
News from the NW Synod 12 August 2015

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1: Day Conference – September 2015 ‘Remembering the past, Understanding the present, Building the future’ ‘A day conference of the United Reformed Church and the German Church of the Pfalz considering the commemoration of World War 1 and the lessons it has for us in the 21st century.’ Saturday September 19th 2015 Emmanuel URC, Trumpington Street, Cambridge 11.00 am – 4 pm. This is an open session of a theological consultation being held between the two churches at Westminster College, Cambridge from September 17th to 22nd.

The United Reformed Church has, for many years had a covenant with the Church of the Pfalz in Germany with many linked local congregations and other shared activities of which the biennial theological consultation is one.

Input to the day will be given from both German and UK perspectives with the opportunity for shared reflections.

The day is free to attend, attendees should bring their own lunch but tea and coffee will be provided. For planning purposes please register attendance by email to: international@urc.org.uk
Please email for further information and for details of parking or travel advice.

2: Safeguarding

It is hard to imagine that in this day and age there are still churches and chapels who do not take the issue of safeguarding seriously.

If you are involved with younger people (under 18) or with vulnerable adults it is essential that you have a written protection policy in place, and this should be reviewed regularly. However, safeguarding is more than just having a policy in place – it means having a culture of vigilance where everyone knows what to do if they have concerns. Safeguarding is preventative, rather than simply reactive. There needs to be a commitment to safeguarding and clear procedures for reporting concerns.

It is of course essential that there is not only a policy in place, but that it is complied with. This may seem an obvious point but a major church insurer has had a substantial legal expenses claim from a church which did have excellent policy in place but just did not follow it for certain ‘trusted’ people: Needless to say this proved to be sadly wrong!

Recent legal advice states that if a church is hiring out their premises then the church should ensure that the ‘hirer’ has a suitable protection policy in place. A church in the South West closed recently after employees at the independent nursery were charged and convicted of serious child abuse. With increased publicity in recent years there is no doubt that not having a safeguarding policy in force will not be considered reasonable by insurers or the law. CCPAS have an excellent website on this subject,

which answers the question as to whether a child protection policy is a legal requirement for a church. They state as follows –

You will not be breaking criminal law if you do not have a child protection policy. However, the government's statutory guidance – 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2010 – states that churches, other places of worship and faith-based organisations need to have appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (anyone up the age of 18 years). The Charity Commission requires every organisation that works with children, including places of worship, to have a written safeguarding policy and charitable status will not be granted unless a policy is in place. Insurance companies require written policies.

In addition Trustees providing services to children and vulnerable adults are required to inform the Charity Commission if they do not have a safeguarding policy in place and are not carrying out criminal records checks on Trustees (where legally possible) and workers (paid and volunteer). The Charity Commission would regard such a situation as a 'serious incident' and investigate. When filing their Annual Return, charity trustees are required to confirm that such policy procedures are in place.

Furthermore, in all insurance policies there is a 'duty of care' condition whereby one must take due care to prevent loss or injury. Failure to address the above issue could in theory invalidate an insurance claim. There is a wealth of information available on this subject to advise and assist and we would encourage every church and chapel to take this matter very seriously.

Kath Fowler, Legal & Trust Officer

3: Request from Michael Jagessar

Michael Jagessar is seeking information on how many black and ethnic minority people we have in the 20-40 age range in our churches. It would be helpful if you could let Hazel know in the office (0161 789 5583 admin@nwsynod.org.uk) the number of people in this age range from BME backgrounds so she can pass on the information to Michael.

4: Church Hymnary 4 on Sale

Every so often the Church House Bookshop has a sale. You may know that the Church of Scotland's hymnbook, Church Hymnary 4, was marketed south of the border as Hymns of Glory, Songs of Praise. It is exactly the same as CH4 except it has a different cover. The full music edition is normally £27 but is currently on sale for just £8; the words edition is normally £12 but is now on sale for just £4. You can find these via www.chbookshop.co.uk then search for Hymns of Glory, Songs of Praise.

Andy Braunston, Synod Clerk

5: Revd Geoffrey Bending It is with regret I write to inform you of the death of Revd Geoffrey Bending. Geoffrey had become frailer of late and moved into a care home earlier this year; he died on Sunday afternoon, 2 August. The funeral service will take place on Thursday 20th August at 1.45 pm at the Chilterns Crematorium in Amersham and afterwards at the Methodist Church (I believe in Princes Risborough where Geoffrey had been a member) for refreshments. Our thoughts and prayers are with his children and grandchildren.

Thames North Synod

6. Revd David AL Jenkins Very sadly we have to report to you that Revd David AL Jenkins (retired NSM, the original co-ordinator of TLS URC-wide, and of course deeply involved in District and Synod affairs for many years) died suddenly on Saturday. Funeral details to follow - it is likely to be a private family funeral followed by a Thanksgiving Service.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his widow, Jill, and the family.

Sue Russell, PA to the Moderator and Synod Clerk URC Thames North Synod

7: Revd John Waghorn died peacefully in his sleep on 6 August having been diagnosed with a brain tumour at the beginning of the year. Details of his funeral/thanksgiving service will follow once they are known, or by contacting the Synod Office.

Deborah Walker, Synod Secretary and Moderator's PA, United Reformed Church Wessex Synod Office