

2024 Synod Meeting Dates

The dates for 2024 will be as follows:

Tuesday 20th February (online in the evening – [papers now available](#))

NEW DATE: Wednesday 24th April (online in the evening)

Saturday 12th October (in person, all day, United Church Winchester)

Holiday Forum in a Day - Saturday 24th February

Join online for a taste of what to expect at August's summer conference.

We'll be joined by **Rev Fiona Bennett** who leads our theme of '[Seeds and Yeast](#)' and **Rev Kura Mutimwii**, our worship leader. They'll give us a flavour of their sessions ahead of the summer conference. You can also expect games, hymns, youth events, crafts and an exclusive interview with Jack Giacaman, who joins us live from Bethlehem to talk about his life and work there.

The day will run in two parts: #1 from 9.30am-3pm and #2 from 7.30pm-9.30pm (with the option to join from 6.30pm to meet and share dinner virtually).

Feel free to drop in as you like throughout the day.

Join using this zoom link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85672315058>

Meeting ID: 856 7231 5058

See you there!

Christian Aid - Changemakers Conference - 2 March

We are so excited about the Changemakers Conference on Saturday 2 March 10.30am-1pm. It will be a chance to hear all about this year's Christian Aid Week plans, including stories shared by Philip Galgallo, Burundi Country Director about Burundi, our focus country this year.

Please sign up here [Changemakers Conference: Changing the world together | Christian Aid](#). You can join at St James Piccadilly, online or at our Watch Parties at **Woking URC** or St James Road Methodist Church, **Southampton**.

Here are invitations to the **Woking** and **Southampton** Watch Parties:

[Woking URC Supporter Conference Invitation.pdf](#)

[Southampton St James Road Methodist Supporter Conference Invitation.pdf](#)

Christ of the Ashes: finding life in the season of Lent

Saturday 16 March 2024 at Guildford URC. £5 per person.

An event organised by the Wessex Synod spirituality group.

[Further information](https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/event/lent/). Bookings: <https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/event/lent/>

Induction of Michael Hopkins

For those who have not already responded and would like to attend Michael's induction on **Saturday 23rd March** at 3pm at London Street URC, Basingstoke, please let me know by Monday 11th March at the latest for catering purposes. Many thanks.

Deborah - office@urcwessex.org.uk

Synod Big Day Out 2024 – bookings now open!

[Buy your tickets here](#)

Following the success of the last Synod Big Day out at **Hollycombe Steam in the country**, we have booked the site again for our exclusive use on **Saturday 4 May 2024, 10am – 5pm**.

There will be more steam rides open this year and additional programme activities provided by Wessex Synod.

We invite all churches, church user groups and community groups with links to URCs and LEPs in Wessex Synod to come and enjoy a day of fellowship, fun and worship.

Ticket prices are the same as in 2022:

£8 per adult, £5 per child - for up to 10 rides on the attractions

New this year are **tickets for unlimited rides on the attractions:**

Adult £10.50 Child £7.50

A free ticket can be booked for an accompanying carer.

Hollycombe's fabulous new café will be open this time and there will be other food and refreshment outlets. You are welcome to bring your own picnic.

We have listened to feedback and so this time the layout for the Synod activities will be more central and accessible for all. Synod activities include a large marquee with worship, stories and entertainment, as well as a marketplace with crafts, Synod Youth Executive, and church connections, forest church and a nature walk.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Le Weekend franco-britannique: 3-5 May 2024

Celebrating Together

We will celebrate being together again after 5 years. We will take part in Wessex Synod's Big Day Out and have fun with people from across the synod. How is God calling us to come together?

We will meet at Fleet URC in Hampshire. Accommodation will be in nearby hotels and we will eat together as a group. Arrivals from Friday late afternoon. On Saturday we will join people from all over the Synod in the Big Day Out at Hollycombe Steam Fair. We will join in worship at Fleet URC to celebrate. Everything will be in French and English.

| 3 May | 4 May | 5 May |
|---|--|---|
| Afternoon arrivals 18:30 evening meal 20:30 Depart for hotels | 08:00 Breakfast at the church 09:00 depart for Big Day Out at Hollycombe evening meal together | 08:30 breakfast 10:00 Sunday Worship 12:30 lunch and depart |

Flier and booking form available on the [Synod Website](#).

Moderator's photo/drawing request

Our incoming Moderator, Michael Hopkins, would like to have a small range of notelets/greetings cards printed with images reflecting Wessex.

Everyone in the Synod is invited to send in photos or artwork that they think is suitable, and as many as possible will be used. Michael is not particularly looking for photos or drawings of church buildings, but anything that conveys an idea of Wessex.

Some parameters:

- You can interpret Wessex however that speaks to you.
- Everything submitted must be original, and by submitting you grant permission to the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church to use any material submitted for stationery and/or publicity in perpetuity.
- No photos of identifiable people please, to avoid safeguarding or data privacy difficulties. Unidentifiable people in the background are fine.
- Everything must be electronic, so if you draw, paint, etc. please scan it and send in an electronic file.
- Please use wetransfer.com or equivalent for large file sizes.

Send to: office@urcwessex.org.uk

Deadline: Monday 13 May

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

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Training – *Flowchart*

The flowchart gives an overview of the various safeguarding training courses on offer and has a table which shows the mandatory level of safeguarding training for various roles within the URC. The [flowchart](#) is on the Synod website.

Safeguarding Quarterly Newsletter – January 2024

Read the latest [newsletter](#) from the Safeguarding Team at Church House.

Safeguarding Training – *Refresher course*

A new Refresher safeguarding training course is now available for people who completed the Foundation and Intermediate level training 3 to 4 years ago. The Refresher course works best as in-the-room training. If your church would like to host a Refresher course, please contact your CYDO to discuss dates.

Safeguarding Training – *new dates in 2024*

- **Foundation and Intermediate safeguarding training in the room.**
 - Saturday 9 March 2024 at Havant URC. 10am – 4pm.
- **Refresher safeguarding training in the room.**
 - Saturday 16 March 2024 at Broadstone URC. 10am – 1pm.
 - Saturday 27 April 2024 at Gosport URC. Time tbc
- **Refresher safeguarding training on zoom.**
6.30pm – 8pm on Thursday 12 September and 19 September 2024.

If your church would like to host safeguarding training, please contact your CYDO to talk about dates.

Safeguarding – *Good Practice 6*

GP6 is now available. Church House has sent out hard copies to Church Safeguarding Coordinators. **GP6 is available online** [here](#).

National Safeguarding Training courses – *various topics*

Specialist Safeguarding training in 2024 organised by Church House. Please see the [poster](#) for the full list of dates and topics.

To book, please email: Emma.Pearce@urc.org.uk

Training Webinars. [Elders as Trustees](#). This is available online for you to access in your own time.

Red Cross First Aid Training

Saturday 11 May 2024. Immanuel Church, Southbourne, BH6 3QJ. 10am-4pm. This is the bespoke community awareness course for URC churches which gives participants basic knowledge and confidence as a first responder. This is not a certificated course. Places are limited, first come first served.

Bookings Email: office.immanuelsouthbourne@gmail.com contact Roz Bradbury
Tel: 01202 290161.

Mental Health First Aid training – with Peter Larkum

Become a certified Mental Health First Aider. Two-day courses in-person or online equivalent which includes four live zoom sessions with the trainer.

Become a certified Youth Mental Health First Aider. This two-day in-person course or online equivalent qualifies you as a MHFA with a specific focus on how that relates to younger people.

Training dates and further information for all courses with trainer Peter Larkum can be found [here](#).

Wessex Synod will cover the cost of the MHFAider training courses.

Please register via Wessex Synod, not direct, and preferably no later than 10 days before the start of the training course.

Email: bookings@urcwessex.org.uk to receive the link to register on the course.

Development and Support

**Bookings for all events and training courses to
Ruth Heine at the Synod Office**

Email: bookings@urcwessex.org.uk Tel: 023 8067 4513

From your DSOs

Development and Support Officers Mary and Ray continue to support churches, elderships and ministers, individually and through their work with the pastoral committees.

If you or your church feels that the DSOs can be of assistance, please do be in touch with them.

Ray Stanyon – dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk

Mary Thomas – dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk

Dates in 2024

Listening Skills day – North, Sat 27 April, Collinwood Rd URC, 10.30 - 3.30pm

Church Treasurers' networking zoom, Sat 11 May, 10am – 11.30am

Listening Skills day – South, Sat 18 May, Avenue St Andrew's URC, 10.30–3.30

Elders' Conference, Saturday 22 June 2024 at Sarum College.

Funerals and Weddings training – Saturday 27 July 2024 at Fleet URC.

Children's and Youth Events and Training

Bi-monthly Newsletter – January 2024

[Bi-monthly Newsletter – January 2024](#) from the Children's and Youth Team at Church House.

Talking About ... *children's participation*

Thursday 22 February 2024. 7pm – 8pm.

It's always lovely to have children in or church communities – but they aren't ornamentation, or proof that all is well.

Children have real insights to offer about faith and discipleship and theology. They can challenge us to be different and better. And we must engage with them meaningfully so that they have the chance to share their thoughts and understandings – and we can learn from each other.

Our guest speakers will offer their own thoughts and you will have the opportunity to learn more, or ask questions of them, in hosted breakout rooms.

Book your free ticket – www.bit.ly/URCTalkingAbout and encourage others from your church to book as well!

Children's Camp – *bookings now open*

28 – 31 May 2024 at Oakwood Activity Centre. For children in school years 4 – 7, (ages 7 – 12). Early bird bookings before 28 April 2024 – cost £70 per child.

[Further information](#) on the Synod Website.

Youth Camp – *bookings will open at the end of February*

12 – 14 July 2024 at Gordon Brown Outdoor Centre. For young people in school years 7 – 13 (ages 11 – 17). [Joint Brochure](#) with further information.

Children and youth Work webinar

For those working with children and young people.

Understanding behaviour and additional needs webinar. Available on YouTube [here](#).

Family Film Night – *resources available*

These exciting resources are designed for families to have fun and explore big questions together, all based around a family friendly film. Each film night has a main theme and follows the same pattern. Watch the film together, have fun doing the activities and then explore using the wondering questions. For families who want to link to the Bible, there are 'going deeper' wondering questions to use. This resource can also be used in Sunday Schools, messy church, bible study groups and school assemblies. **Why not consider hosting a family film night and inviting your community to come along?**

Free to download from the [Synod website](#).

Job Opportunities

Southampton District of the Methodist Church and the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church seeks to appoint a professional HR specialist to the role of

LAY EMPLOYMENT ADVISER

14 hours per week £33,000 pa (pro rata)

The principal duties include advising and liaising with lay and ordained Church Officers to enable and implement good employment practice, to keep accurate and up-to-date records and to deliver training sessions to small groups.

The postholder will work from home and will be provided with a laptop and phone.

Part-time 14 hours per week spread over 3 days with some flexibility to work evenings and weekends occasionally. The ability to travel around the District and Synod is essential.

An Enhanced DBS is essential.

More information, Job Description, Person Specification and Application Form are available from:

Rev Rachel Borgars: rachel.borgars@methodist.org.uk Tel: 01256 895878

Closing date: 1st March 2024

Interviews: 14th March 2024

Other News

URC News Update

[View February's News Update here](#)

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.nye@urc.org.uk

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

Education and Learning bi-monthly newsletter

View Issue 7: February 2024 of [Education and Learning bi-monthly newsletter](#)

Joint Public Issues Team

View JPIT newsletter [Edition 160 \(January\) here](#)

Churches Together in England Newsletter

Latest newsletter available here: <https://cte.org.uk/enews/>

Good News Story – Woking’s Solar Panels

Sun’s energy powers up Sunday services at Woking United Reformed Church. Woking URC has achieved its dream of powering their entire building using electricity generated by the sun following the installation of 134 solar roof panels and eight large storage batteries. The cutting-edge technology will allow the church to produce and store five months’ worth of its annual electricity needs, saving several tons of CO2 emissions every year.

[Read the full story here](#)

News from St Andrew’s Walton & Weybridge

St Andrew’s Walton & Weybridge has close links with Zimbabwe, and each Sunday they are joined by over 100 people from the local community, either listening to the service a few minutes behind or in the days following the service. The sermon is also used in at least 2 local schools for their weekly assembly. The Zimbabwean community contribute via prayer, prayer-requests, and greetings. They also take part in the services sometimes by doing Bible readings etc. Sometimes they will send messages of support and condolence to the members of St Andrew’s who have lost a loved one, and St Andrew’s pray for the Zimbabwe community's members when they are ill or have lost someone.

St Andrew’s really are one church, meeting in different places on different continents.

[Artpeace Zimbabwe article](#)

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.

Reminders

Christ of the Ashes: finding life in the season of Lent

Saturday 16 March 2024 at Guildford URC. £5 per person.

An event organised by the Wessex Synod spirituality group.

[Further information](#). Bookings: <https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/event/lent/>

URC Holiday Forum

Holiday Forum – Sunday 18th – Friday 23rd August – The Hayes & Online

Places for the summer conference are limited to just 100 this year and lots have been filled already, so [book early](#) to avoid disappointment!

Line Management Training dates for 2024

The URC have now released the Line Management training dates for 2024. The sessions will be online on Zoom from 10am to 11:15am.

You can find the training dates and topics here: <https://urc.org.uk/your-church/guidance-support-for-churches-synods/employment-guidance/training-events-and-courses/>

UK Church Administrators Network

UCAN believe the local church is the hope of the world and that effective administration is crucial to maximising its impact.

Administration is a Spiritual calling which honours God and helps people.

UCAN exists to support the church and promote the Spiritual gift of administration by bringing administrators together, sharing excellent resources and providing high quality training opportunities.

Take a look at what they have to offer: <https://www.churchadministrators.net/>

Prayer Calendar

March

| | |
|----|--|
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Spire Church, Farnham• Christ Church, Marlow |
| 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trinity, Charminster• London Street, Basingstoke• St Peter's Shared Church Guildford |
| 17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trinity United Church, Ringwood• Jersey, St John, The URC in Jersey |
| 24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• St Mark's Shared Church Bordon• St Columba's, Oxford |
| 31 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three Legged Cross• Ryde, Isle of Wight• St Andrew's URC, Walton and Weybridge |

April

| | |
|----|---|
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christchurch Thame• The Beacon Church, Canford Heath |
| 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normandy• Blackbird Leys, Church of the Holy Family |
| 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swanage• Havant and Emsworth United Reformed Church |

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- Hindhead, Beacon Hill
- Twyford (Berks)

Items for the next edition to office@urcwessex.org.uk
by 12noon on Monday 11th March 2024

Please submit news items in the form of:
a heading; date and venue details; a brief descriptive sentence and a website link.