee to reign.**

Please be seated.

We are met to give thanks to Almighty God for our coming together, 50 years ago, in one church, catholic and reformed; and the gifts and graces of God in those who responded to God's call to enable our union. We rejoice in the leading of the Holy Spirit; and pledge ourselves once again to our common Lord. The faith on which this unity rests, and which we now are firm, is this:

We believe in one living and true God, creator, preserver and ruler of all things in heaven and earth, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: God alone we worship, and in God we put our trust.

We believe that, out of infinite love for all people, God gave Jesus Christ our Lord, God's eternal Son, who became human, lived on earth in perfect love and obedience, died upon the cross for our sins, rose again from the dead: and lives for ever more, Saviour, judge and king.

We believe that, by the Holy Spirit, this glorious gospel is made effective so that through faith we receive the forgiveness of sins, newness of life as children of God, and strength in this present world to do his will.

We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church, in heaven and on earth, where, by the same Spirit, the whole company of believers is made one Body of Christ: to worship God and serve in the kingdom of righteousness and love.

We rejoice in the gift of eternal life, and believe that, in the fullness of time, God will renew and gather in one all things in Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

Jubilee Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth
Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for
your glory.



Glo-ry to God_ in the high-est, and peace to his peo-ple on earth._



Glo-ry to God_ in the high-est, and peace to his peo-ple on earth._ Lord



God, heaven-ly King, al - might-y God_ and Fa - ther, we wor-ship you,_ we



give you thanks, we praise you for_ your glo - ry.

Gloria by Scott Stroman

A Prayer of Lament and Confession

God of all mercy and understanding,
as the Gloria fades from our lips
we remember with honest sadness
the fading of the hopes we once had.

We are sorry that the church is still divided,
bereft that when once we thought to lead the way
we now find ourselves left behind.



We wonder whether we misheard your call,
failed in discerning the lessons of our times
or were arrogant in thinking we could fulfil your mission.

Today we mourn the churches that have closed,
the fellow pilgrims who have died,
the projects, experiments and programmes
that have fallen to dust.

Deliver us from the sins that tempted us;
the narcissism that thought we were right,
the cynicism that casts blame,
the despair that gives in and gives up.

**Forgive us, cheer us and renew us, gentle God.
Revive tired pilgrims' limbs
and stir once more the confident hope
that endures all things and rejoices always.**

The Assurance of Pardon

Let all the people hear these ancient and holy words:

God has blessed you and will keep you:
God faces you, shines upon you and has mercy upon you;
God lifts up eternal countenance upon you, and gives you peace.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We pray together The Lord's Prayer. Please use whatever language or form is familiar to you.

English:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Cymraeg:

**Ein Tad, yr hwn wyt yn y
nefoedd,
sancteiddier dy enw,
deled dy deyrnas,
gwneler dy ewyllys,
megis yn y nef felly ar y
ddaeear hefyd.
Dyro i ni heddiw ein bara
beunyddiol.
A maddau i ni ein dyledion,
fel y maddeuwn ninnau i'n
dyledwyr.
Ac nac arwain i ni i
brofedigaeth,
eithr gwared ni rhag drwg.
Canys eiddot ti yw'r deyrnas,
y nerth,
a'r gogoniant, yn oes oesoedd.
Amen.**

After The Lord's Prayer, please rise in body or spirit.

Hymn: God of the Pilgrim Way

One of the winners in the URC's 50th Anniversary Worship Resources Competition, this was written by Colin Thompson. The tune is Darmstadt by Ahasuerus Fritsch, 1629-1701.

The image displays a musical score for the hymn "God of the Pilgrim Way". It is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The melody is primarily composed of quarter and eighth notes, with some rests. The bass line provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system begins with a measure rest of 4 measures, indicated by a '4' above the staff. The third system begins with a measure rest of 7 measures, indicated by a '7' above the staff. The fourth system begins with a measure rest of 10 measures, indicated by a '10' above the staff. The final system begins with a measure rest of 13 measures, indicated by a '13' above the staff. The score concludes with a double bar line.

God of the pilgrim way,
guide of each generation,
through ever-changing years
our sure and firm foundation:
we turn to you, the source
of all that's good and true,
the never-failing store
of treasures old and new.

We praise you for the lives
of those who went before us,
saints honoured, saints
 unsung,
the witness which they
 bore us;
for those who took to heart
the prayer of Christ the Son,
that all who bear his name
should be in Christ as one:

One Church, a house of peace,
where people long surrounded
by walls built to divide
meet, held in Love unbounded.
The suffering of our world,
the sorrows of our earth
cry for your healing touch,
long for a second birth.

And when the way grows hard,
and will and purpose fail us,
when dreams and visions die,
and doubts and fears assail us,
let wisdom from on high
our troubled spirits raise,
walk with us on the road
and set our hearts ablaze.

United for your sake,
by grace a new creation,
grant us the strength to serve
the work of your salvation:
hope for a world unsoiled
by terror, lies and greed,
faith in a future blest
where Love's
 commandments lead.

Please be seated.

The Ministry of the Word

Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 7:7-12

Joe Amoah

The Lord did not set affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath sworn to your ancestors that you were brought out with a mighty hand and you were redeemed from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; is the faithful God, keeping that covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love God and keep God's commandments. But those who hate God will be repaid to their face by destruction; God will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate.

Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today. If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep the covenant of love with you, as sworn to your ancestors.

Sermon: Unity, God's precious gift ...

The Revd Dr David Cornick

Choir

The choir will sing a setting of Always Trust The Star That Guides You, the winning poem in the URC's 50th Anniversary Worship

Resources Competition. The poem was written by Neil Thorogood and set to music for the service by Scott Stroman.

'Let them be, as we are; one,' we hear you say.
Those treasured roots do not have to cling so tight.
Always trust the star that guides us on the way.

In this aching world your dreams can be the prey:
Ignored; forgotten; fading out of sight.
'Let them be, as we are; one,' we hear you say.

Set sail. Become an answer to what you pray.
Risk open ocean where storms can reach their height.
Always trust the star that guides us on our way.

Sail on. Discern all the Spirit has in play,
Set course by sacrament and word. Know what's right.
'Let them be, as we are; one,' we hear you say.

Defensiveness, fear, might seem to rule the day,
This is why our love, hope, faith must shine so bright.
Always trust the star that guides us on the way.

Fifty years; our life always yours, come what may,
Pilgrim servants sailing still. Travelling light.
'Let them be, as we are; one,' we hear you say.
Always trust the star that guides us on the way.

Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16

Poppy Thorpe

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it is said, 'When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'

(When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Sermon: Counter-Culturally Bonded by Peace in our In-Between Place

Victoria Turner

Song: Siyahamba (We are Marching)

Please rise in body or spirit.

Zulu: **Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos' ...**
English: **We are marching in the light of God ...**

Please be seated.

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:16-19

Yvonne Campbell

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

Sermon: Together towards Life

The Revd Prof Dr Jooseop Keum

After the sermon, please rise in body or spirit.

Song: Sung Alleluia – Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Caribbean Traditional

Halle, halle, hallelujah!
Halle, halle, hallelujah!
Halle, halle, hallelujah!
Hallelujah, hallelujah!

Please be seated.

Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC

Led by the Revd John Reardon, the Revd Margaret Ali, Isaac Harvey and Maria Lee

We say these words together on some of our big public occasions because they provide a vivid snapshot of what we are about.

Those with well-tuned historical antennae will be able to pick up all sorts of references to our sometimes turbulent past and to issues that are still divisive among us.

They are a spine-tingling testimony to the kind of church we are or hope to be.

With the whole Christian Church
the United Reformed Church believes in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
**The living God, the only God,
ever to be praised.**

The life of faith to which we are called
is the Spirit's gift
continually received
through the Word, the Sacraments
and our Christian life together.

**We acknowledge the gift
and answer the call,
giving thanks for the means of grace.**

The highest authority
for what we believe and do
is God's Word in the Bible
alive for his people today
through the help of the Spirit.

**We respond to this Word,
whose servants we are
with all God's people
through the years.**

We accept with thanksgiving to God
the witness to the catholic faith
in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.
We acknowledge the declarations
made in our own tradition
by Congregationalists, Presbyterians
and Churches of Christ
in which they stated the faith
and sought to make its implications clear.

**Faith alive and active:
gift of an eternal source,
renewed for every generation.**

We conduct our life together
according to the Basis of Union
in which we give expression to our faith
in forms which we believe contain



the essential elements of the Church's life,
both catholic and reformed;
but we affirm our right and readiness,
if the need arises,
to change the Basis of Union
and to make new statements of faith
in ever new obedience to the Living Christ.
**Our crucified and risen Lord,
who leads us in our faith
and brings it to perfection.**

Held together in the Body of Christ
through the freedom of the Spirit,
we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts
and uphold the rights of personal conviction.
For the sake of faith and fellowship
it shall be for the church to decide
where differences of conviction
hurt our unity and peace.
**We commit ourselves
to speak the truth in love
and grow together
in the peace of Christ.**

We believe that
Christ gives his Church a government
distinct from the government of the state.
In things that affect obedience to God
the Church is not subordinate to the state,
but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ,
its only Ruler and Head.
Civil authorities are called
to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind,
and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

**While we ourselves
are servants in the world
as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.**

We affirm our intention
to go on praying and working,
with all our fellow Christians,
for the visible unity of the Church
in the way Christ chooses
so that people and nations
may be led to love and serve God
and praise him more and more for ever.

**Source, Guide, and Goal
of all that is:
to God be eternal glory.
Amen.**

Please rise in body or spirit.

Song: The Lord's my Shepherd

Setting by Stuart Townend

**The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
Christ makes me lie in pastures green.
and leads me by the still, still waters,
God's goodness restores my soul.**

Refrain:

***And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.***

**Christ guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on these pure delights.**

Refrain

**And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.**

Refrain

Please be seated.

Poem: A Table for All

Written and read by Karen Campbell

Come as you are, because you are welcome.
Come take your place, and hear now the call,
The table is spread, and the music is playing –
Come take your place at the Table for All.

Don't ponder now who you think is worthy,
When, where or how RSVP they sent;
Instead come with gladness, and joy overflowing,
For each person present was God's first intent.

No special place for royal or mighty,
Earthly wealth and position a thing of the past
At the Table prepared with upside-down values,
Where the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

No longer division 'tween haves and the have nots;
Here no oppressed, neither those who oppress.
Where the world has said 'no' to dignity of justice,
Our God, at this Table, says 'yes'.

And don't be fooled into thinking God does not see colour;
God's Table for All is no sea of grey –
God creates and admires, and declares 'It is good!'
No matter what racist or bigot may say.

God calls to all people, from every direction,
From the east to the west, the north and the south;
There's drink for the thirsty of every nation,
A banquet abundant for every mouth.

A rainbow of people, all at God's table,
Different languages, customs, and faiths from all lands,
Invited to sit, talk and learn all together,
More human made by the joining of hearts and of hands.

So come sit with prince, and come sit with pauper,
With old and with young freely come take your rest;
Whatever the label, the burden you carry,
Lay it down, for now you are most honoured guest.

And let us not wait to dine at that Table,
For though it's not yet, the Table is now –
Where valleys are filled, and mountains are levelled
And a sharing of fate emerges somehow.

Oh the Table is spread, and the music is playing,
Let's listen and hear and respond to God's call,
And live into being the kingdom we cry for –
The Table with room for All.

A trumpet will sound.

As we gather, in this place, in this year, and at this table,
we celebrate that in Jesus, God was born among us,
that he proclaimed a time of jubilee, a year of the Lord's favour,
and gave his life for us and for all who wait for redemption.
On the third day he rose to new life
and now, on each day of every year,
he is present with us through the Holy Spirit.
In the presence of the Apostles and the Saints,
of our forebears in the faith,
and with all Christians, with whom we are one body,
we come to celebrate this feast of abundant life.

The Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them to the Lord!

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

We give thanks to you, O God,
because this beautiful Earth belongs to you,
and you made us to live in freedom,
one church, one people, one world.

Thank you for this time of jubilee,
for joyful celebration and faithful return,
for your summons to justice
and the restoring of our hope.

Thank you for this bread and this wine,
for memories made vivid
of Exodus and freedom,
of death and sacrifice,
of revelation and renewal.

With all your people, in earth and heaven,
we join to sing your praise ...

Jubilee Sanctus

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, almighty,
Heaven and Earth are full of your glory,
Hosanna in the highest. (Repeat)
Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest. (Repeat)**

Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho - ly, Lord God, al - might - ty,
Hea-ven and Earth are full of your glo-ry, Ho-san-na in the high - est.
Bles-sed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na in the high - est.

Sanctus by Scott Stroman

We praise you for Jesus Christ,
bread of life and true vine,
his body given for us and his blood poured out.
On the night when he was betrayed,
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it,
and gave it to them saying,
'Take eat: this is my body which is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

And he took the cup after supper, saying,
'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

Remembering the life and teaching,
the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus,
and confident in his sacrifice made once for all,
we rejoice that he is present with us,
and that we can walk the way with him.

Send now your Holy Spirit
upon this bread and wine,
us your people,
and all creation,
that Jesus may be truly present
and the jubilee he proclaimed
be made real along us.

May the bread that we break be for us the communion of the
body of Christ.

May the cup that we bless be the communion of the blood of Christ.

May we continue to be made one with you and with each other,
and may our unity give you glory,
God who is one in three, a community of love, now and forever,
Amen.

Let joy ring out!

May unity be made!

May creation be made new!

The Sharing

The communion elements are pieces of gluten-free bread with glasses of grape juice given to the URC by the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz in Germany, a partner of the Church since the 1950s.

*Stewards will bring trays to your rows. Please eat a piece of bread as you receive the tray, take a glass and then pass the tray to your neighbour. Please drink the grape juice and **keep the glass** for yourself, or to give as a gift to a minister, church member, family member or friend.*

During The Sharing, you can watch films of our partners from around the world and the choir will sing Together Through the Father's Love, the third winner in the URC's 50th Anniversary Worship Resources Competition, by Stephen Newell and Naomi Sharp and arranged by Scott Stroman.

Together through the Father's love
we are one family.
His love in us, our love for him
holds all in unity.
Let us praise and sing
for he's good and true;
love and mercy flows.
From him all things are made new.

Together on the Jesus road,
we learn his servant heart,
discovering that humility
is where true blessing starts.
Let us walk his way
raise our voice in song
to the Love, whose love
is our joy and makes us one.

Together when the Spirit leads,
her whisper like a dove,
resisting our complacency
she kindles gifts of love.
Let the breath of life
spark in us a flame
for a hurting world
to find comfort for its pain.

We stand together on this day
and make our pledge in faith,
with hope for all the future holds
and trusting in your grace.
We will journey on
guided by your Word;
voices, hearts and lives
singing 'Jesus Christ is Lord!'
singing 'Jesus Christ is Lord!'

Prayers for the Church and the World

Thanks be to God for this gift beyond words.

At the feast of life, we bring our prayers and hopes for the church, for the world, and for all creation.

*There follows a series of prayers on the screens.
After each set of prayers and images, we will sing one part
of the Ukrainian Kyrie.*

After the last set of prayers, we will sing the whole Kyrie.

Video

Prayers for the United Reformed Church

Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison
(Lord have mercy)

Video

Prayers for community projects

Christe Eleison, Christe Eleison, Christe Eleison
(Christ have mercy)

Video

Prayers for our ecumenical and international partners

Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison
(Lord have mercy)

Video

Prayers for the world

Christe Eleison, Christe Eleison, Christe Eleison
(Christ have mercy)

Video

Prayers for creation

Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison
Christe Eleison, Christe Eleison, Christe Eleison
Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison

Prayer

Based on the theme of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in September, and written for that occasion

Holy God, source and Creator of all things,
love made flesh in Jesus Christ,
and known among us through the Holy Spirit,
gather us together in your loving arms
that we may grow in visible communion
and so witness to unity in the world.
Where your people are broken, may love mend.
When hatred shouts in the world, let love bring peace with justice.
As creation groans, may redemption come to all the earth.
Come with your divine love, and enter our hearts.
Move your church, and move the world,
to reconciliation and unity. **Amen.**

A moment of silence.

A trumpet will sound.

Act of Recommitment

Please rise in body or spirit.

People of the United Reformed Church,
giving thanks for God's mercy and grace in days past,
I call upon you, in this year of jubilee,
to make a new commitment
for today and tomorrow.

**May the quest for unity, forge us.
May the celebration of diversity, sculpt us.
May the vision of abundant life for all, steer us.**

**Transfused by God's grace,
walking the way of Jesus Christ,
bound together in the Holy Spirit,
we commit ourselves
to be signs and servants of God's new creation.**

God of the past, **together – we give you thanks.**
God of the hidden future, **together – we place our trust in you.**
God of our own time, **together – we will follow where you lead.**

Hymn: Living God, your joyful Spirit

**Living God, your joyful Spirit
breaks the bounds of time and space,
rests in love upon your people,
drawn together in this place.
Here we join in glad thanksgiving,
here rejoice to pray and praise:
Lord of all our past traditions,
Lord of all our future days.**

**As your bread may we be broken,
scattered in community;
we who know your greatest blessings
called to share Christ's ministry.
May we gently lead each other,
share our hunger and our thirst;
learn that only through our weakness
shall we know the strength of Christ.**

**Lord, when we grow tired of giving,
feel frustration, hurt and strain,
by your Spirit's quiet compulsion,
draw us back to you again.**

**Guide us through the bitter searching
when our confidence is lost;
give us hope from desolation,
arms outstretched upon a cross.**

**Living God, your power surrounds us,
as we face the way Christ trod,
challenge us to fresh commitment
to the purposes of God:
called to share a new creation,
called to preach a living word,
promised all the joys of heaven,
through the grace of Christ our Lord.**

During the hymn, the Synod Moderators or representatives of the Synod will collect a candle which they will take back to their Synod, to help them pray for the life and work of the URC. Please remain standing for The Blessing.

The Blessing

The blessing of God,
who makes this year holy,
be with you.

The blessing of Christ,
who proclaimed the Lord's favour,
be with you.

The blessing of the Spirit,
poured out on all creation,
be with you.

May you continue
to be a sign of unity,
that the world may believe,
and creation rejoice,
now and always,
Amen.

The General Assembly Bible is carried out followed by the General Secretary, the Moderator and Moderator-Elect of the General Assembly and the Synod Moderators or representatives of the Synod.

Anniversary greetings

The Waldensian Church

Dear Friends of the United Reformed Church,

We wish you a happy anniversary. Fifty years is an important step of testimony, commitment and of agape.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we live in the hand of this communion, a communion that becomes a community that gathers different languages, peoples, countries, cultures and beauties.

This device is a sign of God's love, which frees us from fear, and makes us capable of fighting together for justice and for the protection of creation.

From Riesi, Europe's frontier in the deep south, and from all us in the Servizio Cristiano, and as Sicilians, with therefore a generous embrace, best wishes, take care, and Ciao!

Gianluca Fiusco, Director of the Servizio Cristiano Riesi (Christian Service Waldensian Institute), the Waldensian Church, Italy

- The URC-Waldensian Fellowship has existed since the early 1980s.

The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan

It is with a sense of gratitude and great joy that we write these few words on behalf of the 67th General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) to the officers, ministers and members of the United Reformed Church during this auspicious 50th year in your history as a united family.

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan cherishes the life-long mission partnership we have enjoyed from our humble but firm beginnings in 1865 to the present day.

We thank God for the example the URC has been to PCT, and for the mutual partnership that has evolved between us as sisters and brothers in Christ. Looking back to 1972, we thank the Lord for the way the URC family was guided, moulded and nurtured on the faith journey to unity where differences could be respected and diversity celebrated. We join our hearts and lips to the words of Psalm 111:

Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures for ever.

As we celebrate the past, we also look forward with anticipation to continue the journey together and witness to the power, wisdom, love and hope of our living Lord in a world that is, sadly, fraught with challenges and pain.

Regretfully, we are unable to be present for the Celebration Service. However, please be assured of our prayers not only for the service, but also for all the congregations of the URC country-wide. We pray the Lord to bless your mission abundantly.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*The Revd Tai Shuo-Chin, Moderator, PCT 67th General Assembly
The Revd Chen Hsin-Liang, PCT General Secretary*

The Council for World Mission

Greetings from the Council for World Mission and Happy 50th Anniversary to the URC!

What a blessing for the URC to be celebrating its jubilee year, which the Bible describes as the year to 'proclaim liberty', or a time to 'set free' (Leviticus 25:10).

As we celebrate together with the URC, we therefore simultaneously reflect on several questions.

- Who do we need to set free – physically, economically or socially?
- Who do we need to forgive – spiritually, personally or mentally?
- What do we need to let go of – individually, and corporately as a church community?
- Which of our methods or ways of operating create situations of bondage or indebtedness?
- What do we need to change to bring about liberty to those in the church and outside the church?

The answers to these questions will determine whether we are 'a people of jubilee', a people who on the one hand celebrate God's blessings for the past 50 years, while also consciously considering situations around us that we are called to 'set free'.

God bless the URC community to be a community of obedience.

The Revd Lydia Neshangwe, Moderator of the Council for World Mission

Dear Sisters and Brothers at the United Reformed Church,

On behalf of the Council for World Mission (CWM) family, I would like to congratulate you for celebrating the Jubilee, commemorating the life, ministry, and witness of the URC throughout the past 50 years.

While the 50th year is just a number for some, for us, it is a year of liberation with joy during which the covenant community is restored through the establishment of peace and justice. The proclamation of the Jubilee is an act of God's people, which reveals their unshaken trust in God's sovereignty over history and their faithfulness in keeping God's covenant. The Jubilee is a time during which the covenant community of unity and peace is restored through the establishing of shalom based upon God's justice. The shalom is the vision of Jubilee established through the realisation of social, economic, and ecological justices.

Jubilee is the time when the people return to God, repenting for their shortcomings, recovering righteousness, and rejoicing in hope. It is a time to love one another and forgive those indebted to us as God has forgiven our debts. Finally, Jubilee is a time to remind ourselves that God has remained faithful, so that we must continue to walk the path of God with love, peace, and reconciliation.

Well done the faithful ambassadors of God's mission of unity, justice and life in the UK and all over the world! I believe this Jubilee is an opportunity for the URC to look for the future with a renewed commitment to the mission of Triune God. The URC is called by the missionary God to proclaim and to live into the jubilee – a new journey of liberation for all!

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon all of you as you proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, the Jubilee.

The Revd Dr Jooseop Keum, General Secretary, the Council for World Mission

The Presbyterian Church of Korea

Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of the United Reformed Church!

First of all, on behalf of the Korean Church and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) who are debtors to the gospel and love, I send my heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to you. The past 50 years of the URC have been a journey that constantly clarifies and confirms its mission as a witness of the gospel and missional church.

The URC and the PCK have precious experiences in collaborating as mission partners. In 2015, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the 100th General Assembly of the PCK, and have made efforts for the fruitful progress of bilateral relations. Currently, seven families from the PCK are working within the URC. I feel truly grateful that human resources exchange and ministerial cooperation have been expanded.

Historically, the Korean Church already had a tie with the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England, which eventually formed the URC.

Missionary Robert Jermain Thomas from Hanover Chapel, which belonged to the Congregational Church in Wales, was sent to Joseon by the London Missionary Society to preach the Gospel. He visited Korea to deliver the Bible, and eventually became the first martyr in Korean Protestant history.

The Revd James Scarth Gale, one of the first missionaries in Korea, made considerable efforts to translate the Bible into Korean. After his 40-year mission works and ministry in Korea, he settled in England and was active in ministry as an Elder of the

Trinity Presbyterian Church, which belonged to the Bristol Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England.

I hope this moment to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the URC could be the chance to reflect on the history with God and refresh the missional calling of the church from God in times of new challenges. We, the Korean Church, will also make every conceivable effort for further solidarity and cooperation.

May the grace and works of God be with the URC on the new journey towards another 50 years.

The Revd Bo Hyun Kim, General Secretary, The Presbyterian Church of Korea

The World Communion of Reformed Churches

As you gather to celebrate God's faithfulness in your journey for 50 years, as United Reformed Churches, we express our thankfulness to God for all the blessings that you received, and for the many blessings that you shared with the communities around you and the global body of Christ.

Jubilee is a time of celebration, evaluation and commitment for continued journey with the Lord, where we are called to bring good tidings to the afflicted, and to bind up the broken-hearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to comfort all who mourn.

It is a time where as we look to the days past and recognise the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, we are assured

that we will be continually sustained by the work of the spirit in the future days and God will turn our mourning to joy.

In the past years the world has experienced several challenges, whether it is the pandemic, or continued wars that have spread to reach Ukraine. The pain of the people dwells among us and became too close. The voice of those who mourn is heard clearly.

This renews the need for the mission of the church to provide healing to a broken world. This is what rekindles our spirit to keep the Gospel alive, and to work for justice for all, so they have abundant life.

Today as the World Communion of Reformed Churches we rejoice with you, and lift our prayers so together in strength and wisdom, we dream of and strive towards a better world.

In hope we celebrate trusting that the one who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns (Philippians 1:6).

May the Lord of Life sustain you and may you be blessed in His abundant grace.

In Communion,

The Revd Najla Kassab, President, the World Communion of Reformed Churches

We asked members of the URC to share why they belong to the URC:

I like the broad-minded and inclusive approach of the Church, its services, liturgy, music and message.

In the 1950s, I became a member in the lively Congregational Church in Birkenhead, where there were plenty of young people and an enthusiastic Minister! I was at Swanwick conferences for a few successive years which were an inspiration leading me to service on the 'mission field'!

It is great to belong to the Church family at Augustine United Reformed Church and to enjoy the inclusive, intergenerational fellowship.

Quite literally 'God only knows' and I presume I benefit the URC in some way. There is a sense of being part of a (slightly dysfunctional) family.

The URC is an inclusive Church and all are welcome. It is a worshipping, praising, caring community.

Because it enables all people, whoever they are, to be an active 'priesthood of all believers', led by the Spirit and because of its commitment to ecumenicism. In addition to the above – great sense of being part of whole URC, across the nations, as there are so many opportunities to create and sustain fellowship with others in every Synod.

I am a member because my family was part of the Congregational Church when I was a boy, so I was brought up in the faith, and called to be a Minister of Word and Sacraments when I was 8. It is great to be part of our Church because it gives me a structure for my work, gives me friends throughout the country and world, helps to resource me, and is my spiritual home.

I am a member of the URC because of my faith. What is great about being part of the URC is the support and fellowship I get there.

Free to believe, no set liturgy.

By accident! I am a Christian and the denomination is secondary. We are seeking to be ecumenical and anti-racist and I welcome this. Also, the flexibility we have is helpful.

We love justice and actively work for it. We put our love into action. We can live with disagreement and still strive by unity. We keep on reforming – in line with the Spirit's promptings. We don't do 'hierarchy' in the way other churches do, everyone is paid equally for their calling and not their role. I'm still a member (and Minister) of the URC because God wants me here and God hasn't finished with us yet.

I was taken to Billingham Congregational Church at the age of two weeks and was part of that family until we moved and started to attend Staplehurst URC – before the URC ministry.

The unity we hold despite our differences, our Love of God, our passion to share Jesus in word and deeds.

One of the greatest parts of the URC is its welcoming, diverse outward-looking faith filled community and encouragement of all ages.

I chose the URC, coming from South Africa, because of:

- the open table
- non-hierarchical structures
- engagement with social justice
- inclusion of LGBTQ people.

I became a member of the URC because of the welcome I received by the Minister and congregation when I visited. The URC enables people to be fully involved and contribute to the life of the Church.

I love the fact that we are so open to diversity in a way I have not seen in other denominations. We take seriously the journey of 'Legacy of Slavery' and for that, I am grateful.

I am a member of the URC because I was a Congregationalist. What is great about being part of the URC is its flexibility in worship and the fact that all are welcome!

We don't claim to be better than any other Church. We claim to work with all other Churches for the advancement of God's Kingdom.

It goes back to when I was about four and my parents (C of E) felt I should start Sunday School. As the parish church has no provision for children I ended up in the Congregational Church, where because of its Minister, I became a member. I became a confirmed ecumenist. The URC naturally became my home, ultimately as Clerk and Assistant Clerk of the General Assembly.

I became a member of the URC as it is the only Church where my faith has fully come alive. From where I have grown so much in confidence in the ability to share my faith and the reason I have (we all have) for worship. The love and hope offered by our saviour Jesus!

I am a member of this URC as I found it the most welcoming church I had been to, having attended other churches in the past.

I'm not a member of the URC but am really grateful for the significant and sometimes inspirational contribution made by the URC ecumenically both locally and nationally.

I love being a member of Stockton-on-Tees United Reformed Church. I enjoy welcoming people through our doors.

As a Church we decided 50 years ago to become part of the URC. As members, we can be part of the decision-making.

Ecumenicism, government, non-hierarchical ministry, *Rejoice and Sing*, contemporary prayers and liturgy, liberal theology, equality of women.

That 400 of us had the same thoughts to celebrate and worship the Lord one day last July, celebrating 50 years and hopefully longer.

After the passing of my father, aged 99, the Church gave me the comfort that I was not alone – it gives me hope for a better future.

I am a member of the URC because it is a welcoming, friendly and inclusive Church. Christ is at the centre and the preaching of the Word is very important. The URC is involved in social and political actions, often 'punching above its weight'.

Short answer: my great grandfather was a Congregational minister. Long answer: long-standing Christianity and the theological spectrum.

The principles in teaching and example of Jesus Christ are our guide. Creeds hinder rather than help our search for God. With reverence and wonder we pursue our pilgrimage. God is in our discipleship and search for truth. We rejoice in that freedom and discipline.

I've belonged to the URC for a lifetime – literally! Because at its best it's an OPEN fellowship: OPEN to people new and old with all their gifts, wants and hopes, OPEN to our Lord himself for his fresh leading and lasting each day.

To express faith, commitment and belonging. We can all play our part.

Because the URC reflects my understanding of God and even how I am called to respond, as detailed in The Statement of Nature, Faith and Order. Fellowship, challenge. Commitment to social justice, nature and structure.

Why the URC? Because from my earliest years, the Congregational Church down the road was our nearest Church. Or, to put it another way, that's where God happened to put me.

This is the home I know – the home I love and treasure.

Thankfulness for the loving support of a new URC in 1974 during my 'troubled years.' Thankfulness for the gift of a year's theological study at Westminster College, Cambridge 1979-1980. Thankfulness for encouragement and fellowship through long involvement with GEAR.

I can't draw or paint or do anything clever with computers, but my thankfulness has been for love, support, encouragement, opportunities to deepen my faith and my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, through the URC and GEAR and ecumenical partnerships. For the freedom as a minister of Word and Sacraments to create liturgy, and not be tied to any book of common prayer. A sense of usefulness to the URC and local church, even in retirement.

It's in my blood – I was brought up in the Congregational Church. Its work by consensus and the local power of the Church meeting, its breath and its caring nature, plus its ongoing vision of 'one church', all make it worth being part of. That and the great characters encountered in 27 years of URC ministry.

My family have been Congregationalists since the beginning of the 1800s. Hence, I was a member at Skipton. At University in London I went to Cong Soc and moved to Oxford for my job and then to Abingdon. The Congregational Church here closed in the 1980s and we all went to Trinity Methodist Church. That became an LEP. We took our ways to worshipping and holding democratic Church meetings with us; those are the great things about the URC.

On confession of faith I joined in Harrow in 1941 at the Congregational Church; moved to Ewell URC in Surrey, then the United Reformed Church in Dorchester. In the URC I can have direct access to God with study groups to learn Bible, good hymns and sermons, and free from stifling outside roles. The URC is open to change and serves the community.

Because I was baptised in the Fox Lane, Palmers Green Congregational Church, in 1942 and have been happy to be a member in Southbourne. Faith and Congregational Church and now in Christ Church Methodist/URC Chichester, where I enjoy worship and fellowship.

I am a member because my grandparents, my parents, sister and myself and children were all members of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Hebburn, Tyne and Wear and then became a member of the United Reformed Church. Sadly, our Church has closed but some of my friends attend St Margaret's, South Shields and the members are a very friendly congregation.

I turned to the URC when I was in need. I found being part of the URC filled me with comfort and built my faith.

Sense of being amazing friends.

I grew up in the Congregational Church and have always enjoyed the liberal and caring approach. I love *Reform* and especially Stephen Tomkins' editorials.

Hospitality – an event of welcome to all.

Having been raised in a Congregational family, when I joined aged 18 in 1949, I believed I was joining the 'World Church', even though nonconformism is in my DNA. In my working life I have worked with committed and good Catholics, Anglicans, Quakers and Muslims in the UK and abroad and respect our different faith journeys. Having worked ecumenically with our local partner Churches for 40 years, now at 91, I have been warmly welcomed with my URC-ness to attend my local Parish Church and I believe our URC founders would approve!

Contributors

Worship leaders

The Revd Dr John P Bradbury, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church.

The Revd Fiona Bennett, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, 2022-2023, and Minister at Augustine United Church, Edinburgh.

The Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, Moderator-Elect of the URC General Assembly, and Minister of Wanstead URC, Trinity Walthamstow URC, Grange Park URC and Gants Hill URC.

The Bible

The General Assembly Bible was carried into and out of the service by Simon Loveitt, a URC Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) since 1989, who works with the BaNC (Brockley and New Cross) Church-in-community project in London, the sixth project where he has served.

Communion elements

The Revd Sarah Moore is the Assistant Clerk of the URC General Assembly.

The service

The core liturgy was written by the Revd Dr Susan Durber, a URC Minister and the President of the World Council of Churches for the European Region.

Philippa Osei is the URC Youth Moderator and Heather Moore is the URC Youth Moderator-Elect.

Joe Amoah is a student training for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.

The Revd Dr David Cornick is a former Principal of Westminster College Cambridge and General Secretary of the URC and Churches Together in England, and Chair of the Council of the URC History Society.

Poppy Thorpe attends St Andrews URC, Chesterfield, is part of its Junior Church and active in its services, and is a recipient of the Lundie Memorial Award.

Victoria Turner is a PhD Candidate and Tutor in World Christianity and Ecumenism at the University of Edinburgh.

Yvonne Campbell is the General Secretary of the Congregational Federation.

The Revd Prof Dr Jooseop Keum is the General Secretary for the Council for World Mission.

The Revd John Reardon served at Horsham, St Albans, as Secretary for Church and Society, Deputy General Secretary, Moderator of the URC General Assembly and as the General Secretary of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.

The Revd Margaret Ali serves at Rectory Road and Islington.

Isaac Harvey is a disability advocate, video editor and president of an organisation called Wheels and Wheelchairs which runs accessible speed sports for wheelchair users and skaters. Isaac is involved in the URC through creating magazines, helping out with IT and reading in church since a little child.

Maria J Y Lee, former Church Related Community Worker and Ordinand at Westminster College.

Karen Campbell is the URC Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries.

Musical Director: Scott Stroman, the Anniversary Choir from across the URC and the members of the band: Miguel Gorodi, trumpet, Liam Dunachie, piano and organ, Mike Outram, guitar, Sandy Suchodolski, bass, and David Ingamells, drums.

White Light Ltd for the AV, assisted by Dan Morell,
www.media4ministry.co.uk.

British Sign Language interpreters: Lucy Dunhill and Beatrice Osborn.

Thanks

First, thank you for attending and for being part of the URC's Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration. We hope you will share what you experienced today with many others.

To all churches, members, Ministers, staff, Elders, volunteers and friends of the United Reformed Church.

To Synod Moderators and their teams.

To the staff at United Reformed Church House.

To Edwards Insurance for its continued generous support, especially David Edwards, to whom the URC is incredibly grateful:
www.edwardsinsurance.co.uk

To the Greenbelt Festival: www.greenbelt.org.uk

To those who entered the 50th Anniversary Worship Resources Competition.

To Lorraine Webb and Sharon Lloyd for additional worship resources for children and young people.

To Heather Wilkinson and the Children's and Youth Work Team for the decorations.

The Revd Tony Miles, Gerard Brooks and the events team at Methodist Central Hall Westminster.

All of the stewards and volunteers at today's service.

To the children who read the prayers for the church and the world, to the URC Children's and Youth Work Team for putting them together, and to Kevin Snyman, Matt Collins and Andy Jackson for the videos.

50th Anniversary Planning Group

Convenors: Francis Brien, Philip Brooks, Richard Church, Andy Jackson and Sam Richards, with Carole Sired, Ann-Marie Nye, Elizabeth Gray-King, John Bradbury, Nicola Furley-Smith, Peter Ball, Simon Peters, Jenny Mills, Karen Campbell and Neil Thorogood.

Sarah Houlton for proof reading and editing.

Sara Foyle, Laura Taylor and Gavin Micklethwaite for the 50th anniversary designs.

Order of Service by Elizabeth Gray-King, Andy Jackson, Sam Richards, Laura Taylor and Sara Foyle.

Thanks to everyone who wrote reflections about the URC and to those who sent in drawings and paintings on postcards. You can see many of these decorating the hall today.

Thanks to Jo Harris, Immediate Past URC Youth Moderator.

For all of the work done since early 2020 – thank you.

Open Church House

To all who contributed to the Open Church House event at United Reformed Church House, Tavistock Place, London, earlier today.

Walk to Westminster

To those who created the Walk to Westminster: Geoffrey Roper, Hannah Clark, Jenny Mills, Chris Andrews, Simon Peters, Andy Jackson and Laura Taylor.

Communications Team

Andy Jackson, Sara Foyle, Steve Tomkins, Ann-Marie Nye, Chris Andrews, Louise Ault, Hannah Clark, Catherine Kelliher, Neil Hunter, Simon Pickard, Laura Taylor and Laurence Wareing.

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Let All The Word in Every Corner Sing

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Blessèd City, Heavenly Salem

© 1851, words by John Mason Neale, music by Henry Smart,
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Gloria

Glory to God in the Highest, 2022, words and music by Scott Stroman,
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God Of The Pilgrim Way

© 2022, words by Colin Thompson, music by Ahasuerus Fritsch
(1629-1701), used with permission, The United Reformed Church

Always Trust The Star that Guides Us On The Way

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We are Marching in the Light of God

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Halle, Halle, Halle

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The Lord's My Shepherd

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Jubilee Sanctus

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Together Through The Father's Love

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Ukrainian Kyrie

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Living God your Joyful Spirit

© words by Jill Jenkins, The United Reformed Church

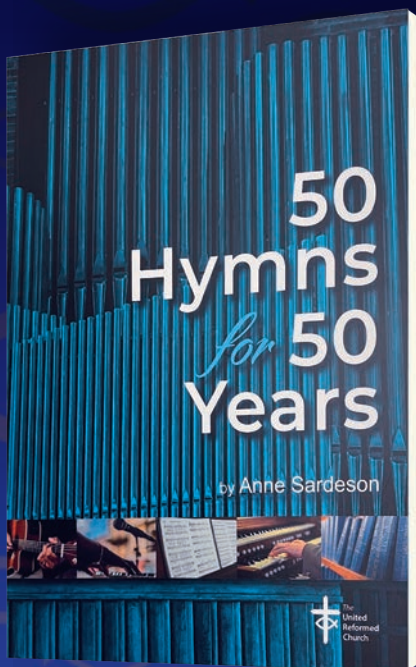
A Table For All

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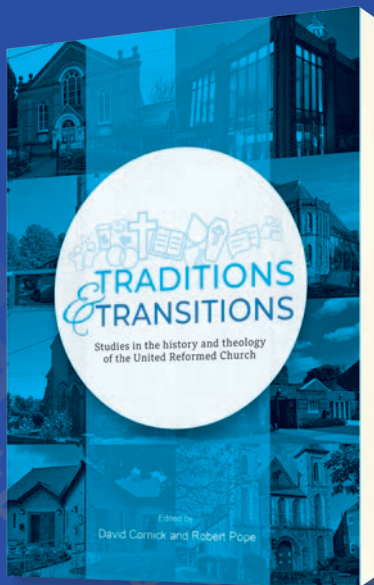


From the URC Bookshop **50 Hymns for 50 Years**

50 Hymns for 50 Years is a wonderfully readable collection of reflections looking at 50 hymns. It tells something of what's happened since 1972, and the journey of The United Reformed Church in its first 50 years.

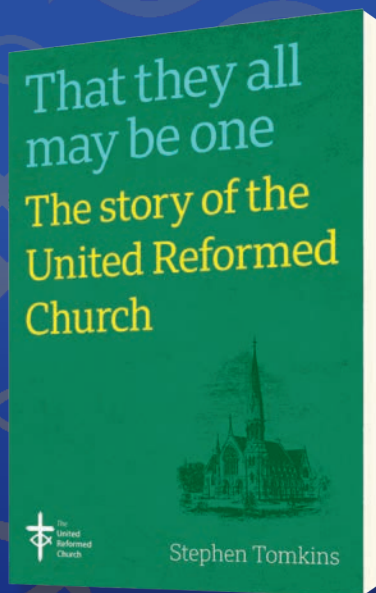
The book, by noted hymn writer and URC Minister Anne Sardeson, is meant to get you thinking about the hymns that you have come across, however long you've been singing them, and the place that music and hymns play in your life and that of the Church and the world.

www.urcshop.co.uk
or call 020 7916 8629

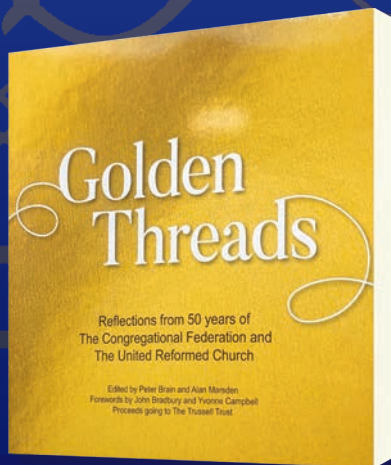


Traditions and Transitions marks an anniversary the architects of the United Reformed Church could not have imagined. They were proud that the formation of the church in October 1972 was the first union of distinct and different Protestant Churches in the UK since the Reformation. The United Reformed Church was to be a stepping stone to another place. But that did not happen, for reasons explored in this book.

To mark the URC's jubilee year, Stephen Tomkins takes us through the story of the Church from 1972 to 2022. It includes crushing disappointment as the hopes for uniting the Churches of Britain collapsed – and then creative soul-searching as the Church worked out what its mission in the world was going to be. Storms of disagreement and tides of social change threatened to overwhelm the URC, but on its side it had pioneering creativity, a passion for engaging with the world, and what the author calls 'a genius for listening'.



Golden Threads – Reflections from 50 years of The Congregational Federation and The United Reformed Church is a 184-page book, full of reflections from ministers and others from the Congregational Federation and the United Reformed Church, to mark the 50th anniversaries of both denominations.



www.urcshop.co.uk/50
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Did you hear the one about the church...

- filled with aid for Ukrainian refugees
- where people go to get chainsaws repaired?
- that started from scratch and has grown ever since?
- with a scarecrow in the pulpit?
- that won gold for going green?
- that ate sausages on Ash Wednesday?
- that was 'the best afternoon I've had'?

There's so much happening in our churches. And it's all in Reform.

www.reform-magazine.co.uk

FIFTY YEARS YOUNG.

Congratulations to our friends at the URC on your 50th anniversary. We loved celebrating with you at last year's Greenbelt Festival.

As well as sharing a longstanding partnership, overlapping values, and even an office building, we also share in this big milestone together.

Because this year we'll be celebrating our 50th edition of the festival – half a century of artistry, activism and belief.

We'd love you all to be there with us. Whether it's your first time, your 15th, or your 50th, you can expect a warm welcome.



greenbelt.org.uk/buy-tickets