



Southern Synod News

Welcome to the latest edition of Southern Synod News. This month we have an important message about the Moderator, a celebration at Billingshurst URC and the Grove Centre Sydenham, as well as some important job opportunities both within the Synod and further afield.

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 28th July 2025.

Latest News

A message about our Moderator, Revd Bridget Banks

It is with great sadness that we share the news that Revd Bridget Banks, our Moderator, has had to take early retirement on health grounds. We give thanks for all that Bridget has done in her ministry with us, serving in a local pastorate, various committees and as Moderator to the Synod. She has served with compassion, deep pastoral care, and always sought to do her best. Hearts have been touched by her kindness and lives impacted by her service. We are grateful for all the ways in which she has shared the gospel message of love through her calling and faithfulness. She will be missed.

Bridget has said “it has been an immense privilege to have served in this role, and it has been an honour to work alongside Ministers, Elders, CRCWs, members, lay leaders, volunteers and all connected to the United Reformed Church. My gratitude goes to all the colleagues who I have been fortunate to work with. I am also grateful for their prayers, support and encouragement.”

We hope you will all join us in thanking Bridget for her hard work as Moderator, and will keep her in your thoughts and prayers over the coming weeks.

As a token of thanks to Bridget, as well as a lovely reminder of all her hard work in the Synod, we would like to compile a scrapbook of well wishes and thanks to Bridget as she enters her retirement. Therefore, we would like to invite all those within the Synod to send in their messages to Bridget as she starts this new chapter in her life. If you could please send in your messages by **31st July 2025** to the Synod Office, we will compile all the messages together in a book that can be gifted to Bridget. These messages can come in any form, whether it is a handwritten card, note, picture or simply an email which we will transcribe into the book for you, all messages would be greatly appreciated. Either post them to the Ross Furley-Smith at the Synod Office, or email them to office@urcsouthern.org.uk. Thank you in advance, for sending them in.

"Certificates of Eligibility" - Ministers wishing to transfer to the United Reformed Church

Ministers of other churches wishing to transfer to the United Reformed Church can seek a [Certificate of Eligibility](#) to come on to the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church. Applications should be received by 31st July 2025, with initial interviews via Zoom in August. Successful candidates will be invited to attend an in-person Assessment Conference from 30th October – 1st November 2025 in Cambridge, UK.

Applications are welcome from ministers who are members of churches that are either a member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Council for World Mission, the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Your application should evidence experience in local pastorate ministry (minimum 5 years) in a leadership role; intercultural competence; understanding/experience of working in multi-church pastorates/settings and a readiness and willingness to serve in any part of the UK

Those interested should contact the Ministries Office (ministries@urc.org.uk 020 7916 8649) for an application pack.

Strategic Mission Fund Panel new deadline!

The next deadline for the Strategic Mission Fund Panel is now **5pm on Wednesday 3rd September**. Please send your applications to the Synod's Mission Officer, Jo Patterson (mdo@urcsouthern.org.uk), by the deadline. For more information, or to access the application form, please click the link below.

The Mission Panel can consider applications of under £20,000 in between meetings by email so if it is a smaller application, please don't wait!

If you are considering harvest, advent, or Christmas events for small amounts, we are happy to give money for a few hundred pounds, so get in touch if this applies to your church.

For more information go to: southernsynodurc.org.uk/mission-resources

Congratulations to Billingshurst URC

Congratulations to Billingshurst URC who are celebrating their 210th anniversary of the church in Billingshurst, West Sussex. To mark the occasion a special service was held on Sunday 15th June followed by a lunch for the members of the church, friends from our Area Ministry sister church and area dignitaries.

Billingshurst URC currently has twenty-two members who are very active in worship and are an important part of their community volunteering their time and support to local activities such as the 'Dementia Café' which they host twice a month. The café has grown in number of visitors who are enjoying a warm welcome by the church, their volunteers and also the delicious homemade refreshments. The church secretary, Brenda Homden is also part of the local Street Pastor team for the village and Chairperson for the local Churches Together.

Two and half years ago, the church decided to begin renovation work to restore the church to its original glory. After a lot of hard work and determination it now looks wonderful again and with the new chairs and carpet, the sanctuary looks fresh and welcoming.



The Grove Centre, Sydenham transforms!

The Grove Centre Church in Sydenham, South London officially opened its newly refurbished Grove Centre House on Friday 6th June. The Church, which is a combined Baptist and United Reformed Church, has

always endeavoured to be a “**A Place For People**”.

While having a full programme of both Church and community activities the Church recognised the limitations in its adjoining Georgian style, listed House Hall and offices. The building was inaccessible, tired and failing to meet the direct needs of our many user groups.

The project, which has been 16 years in the planning and delivery, has transformed the facility into a bright, airy and fully accessible space with a lift providing access to offices and meeting spaces on the first floor. The project has cost in excess of £750,000, with money being raised through a number of charitable grants, including input from both denominations, local fund-raising efforts and gifts and legacies from within its own fellowship.

The Right Honourable Ellie Reeves M.P. performed the ceremony, along with representatives of the London Borough of Lewisham, the professional team and builders, current users of the spaces and members of the Church. Ellie Reeves M.P. welcomed the huge improvements to the building since the last time she was here. She commented on how the refurbishment has turned the building into a welcoming place for use by local groups and organisations who do so much to help make strong communities and help foster a positive community spirit which she is proud we have in Sydenham.

She went on to say “Wonderful to be at the grand re-opening of the Grove Centre House Hall. The Grove Centre has been at the heart of Sydenham for more than 50 years and I know it’ll continue to serve our community for many years to come”.

Check your BT Bills!

We have had an incident recently where BT accidentally added the cost of a new phone line from one church to another church's BT bill. Please ensure that if you use BT you are monitoring any unexpected changes to your payments.



News from the Training and Development Officer

1. Elders Trainings

Since I wrote to you back in June, Mark Rigby and I have held three Elders' Trainings. One in Reigate Park for Banstead, Dorking, Redhill and Reigate Elders. One in Oxted for the Surrey, Sussex and Kent Borders Pastorate, Caterham, Marsh Green, Oxted, and the Moat, and East Grinstead Elders. One at The Vale in Broadstairs for the Elders of The Vale, Ramsgate, Union in Margate, Christ Church in Westgate, and The Bay in Birchington.

To see upcoming Elders Trainings for the rest of 2025 follow this link to the website.

<https://southernsynodurc.org.uk/elders-training/>

2. Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher Training

The deadline to participate in this training through Northern College has passed for this year. If you are being drawn to this training for next year, or want to know more, please contact me so we can begin the conversation.

3. Locally Recognised Worship Leader Training

If you are interested in more local leadership in your own congregation or pastorate, we will begin Locally Recognised Worship Leader training in January of 2026. This will be a full year of training with one session per month and assignments in between. If you would like to know more, let me know and I will set you up on the right track.

4. Sacraments Training for Elders

We held a wonderful training at Christ Church in Tonbridge with Angela Rigby leading. I want to thank Angela for taking on this role in the gap between Andy and my ministries. I will be the new contact person for these

trainings going forward.

If your congregation is interested in having one or two Elders trained in presiding at the Sacraments, please discuss this among yourselves to nominate those Elders and then let me know. No current trainings are planned as these are organised as there is a need.

5. Synod-wide Stepwise Learning Cohort

Finally, I hope to begin an online cohort to work through the Stepwise programme together for those interested in companionship whilst taking that online training. This may start in the Autumn, or possibly the new year. Please let me know if you are interested.

The best way to reach me is at tdo@urcsouthern.org.uk and you can follow me through my personal Facebook through my hashtag – #tdotravelsturcsouthern.

Blessings!

Charisa

(Pictured, all those attending the Elder's Training at Oxted URC).



Signs of Welcome and Ministry #tdotravelsturcsouthern

In my travels around the Synod since I've been here, I've seen so many signs of love and welcome and faith. Here's a few! Thanks for the warm welcome to me and others!

(Pictured, a welcome sign created by Young People at St Paul's, South Croydon).

National Churches Trust Survey

The National Churches Trust survey of places of churches has been extended to close on **Sunday 13 July**. The survey is <https://www.research.net/r/NationalChurches2025> – it takes about 30 minutes to complete.

The purpose of the survey is to demonstrate to Government and policymakers the important role that churches play in their communities. It is particularly timely, given the current pressure on public spending and, in particular, the recent cuts to the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. *The more individual churches that complete it, the more robust and valuable the overall data will be.*

Changes in Southern Synod

We remember Revd Alex Mabbs, Revd Alwyn Knight and Ralph Bradshaw

We are very sad to share the news of the passing of three important members, past and present, of Southern Synod.

Revd Alex Mabbs sadly passed away on Friday 13th June, after a short illness. Many within Southern Synod will remember Alex and all his hard work and dedication as minister in Southern serving Hounsom Memorial, Central Hove & Portslade from 2006 – 2014 before moving to Brighthelm URC & Community Centre until 2021.

Revd Alwyn Knight sadly died on Sunday 22nd June, having struggled with health and mobility issues for some time. Alwyn served at Trinity, Poplar 1965-67; Goodmayes 1967-73; John Knox, Stepney & Stepney Meeting 1973-76; Stepney Meeting 1976-79; Western Road, Romford 1979-95; Bishops Stortford 1995-2003. He had also served with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel and had volunteered with the Christian Peacemaker Teams in the West Bank town of Hebron. Alwyn retired to Tenterden with his wife Enid.

Ralph Bradshaw died on 23rd June. Ralph was a committed servant and Treasurer of Hythe URC. He was also well-known more widely in the Synod as a Lay Preacher around East Kent and amongst the local Methodists, an Interim Moderator and as a member of various Synod Committees over the years.

We hope you will join the whole Synod in remembering Alex, Alwyn and Ralph, and keep their families in your thoughts and prayers.

Jobs throughout the URC

Accreditations Sub-Committee Convener

Do you have a passion to support people who release the church in its local community to flourish in faith, hope and love? Then this could be the opportunity for you!

Ministries Committee is looking for a convener for its Accreditations Sub-Committee to replace its current convenor who will complete their term at the July 2025 General Assembly. The convener will need to have working knowledge of the formal ministries of the United Reformed Church.

The Accreditations Sub-committee plays a vital role in supporting and creating new opportunities in shaping posts to be recognised as Church Related Community Work projects or Pioneering posts including current Special Category ministries, in approving certificates for ministers from partner churches both at home and abroad to serve with us, and in analysing trends in the Rolls of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers, Elders, Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers and Assembly Accredited Lay Pioneers.

Please click the link for the full role description and if interested in making an application or nomination, please email ministries@urc.org.uk for an application form.

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/ASC-Convener.pdf>

Adeyfield Free Church are looking for a Youth and a Family Worker!

Adeyfield Free Church (near Hemel Hempstead in Thames North Synod) are recruiting two new exciting roles - a Youth Worker and a Family Worker! The closing dates for applications is **17th July 2025**.

For more information or to receive the job description please contact admin@adeyfieldfree.org.uk or click the link below.

<https://www.adeyfieldfree.org.uk/Groups/403872/Jobs.aspx>

Church Development Community Worker at Emmanuel, West Wickham

- Emmanuel is seeking a person who is self-motivated and passionate about developing our presence in the community, as a key part of our plans to develop and extend our church's ministry

- The ideal candidate will hold a mature Christian faith and have previous experience of community development
- Emmanuel strives to be an open, inclusive and welcoming community
- Emmanuel already has a strong presence in the life of the local community, but wants to develop this much further
- Emmanuel already has a Children and Family Worker and a Youth Worker and the successful candidate would work closely with them
- The hours/days of work would be flexible to meet the requirements of the role

Hours: 28 hours per week: Flexible working

Salary: £30,400 - £32,000pa

(£38,000 - £40,000 Full Time equivalent)

Location: West Wickham, Bromley, Kent

If you are interested please read the job description below. Application forms should be completed and emailed to welcome@emmanuelww.org.uk

[Job description](#)

[Application form](#)

For an informal discussion please contact:

Jim Lord: welcome@emmanuelww.org.uk

Closing Date: 12 noon on Friday 25th July 2025

Upcoming Training and Events



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

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



**Upcoming Training Opportunity – FULLY FUNDED Youth Mental Health First Aid Training
 September Online Morning Course – Sessions run 09:30-13:00**

Session 1 - Monday 22nd September

Session 2 - Wednesday 24th September

Session 3 – Monday 29th September

Register at www.bit.ly/youth-mhfa

MHFA England has recently launched a **brand-new, updated Youth MHFA Course**, designed to equip you with the knowledge and skills to:

- Recognize the signs of emotional distress or poor mental health in young people.
- Gain confidence in starting supportive conversations.
- Understand how to safeguard and signpost to appropriate support.

This is a fantastic opportunity to enhance your awareness and skills—and for **Southern Synod participants spaces are FULLY FUNDED** (usual cost £325 per person)!

The course is aimed at anyone who engages with young people aged 8-18, and the skills learnt are transferable to other age groups. This fully updated course is also suitable for those who have previously completed the Youth MHFA course and are looking to refresh their knowledge.

Please share this opportunity with others linked to your local church community. Don't miss out—secure your place today!

Register now: www.bit.ly/youth-mhfa



Advent Resources 2025 now available...

It is never too early for Christmas! The URC Advent resources for 2025 are now available for pre-order. This can be done from the URC bookshop. These are a fun pack designed to be a quality missional gift from a church to a family

To pre-order please click the link below.

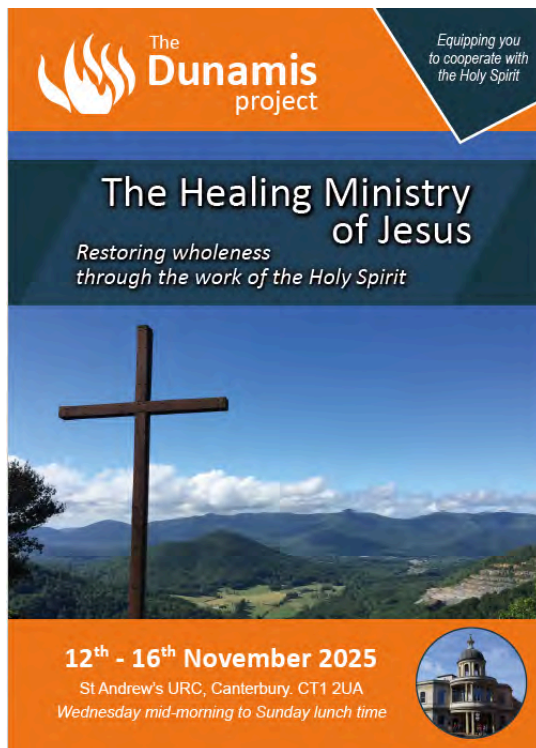
<https://urcshop.co.uk/2025-urc-advent-kit-preorder/>



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



The Healing Ministry of Jesus

Jesus Christ brought wholeness to many people and in a variety of ways - a tangible expression of God's love and power.

Healing was a feature of the early church's life and can be for us, too, because the same Holy Spirit is still at work today. Yet many Christians today have little first-hand experience of how to participate in healing through cooperating with the Holy Spirit.

This conference will give you Biblical foundations and practical instruction to help you learn how to participate in Jesus' healing ministry.

At this event the Holy Spirit often leads us into emotional and physical healing, and this hands-on experience of healing ministry becomes the context in which the teaching takes place.

Topics include:

- Biblical foundations for healing ministry
- How the Holy Spirit continues Jesus' healing work
- Spiritual, inner and relational healing
- Jesus' ministry of physical healing

Join us for this life-changing event, and discover how much more God can do in and through you!

What's involved?

- Corporate worship and prayer, responsive to the activity of the Holy Spirit
- Systematic teaching, rooted in scripture and grounded in the realities of life
- Intentional transition from teaching to practice, helping participants learn through personal experience
- Debriefing, to deepen understanding and insights, and to model accountability

"The gentle approach allows time to consider what is taught, with freedom to raise questions. Everything is clearly biblically based."

This is the fourth in a series of six training events that equip Christians to fulfil the Great Commission and advance the Kingdom of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Booking your place

Full details and booking form online:
www.dunamis.org.uk/canterbury

For enquiries about this event please contact Val Cannon:
E: val@dunamis.org.uk



Dunamis Project - "The Healing Ministry of Jesus"

The Dunamis Project are running the 4th of their 6 part training event which aims to "equip Christians to fulfill the Great Commission and advance the Kingdom of God in the power of the Holy Spirit."

It will be taking place from the 12th-16th November 2025 at St Andrew's URC, Canterbury, CT1 2UA. To book your place please visit <https://www.dunamis.org.uk/events/dunamis-project-canterbury/>

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

