



North Western Synod Newsletter

Spring Synod 2024



Good News stories

- Synod Admin Assistant—Katherine Adewumi

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Spring Synod 2024—Saturday 23rd March

Our Synod is now only a week away and will be held on Saturday 23rd March 2024 at St Andrew and St George's URC, Bolton.

If you are not able to attend the meeting, or have already asked someone else from your church to attend as Synod Representative, could you please make sure that you let Kerry at the Synod office know by Wednesday 20th March 2024.

In line with our Eco policy, and our practice over recent years, we are not sending out printed copies of the Book. If you do require a printed copy of the Book of Reports please notify Kerry Later at the Synod Office no later than Wednesday 20th March 2024 at office@nwsynod.org.uk or by telephone on 0161 769 1122. There will be a small number of large print copies of the Book of Reports available at the meeting for those who require them.

You are encouraged to bring an electronic device to enable you to access the [Book of Reports](#) during the meeting.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at St Andrew and St George's, Bolton in person, or on line.

Click here to view [Book of Reports](#)

Synod Admin Assistant—Katherine Adewumi



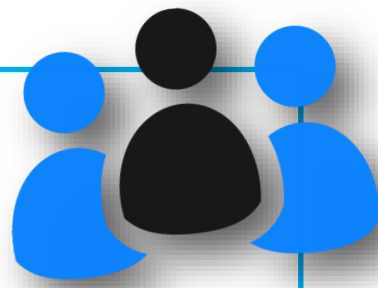
Hi, my name is Katherine and I am the new admin assistant working at the North Western Synod in Salford. With many years' experience working within the civil service I decided I would like to work fewer hours, and for a smaller organisation. I am delighted to be now be working for the United Reformed Church.

I was brought up Christian, mostly in Nigeria. My parents let me choose which church I went to whilst growing up and I attended the local catholic church with my friends. In my adult life I attended silent worship with Quakers at A Friends' Meeting

House, although I have not been for a few years now.

I live in Salford with my husband Ian and 2 black cats named Jessica and Pandora. I am happy to be working fewer hours now and have more time for my family and my hobbies. My hobbies include singing, playing guitar, gardening and yoga amongst others. I drink a lot of tea, especially green teas, and spice/herbal infusions. I also love spicy vegetarian food.

My team at North Western Synod has been friendly and welcoming. I look forward to meeting other members of staff from the URC community.



Save the dates

- **Spring Synod - 23rd March 2024 Venue:** St Andrew & St Georges
URC Bolton
- **Lay Preachers Away Day Cumbria Area—20th April**
- **Ministers Away Day—16th April 2024 Venue:** The Delta Marriot Hotel Garstang Road
Preston PR3 5JB (will obtain a certificate for Safer Sacred Spaces)
- **Ministers' May School—20th—23rd May 2024**
- **Lay Preachers Training Day—15th June 2024** (will obtain a certificate for Safer Sacred Spaces)

Elders' Enrichment Days 2024

16th March: Cumbria Area

27th April : Lancashire Area

11th May: Central Area

21st September: South Area

26th October: Cumbria Area

Disciple^ship

Lancashire Area Elders' Enrichment Day 2024

You are invited to our annual Elders Enrichment Day for the Lancashire Area on 27th April. This year it will be held again at the popular and beautiful grounds of StonyHurst College (Christian Heritage Centre), Hurst Green. Please see info below and please register with Kerry Later office@nwsynod.org.uk asap. Numbers are limited!

Please share with all your Elders. We are looking forward to see you all there!!



ELDERS' ENRICHMENT DAY 2024
LANCASHIRE AREA

VENUE: CHRISTIAN HERITAGE CENTRE
THEODORE HOUSE
STONY HURST, BB7 9PZ

DATE: 27TH APRIL 2024
TIME: 10AM-3PM
REFRESHMENTS FROM 9:30AM AND LUNCH IS PROVIDED

RSVP: KERRY LATER OFFICE@NWSYNOD.ORG.UK
BY 19TH APRIL 2024

PARKING BEHIND THE HERITAGE CENTRE BUILDING

Disciplehip

Day Module for Interim Moderators

For those either serving as Interim Moderators or considering the role of IM, our day-long session 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (**Saturday, 13 April 2024**) will include presentation and conversation around the following topics:

- I. **Theology:** spirituality of transition process (finding, listening, discerning, etc);
- II. **Pastoral Role of IM:** how to facilitate reflection, looking back, looking forward, the place of gentle challenge;
- III. **Call Process:** Principles and Steps + flowchart + how to do a Congregational Meeting (Zoom, no Zoom, hybrid, in person (more than one meeting));
- IV. **Situational Learning:** Art of Listening/Learning/Asking the right questions in the middle of complicated situations.

Equal Opportunity: Ensuring Inclusivity and Diversity in the call process.

Leaders include Rev. Clare Downing (Moderator), Rev. Richard Bradley, Elizabeth Hall, Rev. Mike Aspinall, and Rev. Dr Rob Hoch.

Who is this for? The training is available to those who might consider offering to do the IM role as well as those simply wanting to explore it further. Need for someone to fill the role will be variable.

Where will we meet? Synod Boardroom, lunch provided (please note any dietary requirements with Kerry when you make the reservation).

Additional questions? Email Rob Hoch at learningmentor@nwsynod.org.uk.

Please RSVP with office@nwsynod.org.uk

CREATING A CULTURE OF INVITATION

an open Mission & Discipleship Network Meeting with Michael Harvey

(21 March at 7.30 pm on Zoom)

AN OPEN MISSION &
DISCIPLESHIP NETWORK
MEETING

creating a
culture of
invitation

WITH MICHAEL HARVEY

21 MARCH AT 7.30 PM
MEETING ID: 898 5129 3330
PASSCODE: 053406

ALL WELCOME



It's easy to think there's some huge, complex mystery to getting people into our churches - after all, there's no shortage of Church Growth courses, programmes and organisations.

Michael Harvey disagrees - and with good reason: he's seen just how effective creating a culture of invitation is! God is the Great Inviter, he maintains. God is at work in people's lives and hearts; what God needs is church members who are attentive to God's voice whispering names in our ears and who will then invite them to church.

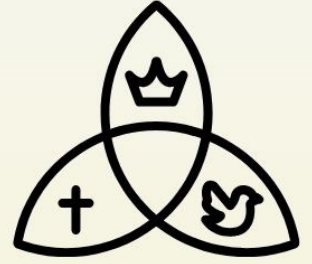
Michael was the founder of Back to Church Sunday. He's an international speaker who works on a PayWhat You Can basis. You can find out more at <https://www.unlockingthegrowth.com/>. He'll be working with the Synod over the next three years to create a culture of invitation. Come and listen on 21 March as he sets out the vision!

Join using the link <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89851293330?pwd=WGloYnhneTVITE93VXhLZmJXcHdqdz09> or the Meeting ID: 898 5129 3330 and Passcode: 053406.

For more information please contact Revd Richard Bradley— Convenor of the Synod's Mission and Discipleship Network on Richard.bradley@nwsynod.org.uk // 01706 369622 // 07483 155807



Thinking about Pentecost+



Monday 22nd April 2024 7pm on zoom

With the URC NW Synod South area preachers' and worship leaders' circle and Liz Delafield (Mission and discipleship mentor).

Meeting ID: 858 6157 3748

Passcode: 426229

Open to all who lead worship.
We will be exploring resources and ideas for:

- Pentecost (19th May)
- Trinity Sunday (26th May)
- Environment Sunday (2nd June)

Contact

**liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk for
more information, or to tell me
you're coming**



Cumbria Area Lay Preachers' Away Day

Join us for a Lay Preachers Away Day on the topic of Living with the Sermon: Signposts on the Footpath of Preaching. Drawing from his forthcoming book by this title, Rev'd Dr. Rob Hoch (Yidokodiltona), offers practical signposts, theology, and wisdom for those who live with the sermon. Whether you have been in the pulpit for many years, or have just begun the journey, this conference will add to your wisdom and joy in the preaching life. Register by email: admin@nwsynod.org.uk



LIVING WITH THE SERMON: SIGNPOSTS ON THE FOOTPATH OF PREACHING

CUMBRIA AREA LAY PREACHERS AWAY DAY

Saturday 20th April

Venue: The Rheged Centre, Redhills, Penrith,
Cumbria, CA11 0DQ



Revd. Dr Rob Hoch

Drawing from his forthcoming book by this title, **Rev'd Dr. Rob Hoch** (Yidokodiltona), offers practical signposts, theology, and wisdom for those who live with the sermon. Whether you have been in the pulpit for many years, or have just begun the journey, this conference will add to your wisdom and joy in the preaching life.

Register by email: deputyclerk@nwsynod.org.uk



What other Lay Preachers had to say about our Away Days

"A sense of community; a sense of recognition for all the lay preachers; encouragement to continue struggling with preparing and leading worship, because God is in it with us."

"I came away feeling blessed and looking forward to the next one."

"I appreciated the warm, inclusive atmosphere, feeling accepted by those with a lot more experience than I have. Leaders with knowledge, sincerity and humility- and a lot of fun!"



Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

Training:



Face to face Intermediate Safeguarding training

Dates and venues are currently being finalised for face-to-face Intermediate safeguarding training in most missional partnerships.

In the meantime, joint training with the Mersey Synod is taking place as follows:

- Wilmslow URC – Monday 25 March 2024 6-9pm

To register and book a place please contact: Pauline Burke, the Mersey Safeguarding Administrator on: safeguardingadmin@urcmerseysynod.org.uk

All Church Safeguarding Coordinators, Ministers and Church Secretaries will be contacted with an up-to-date list of people connected to the church, with their current safeguarding training and DBS status. This will assist churches to establish who needs to complete what level of training and when.

Advanced Training

Advanced Safeguarding training is going to be jointly delivered with Mersey Synod in 2 x 2-hour modules (Module 1 & 2) and is mandatory for:

- Youth & children workers including volunteer leaders
- Adult workers including volunteer leaders

Although, if you have completed the Intermediate Safeguarding training, you are also welcome to attend.

Dates for your diary are as follows:

Module 1:

Wednesday 17 April 2024 1-3pm *

Monday 29 April 2024 6.30-8.30pm

Module 2:

Wednesday 8 May 2024 10-12pm

Thursday 30 May 2024 6.30-8.30pm

***change in date**

Click on the link www.ticketsource.co.uk/urc-mersey-synod to register your interest.

Foundation e-Learning

Find attached the link for the URC Foundation Safeguarding e-Learning

Any person with a role in a URC church that hasn't completed URC safeguarding training in the last 4 years is required to complete the Foundation e-learning as a minimum, ideally individually but it can be facilitated in small groups if people do not have access to the internet, a computer/ device or both. <https://www.urclearninghub.org.uk/course/view.php?id=24>

Church Safeguarding Coordinator training

Church Safeguarding Coordinator (CSC) online training is now available and details are as follows. Please click on the link below to register:

Wednesday 20 March 2024 6.30-8.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/urc-church-safeguarding-coordinator-training-m-nw-synods-tickets-803403530587>

This is a 2-hour online training course for URC Church Safeguarding Coordinators, to help them in their role and to understand their responsibilities. Also, an opportunity to network with others, discuss issues and concerns and ask questions to clarify policy and procedure.

(NB: This is the same course delivered in June, July and August 2023, so if you attended last year, there is no requirement to complete it again, unless you want to!)

URC Denominational (Church House lead) Safeguarding Training for 2024 (please click on the link for further information)

[URC Denominational Safeguarding Training 2024 \(urc.org.uk\)](https://www.urc.org.uk)

Topics include:

- Domestic Abuse
- Modern Slavery
- Refugees & Asylum Seekers
- Adult Safeguarding
- Spiritual abuse
- Online safety
- Supporting survivors

- Substance abuse
- Elders as Trustees
- DDC DBS verifier training and safer recruitment

Annual Church Safeguarding Returns for 2023

The portal is now closed but if you have not completed this online you should receive a paper copy in the post. Please can you complete this and return back to the Synod Office in the stamp addressed envelope provided.

Safeguarding Contacts:

Yvette Hansbury-Robinson is the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

For General safeguarding queries, relating to safeguarding training, DBS and the annual church safeguarding returns, please email the safeguarding team on safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk

For queries relating to safeguarding policy & procedure and safeguarding allegations/ concerns, please contact Yvette on:

Email: Yvette.robinson@nwsynod.org.uk

Mobile number: 07827-390299



Stepwise Faith Filled life

Join us on a journey to explore faith and life with a group across the Northwestern Synod. Sessions will take place monthly via zoom.

The first session will be at
7pm on Wednesday April 24th.

To register, or for more information, please contact Liz Delafield on liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk by 3rd April.



Dear friends,

Want to make 2024 a year to deepen your Christian faith? Please register for the Faith Filled life group beginning on Wednesday April 24th at 7pm.

What is Stepwise?

Stepwise is the discipleship development programme from the United Reformed Church. It is for everyone.

If you are keen to reflect on, and develop your Christian faith, ready to be stimulated and challenged, and want to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others, then Stepwise is what you're looking for.

Who is it for?

Faith-filled Life is for anyone who wants to develop and grow in their Christian faith and discipleship. It provides a foundation for exploring more deeply the call to discipleship in the 21st century. Past participants have included people new to the Christian faith as well as experienced elders and ministers. It does assume some prior knowledge of Christianity and the Bible, but guidance can be given to help you access the course if this is a new thing for you.

What does it cover?

Faith-filled Life is made up of seven key themes:

- Why Stepwise? An introduction to Faith-filled Life
- Who am I? Exploring identity and faith
- Where do I fit? How faith shapes our daily life
- Where do I fit in my community? Thinking more about God's mission in the world and how you are part of it.
- My walk with God - what journey am I on?
- Dealing with challenges? Building confidence and resilience for facing life's challenges
- Which way now? Looking back and looking forward

What is the time commitment for Stepwise Faith filled life?

The course takes place over 8 sessions of up to 2 hours each. They will take place once a month over zoom. We plan to organise an in person Away Day later on in the course to cover a couple of these sessions.

In between the sessions you are asked to do some reflection, preparation and follow up using the URC Stepwise Hub online (This is not “homework” and no-one will check up on you- but it will enhance your experience of the course if you can give time for this.) Most participants tell us that their preparation for each session takes about an hour, with some spending more or less. There is also a practical group project- a way of putting things into practice. You are also asked to meet with a mentor (chosen by you) three times to reflect together on your discipleship journey. You are also invited to keep a journal (or use another way of reflecting that works for you).

What are the types of things to expect in a stepwise session?

All sessions begin with prayer and in reflecting about where we have seen/experienced God. There is some Bible study, discussion as well as videos and other resources to engage with. There are plenty of opportunities to shape the session with your own questions and reflections. There are no right or wrong answers, and everyone’s contribution is valued.

How, when and where will the sessions take place?

Sessions will take place monthly via zoom with an in person away day.

Who will facilitate the course?

The course will be facilitated by the Mission and Discipleship Mentor team: Daleen Ten Cate, Liz Delafield, Lawrence Heath-Moore and Alastair Smeaton.

What happens after I have finished the course?

Faith filled life finishes with an exploration of “What next?” You will be invited to reflect on where your faith journey is taking you next. For many this is simply to continue your current pathway with renewed sense of purpose. For others faith filled life is the first step to another Stepwise strand, such as Faith filled worship or community. (It is a requirement for the other strands that Faith Filled Life is done first). Some may wish to take on a new ministry in church or make a different lifestyle choice. Your facilitator and mentor will help you to consider those next steps for you, and signpost you to any training that is available.

Where can I get more information?

This video gives further information about Stepwise. <https://youtu.be/DR7aQbJ74bl>

Or on this webpage: <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/developing-your-faith/stepwise/>

If you would like to sign up for the course, please contact:

Liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk before 3rd April. (This is when the registrations will be sent to the Stepwise office. It takes a few weeks for the admin to be processed).

We look forward to journeying with you as we deepen our discipleship together,

The Mission and Discipleship Mentor team.



An Introduction to Godly Play

There are still a few places left on this day session...

An introduction to Godly Play

For worship leaders, children's workers, and the 'just curious'

Westbury Gardens URC, Blackburn

11th May 2024, 10am - 3:30pm



With Richard Knott from

Godly Play ^{UK}

taking childhood spirituality seriously

Book your place at www.bit.ly/GodlyPlayIntro

An Introduction to Godly Play – a different way of engaging children with the Bible as they grow spiritually.

Westbury Gardens URC, Westbury Gardens, BB1 1XF

11th May, 2024 from 10:00 – 15:30

Godly Play begins with children's innate sense of the presence of God. It offers Christian language as a support for their ongoing spiritual formation. It teaches a process that aims to promote an inner working model for life-long Christian learning.

The session will be led by Richard Knott, a certified Godly Play trainer.

During this introductory session you will have an opportunity to experience a whole Godly Play session, followed by two sessions each exploring a different Godly Play story genre. There is also ample opportunity to discuss key elements of the Godly Play approach to childhood spirituality. The group size is small, which is ideal for exploring all your questions. This session open to anyone and is especially designed for those who have little or no previous experience of Godly Play. This opportunity is suitable for children's leaders, youth leaders, teachers, ministers, chaplains or anyone interested in childhood spirituality.

The venue offers a modern and flexible setting open to all. Please let us know of any access requirements you have when booking. Tea, Coffee and light refreshments will be available, please bring your own lunch. You may also like to bring a cushion to sit on, as wherever possible we like to sit on the floor for Godly Play.

There are only 20 places available – although there is no limit on the number of people from a church team - so early booking is essential.

Book your place(s) at: <https://bit.ly/GodlyPlayIntro>

If the event is oversubscribed, we will endeavour to arrange a further session later in the year.

An Introduction to Brick Church

Would your church be happy to host an 'Exploring Brick Church' session for the other churches in your Missional partnership?





An Introduction to Brick Church

What is it?
What does it look like?
How do we start it?

Book your place with
cydo@nwsynod.org.uk

The following Missional Partnerships have sessions booked:

Lancashire North – Saturday, April 13th 10-Noon at Sefton Road URC





An Introduction to Brick Church

What is it?
What does it look like?
How do we start it?

Saturday, April 13th
10-12am
Sefton Road URC, Morecambe

Book your place with cydo@nwsynod.org.uk

East Cheshire & Derbyshire Borders - Saturday, May 18th 10-Noon at Hazel Grove URC



The United Reformed Church of England

An Introduction to Brick Church

What is it?
What does it look like?
How do we start it?

Saturday, May 18th
10-12am
Hazel Grove URC, Short Street, Stockport
SK7 4AD

Book your place with cydo@nwsynod.org.uk

If the Missional Partnership to which you belong hasn't booked a session yet, get in touch with Leo at cydo@nwsynod.org.uk

Holiday Club Material



'Sparks and Stories', the free Holiday Club material for 2024 is available for free download from [Holiday Club Materials - United Reformed Church](#)

Tying in with our theme for the year, **Story Story Story**, we are gathering round the campfire, wrapped in our cosy camp blankets and armed with steaming mugs of hot chocolate and marshmallows on sticks to toast in the flames, as we listen to and share stories of Jesus together. What stories did Jesus tell and what stories were told about him? How does his story mingle with our stories? Let's find out.

This material is not designed to be prescriptive, although you may use it that way if you wish. Nor is it designed to be exclusive; feel free to swap and change the ideas included

here for ones you think more suitable for your groups. It is written as a five-day plan but you may decide to do a one-day extravaganza, a club once a week through the holidays, or maybe just select a couple of the sessions to do on two or three days in the week.

The material is supported with YouTube videos and recording - including 3 songs written by our CYDO, Leo.

Remember: grants of £50-£100 are available to churches running holiday clubs – and you don't have to be using the URC material to qualify! For further information contact Leo on cydo@nwsynod.org.uk

Youth Mental Health First Aid Course



Online Youth Mental Health First Aid

Learn to support young people

- Gain an in-depth understanding of mental health and factors that can affect wellbeing in the youth sector
- Develop practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Feel confident to step in, reassure and support a young person in distress
- Enhance your interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening and learn to champion self-care

For more info and to book, contact:

 Children's & Youth Development Officers
Mersey Synod - Steven Mitchell cydo@urcmerseysynod.org.uk
Southern Synod - Tom Hackett cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk

Visit the MHFA England website at mhfaengland.org
Find us on social media @MHFAEngland

March 2024
Evenings 18:30-21:30
4 online sessions
Mon 11, Tues 12
Mon 18, Tues 19



Register at:
www.bit.ly/march2024mhfa

4x online evening sessions leading to a certificate in Youth Mental Health First Aid issued by MHFA England.

Youth MHFA offers an internationally recognised course designed especially for those people that teach, work, volunteer, live with or care for young people aged 8 to 18 years.

Participants learn how to provide information, tools and techniques to promote a young persons mental and emotional well-being and to support a young person who might be experiencing mental and emotional distress.

This course will be a blend of self-learning actives and live interactive sessions with the trainers and other course participants. The total learning time is approximately 16 hours.

Normally costing £200, the course is being offered to workers and volunteers in the United Reformed Church for only £29.50 – to cover the cost of the course handbook.

Book your place at www.bit.ly/march2024hfa

Virtual Gathered Youth Group

Want your young people to connect with other young people in North Western Synod?

Invite them to the virtual Gathered Youth Group on the 1st Wednesday of every month – 7-8pm on Zoom for games, quizzes and conversation. It's free – and they might actually enjoy it – but won't know about it unless you tell them! www.bit.ly/gatheredyouthgroup

VIRTUAL GATHERED YOUTH GROUP

On the first Wednesday
of every month 7-8pm



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.

This week we invite you to pray for:

- **Pray for the continued growth of church mission**
- **For the Churches who are facing difficult decisions about the future of their fellowships and buildings.**

