

News Update

November 2025



Keeping you informed with the latest news from around the URC

Don't target refugees, say Church leaders



The United Reformed Church joined some of the UK's biggest charities in writing to the Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood to express deep concern at the government's direction on immigration.

The open letter, signed by Catriona Wheeler, URC General Assembly Moderator, and published in *The Guardian*, was coordinated by Refugee Action and signed by more than 100 organisations. It urged Ms Mahmood to "turn the tide, and to end the scapegoating of migrants and performative policies that only cause harm".

The signatories said that if the government wants to deliver growth and renew Britain, "this requires tackling issues such as growing extreme inequality, underfunded councils, lack of investment in quality housing, a crumbling NHS, the climate emergency and polluted waters. Targeting refugees will do nothing to tackle these structural issues or improve people's lives." [Read the letter in full.](#)

Prayers and reflection follow synagogue attack

Faith leaders in Greater Manchester, including the Moderator of the URC North Western Synod, the Revd Clare Downing, declared their solidarity with the local Jewish community following the attack on the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue on 2 October. In the statement, the community faith leaders said they were praying for the wide Jewish community, who were “understandably in shock”. The attack, in Crumpsall, Manchester, took place on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year.



Clare also invited prayer “for those of all faiths and none, that all may continue to work for peace and community cohesion across the city and beyond”. In the latest edition of *Reform* magazine, Lawrence Heath-Moore writes about “the politics of division” that remained on display at the vigil that followed the attack, but says there was also evidence of bonds and revulsion of violence that trumped “religious, political and ideological divisions”.

Ely Cathedral appoints URC canon



The Revd Lythan Nevard, Moderator of the United Reformed Church Eastern Synod, has been appointed as the only Ecumenical Canon of Ely Cathedral. Joining sixteen other Anglican clergy, Lythan will be installed in the role at a service at the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity of Ely during Evensong on 23 November. [Learn more.](#)

New Moderator for North Western



The Revd Mike Thomason has been nominated as the next Moderator of the North Western Synod. Mike has served several churches across the country, and as an army chaplain. Subject to confirmation by the URC's Assembly Executive, Mike will return to the synod over 20 years after having his first pastorate there. [Learn more.](#)

yourchurch celebrates first official wedding



Dr Diana Paulding-Sturdy and her new husband Dr James Sturdy were married through **yourchurch**, the URC's digital congregation, on 6 September.

Although other members of **yourchurch** have married in a similar way, this was the first wedding since **yourchurch** was recognised as a local congregation by General Assembly in 2023. The **yourchurch** service, led by the Revd Philip Brooks, who is also a member of the congregation, was held at Fenstanton URC in Cambridgeshire, with a link to those gathered online.

Diana said: "It was never in question that I would get married through **yourchurch**, my home church," said Diana who has been a member of **yourchurch** since 2020 and serves as an Elder. "For me my home church is about the people and the style of worship, not a building." [Learn more](#).

(Photo credit: Jack Matthew Photography)

Safeguarding wisdom

The Offices of General Assembly safeguarding team ran its third bi-annual Symposium in October. There was an emphasis on the need to act with wisdom when we navigate safeguarding in the church.

The event brought together more than 150 attendees from synods, local churches, and guests from outside of the denomination. Information was shared on changes within safeguarding, including the newly updated training framework, and a keynote speaker from Restored UK led a thought-provoking session on domestic abuse in church settings. One participant said the event "shows that safeguarding is being taken seriously". He added: "The domestic abuse session was enlightening. I felt encouraged that our denomination is working to help in these areas."

The symposium will be available on the [URC website](#) shortly.

New WCRC president



The Revd Dr Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ in the US, has been elected as the next president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The current president, the Revd Najla Kassab, called the election of a woman a mark of “our seriousness regarding empowering women in leadership”. The URC’s Victoria Turner was elected to the Executive Committee.

URC represented in Thailand



Four URC members travelled to Chiang Mai, Thailand, for the General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in October. The Revd Dr Michael Jagassar presented a call to member Churches in response to global challenges. Dr Victoria Turner presented an exploration of the stories we tell ourselves in relation to privilege and oppression. And the Revds Alex and Jo Clare-Young served on the worship committee. [Read more.](#)

Download or print News Update

A downloadable version of News Update, formatted for print, and for churches to copy and paste into church newsletters or magazines will be available within a week of this edition being published. [Download your printable version of News Update.](#)

Share your good news

If you have a good news story that can inspire, raise hope or show God's work in action then please let URC Communications know. We would love to help share your news across the denomination and in local news outlets. [Email the URC Press Office](#) or call 07976 753 950.

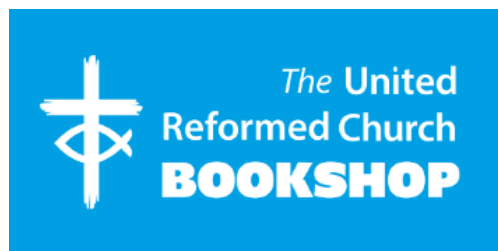
This month in *Reform* magazine



The Green Party's Carla Denyer MP is all fired up in her interview for the latest issue of *Reform*. And she says politicians can make a difference if they have a passion they want to follow.

Elsewhere, Lindsey Brown welcomes the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Lawrence Heath-Moore has sobering reflections on the vigil that followed the Heaton Park synagogue attack, and there's "church for non-believers" in Margate.

Plus, editor Steve Tomkins asks, What's in a name? [Read more about Issue 7/2025 of Reform magazine](#) and [subscribe here](#).



There's a huge range of Christmas gifts available from the URC Bookshop's easy-to-use website: www.urcshop.co.uk/christmas or by calling **020 7916 8629**.



Wooden nativity set from Denmark. 10cm x 18.5cm, with stable shaped box. Made from FSC wood from managed forests. Each figure is painted on both sides. Contains small parts. £5.99 + p&p. [View the range.](#)



Silicone baking mould in a Christmas tree shape with a snowflake, tree, gingerbread person, stocking, present and Father Christmas shapes. From Christmas cakes to Messy Church, a flexible Christmas friend. £5.99 + p&p. [View the range.](#)



Nativity Jigsaw. Thirteen wooden pieces, complete with an outer stable housing with the star of Bethlehem shining down on the scene. This two-in-one gift, can be used as a Nativity scene as well as a jigsaw. £4.99 – p&p + VAT. [View the range.](#)



Nativity scene craft kit. Pre-cut felt shapes to be sewn together with wool and decorated. Wool, decorations, scissors and stuffing all included, plus instructions. £5.99 – p&p + VAT. [View the range.](#)

Synod news

Southern



Children from Reigate Park Church's junior church visited Southwark Cathedral to see their own work on display. The Peace Doves installation at Southwark Cathedral by sculptor Peter Walker featured thousands of paper doves carrying messages of peace, hope and love. The children had created their own peace doves in church and were delighted to discover their prayers among those on display as part of the stunning collective artwork.

Yorkshire



Saltaire URC was at the heart of this year's Saltaire Festival, hosting the Aire Valley Arts exhibition. On sale were copies of the church's new illustrated history, written by Dr Simon Ross Valentine, a Methodist Local Preacher and an expert on Sir Titus Salt. Salt was a wool manufacturer who built Saltaire Village for his workers. Simon gifted the guide to the congregation and is now a regular preacher in their pulpit.

(Photo credit: National Churches Trust)

National Synod of Wales



Bug Hotels are open for business thanks to members of Castle Street URC, Abergavenny. A workshop run at Bwlch Village Hall allowed members to custom-design pre-prepared outer frames, filling them with cones, sticks, slate and bamboo. Complete with waterproof roofing, the "five-star hotels" are in the vicinity of the church.

East Midlands



West Derbyshire URC in Wirksworth is campaigning to make Wirksworth a Fairtrade Town. During Fairtrade Week, members joined with other churches on a Fairtrade stall at the local farmers' market. Visitors signed a petition asking for a better deal for tea workers, and a new leaflet featured local traders selling fairly trade goods. More in the 2025/7 *Reform*.

What's On

Gospel women

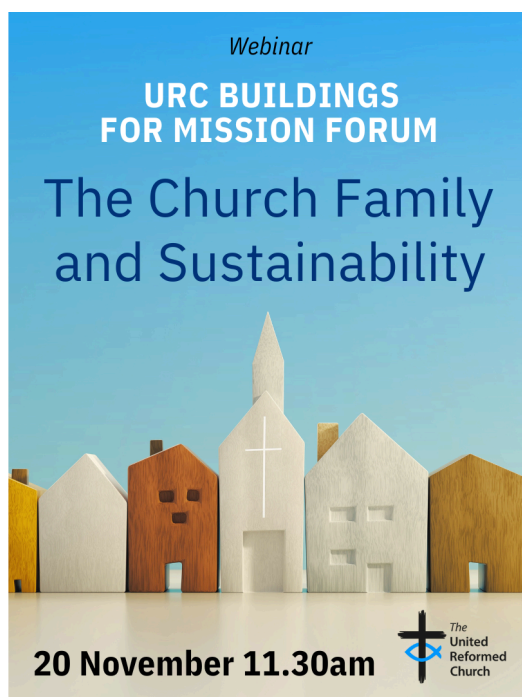


'Preaching the Women of the Gospels' is an online workshop led by the Revd Liz Shercliff, tutor at Luther King Centre, Manchester. **Monday 17 November**, 6.30-9pm via Zoom.

Re-visit Gospel stories of women and ask how we can preach about them, and why it matters.

Tickets: general, £12; ministry student, £10. Booking closes 13 November 2025. [Further details and booking links](#).

Buildings for mission



Thursday 20 November, 11.30am – an online discussion about “the Church Family and Sustainability”. Learn how the resolutions taken at Extraordinary General Assembly will impact the use of our churches’ buildings for mission, and hear from experts Cliff and Sacha on sustainability for our church families. There will be time for exchanging ideas and sharing experiences. [Register for the webinar here.](#)

20-40s gathering



Aged between 20 and 40? You're invited to the URC's second 20s–40s gathering, on **13 December**, 9am-6pm at Westminster College, Cambridge. The free event offers a day of faith, friendship, food and fresh perspectives. Including fresh insights on St Paul in a Bible study, reflection on what it means to be part of the URC, social time and worship. Why not make a weekend of it? Arrive on 12 December for free accommodation at the college, with an optional evening meal at 6pm. [Book here.](#)

JPIT on Iona





JPIT's Simeon Mitchell and Steve Tinning will lead a residential programme at Iona Abbey, **17-23 October, 2026**. The theme will be, 'Politics, Power and Protest'. This will be an opportunity to spend six days on Iona, living in community, exploring the island and reflecting on faith and politics. Bookings are now open. [Find out more here](#).

Shine your light



Shine Your Light is an initiative to help churches to get out of their buildings to shine the light of Jesus in the communities they serve. Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to share our joy, peace, hope and connection when those around us are looking for light in the darkness. Arrange an activity on the weekend of **12-14 December**, register it with [Shine Your Light](#), and help to reach two million people with the Good News this Christmas. There are lots of ideas for [Advent and Christmas activities here](#).

Calling children's workers





Think children are important? Want to help them be heard more in church life? The URC Children's Workers Together conference is for you. **28-30 November** in Northampton. Godly Play's Peter Privett will be the main speaker in a weekend all about participation. For more information and to book your place, email children.youth@urc.org.uk

Recruitment

URC vacancies and beyond

Regional Children's Work Specialist

Based: URC Eastern Synod

Contract: Full time, 35 hours pw (flexible, including some evenings and weekends)

Salary: £38,000 – £43,000 pa depending on experience

Closing date for applications: 17 November

Repairs and Maintenance Officer

Based: London

Contract: Permanent, 28 hours per week

Salary: £37,185 (FTE)

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Friday 7 November

Interview date: Wednesday 19 November

Children's Advocates

Two Children's Advocates are being sought to join the Children's and Youth Programme Enabling Group on a volunteer basis. [Role description](#) and [person specification](#) are available. Please share expressions of interest to children.youth@urc.org.uk by 9 November

Moderator – Southern Synod

Full time, seven-year termed appointment on a URC Minister's stipend

Nomination Closing Date: Sunday 23 November

Closing date for applications: Sunday 18 January

Interview date: Friday 6 March 2026

Treasurer – The Milton Mount Foundation

The Milton Mount Foundation supports the cost of education of children of ministers of the URC and other Congregational organisations. A treasurer is being sought to oversee the financial matters of the charity and to report to the Board of trustees about the financial health of the organisation.

Closing date for applications: 30 November

More information and application form: email the Secretary at miltonmountfoundation@gmail.com



If you no longer wish to receive News Update, please use the link below to unsubscribe.

UNSUBSCRIBE

The United Reformed Church
Church House, 86 Tavistock Place
London, WC1H 9RT
Tel: 020 7916 2020
Email: urc@urc.org.uk

The United Reformed Church was created by church unions in 1972, 1981 and 2000, facilitated by Acts of Parliament passed in each of those years. It has a number of associated bodies: The United Reformed Church Trust (URC Trust) is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (Registered Number: 135934); it is also a registered charity (Registration Number: 1133373). The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pensions Trust Ltd is a limited company registered in England & Wales (Registered Number: 2821011). The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd. is a registered Community Benefit Society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (Number 15986R). The Registered Office for all the aforementioned bodies is Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT.