

Southern Synod News

Welcome to the latest edition of Southern Synod News. This month we are reflecting on Easter celebrations at local churches, and have some exciting events for you to look forward to, including a Pentecost lecture at Trinity Sutton and an exciting FaithTalk webinar.

We would love to hear from you! If you have any exciting upcoming events you wish to advertise, or would like to share good news from your local church we would love to include it in the next edition. Please send items for the next issue to Ross (office@urcsouthern.org.uk) by Monday 26th May 2025.

Latest News



Moderator's Quiet Day at Crowhurst

On a warm sunny day in March several Ministers and Local Church Leaders gathered at Crowhurst Healing Centre for what was truly a gift of a day. We were blessed with time and space to be with God, to receive teaching, to enjoy beautiful grounds to walk in, to have access to a wonderful well equipped art room, to enjoy good food and company. A rare opportunity to have batteries re-charged.

Unfortunately Bridget, our Moderator, was unable to join with us and we prayed for restoration of health for her. However Martin, our Synod Clerk, was available for those who needed a chat.

Pastoral Charge can be an isolating experience sometimes and to have a day set aside to spend with God, and with others in a similar ministry was truly a blessing – so thank you! And for those who could not be with us – we missed you!

(Article by Revd Helen Warmington, pictures by Revd Memonah Shahbaz).



Palm Sunday celebrations at Broadway United Church, Eastbourne

Broadway United Church, Eastbourne had a jubilant service led by Zeerak Shahbaz to celebrate Palm Sunday. This included a procession, singing and waving palm branches with a shout of Hossana! They also had a Palm Sunday play. Zeerak shared the importance of Jesus' jubilant entry into Jerusalem and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies.

(Pictures by Revd Memonah Shahbaz)

Strategic Mission Panel Fund applications...

The next deadline for applications for the Strategic Mission Fund Panel is 5pm on Wednesday 28th May, ahead of their next meeting on the 4th June. Any applications should be emailed prior to the deadline to the Mission and Development Officer, Jo Patterson on

mdo@urcsouthern.org.uk. The application form can be found on the Synod Website: southernsynodurc.org.uk/mission-resources/

Changes to Synod Building Grants

We are pleased to announce that the Church Building Maintenance Grant has been increased to £2,500, and the Annual Manse Grant has been increased to £1,500. Both changes take effect immediately for this and future years.

For further information, please contact the Property Administrator (prop.admin@urcsouthern.org.uk).

Updated Copyright booklet

Church House has updated their copyright booklet which they would like all URC churches to use from now on. The booklet can be found at: urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/getting-to-grips-with-copyright/

URC Club House Holiday Resources now available...

The URC have launched their Holiday Club Resources page!

"Here you will find free resources that contain suggestions for a holiday club for 5 to 11-year-olds. It also contains appendices for intergenerational, toddlers, 11 to 14s and vintage holiday clubs.

You can download the whole resource theme, individual sections, activity sheets, colouring-in sheets, music sheets and lyrics, and additional drama – build your holiday club your way. Each holiday we produce a new theme, but the material is not designed to be prescriptive, although you may use it that way if you wish. Feel free to swap and change the ideas included here for ones you think are more suitable for your groups."

For more information and to access the resources, visit: urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/children-youth-work/holiday-club-materials

Job Opportunities

Volunteer Opportunity: Join the Congregational Fund Board as a Trustee!

At the heart of the Congregational Fund Board lies a strong commitment to supporting ministers and students in times of financial need. This small yet impactful charity, with an annual income of approximately £20,000, offers vital assistance to aged and/or infirm ministers, ministers in training, and students facing sudden and unexpected financial challenges. The Board also provides annual study grants to students undertaking ministry training or higher-degree studies.

The Board is composed of both lay and ordained trustees and includes representatives from the Union of Welsh Independents, the Congregational Federation, the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, the Unaffiliated Congregational Churches Charities, and the United Reformed Church.

The Board is currently seeking a trustee to represent the United Reformed Church. As part of the Board, this role offers an opportunity to actively contribute to meaningful decision-making and to support the vital work of the charity, shaping its efforts to assist ministers and students across the community.

What is the role? Trustee to represent the United Reformed Church

Purpose: This voluntary role involves contributing to decision-making that directly impacts the lives of ministers and students across the UK.

Responsibilities:

- Participate in two annual meetings: the AGM in London (October) and a virtual Zoom meeting (March).
- Collaborate with Trustees throughout the year via joint email discussions to review applications.
- Ensure data protection and confidentiality in all aspects of the work.

Requirements:

- Must be a member of the United Reformed Church.
- Commit to a term of 4 years.

While residing near London is not a requirement, closer proximity may help reduce travel expenses, which are funded by the Congregational Fund Board.

If you're interested in volunteering for this role or would like more information, please contact Ian Jones at revianjones@hotmail.com. We welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and experience levels to join us in serving God. Please be aware that all volunteers applying for roles within the United Reformed Church (URC) are required to undergo safer recruitment procedures. This ensures the safety and protection of all members within our community.

Further details on this process will be provided during the application and selection process. Further guidance can also be found on our website www.urc.org.uk.

Job Opportunity: Community Outreach Worker at Basildon URC

We are seeking an experienced person who is motivated to develop and support initiatives that aim to improve the lives and wellbeing of people in our communities.

The focus of the work is to assist and develop the existing activities, develop relationships with the wider communities, and to lead on local and social media advertising.

The successful candidate does not have to be a committed Christian but would be expected to be caring and empathetic and be comfortable working within the Statement & Nature of Faith of the United Reformed Church.

Church-based, with some working from home permissible.

The regular place of work will be either: The Hive at Basildon URC or Grays URC and reasonable travel expenses will be covered to travel to the other site. The role is shared, and the expected workload is to be 2/3 / 1/3 between Basildon / Grays.

This is a 5-year, full time appointment.
£24 – 28,000 per annum, depending on experience.

An application pack can be accessed by emailing David Coaker on drcoaker@gmail.com

Only completed application forms will be accepted. No CVs.

Closing date for applications is by 5pm on **Friday 30th May** with interviews taking place on

Thursday 12th June at Basildon URC.

As part of the interview, you are asked to prepare a ten-minute presentation on your choice of subject to cover the responsibilities of the role and to display the essential experience, skills and abilities listed in the person specification

Upcoming Training and Events



New dates for online “Talking about...” sessions from the URC Children & Youth Work team.

There are some excellent topics for this monthly gathering hosted by members of our brilliant CYDO+ (children and youth work development officers and their equivalents) from across the Synods. These informal gatherings are an hour long and involve a short introductory presentation followed by more general discussion and chat on the theme. It's an excellent opportunity to meet with other people from similar settings, share experiences and explore new topics. Here is a list of upcoming dates and topics for 2025. All sessions run 7-8pm. Add them to your diary! Booking links will be released each month via the [URC Children & Youth Facebook Page](#).

29 May - House based youth work

26 June - The realities of porn and young people

22 July - Rest and self care for practitioners

25 September - Advent

28 October - Brain Development

27 November - Residential/Overnight Stays

See you there!

Free Church Choirs are looking for singers

Free Church Choirs are looking for individual singers as well as choirs to join them for the Festival of Church Music, taking place this year at Coventry Cathedral on Saturday 11th October 2025. It is always a memorable experience to be able to sing with a large choir in a cathedral.

The theme this year appropriately is 'Justice and Freedom'.

For further details go to: www.freechurchchoirs.org.uk

Online Gathering about International Partnerships

Please join the URC in their online gathering to discuss the opportunity for International Partnerships!

The URC has a long-standing Covenant of Pulpit and Table Fellowship with the Protestant Churches in the Palatinate region of Germany, the 'Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz' and around twenty local URCs are twinned with partner German churches from the region. We also have close links with the Waldensian Church in Italy and the United Protestant Church of France, among others.

Celebrating and nurturing unity is especially important now in the changing political landscapes.

It is hoped that this meeting will:

- Proclaim a narrative of unity and partnership
- Give an opportunity for churches with existing partnerships to share their stories
- Inspire other churches to get involved and develop their own partnerships.

You are very welcome to join this meeting using the link below:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84222451396?pwd=4m5bFx4bBn1TTJcW60rzQij7zyyPQI.1>

Meeting ID: 842 2245 1396 Passcode: 726105

For further information please email ecumenical@urc.org.uk.

"Celebrating Christian Aid" at Trinity Sutton

Trinity Sutton are hosting a service on Saturday 17th May 2025 to celebrate and raise money for Christian Aid.

There will be coffee, music, readings and film about Christian Aid and its work to end poverty and achieve climate justice.

Date : Saturday 17 May 2025

Time : 10.45am (coffee served from 10am)

Venue: Trinity Church Sutton (Cheam Road opposite Sutton Library) SM1 1DZ.

All are welcome, there is no charge.

www.trinitychurchsutton.org.uk/christian-aid-morning

"Music for a Summer Evening" at Trinity Sutton

Trinity Sutton would like to invite you to Music for a Summer Evening with their Trinity Festival Choir.

The programme will feature a feast of popular and attractive choral and instrumental music, including choruses from Haydn's The Creation, Mozart's exquisite and beautiful Laudate Dominum, an eagerly-awaited return from last year's very popular jazz ensemble featuring saxophonist Adie Starbuck, as well as poetry readings, instrumental duets and popular organ pieces to enjoy!

Date : Sunday 29 June 2025

Time : 6.30pm

Venue: Trinity Church Sutton (Cheam Road opposite Sutton Library) SM1 1DZ.

All are welcome, free entry with donations invited in support of our local hospice in Sutton, St. Raphael's.

www.trinitychurchsutton.org.uk/summer-evening

"IOPT in Focus"

The Interfaith Enabling Group together with Commitment for Life are hosting a series of online events unpacking the issues of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, continuing with:

18th June - ANTISEMITISM with Nathan Eddy, Co-Director, Council of Christians and Jews

For more information and a link to the webinars please contact

commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk

150th Anniversary of the World Council of Reformed Churches

The World Council of Reformed Churches is celebrating its 150th Anniversary this year and to make this they are hosting a service on July 12 at the American International Church, Tottenham Court Road.

With roots in the 16th-century Reformation, and particularly in the theology of John Calvin, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) dates its organisational history to London in 1875, and has been unifying churches over the course of its existence. It now represents 100m Christians from 230+ member churches in 109 countries around the world.

Tickets available from:

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1257520550819?aff=oddtcreator



Youth Mental Health First Aid

By booking onto the new Youth MHFA course by @MHFAEngland, you will gain:

- ✓ The knowledge, awareness, and skills to spot the signs of a young person experiencing emotional distress or poor mental health
- ✓ The confidence to start a conversation
- ✓ The tools to safeguard and signpost to appropriate support

April 22nd/ 24th/ 29th/ May 1st 6pm to 9.30pm
 Sep 22nd/ 24th/ 29th/ Oct 1st 9.30am to 1pm
<https://bit.ly/youth-mhfa>



United Reformed Church Youth

Youth Mental Health First Aid (Online)

MHA England have just launched a brand-new updated Youth MHFA Course. By booking onto the course you will gain:

- The knowledge, awareness and skills to spot the signs of a young person experiencing emotional distress or poor mental health.
- The confidence to start a conversation
- The tools to safeguard and signpost to appropriate support

There are plenty of spaces available for the upcoming courses in April - make sure you don't miss out!

Booking for upcoming Youth MHFA courses are now open.

Register at www.bit.ly/youth-mhfa

Spaces are FULLY FUNDED for Southern Synod participants. (Usual cost £325pp)

Restful Day for Ministers at Crowhurst

Crowhurst are hosting a day of rest for those in ministry on Wednesday 30th July. This event is free, however, donations are welcome.

www.crowhursthealing.org.uk/retreat.php?retreat=961

FaithTalk: everyday evangelism in the URC

The next webinar, An Evening with Trey Hall, is at 7pm on Wednesday 7 May. Trey is the Director of Evangelism and Growth at the Methodist Church and will be helping us to grapple with the question: *Faith Talk and Church Growth: How does prayer make a difference?* Come and join us for a relaxed conversation praying and talking about our faith with others.

Please email mission@urc.org.uk for the link. Save the date for the next webinar, on **Tuesday 23 September at 7pm.**

Pentecost Lecture at Trinity Sutton

Date : Tuesday 27 May 2025

Time : 7.30pm

Venue: Trinity Church Sutton, SM1 1DZ

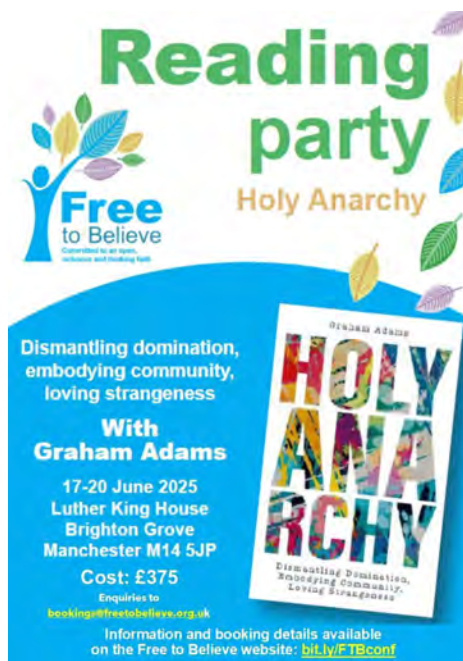
Trinity Sutton would like to invite you to their Trinity Pentecost Lecture. Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark, will give a talk entitled

'The curse of literalism' poetry God and the life of faith'

All are welcome, there is no charge.

Dr Mark Oakley is Dean of Southwark, and formerly Dean of St John's College, Cambridge. He is an admired public speaker and the author of several books on the relationship between poetry and spirituality, including *The Splash of Words: Believing in Poetry*, which won the international Michael Ramsey Prize for theological writing.

www.trinitychurchsutton.org.uk/lecture



Free to Believe Reading Party!

Free to Believe are running a 'Reading Party' of Holy Anarchy with Graham Adams from 17-20th June 2025. For more information: freetobelieve.org.uk/conferences



Creative Week is coming!

Running from Tuesday 5th to Saturday 9th August 2025 at Lumen, London (WC1H 9RS), this exciting event is designed for young people aged 11–16 who are in secondary school. Participants can choose from a variety of creative streams—drama, music, creative writing, movement and dance, or stage craft—and spend the week developing their talents in a fun and supportive environment. The week concludes with a special showcase performance on Saturday 9th August at 4 PM, open to all. Don't miss out—register online now at www.bit.ly/cw-registration

If you would like to receive a copy of Southern Synod News with clickable links direct to your email inbox each month please subscribe using the QR code or by visiting the Southern Synod website: southernsynodurc.org.uk/newsletter

