

## A Synod Choir for Michael Hopkins's induction

We are trying to gather a choir of people from around the Synod to sing at Michael's induction as our Moderator on Saturday 23 March 2024 in Basingstoke. There will not be auditions, and you don't need to sing in a choir at the moment. There will be one rehearsal at Basingstoke on the morning of the induction, and there may be a brief rehearsal or two via zoom if that is deemed helpful.

If you would like to offer to join the choir, please contact the Revd Michael Hodgson by email on [michaelgwenidog@gmail.com](mailto:michaelgwenidog@gmail.com) with your name, phone number, email address, which part you sing, and a brief note of any relevant experience.

If you like to sing, but don't have a church choir in your church, this is an ideal opportunity!

Please share this around your church(es) and let Michael Hodgson have any names as soon as possible, and **no later than Monday 4 December**.

## URC Holiday Forum Events

### Online Winter Social - Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30pm-9.30pm

Beat the winter blues and catch up with your Forum friends on Zoom.

Feel free to drop-in as you like between 7.30pm-9.30pm.

There'll be some break out rooms and a quiz round or two if people would like!

Join using this link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88477027985>

### **Future events:**

### **Holiday Forum in a Day – Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

Save the date! Join us on Zoom next February 24th for ***HF in a Day*** and have a taste of what to expect at next year's summer conference.

**The day will run in two parts:** #1 from 9.30am-12.30pm and #2 from 7.30pm-9.30pm (with the option to join from 6.30pm to meet and share dinner virtually).

We hope you'll be able to join us!

### **Holiday Forum – Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> – Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August – The Hayes & Online**

Places for the summer conference are limited to just 100 this year and lots have been filled already, so **book early** to avoid disappointment!

## Vocation and Call Conversation Starter

On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November from 7.30-8.45pm on Zoom, there will be a Conversation Starter exploring the new URC Learning Hub resource: **Vocation and Call**.

Click on this link to register: [Conversation Starter... Vocation and Call Tickets, Thu 30 Nov 2023 at 19:15 | Eventbrite](#)

Come and explore this Hub resource, how it can be used, and share good conversations on the theology and questions around it.

All are welcome!

## Pre-order your 2023 Advent resource kit

**The United Reformed Church's 2023 Advent resource for families, God in the Ordinary, is available for pre-ordering.**

The focus this year is on helping people find God in their daily lives as well as in the Christmas story.

Each pack will contain:

- A giant poster with a 'countdown to Christmas', featuring lots of suggestions for things to do, QR codes to the Faith Adventures: Children Together take-home postcards with the Bible story, prayer and activity for the four weeks of Advent
- Four mini-books (which look like presents) with ribbon to hang them up as decorations – each telling part of the Christmas story with playful photo illustrations and a simple prayer
- Four stained-glass windows to colour (linked to the four books)

The Children's and Youth Work Team will produce suggestions for how churches can use the pack for outreach and with their congregations. For more information on this, please email the team at [childrens.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:childrens.youth@urc.org.uk)

The slightly subsidised packs are priced as affordable as possible at:

£3 for a single pack +p&p

£28 for a pack of 10 (£2.80 each) +p&p

£65 for a pack of 25 (£2.60 each) +p&p

The Children's and Youth Work Team, which will be preparing the packs for distribution, would like to receive pre-orders by mid-October. The packs should be available for despatch from 1 November.

The team will also be offering grants to cover the cost of the pack for churches needing help, meaning just the cost of postage and packaging will need to be paid. Churches can apply via a simple application form.

Please email the team at [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk) to submit your pre-order or to apply for the grant.

## Christmas gift ideas from the URC Bookshop

Gifts and stocking fillers for all ages including new designs and bestsellers in the URC Bookshop's Christmas selection. From £2.99, plus p&p. [Browse the selection.](#)

## Synod Big Day Out 2024 – bookings now open!

### [Buy your tickets here](#)

Following the success of the last Synod Big Day out at **Hollycombe Steam in the country**, we have booked the site again for our exclusive use on **Saturday 4 May 2024, 10am – 5pm.**

There will be more steam rides open this year and additional programme activities provided by Wessex Synod.

**We invite all churches, church user groups and community groups with links to URCs and LEPs in Wessex Synod to come and enjoy a day of fellowship, fun and worship.**

**Ticket prices** are the same as in 2022:

£8 per adult, £5 per child - for up to 10 rides on the attractions

New this year are **tickets for unlimited rides on the attractions:**

Adult £10.50      Child £7.50

A free ticket can be booked for an accompanying carer.

Hollycombe's fabulous new café will be open this time and there will be other food and refreshment outlets. You are welcome to bring your own picnic.

We have listened to feedback and so this time the layout for the Synod activities will be more central and accessible for all. Synod activities include a large marquee with worship, stories and entertainment, as well as a marketplace with crafts, Synod Youth Executive, and church connections, forest church and a nature walk.

We look forward to seeing you there.

## URC Buildings Forum webinar now available

A resource to encourage and assist churches to develop creative thinking around the potential and the missional use of buildings.

You can read more about the objectives of the Buildings Forum, [here](#)

The recording of the URC Buildings Forum webinar on 26 September is now available on the website [here](#).

## Upcoming Synod events

Bookings for all events and training courses to

Ruth Heine at the Synod Office

Email: [bookings@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:bookings@urcwessex.org.uk)

Tel: 023 8067 4513

### Safeguarding

#### Safeguarding Training – *Flowchart*

The flowchart gives an overview of the various safeguarding training courses on offer and has a table which shows the mandatory level of safeguarding training for various roles within the URC. The [flowchart](#) is on the Synod website.

#### Safeguarding Newsletter – *October 2023*

Read the latest [newsletter](#) from the Safeguarding Team at Church House.

#### Safeguarding Training – *Refresher course*

A new Refresher safeguarding training course is now available for people who completed the Foundation and Intermediate level training 3 to 4 years ago. The Refresher course works best as in-the-room training. If your church would like to host a Refresher course, please contact your CYDO to discuss dates.

**Refresher Safeguarding training course on  
Saturday 25 November 2023 at Salisbury URC. 1pm – 4pm**

Bookings: email [bookings@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:bookings@urcwessex.org.uk)

#### Safeguarding Training – *new dates in 2024*

- **Foundation and Intermediate safeguarding training on zoom.**  
6.30pm – 8pm on Thursday 22 February, 29 February and 7 March 2024.
- **Foundation and Intermediate safeguarding training in the room.**
  - Saturday 3 February 2024 at Immanuel, Southbourne. 10am – 4pm.
  - Saturday 10 February 2024 at St Andrew's URC, Reading. 10am – 4pm.
  - Saturday 9 March 2024 at Havant URC. 10am – 4pm.
- **Refresher safeguarding training in the room.**
  - Saturday 16 March 2024 at Broadstone URC. 10am – 1pm.
- **Refresher safeguarding training on zoom.**  
6.30pm – 8pm on Thursday 12 September and 19 September 2024.

If your church would like to host safeguarding training, please contact your CYDO to talk about dates.

## Safeguarding – Good Practice 6

**GP6** is currently at the printers. Church House will be sending hard copies to Church Safeguarding Coordinators over the next 6 weeks or so.

**GP6 is available online [here](#).**

## National Safeguarding Training courses – various topics

Specialist Safeguarding Training on zoom in 2023.

- DDC and Safer Recruitment. 22 November 2023, 1.30pm – 3.30pm.
- Safeguarding for Pastoral Workers and Elders supporting Survivors. 28 November 2023, 1.30pm – 3.30pm.

To book, please email: [Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk](mailto:Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk)

**2024 training dates.** Specialist Safeguarding training organised by Church House. Please see the [poster](#) for the full list of dates and topics.

**Training Webinars.** [Elders as Trustees](#). This is available online for you to access in your own time.

## Mental Health First Aid training – with Peter Larkum

**Become a certified Mental Health First Aider.** Two-day courses in-person or online equivalent which includes four live zoom sessions with the trainer.

**Become a certified Youth Mental Health First Aider.** This two-day in-person course or online equivalent qualifies you as a MHFA with a specific focus on how that relates to younger people.

**Training dates and further information for all courses with trainer Peter Larkum can be found [here](#).**

Wessex Synod will cover the cost of the MHFAider training courses.

**Please register via Wessex Synod, not direct, and preferably no later than 10 days before the start of the training course.**

Email: [bookings@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:bookings@urcwessex.org.uk) to receive the link to register on the course.

## Public First Aid training for URC – with British Red Cross

**Saturday 13 January 2024 at St Francis Church, Banbury. 10am – 4pm.**

**Saturday 20 January 2024 at Wheatley URC, Oxford. 10am – 4pm.**

**Booking is essential.** Email: [bookings@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:bookings@urcwessex.org.uk)

## Development and Support

### From your DSOs

Development and Support Officers Mary and Ray continue to support churches, elderships and ministers, individually and through their work with the pastoral committees.

If you or your church feels that the DSOs can be of assistance, please do be in touch with them.

Ray Stanyon – [dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk)

Mary Thomas – [dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk)

## Dates in 2024

**Church Secretaries' networking zoom**, Saturday 27 January, 10am – 11.30am

**Lay Preachers' Gathering**, Saturday 2 March 2024 at Sarum College.

**Church Treasurers' networking zoom**, Sat 11 May, 10am – 11.30am

**Elders' Conference**, Saturday 22 June 2024 at Sarum College.

**Ministers' Spring School**, 10-13 June 2024 at Sarum College.

**Ministers' Gathering**, Wednesday 25 September 2024 at Sarum College with optional overnight stay the night before (Tuesday 24 September 2024).

Keep your eyes open for more DSO dates in 2024, to be publicised in due course

## Children's and Youth Events and Training

### Bi-monthly Newsletter – *September 2023*

[Bi-monthly Newsletter – November](#) from the Children's and Youth Team at Church House.

### Children and youth Work webinar

For those working with children and young people.

**Understanding behaviour and additional needs webinar.** Available on YouTube [here](#).

### Talking About ... Lego™ Church

**Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023, 7pm - 8pm on Zoom**

Have you heard of Lego™ Church?

Have you tried Lego™ Church with your group?

Would you like to know more, or are you able to share your experiences?

Book a place on Talking About...Lego Church to hear what it's all about.

Our guest speakers are Judy Harris (CYDO for the National Synod of Wales) who will share the thinking around the faith and spirituality development opportunities offered by Lego™ church and a practitioner from Desborough URC (East Midlands Synod) who will share the practicalities of starting a Lego™ church and how it has engaged children, young people and families.

Book your free place at [www.bit.ly/URCTalkingAbout](http://www.bit.ly/URCTalkingAbout)



## Family Film Night – now easier to find in the document library

These exciting resources are designed for families to have fun and explore big questions together, all based around a family friendly film. Each film night has a main theme and follows the same pattern. Watch the film together, have fun doing the activities and then explore using the wondering questions. For families who want to link to the Bible, there are 'going deeper' wondering questions to use. This resource can also be used in Sunday Schools, messy church, bible study groups and school assemblies. **Why not consider hosting a family film night and inviting your community to come along?**

Free to download from the [Synod website](#).

## Youth Assembly 2024

**26 – 28 January 2024 at Whitemoor Lakes, Alrewas, Staffs.**

Youth Assembly is a fabulous weekend for young people aged 14 plus and gives them an opportunity to discuss, explore and have their voices heard on a variety of issues.

Wessex will fully fund all places (at the early bird rate) and will organise transport too.

Last year the Synod Youth Exec took a large group and we hope to do this again. Please contact your CYDO for more information and advertise this widely with your young people.

[Publicity flier](#). [A4 poster](#) for display.

## Other News

### URC News Update

[View November News Update here](#)

News Update is seeking anything of interest for the denomination as a whole from across the country – and the nations.

Any news/photos/event information for the next edition should be sent to:

[ann-marie.nye@urc.org.uk](mailto:ann-marie.nye@urc.org.uk)

You can subscribe to News Update via the link on the URC website.

### Joint Public Issues Team

View JPIT newsletter [Edition 157 \(October\) here](#)

### Churches Together in England Newsletter

Latest newsletter available here: <https://cte.org.uk/enews/>

## REMINDERS

### Dates for your Diary – 2024 Synod Meetings

The dates for 2024 will be as follows:

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February (online in the evening)

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April (online in the evening)

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October (in person, all day, United Church Winchester)

### Discipleship Development Fund Large Grant – applications welcome

We are delighted that the latest Discipleship Development Fund Large Grant Group received 3 applications, including one from a local congregation.

We would like to encourage more applications as we have money available to support lay discipleship. The opportunities, experiences and events that we have supported so far are many and varied.

The application form is easy to fill in. Local congregations need to agree the application at a Church Meeting and get Synod support. Jenny Mills is willing to have conversations about checking out eligibility, if that is ever needed, in which case please email [jenny.mills@urc.org.uk](mailto:jenny.mills@urc.org.uk)

More information available: <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/developing-your-faith/discipleship-development-fund/>

Video giving more information about the Grant:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ8ODOW3rA0>

### Does your church have a good news story?

If your church has something it would like to share with people via the Synod Website page “[Stories from our Churches](#)”, please send the article to the [Synod Office](#) and we will publish it on that page.

*NB If using photographs please ensure you have signed permission from those people featured for it to be published on the Synod Website (not just for your own personal church’s use) and supply this at the same time as submitting the article.*

New Stories are added as when they are received, so do keep an eye on the page regularly.

### Prayer Calendar

#### December

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parkstone</li><li>• Twyford (Bucks)</li></ul>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Windsor: Christ Church</li><li>• Rowlands Castle</li></ul>
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poole: Skinner Street</li><li>• Woodley Airfield Church</li></ul>



24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Moderator and Synod Staff</li> <li>• Thatcham</li> </ul>
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woking</li> <li>• Southampton: Avenue St Andrew's</li> </ul>
<b>January</b>	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wimborne</li> <li>• Drayton United Church</li> </ul>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Womersh</li> <li>• Brill United</li> <li>• Fareham</li> </ul>
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wareham</li> <li>• Guildford, Portsmouth Road</li> </ul>
28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abingdon: Trinity Church</li> <li>• Weymouth: Radipole</li> </ul>
<p>Items for the next edition to <a href="mailto:office@urcwessex.org.uk">office@urcwessex.org.uk</a>  by 12noon on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023  Please submit news items in the form of:  a heading; date and venue details; a brief descriptive sentence and a website link.</p>	