



Sharing the Vision

December 2020

News from the URC Wessex Synod



Note: Items headed in grey have appeared in the newsletter previously

Wessex Synod Office Christmas Arrangements

The Wessex Synod Office will close at 1.30pm on Friday 18th December and reopen at 9.30am on Monday 4th January 2021.

Emails and telephone messages will not be monitored during this period, and will be dealt with when the Synod Office reopens in January.

In the event of an emergency, please contact the Synod Moderator, Clare Downing, on moderator@urcwessex.org.uk or 07791 637320.

From everyone at the Wessex Synod Office we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

“Blue” Christmas

A couple of our churches are holding online services. Blue Christmas is a service of consolation and hope for people who find Christmas sad or difficult.

The Spire Church, Farnham will have a link on their YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5eOphpuQqL1wGVJ7iSQIuA> by the evening of Monday 21st December.

Oxford churches Wheatley, Summertown and Marston will be holding a Longest Night/Blue Christmas service on Monday 21st Dec at 6pm on Zoom, lamenting for the year and looking forward. If you would like to attend, please contact Revd Pauline Main for the zoom link at paulinemain@virginmedia.com

URC Children’s and Youth Work – Advent resources

This is a short [special supplement](#) to the bimonthly newsletter from the Children’s and Youth Team at Church House to share with you the resources that have been created by the team for you to use with children and young people throughout the weeks of Advent through to Christmas and Epiphany.

Walking the Way – Advent materials

The Walking the Way steering group has released materials for [Advent 2020](#), focussed on the Psalms in the lectionary for the season, offering reflections and activities which people can explore in their own households and bubbles, in what is likely to be a very different Advent than we are used to.

For this, and other resources, please visit the Walking the Way [webpage](#) and, in particular, the [resources](#) page, (you may need to clear your browser’s cache memory to view the latest versions of materials). The Walking the Way steering group is always on the lookout for stories and resources to highlight, as well as

reviews and comments to share: please e-mail wtw@urc.org.uk or phone on 020 7520 2718.

GEAR Advent 2020 Prayer Letter

The Advent Prayer Letter from GEAR is available to read at the following link:
[GEAR Prayer Letter](#)

General Assembly – Friday July 10th to Monday July 12th

At The Hayes, Swanwick (we hope)

Would you like to represent our Synod in the wider work of the URC?

As you know General Assembly was moved from 2020 to July 2021. We have offered those who were due to attend in 2020 the spaces for 2021, however there is likely to be some spaces, so if you are interested please let me know.

Karen Bell, Synod Clerk clerk@urcwessex.org.uk

2020 Hiring Return

For church treasurers and those responsible for church hiring.

In view of the Covid situation and the consequent very substantial reduction in hiring of most churches' premises, the Wessex Trust trustees have decided that, for 2020 only, a hiring return will not be required.

Please ensure that the person in your church who would normally do this is told.

Ray Dunnett - URC Wessex Trust Deputy Convener

Charities (Exception from Registration) Regulations 1996

Executive summary: The Government intend to extend the deadline which was to expire on 31st March 2021 for charity registration for excepted charities by up to 10 years.

Detail: Following the Churches' Legislation Advisory Service (CLAS) response to the consultation on exception from registration, the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has e-mailed CLAS as follows:

'We have carefully reflected on all the feedback we received. DCMS intends to extend the Regulations by 10 years to give excepted charities time to prepare for registration and to allow the Charity Commission as much time as possible to register all excepted organisations in a co-ordinated way.

DCMS and the Charity Commission are working on a plan to phase more organisations onto the register in a manageable way over the extension period and we will share further details in early 2021.

Extending the Regulations beyond 31st March 2021 requires Parliamentary approval, through Secondary Legislation. We intend to lay the necessary Statutory Instrument in early 2021. When a date is confirmed I will write again to inform you.'

CLAS and the Trust Office will keep a careful eye on further developments and watch out for the draft Statutory Instrument and will provide further updates on the timetable of the phasing that is to be implemented.

Re Frank Cochrane - Thank You from Pat and Family

On behalf of the family Col, Bob and I would like to thank all our church families and friends from all over the URC for the beautiful messages, calls, cards and prayers received following Frank's sad and very sudden death. It was such a shock to us all.

Everyone has been so very kind and we have received messages from churches and friends all over the country.

Frank loved his God and his ministry so much and we had so many happy memories of all his pastorates; Brighton, Carlisle, Bournemouth and Totton, even some work at Windermere Centre, and all the friends we made. Please continue to keep us all in your prayers as we come to terms and move forward.

Every blessing

Pat, Bob and Col.

A Festival of wonderful Christmas Trees at Guildford URC

Sunday 6th December to Sunday 20th December 2020

Address: 83 Portsmouth Road, Guildford, GU2 4BS

A series of Festival events are planned, but these will be subject to change due to coronavirus restrictions. For the latest information go to the website

www.guildfordurc.org.uk

News Story from Guildford URC and Prayer Request

We are very fortunate, and quite unusual, in that we have a resident caretaker. This has meant that our building could never be completely closed although in the first lock-down almost activities ceased including the various 12-Step groups (AA, NA etc. who met in our premises. However once the rules relaxed slightly many of them asked to come back which was permissible as they were self-help groups. We did a careful and thorough risk assessment and decided that we could let them, subject to certain necessary conditions. It helped that we have several entrances so two or three groups could be in at one time but kept completely separate. That the need for support from those fighting addictions is desperate is indicated by the fact that last month we had about a dozen different groups in, many on a weekly basis, and can be seen from this extract from one of several letters of appreciation we have received

"After an especially poignant meeting last night, I felt moved to write this letter to tell you just how much Guildford United Reformed Church is helping people by hosting AA meetings. So many of us are so grateful to you we want you to know what your leadership and generosity has meant for people who might otherwise have been in despair during this period.

Last night, six newcomers came into the meeting asking for help and thanks to you we were able to help them.... At the end of the meeting, the newcomers went away with a light in their eyes after hearing this message of hope.

Those we help cannot manage to get online, many do not have laptops and even if they could access the online AA meetings they are beyond being able to hear the message they need to hear via a computer screen. Therefore, for them to come into a room and receive warmth and advice is life-saving

We hear miracles happening week after week. Families have mums and dads who can cope because Guildford URC host AA. Children have parents who can look after them properly because you opened your doors to us.”

This has really brought home to us just how difficult things have been and still are, not only for those struggling to keep clear of addiction but also for members of their family. We thank God that we have been able to help, albeit small way. Obviously most other churches are not able to do anything similar but we would ask your prayers for such people and for that the key people in our church may remain Covid-free so that we can continue to be able offer our facilities to the groups.

Godfrey's Almshouses Trust

Godfrey's Almshouses Trust is a registered Charity (No. 254036) in Petersfield Hampshire

Close to Town Centre: A one-bedroomed flat is available for a person in need, aged 60 or over, resident in the county of Hampshire.

Priority will be given to members of the United Reformed Church.

Living room, Kitchen, Bathroom, Electric heating

Applications in writing only please to:

Godfrey's Almshouses Trust, c/o 12 Geddes Way, Petersfield Hants GU31 4DJ

Council for World Mission

CWM have produced a devotional resource entitled "2021 Sundays with CWM" which is available here: [Sundays with CWM 2021](#)

September Area Gathering video

The Synod Mission Development Group were delighted to arrange a series of four talks on "being church in New ways" in place of the regular area gatherings in September 2020.

If any wish to view the ten minute video by Revd Nick Stanyon, West Midlands Synod Evangelist, it can be found via the following link

<https://youtu.be/4jrr2mtfCFQ>

Nick has given permission for this to be used in any way desired by individuals and church groups.

The link is also on our Synod Website on the [mission and outreach](#) page.

Safeguarding Newsletter December 2020

From the Safeguarding Team at Church House and your Synod Safeguarding Officer.

Safeguarding Newsletter December 2020 - [Online version](#)

Safeguarding Newsletter December 2020 - [Print version](#)

The December safeguarding newsletter (both versions) has been uploaded to the Synod website on the [Safeguarding page](#).

Joint Public Issues Team

View the [November newsletter here](#)

News Update

News Update is seeking anything of interest for the denomination as a whole from across the country – and the nations.

Any news/photos/event information for the next edition should be sent to:

ann-marie.abbasah@urc.org.uk

You can subscribe to News Update via the link on the URC website.

View the [December News Update here](#)

URC Safeguarding Symposium and 5 year strategic plan

On 9 October 2020, the safeguarding team at the United Reformed Church (URC) launched the safeguarding strategic plan of the Church (2020-2025) at an online symposium. You can watch a video of the launch and download the presentations from the URC website <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding-symposium>

Here is the link to download a copy of the 5 year [safeguarding strategic plan](#).

New Safeguarding posters

Two new posters to support local churches in their safeguarding are available to download for free. These use symbols as well as text to enable children and also young people and adults with additional needs, limited literacy, or for whom English is not their first language, to access information about how to get help. Download the posters, '[Accessible CY and adult safeguarding coordinators](#)' and '[Accessible joint safeguarding coordinator](#)' for free.

Change of Date – Synod Big Day Out will now be in 2022

URC Wessex Synod - Big Day Out

Date: 7th May 2022

Time: 11am till 5pm

Venue: Hollycombe Steam Fair and Museum near Liss

(Wessex Synod will have sole use of the whole site)

Theme: Heroes and Villains

More details to follow.

Upcoming Synod events

Bookings for all events and training courses to

Ruth Heine at the Synod Office

Email: bookings@urcwessex.org.uk

Tel: 023 8067 4513

Development and Support

From your DSOs

The build up to Christmas is always a time of waiting, and this year more than ever we don't even know exactly what we are waiting for! In this we have the opportunity to focus on the wondrous story authentically – in that we can face it with similar uncertainty and confusion as the original characters! As DSOs we want to wish you a very Happy Christmas. Yes, it is strange. But yes, it is still Emmanuel!

We also want to wish you a very Happy and blessed New Year – we will be in touch as embryonic plans solidify. Please also be in touch with us with ideas and needs for Development work in your areas.

God bless you,

Mary and Ray

Discipleship Development Fund

Grants of up to £200 per person are available! To encourage individuals to engage with a journey of deepening personal discipleship. Individuals can apply for help with the cost of attending approved discipleship courses, activities or retreats offered by others, or a congregation can apply for help with the cost of buying in a speaker or other resources. Please contact your DSO to discuss your discipleship development in advance of an application to this fund.

[Discipleship Development Fund flier.](#)

Children's and Youth Events and Training

Youth Assembly 2021 for 14 – 25 year olds

Another wonderful opportunity for young people!

The URC's Children's and Youth Work team has organised two, free, live online events for all young people aged 14 to 25 that have a connection to the Church. Fun with 'Folk On' takes place on 30 January 2021 from 8-9.30pm, and a worship service takes place on 31 January 2021 from 8-8.45pm.

Bookings close on 27 January 2021.

[Read more](#) about Youth (*dis*)Assembled 2021.

Safeguarding Training – next online course

The basic safeguarding training course is delivered online across 3 sessions. Participants must attend each of the 3 sessions to complete the training and gain a certificate. On **Saturday mornings, 9.30am – 11am, on Zoom.**

23rd January 2021, 30th January and 6th February 2021.

Places are limited, booking is essential.

Mental Health First Aid training dates

Mental Health First Aid Training courses. Wessex Synod covers the cost for members of URCs and LEPs in Wessex Synod.

- **Awareness course.** This course is delivered online via Zoom, 9am – 1pm. **Wednesday 27 January 2021**, (book by 18 January 2021).
- **Become a certified Mental Health First Aider.** These courses are delivered online across four sessions with some self-learning exercises to complete in preparation for each of the live Zoom sessions with the trainer. Course dates;
 1. Certified **Mental Health First Aider** on Tuesday and Friday mornings 9am to 12 noon, from 23rd February – 5th March 2021. (Book by 15 February 2021).
 2. Certified **Youth Mental Health First Aider** on Tuesday and Friday afternoons 1pm to 4pm, 23rd February – 5th March 2021. (Book by 15 February 2021).
 3. Certified **Mental Health First Aider** on Monday and Thursday mornings 9am to 12 noon, 22nd March to 1st April 2021. (Book by 15 March 2021).

Booking for the above is essential. Please email: bookings@urcwessex.org.uk

- **Mentality.** These courses are delivered online as a one hour video. The cost is £15 + VAT (£18). Wessex Synod does not cover the cost of mentality at work courses.

1. **Mentality at Work** can be accessed here www.mentality.work

This course gives anyone the need-to-know essentials to spot the signs of poor mental health and take action.

2. **Mentality for Students** can be accessed here www.mentality.work

This course is aimed at University Students who would like to gain a base knowledge training so they can better support their friends, housemates and themselves. A one minute preview can be viewed at [Mentality for Students | Peter Larkum](#). Cost £15 + VAT. Wessex Synod may be able to help with the cost – contact your CYDOs: Phil Ray or Ruth White.

Children's Day 2021 – save the date!

Save the date – **Saturday 24 April 2021** – Venue to be confirmed

We will be inviting children between 7 and 13 years to come to an exciting Heroes and Villains Children's day next year. It will be held predominantly

outdoors in Forest Church Style, in small groups, so our hope is that it can take place even in the current climate.

Watch this space for further details and opportunities to book your places.

Wessex Summer Camps – save the date

16 – 18 July 2021 at Oakwood Activity Centre, Wokingham.

'Heroes and Villains' theme. For ages 8-11 years and 11-17 years.

A time for young people to have fun with others through a varied programme of activities, discussion and worship.

Bible Chatmats resource

A brilliant FREE resource from the Diocese of Bath and Wells. **Bible Chatmats** help families or small groups to engage with Bible passages using doodling and conversation. New ones are added weekly. Free to download, check them out here

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/youth-children/resources/bible-chat-mat/>

Here is an example – [Jesus the Miracle Maker](#).

Children's & Youth resources – on the synod website

Take a look at the Children's & Youth [resources page](#) on the Synod website!

Families on Faith Adventures @ Home!

Updates from Children's & Youth desk at Church House

Dialogue – online YouTube broadcast for 16 to 25 year olds

Fortnightly on Thursdays at 7pm. URC Youth offer a weekly online live YouTube broadcast called 'Dialogue'. Aimed at 16 to 25 year olds, each session explores a theme alongside a Bible passage, providing a spring board for further discussion and reflection. 3 Panelists, 3 Questions, 3 Values. All past episodes are available on YouTube for viewing at any time, plus all episodes this season (Sept onwards) are now available as podcasts.

Follow the URC Youth Dialogue Facebook page to engage and receive up to date information - <https://www.facebook.com/urcYouthDialogue/>

URC Website for information - <https://urc.org.uk/events-and-opportunities>

URC Children & Youth YouTube channel (Dialogue link) –

<http://bit.ly/urctrialogue>

Does your church have a good news story?

If your church has something it would like to share with people via the Synod Website page "[Stories from our Churches](#)", please send the article to the [Synod Office](#) and we will publish it on that page.

NB If using photographs please ensure you have signed permission from those people featured for it to be published on the Synod Website (not just for your own personal church's use) and supply this at the same time as submitting the article.

New Stories are added as when they are received, so do keep an eye on the page regularly.

Prayer Calendar

The Synod Prayer Calendar is available on the Synod Website and also each month in this newsletter.

Please note that it is updated from time to time, for example when a church closes it will be removed from the list.

Please refer to the website/newsletter before printing weekly prayer sheets to ensure the most up to date information. Thank you.

January

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brill • Cornerstone, Hythe • Wonersh
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abingdon: Trinity Church • Maidenhead
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Church Faringdon • Lymington • Basingstoke: London Street
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ Church, Henley-on-Thames • Southampton: Bitterne Park
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford: Blackbird Leys • Three Legged Cross • Guernsey

February

7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodley: Christ Church • Longham
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford: Cumnor • Bordon • Chandler's Ford: St Francis, Valley Park
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banbury: St Francis • Beacon Hill, Hindhead • Isle of Wight: Shanklin
28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford: Wheatley • United Church Dorchester

Items for the next edition to enews@urcwessex.org.uk

by 12noon on Monday 11th January 2021

Please submit news items in the form of:

a heading; date and venue details; a brief descriptive sentence and a website link.