

The United Reformed Church Press Pack



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About the URC

The URC is a family of Christians who meet in local churches across England, Scotland and Wales, part of the worldwide family of Reformed Churches, a group of more than 70 million Christians.

The URC has around 37,000 members in about 1,250 congregations with more than 600 ministers. More than 50,000 people worship in our churches each week, and many more take part in the weekday activities of the churches.

We believe that each and every one of us can find contentment through loving and serving Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

A lack of hierarchy, and a respect for individual principles, means that the URC is not rigid in the expression of its beliefs, and embraces a wide variety of opinions.

At the same time, in the words of the URC's Statement of Nature, Faith and Order, together we are committed to 'God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the living God, the only God, ever to be praised.'

Our roots

Being reformed sets us in a stream of tradition that goes back 500 years to the Protestant Reformation that began in 1517 when Martin Luther launched a movement of challenge in the Church.



Church Structure

The URC has a three-tier structure, which is open for everyone to participate in.

Local churches have an Elders' Meeting,



Global relationships

The URC has ecumenism rooted at the heart of its very existence. At local, national and international level, the contact and understanding between the wide variety of Christian traditions, representing the diversity of the body of Christ, lies at the heart of our mission.

As such the URC is a member of: Council for World Mission; Council for World Mission UK, World Communion of Reformed Churches; World Council of Churches, Conference of European Churches, Churches Commission for Migrants Europe, Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Churches Together in England, The Free Churches Group, Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Churches Together in Wales, The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council;

The URC has international links with churches in Africa, Asia, North America and the Pacific. Our partners are: Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, Presbyterian Church in Korea, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Uniting Congregational

Church of Southern Africa, Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, United Church of Zambia, Church of North India, Church of South India, United Church of Christ in the USA, United Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church in the USA, United Church of Australia, and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands



Key people

The Revd Dr
Tessa
Henry-
Robinson
General Assembly
Moderator
2023-2024

As a URC minister,

Tessa has responsibility for four congregations in the East London Group, a multi-culturally diverse constituency.

Tessa, a womanist practical theologian and published author, made history at General Assembly 2023 by becoming the URC's first woman BAME Moderator.

Tessa serves on groups such as the Church Life Review, Cascades of Grace,



The Revd Dr
Susan Durber
President of the
European Region
of the World Council
of Churches

Susan is a minister of the United Reformed Church, now retired after serving in pastorates, as Principal of Westminster College and as Theology Advisor at Christian Aid. Since 1993 she has been involved with the work of the World Council of Churches, and particularly with Faith and Order. In 2022 she was elected as one of Presidents of the WCC and can be called on to provide comment about the global ecumenical movement and about ecumenism more generally. She is committed to the WCC as a place

The Revd Dr
Michael

The Revd Dr
Alex
Clare-Young
Pioneer Minister and
Theologian

Alex is an ordained minister in a pioneering role in

the URC in Cambridge City Centre and identifies as they/them. Alex has a PhD in queer theology, having researched the experiences, identities and faith understandings of trans and non-binary Christians. Alex is a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) expert and is at the forefront of creating new expressions of church in partnership with young adults and millennials, and particularly with people who have experienced religious trauma. Alex is also co-chair of the Open Table Network – a network of communities which create safer faith spaces for LGBTQ+ Christians. Alex's first book, *Transgender. Christian. Human.*, was published in 2019 by Wild Goose. For their academic publications, see:

The Revd Dr
Elizabeth
Welch
Former General
Assembly Moderator

Elizabeth is a URC minister within the URC Thames

North Synod. Her father served as a Congregational minister in South Africa where she grew up, in a family

that campaigned against apartheid. She was ordained in the UK in 1976, served for 20 years in local ecumenical partnerships, and then moved on to serve as West Midlands Synod Moderator from 1996-2008. During this time, Elizabeth also served as Moderator of the URC General Assembly. In 2008, she moved to Hackney to serve the church part-time while writing a PhD on the Holy Spirit and worship with the other half of her time. Elizabeth has chaired national and international ecumenical and theological groups and is interested in digging deeper into ecumenism, the Holy Spirit and the nature of worship when looking at the role of the church in the world today.

Dr Sam
Richards
Head of Children's
and Youth Work

Sam, whose doctoral studies were on lay vocation, was

previously Director of Oxford Youth Works, an innovative mission project among young people in Oxford, for more than 20 years and one of the founders of CYM (Institute for Children, Youth and Mission) which developed ground-breaking training including degrees, and masters programmes for Christian youth and children's

church life and mission, intergenerational practices, and new ways of being church and can be called on to speak on these issues.

The Revd Anne Sardeson

Anne Sardeson is a minister in the URC and has ministered in multi-cultural London before

moving to rural Essex. She trained for ministry many years ago in Manchester and then studied for an MA in Pastoral Theology at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. She is fascinated by all things worship, and in particular hymns and prayers: the process of writing them and their place in worship. She's also committed to LGBTQI+ issues from the inside out and has an interest in faith and mental health. Before returning to pastoral work she was a trainer for the URC and appears to have no fear of large groups of people.

The Revd David Coleman Environmental speaker

Ordained 1995,
and a member

of the Iona Community, the Revd David Coleman is EcoChaplain for EcoCongregation Scotland, the movement of Scottish churches committed to partnership with Creation. The chaplaincy is a special category ministry, working ecumenically, visiting grassroots congregations from the Borders to Shetland, and in conversation with training institutions. David curates the annual "Season of Creation" resource. The remit includes availability to the wider URC too. Having attended COP26, David has been confronted by the rapid and alarming changes which affect life on Earth, and works to help churches repurpose language, prayer and action, accordingly, building spiritual





Structure and organisation diagram

Level 1

Local Churches

Elders' Meeting
(Ministers and Elders)

Church Meeting
(all members)

Level 2

13 Synods

The National Synod of Wales, the National Synod of Scotland and 11 regional Synods in England

Level 3

General Assembly

The national decision-making body

Assembly Executive

(executive body which meets once a year to review and continue of work of the General Assembly)

URC Youth Assembly

(Children and Youth)

Ecumenical links

URC Synod Map

