



2026/2027

Commitment
for **Life**

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

MAGAZINE

WORLD JUSTICE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

EXCLUSIVE

**MEET GORDON
COWANS**

**INSPIRING
STORIES**

**ZIMBABWE
ISRAEL / PALESTINE
BANGLADESH**

UPDATES

**FAIRTRADE
EMERGENCY APPEALS
GREAT NORTH PILGRIMAGE**



Kevin's Introduction

Dear Commitment for Life Friends

We hope you like the new-look magazine! We're entering into an incredibly rich and exciting stage in the Commitment for Life journey. We are grateful for your ongoing support-thank you for taking risks for the sake of the Kingdom, and sharing that journey with us!

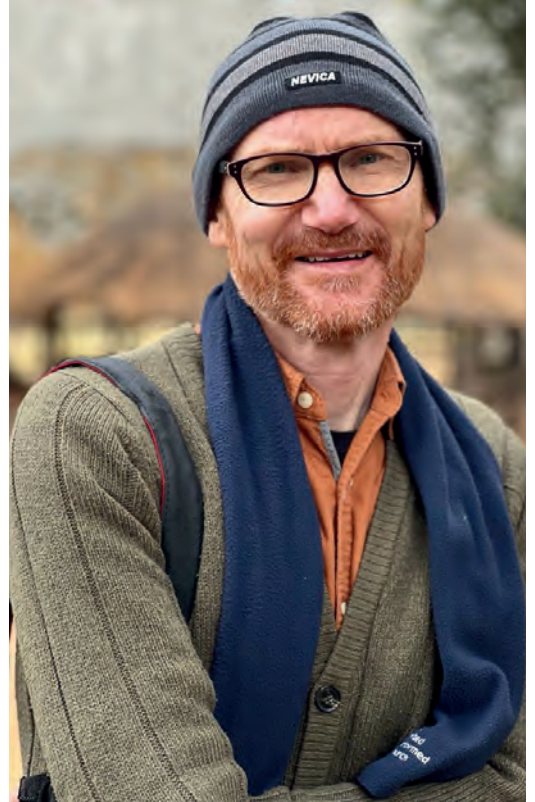
Commitment for Life has taken very seriously the URC's work on the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and the question of reparations. Reparations are, in reality, quite impossible to achieve. But that does not mean we cannot model mutuality, generosity and care. This is what we hope to do over the next four or so years in Jamaica.

In this edition of our annual magazine, you'll meet the irrepressible Revd Gordon Cowans who is doing so much to deepen our URC bonds with Jamaica. You'll read about our work with Christian and Global Justice Now, especially in our focus regions. Please do use these stories in your prayers, sermons, and groups.

With respect and love

Kevin Snyman
Suzanne Pearson
the CFL Reference Group

Search 'Commitment for Life United Reformed Church'



BIBLE STUDY



WISE WORDS

REVD JENNY MILLS

Proverbs 31:10-31

When asked to offer this reflection on Wise Words, I wanted to offer something that is perhaps little less familiar. I have never heard a Bible Study on this text.

This text comes at the end of the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a wondrous book, full of wisdom, weird sayings, instructions, and sage advice. 'Proverbs is the third great poetic book that stands at the beginning of the third canon (in the Bible) the Writings*'. It is a collection of proverbs and sayings from different contexts and authors, written in the wisdom tradition. Its context is not agreed on, but it was likely: for family nurture familiarising children with a certain worldview by contextualising folk sayings; in schools where teaching was more formalised; or the royal court where sons of the politically well connected were taught. The section we are looking at is an acrostic poem following the sequence of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. It has been cited as the ABC of a good woman!



ABC OF A GOOD WOMAN!

I have chosen this as it is both wise words and shows someone using wise words! Before I begin may I make some warning notes about this text. As with all Bible texts nothing is simple and it cannot be taken out of context, lifted and applied, but needs to be reflected on, considered, and discussed, to enable God's word to us to be able to be heard.

As we read it, let us be reminded that a man wrote it, that this could be seen to play into all the negative stereotyping of women, and let us be cautious in taking this as saying how this woman lives is the ideal for all women! Warning over, let us dive in!

BIBLE STUDY CONTINUED...

Proverbs 31:10-31



In chapters 1-9 and in 31:10 onwards we hear of wisdom personified as a woman and we hear of the wise woman and the woman of folly. These personifications are used for instruction.

As often happens in the Bible, there are two extremes for comparison and it is clear that the wise woman is the sort of woman who would be considered 'better' for those who are being taught. She would be what women would be encouraged to aim to become and for men to marry.



When I read this text, each time I get a different response. From admiration, to exhaustion, to a sense of satisfaction that she is so well appreciated, to sadness that a woman's worth is in what she does and what value she has for the man whom she marries. And it reminds me of the depth, challenge, wisdom, learning, and emotion that is in every text.

When we face texts in the Bible we are facing writings that can be taken at many levels, that were written for one society or group and are now being considered by another centuries later, that had purpose when written and when reading now we cannot really be sure of the exact purpose, and that have many and varied meanings and things to teach, inspire, or challenge us! This Wise Woman reading contains wise words about being prudent, hardworking, generous, practical, creative, faithful to God. But we also hear her speaking with wisdom, teaching others carefully, and receiving praise for what she does.

What does she have to teach us?

I wonder how careful we are when we describe someone? Do we prefer to use words that belittle or build up? How do we offer words of advice or teaching? Are we gentle and do we choose our words carefully to help those we support? And do we judge on appearance? Do we value more highly people who appear busy and productive? What are our views of those who appear lazy and idle- do we go beyond the immediate to understand what might really be going on? Do we value all people as God shows us to do and as God does of us?

Reflection Time

Maybe spend some time reflecting on this Wise Woman and your response to the reading and why it engenders the response it does. What is God saying to you through this and what is being asked of you because of it?

FOR THE CHILDREN!

Greta Says

'Be wise in your words and actions'



Jesus says: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'
(Matthew 22:39)

'Do to others what you would have them to do
you'. (Matthew 7:12)

Who do you think is *YOUR* neighbour?



Micah 6 verse 8b says: 'What does the
Lord require of you, but to do Justice,
love kindness, and walk humbly with your
God'.

In the Bible Jesus says that everyone is our
neighbour, not just those people who live near
us or who are our friends. We are to treat
everyone fairly, by using kind words and treat
others with the same respect and care that
we would want them to treat us.



We can do this by showing love as we
help those who are hurting and stand
up to others even if it is difficult.
We are to forgive others and not hold
on to grudges against people or
groups of people different from us
but treat everyone equally and fairly.



Some practical ways in which you can help others:

At School include making friends with those who are lonely, or stick up for someone who is being teased, or share your toys.

At Home help your siblings, obey your parents and say sorry when you have done something wrong.

In Daily Life be kind to someone who looks or acts differently from you. Pray for the children in regions that Commitment for Life support.



Prayer Activity

You will need:

- Crayons or markers
- Glue
- Construction paper or card
- stickers for decoration

What to do:

- Draw round your hand and cut it out.
- Cut out a heart shape, larger than the hand, and glue the hand onto the heart shape.
- Write round it prayers in how you can help and love others.
- Add extra decoration such as stickers etc



Partner Region Updates

Bangladesh



Photo by Christian Aid

Prayer for Bangladesh

Loving God,
We pray for the Manta
community in Barisal:
for children learning in
safety, for families
building secure
livelihoods, and for all
who are gaining dignity
and recognition.

Bless the work of AVAS,
and all who seek justice
and inclusion. Open our
hearts to respond with
compassion and
generosity.

Amen.

From invisible to included

Transforming life for Manta families

For generations, the Manta community in Barisal, Bangladesh, have lived on water—floating from place to place, unseen and often forgotten.

Life on the river has meant more than movement. It has meant exclusion. Children grew up on boats without access to education, often tied with ropes to keep them safe from falling into the water. Families depended entirely on unpredictable fishing incomes, vulnerable to storms, climate shocks, and seasonal bans. Without official identity documents, many were unable to access even the most basic public services. For many, it felt like their lives did not matter.

But change is happening. With support from Commitment for Life, working alongside local partner AVAS, 200 Manta families have begun a powerful journey—from isolation to inclusion.



Photo by Christian Aid

cont... At the same time, new opportunities are opening up. Through skills training and small business support, families are no longer reliant on fishing alone. Women and men are learning net weaving, small trade, and other income-generating activities—giving them stability even when fishing is not possible. “Before, we only knew fishing,” one community member explains. “Now we can run our families in different ways. We feel capable.”

Perhaps most transformative of all, families are gaining official recognition. With support to access national ID cards and birth registrations, many Manta people are, for the first time, recognised as citizens. This simple but powerful shift opens the door to education, healthcare, and government support—restoring not just access, but dignity.

As one elder reflects: “Our lives had no value; people used to drive us away. But today, our grandchildren go to school with bags on their shoulders. We have been given not just opportunities, but dignity.”

Safe spaces for children have been created—places where they can learn, play, and simply be children. For the first time, many are holding pencils, writing their names, and discovering a world beyond the river.

“Before, I couldn’t do anything except say my name,” shares one young girl.

“Now I can write it. I can read books. I am no longer tied to the boat.”

Families are also safer. With life jackets, solar lights, and training in disaster preparedness, daily life on the water is no longer defined by constant fear...

“Before, I couldn’t do anything except say my name...”

“Now I can write it. I can read books. I am no longer tied to the boat.”

This is the impact of Commitment for Life in support of Christian Aid. We work with communities to address not just immediate needs, but the deeper causes of poverty and exclusion: from safety to education; from livelihoods to identity, and from invisibility to inclusion.

But there are many more families still waiting for this chance.

You can help make it possible

Your support can help extend this life-changing work, ensuring that more children can learn, more families can earn, and more communities can claim their place in society.

Together, we can help turn the tide. Thank you for your continued support of our valuable Commitment for Life partners.



Partner Region Updates

Israel and Palestine



Photo by Christian Aid

Prayer for Israel and Palestine

Loving God, we pray for all children whose lives have been changed by conflict and displacement.

Surround them with safety, comfort, and care. Remove the trauma of war from them so they can hope and dream again.

Bless the teachers, families, and organisations such as IOCC who support these children. Grant them wisdom, strength, and compassion as they help children face a future with courage and hope.
Amen

From Fear to Hope Sara's story

Eight-year-old Sara (not her real name) lived in a loving, caring home, and where she felt safe and would walk to school in Deir al-Balah with simple hopes for the future. However, everything changed when the conflict in Gaza became worse. For first time Sara had to leave home. Being displaced did not only mean moving to a new place, but it also brought into her life fear, worry, and sadness.

When Sara returned to school, the effects of the war were clear. She had once dreamed of becoming a pharmacist, but now she found it hard to focus. She began to fall behind in reading and writing, and the stress around her made learning even more difficult. She started to lose confidence and became withdrawn.

Things began to improve when Sara joined a school supported by the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) program. There, she received the support she needed. Special classes helped her strengthen her reading and writing skills. Psychosocial support gave her a safe space to cope with the fear and stress caused by the war.



Photo by Christian Aid

Little by little, Sara began to change. In the caring environment of the school, her anxiety eased and her interest in learning returned. She became more confident and started taking part in class again. Over time, she also became a positive example for other children. Sara's progress also brought hope to her family. Her mother was deeply thankful for the support Sara received from IOCC and said, "It is wonderful that you are here. You are the reason for my child's happiness."

Today, Sara is stronger and more hopeful. The war disrupted her life, but it did not take away her future. With renewed confidence and stronger learning skills, her dream of becoming a pharmacist once again feels possible.

Sara's story shows that, even in very difficult times, the right support can help a child feel safe, learn again, and look towards the future with hope.

***"It is wonderful that you are here.
You are the reason for my child's
happiness."***

You have helped to make it possible

Thank you for your continued support. Together we can help change children's lives ensuring that more children can learn to overcome their fears and anxieties brought on by war, and to live in hope for a positive future.

Photo by Christian Aid





Partner Region Updates Zimbabwe



Photo by Christian Aid

Prayer for Zimbabwe

Loving God, thank you
for Tsitsi's courage and
hope.

We pray for all families
facing hunger and
hardship.

Bless the work of
WESRP and Christian
Aid.

Help us to share
generously, so more
people may find dignity,
security, and hope for
the future.

Amen.

From Survival to Stability Tsitsi's story

For years, Tsitsi Chisindi's life was defined by survival

A single mother of four in Mutanga Village, Zimbabwe, Tsitsi carried the full weight of providing for her family after becoming the sole breadwinner in 2012. Each day was a struggle—her small plot of land barely produced enough to feed her children, let alone pay school fees. To make ends meet, she worked long hours in other people's fields, earning just enough to get by. The future felt uncertain. Hunger was a constant threat. But Tsitsi refused to give up.

Everything began to change when she joined a programme supported by Christian Aid. Through the Women's Economic Strengthening for Resilience Project (WESRP), Tsitsi received training, tools, and support that would transform not just her farm, but her entire outlook on life.



Photos by Christian Aid

“Before, I struggled to feed my children and had to work in other people’s fields,” Tsitsi says. “Now, I grow my own crops, my children go to school, and I have built my own house. I am proud of what I have achieved.”

Tsitsi’s journey is more than a personal success. It is proof of what happens when women are given the opportunity to thrive. With the right support, she has moved from dependency to independence, from uncertainty to planning, and from survival to stability.

This is the impact of our local Commitment for Life partners through Christian Aid. we are working alongside local communities to address the causes of poverty and build lasting resilience.

Needless to say there are many more women like Tsitsi. they are working hard and full of potential, yet still facing almost impossible odds.

Tsitsi has learned new farming techniques. She has gained skills in financial management. She began to see her work not just as mere survival, but as a business.

With this support, Tsitsi expanded her farming from a tiny 0.01 hectares to a full hectare of diverse crops. Today, her fields are filled with sugar beans, rapoko, cucumbers, maize, and groundnuts—crops that not only feed her family but generate a steady income.

For the first time in years, her household is food secure. Her children are back in school, with hope for their futures restored, and most remarkably, Tsitsi has built her own home, which is a powerful symbol of stability, dignity, and progress.

“Before, I struggled to feed my children and had to work in other people’s fields.”

You have helped to change everything

Your support has provided the training, resources, and opportunities that empower women to transform their futures, and the future of their families.

Together, we can continue to turn survival into stability, and hope into lasting change.



Global Justice Now Update



Prayer for Global Justice Now

Creator God,
Give us courage to
speak out, organise,
and act for climate
justice. Strengthen all
who challenge
corporate greed and
work for a fairer,
greener world. May our
campaigning be
hopeful, persistent, and
rooted in care for
people and planet.
Amen.

UK sued for taking climate action!

In 2024, the people of Cumbria saw a huge victory in their fight against fossil fuels. Campaigners at Friends of the Earth and South Lakes Action on Climate Change took legal action against West Cumbria Mining – and won. The High Court ruled that the decision to grant planning permission to West Cumbria Mining’s proposed coal mine in Whitehaven was unlawful on the basis of its climate impacts.

In 2025, West Cumbria Mining officially withdrew its planning application. It didn’t appeal the High Court’s decision. But as it turned out, this was only one battle won. West Cumbria Mining had a secret weapon. Its hedge fund investors in Singapore are suing the UK for compensation in a secret corporate court. They can do so using Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions in a 1975 treaty between the UK and Singapore.

The struggle to end corporate court systems

Corporate courts have been used globally to challenge everything from increases to the minimum wage to health legislation for plain packaging cigarettes to windfall taxes. Over £74 billion in public money has been awarded to corporations through ISDS to date worldwide. In the UK, we've also been hit by a second case, this time raised by one of the richest individuals in the world. Russian oligarch Mikhail Fridman is using corporate courts to sue the UK, after the billionaire was sanctioned in 2022 due to his ties to the Russian regime amid its invasion of Ukraine.

Now is the time for the UK to take seriously the grave threat corporate courts pose. Following sustained campaigning, the previous Conservative government withdrew from the most litigated ISDS agreement, the Energy Charter Treaty, citing its risks to net zero. Yet the UK's approach has been inconsistent. Our current government is pushing to include new ISDS provisions in negotiations for deals with India and the Gulf states, opening more doors for these costly claims to punish our climate action.

Corporate courts have long let British corporations wreak havoc around the world, and now the UK is tasting its own medicine. For communities here and overseas, we need to push the government to scrap corporate courts across the board. We've won before, and we will do it again. We can't give corporate greed carte blanche to attack the steps we're taking towards a fairer, greener future. Our current government is pushing to include new ISDS provisions in negotiations for deals with India and the Gulf states, opening more doors for these costly claims to punish our climate action.

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Join our partner Global Justice Now's struggle against corporate courts!
Take action at <https://act.globaljustice.org.uk/isds>

INTERVIEW

REVD GORDAN COWANS



Tell us about yourself

I'm Gordon Cowans, an ordained minister and former moderator of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI). I've been involved with church from early childhood in the 1960's. Trained in education, I headed Knox College, Knox Community College, and church institutions. I "retired" in 2018.

I reflect with much gratitude on the fact that my early decision in teen years to follow Christ has shaped and guided the trajectory of an engaging life. It is my understanding that my Christian faith sustains all of life. Though retired from professional engagement, I have no doubt that the sustaining presence of Christ is at the heart of all our current labors.

What is CRAF?

CRAF is the Churches' Reparations Action Forum (CRAF) established in Jamaica. It is a vital voice within and among the churches of the region. We focus on the just cause of reparations for descendants of the Transatlantic trade in and enslavement of African peoples. This 'trade' lasted for centuries.

CRAF is an ecumenical body. It draws upon a wide range of denominational inputs with membership including clergy and laity. Its aim is to sensitize the Jamaican communities and society as to the truths of the complicity of some Christians, churches and para-church organizations in the historic trauma and persisting legacies.

CRAF positions itself as a viable partner of churches like the URC in Britain and other parts of Europe who are themselves engaged in the sensitive and courageous reckoning with those truths which affected their history and which continues in some ways to affect their life and witness.

How does CRAF make a difference?

CRAF has sought to represent the realities of the most vulnerable in these post-colonial societies, engaging brothers and sisters of faith across the Atlantic towards genuine acts of reparations. Among the greatest highlights of my involvement in CRAF is the reception it received in the UK in 2023 and since.

Significant discussions initiated then continue to deepen relationships, like building the relationship with Commitment for Life.

That is because very dear to our hearts is the continuing and deepening relationship with the URC. CRAF is impressed by your sincerity and courage in unearthing truths which has propelled you into taking a lead among British denominations in this search for practical ways of responding to its genuine urge to promote reparatory justice. Such a valued partnership can only lead to a deepened communion among Christians across the Atlantic.

Often, genuine acts of commitment may appear insignificant though by God's power they effect genuine transformation. I certainly would like to encourage all Synods, congregations and individual Christians who have engaged and continue to engage in these acts towards the uplift of the lives of others (though sometimes geographically far away) not to grow weary. The impact is greater than you may even perceive.

May God continue to do His will in and through you.

From 2027, Commitment for Life is joining with the UCJCI and CRAF in a mutual partnership of care to promote justice and reparations in the Caribbean.



Do it Fair Campaign

Fair on the Planet

This summer, Fairtrade is inviting supporters to be part of the next chapter.

The tea, coffee, chocolate and bananas are under growing threat from climate change. Farmers who grow these products find their livelihoods threatened because of the unpredictable weather. Those who have done the least to cause the crisis are the most affected. This is a clear issue of justice.

Naftaly Kinyua Wachira is a 27-year-old coffee farmer and university student in Kenya. He has seen the changes first-hand. "The seasons are no longer predictable. It's becoming much harder to plan and care for our crops."

At Fairtrade, we believe a fairer future is possible – one where businesses take responsibility for people and the planet, and farmers are supported to thrive.

The UK government is currently reviewing its approach to responsible business – an opportunity to close gaps in the law and prevent harm before it happens, not after. Farmers and workers can't afford for this moment to be missed.

Help us call for business that is fair to people and the planet. Too often, farmers and workers are undercut by companies that fail to pay fair wages, protect workers, and safeguard the environment.

Together, we can change this. You can stand in solidarity with farmers like Naftaly by adding your voice.

Find out more and sign the petition at
fairtrade.org.uk/fairontheplanet

Fairtrade Fortnight - 21 Sept to 4 Oct 2026



photo: Fairtrade



Time to Act

Commitment for Life joins with churches and charities calling on the UK government to help end the illegal occupation of Palestine

More than a dozen cross-denominational organisations in England, Scotland and Wales have launched the **Time to Act** campaign to ask the UK Government to demonstrate integrity with respect to The Holy Land.

Supporters across the UK to lobby MPs calling for a just peace for all who call the Holy Land home. Demands include suspending UK arms sales to Israel; banning trade and investment in illegal Israeli settlements; suspending UK-Israel Trade & Partnership Agreement until the illegal occupation ends; imposing wide-ranging sanctions; and accountability for war crimes.

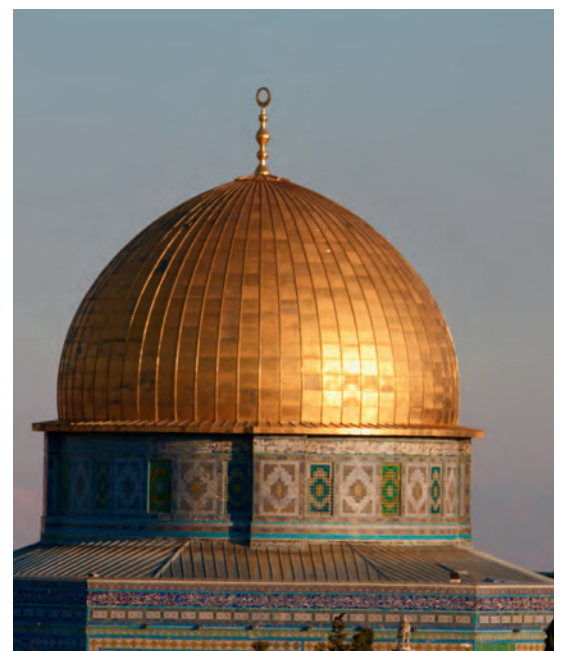
Theologian and writer Revd Dr Munther Isaac is supporting the movement. "We need churches in the UK to speak up because we are one body. Solidarity is not optional; it is part of our calling as followers of Christ.

"There is also a particular responsibility. Given Britain's historical role, both through its colonial legacy and its support for Zionism, and given the ways Christian theology has at times been used to justify injustice, churches in the UK have a special moral obligation to speak with clarity and courage.

"Moreover, the United Kingdom remains one of Israel's closest allies. This gives churches in the UK opportunities and influence that we in Palestine often do not possess.

"That is why we need the church in the UK to speak - with unity, moral clarity, and the courage to stand on the side of truth, justice, and human dignity."

**For more information visit
<https://justpeacecoalition.com>**



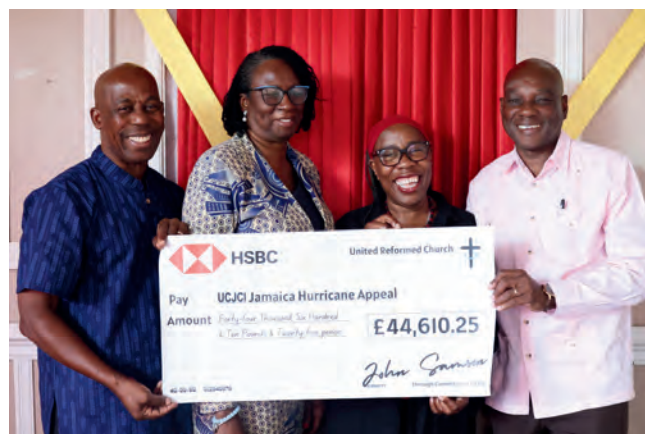
CFL Emergency Appeals Update

Commitment for Life functions best through its long-term, regional partnerships. But when disasters strike, it's right to share generously through emergency relief.

Commitment for Life has worked with partners to assist with a number of disaster relief appeals. We'd like to report on how those have been going.

Ukraine /Transcarpathia Appeal	£ 3,847
Jamaica Hurricane Appeal	£ 52,494
First Gaza Appeal	£ 39,418
Middle East Justice Appeal	£ 10,383

Thank you for your generosity!!



Commitment
for **Life**



Methodist
relief and
development

DIARY DATE
ALERT!

Great North Pilgrimage of Justice

Live in the north? Diarise today!

DATE: 17th to 20th June 2027

LOCATION: Starting at Keld URC finishing on Holy Island

HOW: This will be walked in easy stages and suitable for all abilities

ORGANISED BY: Commitment for Life &
Northern Synod

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT: commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk



Thank you for your support.



**For information about Commitment for Life,
email commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk
visit bit.ly/URCFL or phone 020 7916 8638**



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