



*The North Western Synod*  
of the **United Reformed Church**

## North Western Synod Newsletter

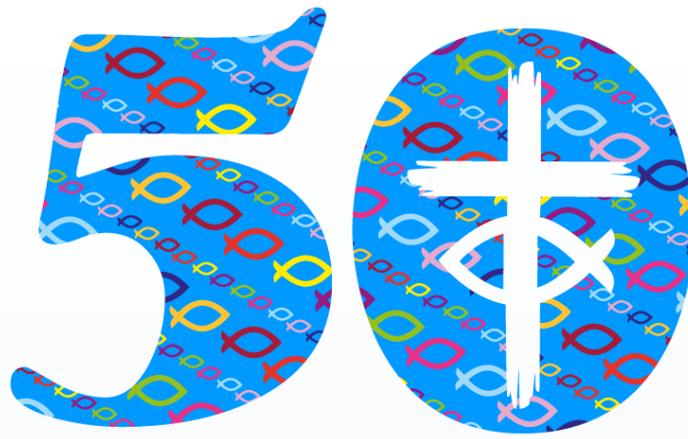
**Happy New Year to everyone from all at the Synod Office**

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*The*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church**

## **Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration—all the information you need to know**

If you asked for a seat or two to be reserved for the October 1 service, you should now have received an email from Eventbrite with your ticket/s. Please keep these safe as the codes will be needed to gain entry to the venue. You can bring a print out of the PDF or show them on your phone. You can also visit the Eventbrite website to amend the number of tickets required or cancel them if needed.

More than 600 tickets have been reserved and so if you have yet to reserve any, **please do so soon:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/50th-anniversary-service-of-thanksgiving-and-celebration-free-event-tickets-163843796205> Please encourage others to book the free tickets as well.

### **Open Church House**

Earlier that day, the Open Church House event will take place from 10am – 1pm. Hundreds of people are planning to visit the office not only to find explore aspects of the anniversary but to meet the staff too. All are welcome and the above link includes an option for those wanting to visit Church House.

### **Celebrate Together**

Copies of [\*Celebrate Together\*](#), the brilliant new, joyously colourful anniversary booklet by Sam Richards and Ruth White, illustrated by Mark Beech and put together by Sara Foyle, are available to order from the [URC Bookshop](#). The book is **free** so please order as many as you can use. Please share this in your Synods, with committees and other networks so that the anniversary year starts in a celebratory fashion.

### **Local church packs**

All churches will receive a pack in the next month containing worship resources, a drama, a quiz, posters and other resources to help with anniversary plans. The resources will also be available to download.

## URC at 50: Worship Resources Competition



To celebrate the United Reformed Church (URC's) 50th anniversary, choirs, bands, individuals, songwriters, composers, and poets are invited to submit an entry into the URC at 50: Worship Resources Competition.

There are four categories in which you can enter: Traditional hymn/song, Poem, Contemporary hymn/song, Rap.

Judges will select a winner from each category. Winning entries will be included in a digital version of the URC at 50 resource pack for local churches for them to use in jubilee celebrations and/or Sunday services.

### Judging schedule

[The closing date for entries is 8 April 2022.](#)

Judges will assess each entry in May 2022.

Winners will be informed in June 2022.

Winners will be publicly announced at General Assembly in July 2022, at which the songs, or recordings, will be performed/played/sung.

The winning entries will be recorded and/or filmed in July 2022 for sharing online.

### Criteria

To enter, you must be a member or active adherent of a URC or a URC local ecumenical partnership, or URC Youth.

Entries can be new lyrics submitted to existing music within the public domain.

Entries must have a jubilee/URC at 50 anniversary theme and be suitable for use in collective worship.

Musical entries to new tunes must include lyrics plus musical score (PDF or JPG) and/or an audio recording (MP3 or MP4).

The competition is open to people of any age.

One entry per person/group.

Submit entries to: [mission@urc.org.uk](mailto:mission@urc.org.uk)

### Prizes

Winning entries will be played/performed at General Assembly in the Jubilee year. Winners will be awarded a commemorative trophy.

Winning entries will be included in a URC at 50 resource pack for local churches for them to use in local jubilee celebrations and/or Sunday services.

**Please note:** The URC reserves editing rights to ensure entries comply with copyright and are suitable for distribution across the denomination. Entrants will be contacted to ensure they agree with any changes made. In addition, the copyright of the work submitted needs to be with the individual/group or shared/managed by the URC, it must not be work published by any other body.

[www.urc.org.uk/50](http://www.urc.org.uk/50)

# National Ministers' Gathering Monday 9th May - Thursday 12th May 2022 Yarnfield Park Training & Conference Centre, Stone, Staffordshire

A heads-up to all Ministers (Word and Sacrament & CRCWs): You are encouraged to attend the National Ministers' Gathering this May.

We are delighted that **Najla Kassab** and **Pádraig Ó Tuama** have accepted our invitation to be speakers. **Revd Najla Kassab Abousawan**, from Lebanon, is president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and one of the first women to be ordained in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL). She was recently one of the international guests at the URC General Assembly.

Poet and theologian, **Pádraig Ó'Tuama's** work centres around themes of language, power, conflict, and religion. A former leader of the Corrymeela Community, he now travels widely as a speaker, teacher, and group worker. Many of you will know him from his contributions at the Greenbelt festival.

**Revd Traci Blackmon**, from the USA, will lead the Bible Studies throughout the week. Traci is the Associate General Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministry for the United Church of Christ, as well as the Senior Pastor of Christ the King UCC in Florissant, Missouri. She is a well-known speaker and author and provides key leadership in anti-racism work both in the church and the community.

Worship throughout the week will be led by the **Rev Dr Doug Gay** and **Iain McLarty**.

This won't be just about listening to distinguished speakers. The organizers of the Ministers' Gathering plan to give participants plenty of space and time to relax and catch up with colleagues as well as attending workshop sessions of their choosing.

If ministers request it, we hope that congregations and partnerships will be open to giving participants a Sunday free of engagement following the Gathering.

Please note that the Ministers' Gathering is separate and apart from EM requirements. For EM2s: The **Summer Retreat to be held in Cambridge from 24-26 June** (more information to be released soon) is a mandatory EM2 requirement and is fully funded by the URC. EM2s are encouraged, along with all Ministers, to attend the Ministers' Gathering in May.

## Funding Scheme

For Ministers serving Missional Partnerships, part of the costs of the Ministers' Gathering in May 2022 will be funded through the Ministers' Expenses Scheme operated on behalf of your local churches, with the balance met from the Synod Training Budget. Churches whose Minister is not part of the Synod Expenses scheme are invited to make a contribution to the costs of your attendance.

If you have questions, please reach out to Rev. Rob Hoch, PhD, Training and Learning Mentor at [learningmentor@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:learningmentor@nwsynod.org.uk).

[Ministers Gathering Letter 2022](#)

[Ministers Gathering 2022 booking form](#)

# What is God asking of **YOU?**



## **Ministry Enquirers' Event**

to help you think about God's call to Worship Leading, Lay Preaching,  
Ministry with children and young people, the Ministry of Word and  
Sacraments or Church Related Community Work.

## **Enquirers' Event**

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022

10am-3pm online

Register with [ministries@urc.org.uk](mailto:ministries@urc.org.uk)  
to receive Zoom details

A photograph of two laptops on a wooden desk. One laptop is in the foreground, slightly out of focus, and another is behind it. The text is overlaid on the image.

**Meet up and share  
ideas on hybrid:  
worship, children's work,  
outreach...**

Meeting ID: 841 2792 2403

Passcode: 244431

**Wednesday 23rd February 7.30pm**

Following our successful training sessions, Education & Learning and Children & Youth invite you to meet together.

We hope this will become a regular gathering.



Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972

**Email: [jenny.mills@urc.org.uk](mailto:jenny.mills@urc.org.uk) for more information.**

## Heart Edge

Andy Salmon priest in charge at Sacred Trinity Church, Salford, has forwarded the attached to me for circulation. Please feel free to book if you are interested.

I'm excited that we've got a great HeartEdge event coming up in February. We're playing it safe and sharing it on Zoom although people will be able to attend in person as well. It's one that you might find helpful but you might also want to invite anyone who is involved in the music or worship in your church to come along to. It's Music and Liturgy for Lent. With Andrew Earis and the HeartEdge Choral Scholars teaching songs, hymns & Chants for Lent. We want this to be a really practical session and although the Choral Scholars are capable of really complex settings they're going to be concentrating in this session on music that can be replicated in our ordinary churches with limited resources. On 19 March we will run a sister event on Music and Liturgy for Easter. Please share widely.

Tickets from eventbrite here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/music-and-liturgy-for-lent-tickets-230380122147>

Andy Salmon

North West Co-ordinator of HeartEdge

Any queries please do contact me and I can give you Andy's contact details direct.

For further details about Heart Edge see <https://www.heartedge.org>

Mike Aspinall [mike54.ma@gmail.com](mailto:mike54.ma@gmail.com)

## GEAR—Refreshing your Ministry

GEAR are running another 'Refreshing Your Ministry' session on Zoom with worship, Biblical input and prayer. Our first one for 2022 is on Thursday 10 February from 2-3.30pm, and will be led by John Proctor, our former General Secretary. John's title is: "Holy Week in Luke's Gospel - Jesus in grief, Jesus as guide, Jesus as giver" All active and retired ministers and CRCWS, local leaders and lay preachers are welcome to join us, and it's completely free. If you'd like to register, please contact Richard Bradley for the Zoom details [richardbradley@cantab.net](mailto:richardbradley@cantab.net)

## Meet...Mike Aspinall



I was born and grew up in Bury, Lancashire. I went to a CafE Junior School, onto a Grammar Technical, then on to university to study Environmental Engineering at Loughborough University. This gave me a chance to study, whilst enjoying my favourite sport of rugby, until I dislocated my knee in my final year. My university course was a “thick sandwich course”, 2 years in university, 1 year in industry and final year at university. I was fortunate to be placed with a firm of consultants just outside London for my industrial year, and for site experience they sent me for 6 months to work in Oman. This was helping to build the basic infrastructure of hospitals, schools, electrical power stations, sewage plants etc. It was an amazing experience. I arrived at 3.00am in January with temperatures mid-70F and left in July at temperatures approx.130F in the shade! We worked 6-days a week, and spent our spare time playing badminton in floodlit outdoor courts at night (too hot during the day) and playing rugby-7’s on sand. I played for an unofficial England team in a 7’s tournament, organised by our Omani-hosts. On our 1-day off a group of us would hire a dhow to sail around the coast to find secluded coves to swim, sunbathe and generally relax - eating rock-oysters straight from the rock-pools.

On leaving university, I joined a building services contractor working on-site to install the services I would one-day design, to learn the problems as well as how everything needed to fit-together.

5-years later I joined a firm of consultants to undertake the design-side which really was my passion. ( I was the first engineer ever to design a sealed commercial domestic hot-water pressurised system which became an industry standard - sadly at the time I didn’t think of patenting it!)

As a designer I worked on a myriad of projects, including housing, schools, offices, hospitals, churches, heritage and industrial buildings. For the last 20 years of my work, myself and 2 colleagues set-up our own consultancy business. After 41 years I finally stopped my secular employ (in 2016) and now concentrate on Synod and church work, hopefully using my work experience when appropriate.

I have always considered myself a Christian. I grew up being involved with cubs then scouts, with close church links. I learnt to play an E-flat base and played with Bury Silver Band, one of our highlights leading Whit Sunday parades through Bury, and carols in the town centre. My mum took me to evensong at our local parish church, I was confirmed at 8-years and became an ‘altar-boy’. When at University I found a very friendly local Anglican church in Loughborough. It was in marrying Barbara (in 1976) that I came across the URC, as she was a member at Bury URC. We became members at Edgeley URC in 1984 (as we now lived in Edgeley) and we soon immersed ourselves in the life of the membership. I became an Elder the following year and Church Secretary some 2 years later. I served as District Secretary until I felt called to undertake the TLS course to become an accredited Lay-Preacher in 2001. Some 2-years later in taking my daughter to a “Come-and-See” day, I felt called to ministry, and eventually became a Non-Stipendiary Minister in 2009.

I have always felt called to ministry in the community/workplace, although fully understand the need for church-links/base of my ministry.

I continue as Synod Property Consultant and feel my life experiences in buildings, church and community are an asset in both my Synod and local church work.

I realise I haven’t said much about my family, but I have 2-daughters, my eldest, Sarah, a deputy-head at an academy in Sheffield, and Samantha an SCM minister in Leeds, both married. And I have 2-grandsons which bring so much joy to everyone, and I adore them, being fortunate to being able to be with them every Wednesday - so apologies if you try to contact me then. My hobbies now include baking (bread my passion) and archery, when I get chance to shoot.

## For your prayers

In each newsletter we would like to share peoples situations and Churches who you might remember in your prayers. If you have any prayer requests to include in this section please send them to [office@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:office@nwsynod.org.uk).

This week we invite you to pray for:

- Those attending and making decisions at Synod Meeting
- For the congregations of churches which have decided to close, and for all those who are facing difficult decisions about the future of their fellowships and buildings.

