

Southern Synod News

Welcome to the latest edition of Southern Synod News. This month we have some heartwarming stories from throughout the Synod.

We would love to hear from you! If you have any exciting upcoming events, celebrations or good news to share 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 23rd February 2026.

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Latest News



Gillingham URC welcomes Youth Fellowship into membership!

The Advent service at Gillingham URC on 21st December was a very special occasion. During the service three of the Youth Fellowship - Paa Abrokwa, Tamika Mtika and Malumbo Mtika - were received into Church Membership. A great joy for them and their families and the whole church family.
(Article by Ms Pam Tolhurst, Elder in Local Leadership at Gillingham URC).



An exciting Commissioning Service at Trinity Church, Eastbourne

We are excited to share some news from Eastbourne LEP Trinity Church. In January they celebrated a covenant service and also had a blessed commissioning service for Jennie Macfadyen a faithful member, and secretary of the Trinity Church, who recently completed her lay preaching course. Jennie is now excited to continue preaching the gospel in local churches.



Reigate Park URC celebrates 50 years!!

Over the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd November 2025 Reigate Park celebrated 50 years on their current site; the church having previously been located in Reigate High Street.

On Saturday a social event with a “70’s” theme took place with a live band and a “70’s” menu which was enjoyed by all.

On Sunday afternoon a Celebration Service was led by Revd Susan Knight Non-Stipendiary Minister at Reigate Park and Revd Siobhan Antoniou Minister of North Downs Surrey pastorate of which Reigate Park is a part. There were contributions from previous Ministers, Revd Dr David Owen, Revd David Skitt and Revd George Watt. The service was followed by Afternoon Tea with the cutting of a celebration cake by past and present Ministers.



Reigate Park's Nativity Service!

Reigate Park celebrated their Nativity Service on 14th December 2025, a joyful and very special occasion, shaped and led by their young people. Working alongside their leaders, they helped to write the service, bringing creativity, enthusiasm and a fresh perspective to the heart of worship. Reigate Park were delighted to include a real life Baby Jesus!



Save the Date: Synod Fun Day 2026!

SAVE THE DATE!!

The Synod Fun Day Out will be taking place on **Saturday 20th June 2026** from 10am to 4pm. This will be a day full of fun, food and fellowship.

It will be taking place at Shires Oast at The Hop Farm, TN12 6PY

To help, please contact Ruth Armstrong on ruthlucy@live.com

Annual Church Returns 2026!

This is just a gentle reminder for those in charge of completing the Annual Church Returns and the Annual Safeguarding Returns, that the deadline is the 28th February. These forms provide us with valuable information about what is going at your local Church, and so it is really important that it is completed. If you are experiencing any problems or difficulties with completing the forms, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Synod Office. We are incredibly grateful for all the hard work that you are putting into completing the forms.

Structure Review – Please let us know your views

The Synod Strategy published in late 2024 referred to a review of structures. A small group has been set up to explore whether the committees and processes that are currently in place are helping the local churches to flourish and thrive.

The voice of churches

We are hearing from field officers, area leaders and staff about the congregations they are working with, their expectations, and their understanding of how Synod works to support them and what they would like to see. The URC Church Life Review recommendations offer a chance to rethink the support that could be available. We are keen for churches and individuals to contribute to the review directly. More details are on the Synod website here

<https://southernsynodurc.org.uk/southern-synod-structure-and-governance/>

Closing date for initial contributions 15th February 2026

Strategic Mission Panel Applications deadline!

The Strategic Mission Fund Panel will meet next on 17th March, the deadline for applications for that meeting is 3rd March. The fund awards for many different projects and activities, from small events like a trip to the seaside for a local community and children's groups, to much bigger projects like development workers, worship for young people and lay workers. We also fund equipment to make it easier to do mission in your buildings. Projects costing under £20,000 can be awarded between meetings so please ask if this might suit you!

For a conversation about the fund please contact me, Jo Patterson, Mission and Discipleship Officer at mdo@urcsouthern.org.uk – 07928 958919. For children's and youth work funding please contact Tom Hackett our Children's and Youth Officer - cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk.

The relevant papers can be found on the Synod website here:

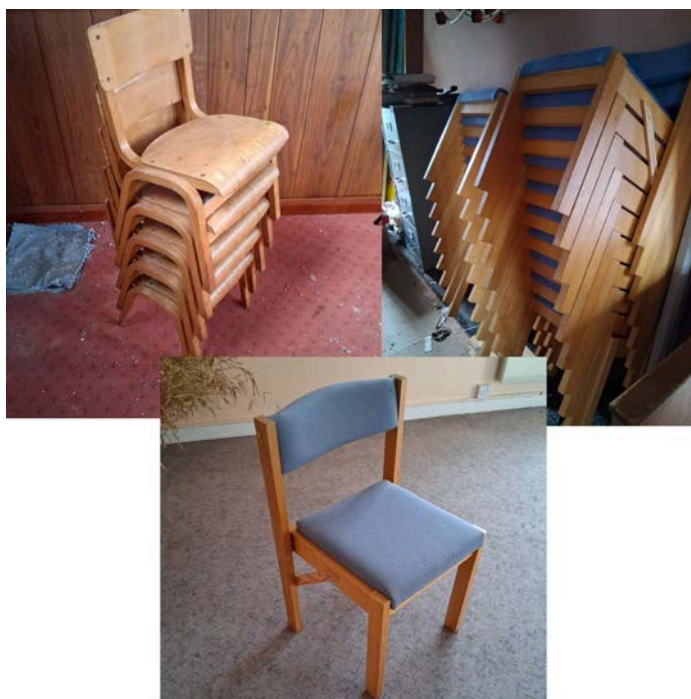
<https://southernsynodurc.org.uk/document-library/> - under 'Mission'

And here: <https://southernsynodurc.org.uk/mission-resources/> - under 'Mission grants for local churches'.

We look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

The Strategic Mission Fund Panel



Chairs Available from Epsom URC

The Synod Office have some free chairs available for collection from Epsom URC. These include;

- 16x Wooden Children's Chairs
- 8x Sanctuary Chairs
- 26x Stackable Sanctuary Chairs

To claim these chairs and arrange collection, please contact the Synod's property administrator, Mark, on prop.admin@urcsouthern.org.uk or click the link below.

Changes in Southern Synod

Job Opportunity: Southern Synod Clerk

Southern Synod are looking for an enthusiastic and dedicated person to be Synod Clerk (lay or ordained). Ideally the person should have a good working knowledge of the United Reformed Church.

Duties and responsibilities include:

1. Working with the Synod Moderator (when appointed) and others to ensure that the strategy and objectives of the Synod are achieved.

2. Working with the Moderator and Synod staff, providing support and assistance as appropriate.
3. Supporting the work of the Synod Council.
4. Facilitating individuals, churches and committees' access to the National Church and Synod information. Encouraging connections to work effectively.
5. Connecting the Synod with the wider life of the United Reformed Church.

This is a full-post, 40 hours per week based at the Southern Synod Office in East Croydon.

Salary: £50,000 p.a. (negotiable) for a lay person/a Minister's Full Stipend.

Please email the Moderator's PA at modpa@urcsouthern.org.uk for a job description and an application form.

Closing date is **23rd February 2026** with interviews taking place on the week beginning 16th March with the appointment to start as soon as possible.

The sad passing of Revd Robert Blows

We are very sad to share the news that Revd Robert Blows passed away on Thursday 8th January. Robert was an invaluable minister in the URC, serving mostly recently in Southern Synod at Thames Ditton URC.

A service of Thanksgiving for his life and ministry will be held on **Tuesday 24th February 2026** at 11.15am at Leatherhead Methodist Church, Church Road, Leatherhead, KT22 8AY. This will be followed by a committal service at 12.30pm Randalls Park Crematorium, Randalls Road, Leatherhead, KT22 0AG.

His family wish for this information to be passed on to those who might have known Robert.

Donations in Robert's memory may be sent to MS Society, either online or via MS Society, 8 City North Place, London, N4 3FU.

Please RSVP with Robert's son, John, if you can attend as they are arranging refreshments afterwards: His phone number is 07957 148818 and email johnblows@hotmail.co.uk.

There is very limited car parking at the Methodist Church however, parking within a few minutes' walk can be found at Church Road KT22 8BG (note this is opposite the Parish Church) and The Swan Centre, Leret Way.

Upcoming Training and Events

Friday 29 May - Sunday 31 May 2026
Whitemoor Lakes, Staffordshire

Cost: £75 (£30 deposit required at booking)
Age: 11 (must be in Year 7) to 16 years

**Thames North & Southern Synod
Youth Residential 2026
“WISE WORDS”**



 **Book by 22 Feb**
www.bit.ly/residential2026

Outdoor Activities
Creative Workshops
Games
Discussion
Worship

Southern Synod's Youth Residential 2026!

Bookings are now open for the Thames North & Southern Synod Youth Residential 2026, “*Wise Words*”. Open to secondary school young people aged **11–16**, this fun, faith-filled weekend includes outdoor activities, creative workshops, games, discussion, and worship. **Book by 22 February** at www.bit.ly/residential2026

TALKING ABOUT... 2026

- WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 18 LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
- WEDNESDAY MARCH 25 THE FAMILY FILM CLUB RESOURCE
- MONDAY APRIL 20 INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP
- THURSDAY 28 MAY TALKING CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM
- THURSDAY JUNE 18 BAPTISM & DEDICATION
- TUESDAY JULY 21 CONNECTING WITH UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS
- MONDAY SEPTEMBER 21 MAKING THE MOST OF THE ADVENT RESOURCE
- MONDAY OCTOBER 19 HOW TO DISAGREE WELL
- TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER CHRISTIANITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO BOOK YOUR PLACE:
WWW.BIT.LY/T4lkingAbout

Talking about series...!

The Talking About Team have released the dates and speakers for the Talking About sessions this year confirmed. To book please visit: bit.ly/T4lkingAbout

Talking About

ABC's of LGBTQ+ inclusive language
 A place to start learning about the LGBTQ+ Community
 With space for asking of questions about how to support Children & Young people

Wednesday 18th Feb 7-8pm
<https://bit.ly/T4lkingAbout>

"Talking About the ABCs of LGBTQ+ Inclusive Language"

The Talking About team's first session of the year is "Talking About" the ABCs of LGBTQ+ inclusive language. This is a great opportunity to learn about the LGBTQ+ Community and creating a space on how to support LGBTQ+ Young People and Children. To book please visit: bit.ly/T4lkingAbout

TASTER SESSIONS @ LUTHER KING  **Luther King**
Theological College

Church Leadership Programme (CLP) Taster

Reflective Practice & Sustaining Leadership

- Explore your call through reflective practice.
- Discover how Luther King and the URC can inform your leadership.

Online via Zoom

12 February 2026
7:00pm-8:00pm

Sign up for free!

 learning@lutherking.ac.uk

 [lutherking.ac.uk/courses/training-for-lay-people](https://www.lutherking.ac.uk/courses/training-for-lay-people)



Church Leadership Programme Taster Session

Luther King Theological College (formally Northern College) warmly invites you to attend their taster sessions for their Church Leadership Programme (CLP) on **Thursday 12 February, 7–8pm**

This will take place online via Zoom and are open to anyone who would like to learn more about the programmes, including prospective students.

More information for this course can be found here;

<https://www.lutherking.ac.uk/courses/training-for-lay-people>

To join the Zoom Meeting:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88399225995?
pwd=wWEeusxuRdVlxcsCb6ZFKo6Ey6SFz3.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88399225995?pwd=wWEeusxuRdVlxcsCb6ZFKo6Ey6SFz3.1)

Meeting ID: 883 9922 5995

Passcode: 716649


Dunamis Project - Equipping for Spiritual Warfare

The **Dunamis** project


Equipping you to cooperate with the Holy Spirit

Equipping for Spiritual Warfare

Discovering Jesus' victory over evil through prayer



15th - 19th April 2026
 St Andrew's URC, Canterbury. CT1 2UA
 Wednesday mid-morning to Sunday lunch time



Equipping for Spiritual Warfare

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

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.

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.

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 fifth 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

Carbon Literacy for Christian Congregations

This Lent period, the Lent Study Group will be running a study group on "Carbon Literacy for Christian Congregations."

Carbon literacy offers a chance to consider how and why as Christians we should tackle climate change. And how best to do that as individuals and as a community.

The course will cover the following;

- Why should Christians care about climate change?
- The science of climate change
- Carbon footprints
- What can we do about climate change as individuals and as a congregation?
- Having hope for the future

Carbon Literacy is an accredited course. At the end of the course, the group will create two actions each which will be submitted to the Carbon Literacy Project. If they are happy with them, you will receive a certificate for your accreditation.

The course will be led by our Synod Green Apostle **Ian Moore**, and our TDO Revd Dr Charisa Hunter-Crump and will include a series of 5 sessions that will take place on Thursdays from 7-9pm on Zoom.

- February 26th
- March 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th.

To book your place on this very exciting course, please email Ian at green.apostle@urcsouthern.org.uk

**Free to Believe
Conference 2026**

'Come help us dream your future into birth'
Speakers: Ian Bradley, Jo Clifford, Graham Adams
Worship leader: Nicola Robinson

Wednesday 17 to Friday 19 June 2026
Highgate Conference Centre,
Northamptonshire

£275 (Same price as 2024)
Download a booking form at freetobelieve.org.uk
or email bookings@freetobelieve.org.uk



Free to Believe Conference 2026

The next Free to Believe conference is coming up this June 17-19, based on the topic "Come and Dream Your Future into Birth".

Speakers include Graham Adams, Ian Bradley and Jo Clifford.

More information about this exciting event can be found on the Free to Believe website here; <https://freetobelieve.org.uk/conferences.html>



Limitless Festival is a vibrant summer gathering for young people, featuring dynamic ministry and a packed programme of activities, sports, events, seminars, workshops, and late night venues.

As God breaks out in our lives, we breakout into the world! So what does it look like to represent Jesus through mission, justice, social action and evangelism?

Are you 11 or over and under 18, involved in the United Reformed Church and interested in going to this great event?

For more details contact:

Rev Andrew Willetts mdoandrew@urcwestmidlands.org.uk 07828195831 or

Rev Sally Willetts mdosally@urcwestmidlands.org.uk 07828110639

We book as a group; our group information can be found here:



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