



# Southern Synod News

Welcome to the latest edition of Southern Synod News. This month we welcome the appointment of a new Synod Clerk, have some news from our local churches as well as a report from the Training and Development Officer on upcoming training events...

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](mailto:office@urcsouthern.org.uk)) by Monday 25th May 2026.

[News](#)   [Changes in Southern Synod](#)   [Training and Events](#)

## Latest News



**Revd Dr Elaine Colechin is our New Synod Clerk!**

Southern Synod are delighted to inform you that our new Synod Clerk is the Revd Dr Elaine Colechin.

Elaine comes to us with a wealth of experience having ministered in a number of United Reformed Churches, including her current church, Bromley URC and serving as Area Leader for South London Synod Area.

Elaine said:

"I am really excited to accept this appointment at a time of change in the United Reformed Church. In Southern Synod, we are beginning to face some of the difficult challenges that go with that change and have recognised the importance of a strong Synod Office Team to support the needs of our local churches. I am looking forward to being part of that team and working more widely with Synod Committees and local churches to enable and encourage further what we are all called to: sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ."

Rev'd Russell Furley-Smith, Convenor of Synod Council said:

"I am delighted about Elaine's appointment. She already knows the Synod well, being a member of Synod Council, and has a great working knowledge of the URC. I am sure she will be a great blessing to us, and I am confident everyone will offer her support as she ends her ministry at Bromley and as plans to take up this vital role in the life of the Synod."

Elaine will be starting as Synod Clerk on 1st July 2026. Please join us in prayer as she prepares to become Synod Clerk and finishes her ministry in Bromley.



### **Spring has Sprung in Southern Synod!**

Spring has definitely arrived within the Synod, with beautiful church gardens providing a beautiful image of hope and new life. Here we have some beautiful daffodils which have brightened up United Emmanuel Church, Tunbridge Wells brightening up their local town centre!

*(Photo provided by Anne Stobo, Church Secretary at United Emmanuel Church)*

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## **Celebrations at St Barnabas United Church!**

We have some very exciting news from Eastbourne!

St. Barnabas United Church (LEP) in Eastbourne joyfully welcomes four new members!

"We are truly delighted to announce that, by the grace of God, our church family has grown with the addition of four new members. Our welcoming service was a wonderful occasion for celebration."

*(Photograph and quotation from Revd Memona Shahbaz).*

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## Southern Synod Big Day Out!

The Synod Fun Day Out will be taking place on **Saturday 20th June 2026** from 10am to 4pm at Shires Oast at The Hop Farm, TN12 6PY.

This will be a day full of fun, food and fellowship. Whilst a burger is provided with your ticket, please feel free to bring your own picnic.

Please book your tickets by **Wednesday 20th May!** Tickets will not be available for purchase after this date. We wouldn't want you to miss out, so please book your tickets as soon as possible!

Tickets: <https://bit.ly/SynodBigDayOut>

## Travel Grants

As we prepare for our Synod Day, we are eager to welcome as many people as possible from across our churches. We know that travelling together is often the most joyful and practical way for congregations to attend — and we want to support that.

To help make group travel easier, the Synod Fun Day organising committee is offering transport grants for congregations organising shared travel. This support can be used towards:

- Minibus hire
- Coach travel
- Other group transport arrangements

If your congregation is planning to travel together and would benefit from financial assistance, we warmly encourage you to apply. The application is straightforward: simply email Ruth on [ruthlucy@live.com](mailto:ruthlucy@live.com), outline your expected transport costs, and submit it by **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026**.

Our hope is that no church feels unable to join us because of travel costs. Synod Day is a celebration of our shared life, and we want every congregation — large or small, near or far — to feel fully included.

Please share this information with your church members and do get in touch if you have any questions.

With thanks for all you do, and looking forward to gathering together,

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## SMF Panel 2026!

The Synod's Strategic Mission funding continues this year. Last year we funded a variety of projects, from local church worker to trips to the seaside and this year we have already funded a garden project and AV equipment amongst other things. The Strategic Mission Fund Panel will next meet on 19<sup>th</sup> May, the deadline for applications for that meeting is 5<sup>th</sup> May. The fund awards for many different projects and activities, from small events like Easter events 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! There is no limit to the number of times a church can apply.

For a conversation about the fund please contact me, Jo Patterson, Mission and Discipleship Officer at [mdo@urcsouthern.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk).

The relevant papers can be found on the Synod website here: <https://southernynodurc.org.uk/document-library/> - under 'Mission'

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

We look forward to hearing from you.

Jo Patterson – Mission and Discipleship Officer.

**News from Southern Synod Staff**

## Upcoming Training for Southern Synod

### Resource Trainings

The next three Resource Trainings, open to anyone interested, will be as follows:

- June 8 – *Understanding the Mission Fund* led by MDO Jo Patterson
- July 13 – *Mission and Vision for your Congregation* led by MDO Jo Patterson and TDO Charisa Hunter-Crump
- September 14 – TBD

These are introductions to the topics, helping you know what resources are available, with answers to some frequently asked questions. They are always online on the second Monday of the month (except May, August, and December) from 18:30-20:30. All are welcome.

It's helpful if you can RSVP to the TDO [tdo@urcsouthern.org.uk](mailto:tdo@urcsouthern.org.uk) but you are also welcome to just show up on the night. [Join with this link](#). For more information, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#).

### Locally Recognised Worship Leader (LRWL) Training (Autumn Rotation)

A new LRWL rotation will begin in September with two events. An Introduction and Overview class will be held online on Tuesday evening, September 1, 18:30 to 20:30, and the first full class will be held in-person on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> of September, at Christ Church, Tonbridge. Applications are due 8 weeks prior to the start, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July. For more information, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#).

If you are unable to join this rotation, the next one will begin in March 2027 with an application deadline of 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2027. And remember that at least two segments of the Stepwise programme are required either before or during the LRWL training.

### Stepwise Peer Support Group: Faith-Filled Worship

The next Stepwise Peer Support Group, for developing our faith together, will be the Faith-Filled Worship course and will begin the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2026, from 19:00 to 20:30. The group will meet eight times, on the second, fourth, and fifth Tuesdays, finishing on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December.

For more information, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#). If you are interested in joining this Stepwise group, please contact the [TDO](#).

### Safer Sacred Spaces Mandatory Training

There will be two Safer Sacred Space Trainings in 2026. Both will be held online on Wednesday evenings, 18:30 to 20:30 on the following dates.

- 17<sup>th</sup> of June
- 21<sup>st</sup> of October

It is important that you RSVP to the [TDO](#). For more information, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#).

If you need training this year and cannot make either of these dates, please contact me.

### Area Elders Training

Elders Training (in-person) for 2026 will be on Sunday afternoons from 14:30 to 17:30 as follows:

- KESSA – 28<sup>th</sup> of June
- SSSA – 19<sup>th</sup> of July
- SLSA E – 6<sup>th</sup> of September
- SLSA W – 4<sup>th</sup> of October
- CSUA – 22<sup>nd</sup> of November

Please mark your calendars for the date in your area to join Elders from across the Synod as we learn together about Eldership as governance, worship leadership, mission, spiritual leadership, and pastoral care. If you or your group are unable to attend the training in your own area, you are more than welcome to join one of the other areas.

We encourage Elderships to travel together to these events. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. Please bring your own packed lunch.

Please RSVP as an Eldership, rather than as individuals, to the [TDO](#) indicating how many Elders will be attending from your group. For more information, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#).

### **Jesus-Inspired Church Training**

The first in the new series entitled “Jesus-Inspired Church” will take place online from 18:30-20:30 on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September. The topic for this class will be Inclusive Church as we explore Jesus’ ministry of inclusion and how this impacts our approach to being church. Its helpful if you can RSVP to the [TDO](#) but you are also welcome to just show up on the night. [Join with this link](#). For more information, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#).

### **Lay Preacher CPD**

The Lay Preacher Continuing Professional Development Day will take place in person on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> of September, 10:30 to 15:30 at Oxted URC.

Please RSVP to the Lay Preaching Advocate, [Deirdre Harrison](#). You are also welcome to just show up on the day. For more information, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#).

We encourage carpooling wherever possible. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. Please bring your own packed lunch.

The next Lay Preacher CPD will be online on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> of April, from 9:30 to 12:30. [Join with this link](#).

### **Sacraments Training**

The next Sacraments Training will be online on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2027 from 14:30 to 17:30 with in-person practicums for each area on the following four Sundays, also from 14:30 to 17:30. The dates are:

SSSA – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2027

SLSA – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2027

CSUA – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2027

KESSA – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2027

For more information about this training, please see the Southern Synod website using this [link](#).

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## Training and Development Website Pages

The training and development web pages have been out of date since the changes made by the TDO to the training calendar. These are now being updated.

The other pages that have been left with a *Page Under Development* notice, will be updated in June.

# Upcoming Training and Events



## Denominational-Wide Safeguarding Training 2026

URC Safeguarding are running a fascinating UK wide Safeguarding Training series.

Thursday 2nd July 10:30-12:30 ~ Domestic Abuse

Tuesday 7th July 13:00-15:00 ~ Supporting Survivors

Tuesday 14th July 19:00-21:00 ~ Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Modern Slavery.

Monday 7th September 13:00-15:00 ~ Elders as Trustees.

Tuesday 15th September 19:00-21:00 ~ Online Safety.

Wednesday 23rd September 13:00-15:00 ~ Spiritual Abuse.

Tuesday 6th October 19:00-21:00 ~ Adult Safeguarding.

Wednesday 21st October 13:00-15:00 ~ Discriminatory Abuse.

In order to book your place, please email Emma [emma.pearce@urc.org.uk](mailto:emma.pearce@urc.org.uk)

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## "Supporting Intergenerational Communities"

This is an exciting series of training workshops designed to help support the growth and development of intergenerational communities. Whether you are working with young people or looking to expand your ministries, these sessions will provide you with valuable insights and practices.

This will be co-delivered by URC's Children and Youth and Safeguarding. To participate in these **Zoom** sessions, please book by emailing [carrie.kaunda@urc.org.uk](mailto:carrie.kaunda@urc.org.uk)

Tuesday 8th September (19:30-21:00) - Growing Intergenerational Communities  
Tuesday 13th October (19:30-21:00) - Developing Spaces for Under 5s  
Tuesday 8th November (19:30-21:00) - Supporting Faith Development in Young  
People.

These workshops are an excellent opportunity to enhance your skills and knowledge in fostering intergenerational relationships and faith development. Don't miss out on the chance to learn and grow in these vital areas.

More information about each individual session can be found at

<https://southernsynodurc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Training-Workshops-for-Supporting-Intergenerational-Communities-6.pdf>

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### **Trinity Church Sutton: Celebrating Christian Aid**

Trinity Church Sutton would like to extend an invitation to all who wish to join them in celebrating Christian Aid.

Please come along for coffee, music and the power of hope. There will be music, readings and a film about Christian Aid and its work to end poverty and achieve climate justice.

Date : Saturday 16 May 2026

Time : 10.45am - 11.45am Coffee from 10am

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

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# Youthscape Essentials

All Round Training for youth work volunteers

## Introductory Day (in person)

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May 10am to 4pm

Lumen, 88 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RS

## Online Sessions

### Option 1 (7pm to 9pm)

June 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>

## Online Sessions

### Option 2 (10am to 12pm)

May 30<sup>th</sup>, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>

## Final Day (in person)

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 10am to 4pm

Lumen, 88 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RS



To book use QR code or link below

<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/yse/register>

Course Code: 2365449

## Youthscape Essentials

To book your place on this course please visit <http://www.youthscape.co.uk/yse/register>



*The*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church**

## Theology of Worship Group

The next speaker meeting for the URC Theology of Worship group will be **Tuesday 5th May 2026 from 7:30pm to 9:30pm via Zoom**. Our topic will be 'Playful Liturgy': A Theology of Worship for a Postmodern World.' Our speaker will be the **Revd Dr Charisa Hunter-Crump**, the TDO for the Southern Synod.

Charisa has an interest in postmodernism, Christology, and liturgy/worship, reflected in her doctoral research on *A Christological Deconstruction and Reimagination of Liturgy in the Local Congregation*. Charisa writes, "in this presentation I will consider why a playful and communal approach to our creation of worship is critical for the times in which we live and how this might be approached in the local congregation. I will also consider why 'liturgy' may be a more helpful concept than worship for this approach."

Email Richard Goldring, [rgoldring23@gmail.com](mailto:rgoldring23@gmail.com) if you would like to join the Zoom meeting.

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## Children's Ministry Essentials

Children's Ministry Network are running a 10-module programme entitled 'Children's Ministry Essentials.' This is a free, monthly, online children's ministry training taking place from 10am-12pm on Saturdays, or it can be self-paced online.

Topics include child development and spirituality, pastoral care, leadership, teamwork and the role of play - helping you grow in understanding, confidence and skills. For more information and to register visit [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk)

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*The*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church Youth**

## **Taize Pilgrimage 2026!**

Please join a group of young adults for a week at Taize, a monastic community in France. Experience daily prayers, communal meals, and workshops that encourage unity and spiritual growth.

This exciting trip is taking place from Sunday 9th-Sunday 16th August and is open for URC Youth Members aged 18-25.

For more information please contact  
[cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk](mailto:cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk)

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## **Save the Date: Thames North and Southern Synod's Creative Week 2026!**

Please save the date for Thames North and Southern Synod's joint Creative Week which will be taking place from **Monday 26th-Friday 30th October**. This will be an incredibly enjoyable week for young people in secondary school (aged 11-17). You will be able to choose between a variety of different creative streams including; drama, music, creative writing, movement & dance, stage craft.

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# 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](https://freetobelieve.org.uk)

or email [bookings@freetobelieve.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:mdoandrew@urcwestmidlands.org.uk) 07828195831 or

Rev Sally Willetts [mdosally@urcwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:mdosally@urcwestmidlands.org.uk) 07828110639

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



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[southernsynodurc.org.uk/newsletter](https://southernsynodurc.org.uk/newsletter)

