

Annual Church Returns and Safeguarding Annual Returns for 2024

The online portal will close on the 28th February.

Thank you to all the churches who have already started and/or completed their annual returns.

If you would like some help, please call or email either Deborah (Annual Church Returns) or Ruth (Safeguarding Annual Returns) and we will help wherever possible.

Deborah – office@urcwessex.org.uk – 023 8067 8570

Ruth – development@urcwessex.org.uk – 023 8067 4513

Greenbelt 2025

The **online application form to volunteer with the URC team at Greenbelt festival 2025** is now available to complete by visiting the URC Greenbelt webpage here: <https://urc.org.uk/greenbelt/volunteer-registration>

The festival takes place on Thursday 21 – Sunday 24 August 2025, at Boughton House, near Kettering. If you would like more information about the festival itself, head over to <https://www.greenbelt.org.uk>

Please feel free to share this information with colleagues, friends and family who may be interested in getting involved. You may even be tempted to volunteer yourself?

The closing date for volunteer applications is 24 April 2025.

If you are interested in joining the Youth venue team at Greenbelt (which is a different team to the URC venue) please contact the [Children and Youth work](#) team directly.

Greenbelt's theme for this year (and the theme we have adopted) is:

Hope in the making

Hope is a practice. It's something we make together, in the fields. Hope has been in the making at Greenbelt for more than a half-century, and it's our theme for this year's festival. We choose to roll up our sleeves, open our hearts and be reminded that, together, we can be the change we want to see in the world. We'd love you to join us.

Find out more about Greenbelt's theme here: [Hope in the Making - Greenbelt](#)

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Samara Andrews – Volunteer Coordinator for URC at Greenbelt

samara.andrews@urc.org.uk

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 – *Away Day for Safeguarding Coordinators & Deputies*

Saturday 15 March 2025 at Fleet URC and on zoom. 10.30am – 3.30pm.

Safeguarding Away Day for Church Safeguarding Coordinators and Deputies.

Bookings: <https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/event/safeguarding-away-day-for-church-safeguarding-coordinators/>

URC Safeguarding Newsletter – *January 2025*

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

Safeguarding Training – *Foundation & Intermediate courses in 2025*

Upcoming Safeguarding training courses in Wessex Synod.

- In person **Refresher** Sunday 23 February, at Petersfield URC. 1pm – 4pm.
- In person **Foundation & Intermediate** course, Saturday 20 September, at Fareham URC. 10am – 4pm.
- **Online Refresher** training across 2 sessions. Tuesdays 6.30pm – 8pm held on 16th September and 23rd September 2025.

To book your place please email: bookings@urcwessex.org.uk or book via the Synod website, go to Safeguarding page

<https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/safeguarding/>

National Safeguarding Training courses – *DBS*

Various workshops to help understand DBS products and services.

- **DBS Barring Webinar 5th March 2025 12.30-2pm** – book via the link [DBS Barring – Faith Sector 5.3.2025 12.30-2pm](#)
- **DBS Update Service Webinar 28th March 11-12pm** – book via the link [DBA Update Service – Faith Sector 28.3.2025 11-12pm](#)

Further information and bookings via the links.

If you have any further questions please email Laura Gaskell

Laura.Gaskell@dbs.gov.uk

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

Safeguarding – Good Practice 6

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

Stepwise – Faith Filled Worship

An online group will be starting after Easter.

Thursday evenings, 7pm – 9pm. First session on 8 May 2025.

Please email bookings@urcwessex.org.uk to find out more or to register an interest.

First Aid training – information on courses

Local churches have a responsibility to ensure that there is adequate provision of first aid at all their programmes.

[Flowchart](#) to help churches identify the appropriate training.

[Booking procedure](#).

Mental Health First Aid training – dates in 2025

Wessex Synod will cover the cost of the following courses, (2-day course or online equivalent).

- Become a certified Mental Health First Aider.
- Become a certified Youth Mental Health First Aider.

Training dates and further information can be found on the trainer, Peter Larkum's website [here](#).

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 2025

Church Secretaries' Networking Zoom – Saturday 18 January 2025.

Lay Preachers' Gathering – Saturday 29 March 2025 at Sarum College.

Church Treasurers' Networking Zoom – changed to **Saturday 14 June 2025**.

Elders' Conference – Saturday 28 June 2025 at Sarum College.

Children's and Youth Events and Training

Children and youth Work webinar

For those working with children and young people.

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

URC Children's and Youth Bi-monthly Newsletter – *January 2025*

From the Children's and Youth Team at Church House.

Bi-monthly Newsletter – [January 2025](#)

Talking About ... *Holiday Clubs*

On Thursday 27 February 2025. 7pm – 8pm.

Are you looking to make your holiday club for children more engaging and impactful? Join us for an informative session where you'll learn how to effectively use the latest URC holiday club material to explore this year's theme: All Are Welcome!

Guest Speaker: Lorraine Webb

Lorraine is the Programme Officer of the URC's Children and Youth Work Team and is an expert in children's educational programs. She will share valuable insights and practical tips to elevate your holiday club experience. She will also explain how your church can apply for a grant towards the costs of running your holiday club!

Register Now at www.bit.ly/URCTalkingAbout to receive the Zoom link and secure your spot. We look forward to seeing you there!

Job Opportunities

URC vacancy

Ministries Support Officer - [Ministries Support Officer](#)

Volunteer positions:

Business Committee Convener

Business Committee member

Assistant Clerk

Commission Secretary – Ministerial Discipline Process

All roles can be viewed here: [Jobs - United Reformed Church](#)

Other News

URC Church & Community Engagement News

View the latest issue: [Church & Community Engagement News](#)

URC Education and Learning bi-monthly newsletter

View Issue 13: February 2025 of [Education and Learning bi-monthly newsletter](#)

URC News Update

[View January News Update here](#)

[News Update Extra](#)

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

Joint Public Issues Team

[View latest JPIT newsletter](#)

Churches Together in England Newsletter

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

News from around the Synod

Guildford URC

The Church held an Intergenerational Music Making event during their Christmas Tree Festival.

Read the full story here: [Intergenerational work at its best - building bridges, breaking down barriers, and creating a sense of belonging for everyone involved.](#)

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

March Calendar

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- Reading: St Andrew's
- Robert Barthram as he retires
- Gosport United Reformed Church, St Columba

9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verwood • St Paul's, Bracknell • Thatcham
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hungerford • Bishop's Waltham United Free Church
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting of Synod on 29th • Bitterne Park • Guildford, Portsmouth Road
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christchurch: Somerford and Burton Greem • Park, Reading

March Eco Prayer

God of each yesterday and
of every tomorrow,
of transitions that
pivot us between your now and your not yet,
stand strong beside us in the moment.
Help us so in turn to stand firm,
to hold solid ground
In this month of spring promises and uncertain storms
We are conscious of change
And wonder if it is change for the better.
We pray be with those who plant and grow our food
Those most affected by the warming world.
We pray for actions and research
Which helps all to care for creation
And for small acts of love
Which have big consequences.
In moments of shaky uncertainty
when all seems tumultuous, stand firm.
As your world turned upside down,
on the cross, so companion us
through all uncertainties.
And so may we remain strong in resurrection hope
and stable in undying love. Amen
(adapted from a prayer by Rev Ruth Harvey from the Iona community)

April Calendar

6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap Street Church, Sherborne • Twyford (Bucks)
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13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pear Tree Green, Southampton • Windsor • Trinity Church, Lower Earley, Reading
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bournemouth: Richmond Hill St Andrew's • Wheatley, Oxford
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southampton: Avenue St Andrew's • Womersley

April Eco Prayer

God of new life

As we celebrate your death and resurrection in Jesus Christ our Lord
 Amid the beauties and blessings of springtime in this part of the world
 We remember that you bring new life to places which had lost hope
 That out of small seeds you bring rich harvests
 So we pray for all who farm and grow food
 And those who work with them in harmony with creation and with You
 Adapting wherever they may to the realities of climate change
 Finding new ways to feed families
 And bring hope to communities
 May we too use our efforts to act with those
 Who help the poorest
 And bring life where there was none
 Through your Spirit
 Amen

**Items for the next edition to office@urcwessex.org.uk
 by 12noon on Monday 10th March 2025**

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