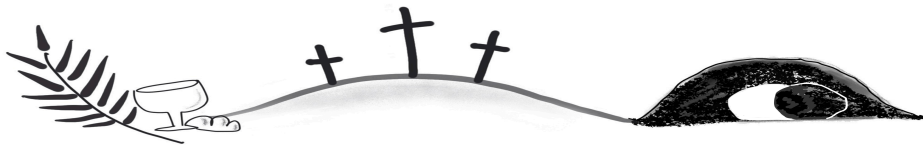


# Stories of the Lent, Holy Week and Easter



## Bank Top URC



Leaf-print butterflies in the garden  
& Easter Garden  
(Bank Top Sunday School)



Our Easter celebrations started well before Easter, on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March, with the first of our three Lent studies, led by Walt. We had an average of twenty people attending each session; mostly from Bank Top, but also representatives from Egerton and Rosehill. All three sessions centred around the Chronicles of Narnia, comparing them with information from the Bible. They were all very interesting and some of us are now busy ploughing our way through the books! The final session was at Egerton URC on Maundy Thursday and took the form of a Communion followed by a bring-and-share Lent meal.

On Good Friday our Church Leader, Andy Guthrie led us in worship, and on Easter Sunday our Worship Group led a Family Service, which included Communion.



On Easter Saturday our local Cllr for Astley Bridge (Hilary Fairclough), organised a Family Fun day on the local park at Andrew Lane. Weeks before the event she asked everyone to paint a stone to make a 'Snake Path' in the garden.



It was extremely successful, with everyone in the local area painting stones. At church we set aside a day where we all met to paint them; the Rainbows and Guides painted them, as did our Art Group, and even our Toddler Group all had a go. It was such fun. On the Saturday of the Fair everyone laid their stones to form the snake path, which will hopefully be there for years to come. Bank Top set up a BBQ which was very popular, and as a result we were able to donate £100 to Bolton Hospice, which is our chosen charity for this year; £100 went to Friends of Astley Bridge to help towards the funding of a Christmas Tree for the park, and we even had enough left to replace our BBQ, which was gradually rusting away!

Val ...



## Deane URC



### Easter Sunday Celebration

On Easter Sunday, Deane URC gathered with joy to celebrate the risen Christ. Our service was filled with hope, music, and the proclamation that “Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!” After worship, the congregation moved outside to decorate the wooden cross with spring flowers—a public witness to our faith and a joyful expression of resurrection life. As we adorned the cross, we shared laughter, stories, and intergenerational fellowship, proclaiming together that Jesus is alive and at work in our community. We give thanks for the faithful witness of this congregation and for the new life Christ brings to each of us, every day.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” – Luke 24:5  
Maria Lee



## New Chapel URC

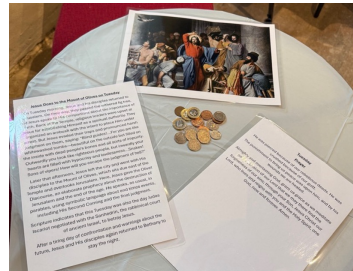
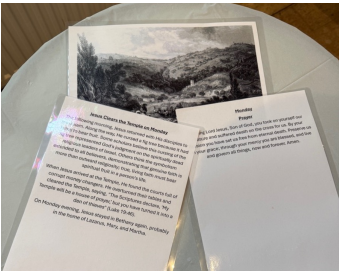
New Chapel URC opened each day over Holy Week for quiet prayer and reflection on Jesus' last week of life.



Monday



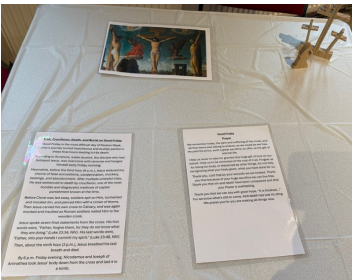
Tuesday



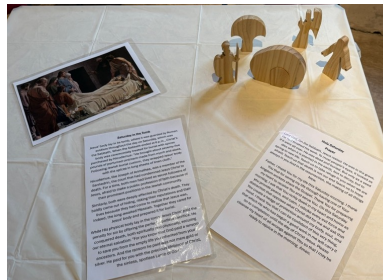
Wednesday



Maundy Thursday



Good Friday



Holy Saturday



Easter Sunday



## Egerton URC

Easter Sunday Service  
at Egerton URC





## Church at the Centre, Tonge Moor URC

The Good Friday service led by Rev'd Barnabas Shin was good and very moving. It was nice to have our friends from St Andrews Methodist Church join us and a gentleman from Farnworth URC.

### During Lent and Easter

we learnt about loving your enemy using Hamer beads.



Temptation is the name of the game this week. Holding a sweet on your tongue. Would you be tempted to eat it? The children also drew what they would take into the desert after reading the bible passage about Jesus going into the desert for 40 days. John East's wife baked us some sour dough which we could sample.



The two Mary's The picture with Edward and William blind folded, the theme was 'Do you see what I see'.

The congregation saw the picture of the dragon, Zoe and Rachel were telling them what it was whilst the congregation made a noise such as laughing. Edward and Willam had to decide whether they believed Rachel and Zoe.

Telling the disciples that an angel told them Christ had risen. The disciples did not believe them because they did not see it with their own eyes.



Making all things new - Our game was 'make something new' by pretending a wooden spoon was something else. It could be a wand, a broomstick, a walking stick etc. The children also acted out animals and the congregation had to guess what they were.

The theme was starting again. After failure or through the dead leaves, we found we made a new tree. A game played in the cafe -building with Jenga. When it fell over, we started again.

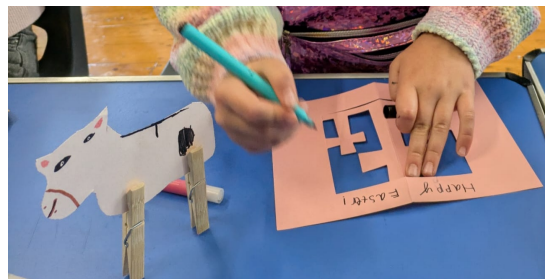


## Worsley Road URC

### Palm Sunday activities



Over the lent period, the children were very busy practising for their performance of Noah's story.



## Wharton & Cleggs Lane Church (LEP)

### VE Brass Band Concert & Easter Cross





## Lent in Narnia (Red. Walt Johnsons)

Folk from Bank Top, Egerton and Rosehill URCs in Bolton met four times through Lent to discuss key themes in the Bible through the lens of CS Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia. Themes included creation, compassion, legacy of empire, justice, salvation, heaven and atonement. CS Lewis wrote 7 books comprising the Chronicles from 1949 to 1956, originally for his goddaughter.

He wrote: "...some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again." We certainly found that to be true! The short course finished on Maundy Thursday with a Last Supper communion service and bring-and-share meal.



## Lent Reflection - God on Mute (Rev. Maria Lee)

During Lent, a small group at Worsley Road URC & Farnworth URC. Each group gathered to reflect on God on Mute by Pete Greig, exploring the silence of God in times of suffering, doubt, and waiting. With honest conversation, prayer, and fellowship over tea and biscuits, we shared stories of faith and learned to trust that even in silence, God is present and listening.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) Even Jesus knew silence. And still, resurrection followed. Let us continue to walk together in faith, even when God feels quiet.



## Lent - Unity in 1 Corinthians 1-4 (Rev. Barnabas Shin)

We shared Paul's prayer that all of us be in agreement and that there be no divisions among us, but that we be united in the same mind and the same purpose.





# News & Stories of BSMP Churches

## Bank Top URC

**We are Talkin' Tables**



*Bringing People Together one Table at a Time!*  
Find your nearest table!

Bamber Bridge	Chichester	Maidenhead
Bolton Bromley	Clayton Green	Much Hoole
Cross	Cyprus	Penrith
Bolton Egerton	Dudley &	Penwortham
Bolton Halliwell	Stourbridge	Poulton-le-Fylde
Bolton Rivington	Garstang	Preston
Bristol	Horwich	Stockport
Broughton,	Leyland	Westthroughton
Preston	Longton	Wigan
Chorley	Lostock Hall	
Chorley Duxbury	Lytham St Anne's	

Scan here to find your nearest table!

 [marjorie@talkintables.co.uk](mailto:marjorie@talkintables.co.uk)  
Talkin' Tables  
Talkin' Tables Chorley  
[www.talkintables.co.uk](http://www.talkintables.co.uk)



Looking to the future – we are looking forward to the grand opening of our ‘Talkin’ Tables’ on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> May. Talkin’ Tables are hosted weekly in different venues with the aim of bringing people together – particularly aimed at people who are lonely.



It's a safe, inclusive space so that people can pull up a chair and enjoy the company of others. If you want to know more about it the go to [www.talkintables.co.uk](http://www.talkintables.co.uk). And, you are welcome to come and visit us each Thursday from 1:30 – 2:30 pm.

## Deane URC



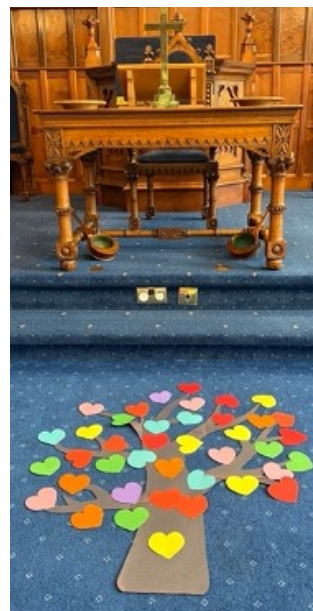
(Derek, our treasurer, faithfully oversees the restoration works.)

**A Grateful ‘Thank You’ from Deane URC**  
On behalf of our friends at Deane United Reformed Church, we want to express heartfelt thanks to the Bolton and Salford Missional Partnership for your generous prayers and support. With your help, we have been able to plaster and paint the inside of our church building and repair the kitchen roof. These improvements mean we are once again ready to worship God safely and continue serving our local community with renewed energy. Thank you!



## Egerton URC

Over the last four Sundays, we have been looking at 1 Corinthians chapters 1 to 4, exploring about 'unity' among Christians through the power of the crucified Christ. As we finish this theme, we are reminded that God calls us to be His image-bearing children. Each of us is different and unique, but we are all embraced by God's love like the colourful hearts. Now, we offer ourselves to bear the fruit of God's love: fruit of beauty and harmony in our community.



**Handbell Group** is a powerful tool for learning about 'harmony' while we enjoy making lovely sounds with the bells. Thank you all for your participation.



## Farnworth URC

Kath Prescott, an elder at Farnworth United Reformed Church, has faithfully led the Toddler Group since 1971—more than fifty years of dedicated ministry to local families. In this photo, Kath is pictured with a beautifully hand-knitted Nativity set she lovingly created, reflecting her creativity and deep faith. Her service continues to bless generations, reminding us that acts of love and care, no matter how small, are at the heart of church life. If anybody would like to knit a Nativity set themselves, please get in touch with Revd. Maria for the pattern and support.



### **A special story of Farnworth URC: One more step along the road we go (Part 2)**

Six offers to purchase were received, the majority were expected to demolish the buildings and build housing on the site. The graveyard had already been formally closed, with the most recent burial almost 100 years before. Following the advice of Synod and the Sale agents, the best offer was accepted in 2018/19 and the church would then have to decide whether to close or relocate. Then God moved in a mysterious, unexpected way. —————>



The Elders met with the new owners, a national project company and possibly our jaws dropped as the managing director told us of his intentions – not to demolish but to refurbish and recycle, to locate his national head office in the Sunday School building, to refurbish the church building for short term office rental and community use and finally he offered us first refusal of renting back space for church use in the main building. We thought we had won the lottery – continuing as Farnworth URC on the same site for worship and fellowship and community activities. He had ticked boxes we hadn't even got! Also, no responsibility for fabric and property in the future as we were tenants. Needless to say, further discussions would be required.

Matters took time. The owners uncovered further serious building issues which delayed things and so the owners initially refurbished the Sunday School building, 'warehouse' style. So it came to pass, (apologies!) that on the first Sunday in January 2020 the church downsized into a fully refurbished sanctuary in the Sunday School, into warm premises with modern facilities and we continue to worship having gone through the painful time of emptying church and settling next door.

Then something called a pandemic appeared which we had not planned for, who had? One initial benefit of selling was that we did not have to worry about security and fabric matters during lockdown and possibly had we not as a church decided to sell the site we probably would not have survived as a fellowship when the various lockdowns ended and the fabric of the buildings deteriorated. Compliance with regulations was undertaken in association with a helpful landlord who has walked with us on our journey.

There have been several unforeseen benefits. As I mentioned the landlords are into recycling and so they used church wood in the improvements to the school building. If visiting and 'spending a penny', please take note of the cubicle doors which are recycled pew backs from church, and the cross on the ceiling in the sanctuary again uses wood from church. Several other items were made out of church timber from church as keepsakes, made by men at The Chapel in the Fields in Cheshire. The building has wi-fi which of course has come into its own once covid-19 struck and changed our style of worship by enabling big screen worship and zooming worship, training and meetings. A local company IDNS donated and fitted all the equipment for which we are continually grateful. We now have disabled access and disabled toilets. We have flexible space for worship, coffee mornings and other activities. We have exclusive use of the worship room and an upper room (apologies again!) for our Parent and Toddler group. We have a good and helpful relationship with the owners and their staff who enjoy the sound of use of our space for the Toddler group and the like and they support our coffee mornings and never hesitate to fit improvements we suggest such as window blinds and nappy changing facilities.

And what of our landlords, JPS Projects? They continue to be busy in the refurbishment of offices, job centres, prisons and various other premises from three offices in Farnworth, Chesterfield and London. However, the pandemic did cause them to remodel their business. As many are aware, working from home became a new norm and the need for rental office space was much reduced. The church building is therefore currently being used for their storage with plans drawn up to convert the interior of the large rectangular church building.





Incidentally I was told many years ago that churches back in the day were built in the style of their surroundings, hence the church at first glance looks like a rectangular mill building with several floors. I digress, plans have been drawn up by the owners to convert the interior into twelve apartments for vulnerable residents including live-in space for wardens at some point in the future.

As for Farnworth URC we continue to worship each Sunday and run community activities. In amongst all this disruption the church transferred from a pastorate with Radcliffe URC and Stand URC to join the now thirteen churches in the Bolton and Salford Missional Partnership. Like many churches, the pandemic changed the style of worship and reduced attendance for several reasons but we remain a group of about a dozen worshippers, with a strong Partnership Ministerial team, keeping the flame burning in our corner of Farnworth, now and in the future, serving God and the community for over 162 years, keeping the faith.

Andrew Jones, Elder and Church Secretary and the Folk at Farnworth URC.

## New Chapel URC



90th Birthday Celebration for Dorothy at New Chapel.

## St Andrew & St George URC

It has been Christian tradition for centuries for **baptisms** to take place on Easter Sunday. Last October at St Andrew & St George URC, we welcomed Arman and Vicky from Iran into the Christian faith and church membership through Baptism. Their daughter, Diana, has also been on a journey of faith, and she wished to make a commitment, which we celebrated in her Baptism on Easter Sunday!

We were delighted that another family also wished to have their baby son Adam baptised. Adam was born prematurely in February to Ali and Parveen, originally from the Kurdish part of Northern Iraq. We give thanks to God for these two families in our church family.





## Red Lane URC



After a Sunday service, Anne and Hilary were sorting out the First Aid Box at the front of the church. There, I found this article written in 2012, which tells a brief history of Red Lane URC. I share this exciting story with you.

.....  
Red Lane United Reformed Church is a relatively 'new' church but in it's short history. It has occupied 5 buildings and been on a journey of faith that has brought the realisation that The Church is not based

in buildings but is the people who worship in them. Derby Street, Mawdsley Street and St Georges Congregational Churches, whose membership included that of Lord Leverhulme. The closer of Derby Street Congregational church meant that a fund was held in it's name for the provision of a church in a suitable location. When Bolton Council were building the huge estate at Brightmet, they set aside a parcel of land at the corner of Red Lane and Newby Road for a church, and the Congregational Church was offered the site. The need to raise further funding meant that building work could not begin immediately. A small group of worshippers were offered the use of Blackshaw House and so, in 1955, Red Lane Church was born. Blackshaw House destroyed by fire in 1957 and a wooden hut on the proposed site was used until the new church opened in 1959. The new building was popular with local people and soon became too small to accommodate all the sections of the Church. Plans were then made for an extension to the building, drawn up by local architect Bob Good, who later became Minister of the Church. The new hexagonal extension was opened in 1968. In 1972 joined the newly formed United Reformed Church.

By 2000 the structure of the 'butterfly' roof had become a real concern. The church had had several attempts at repair, and the diminishing numbers of the congregation meant that finances were tight. A building survey revealed further problems and discussions began as to what might be an affordable solution.

In 2008 a Housing Association offered to buy part of the land. The money from the sale went to the re-order and refurbishment of the 'original' building. This was a very difficult and emotional time but eventually the work was finished and the people adjusted to their new settings quite quickly. Today, the church is committed to offering facilities and services to the local people whether



they are 'church goers' or not. Today, the church is committed to offering facilities and services to the local people whether they are 'church goers' or not. Red Lane is involved in a number of local projects through 'Benchmark' - an ecumenical group of ten churches, and there is not a Friday Community Cafe, which has been a dream of the members for some years. Today, the church is committed to offering facilities and services to the local people whether they are 'church goers' or not. —————>



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The Church continues to flourish through Pilots (the children's organisation of the URC), Ladies Fellowship, Art Groups and many organisations who use our premises. Red Lane is optimistic about its future, despite facing the problems that are common to most churches. A new Minister arrived in 2012 serving Red Lane, Bank Top and Egerton URC. They are excited about this new chapter in their journey.

.....

In 2025, we are part of the Bolton & Salford Missional Partnership with 13 churches and a team of ministers. Our exciting journey continues with the Red Lane Church Project: Community Hub, as an ecumenical partnership with the New Life Church. Barnabas

## Rose Hil URC

On 18th May 2025, we celebrated Rose Hill Church Anniversary. We marked the highlights of our history in line of God's continuous mission from the ancient world.



## Worsley Road URC

### Swift Street,

the largest Swift Street in the UK!

What a brilliant event we had on 17th May to celebrate our swift street- placing the 99th and 100th boxes on the church building. There is so much to learn about how we can support the declining swift population. It was a brilliant effort from the local volunteers and RSPB Greater Manchester and it was great to meet Chris Packham's (of Spring Watch) step daughter, Megan McCubbin.

Thanks, Gill

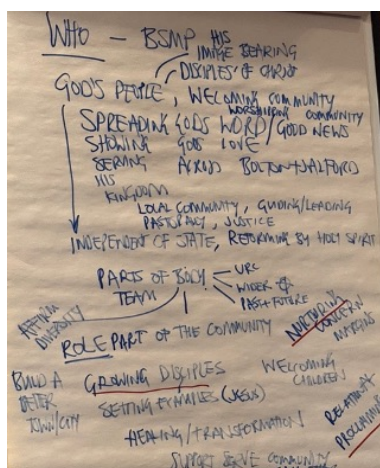




## BSMP Vision Discussion

In June, the BSMP ministers and a mission mentor met first to discuss the BSMP Vision. Then, the BSMP Steering Group met to have a collaborative dialogue about 'Who are we?' and 'What is our role?' We hope to identify 'One Big Vision' and 'Four Priorities' to seek direction for the next 5 to 10 years when we meet in our next Steering Group meeting.

We humbly ask for your prayers as we engage in discussion regarding the vision for BSMP. May we be guided by wisdom, unity and clarity as we seek God's direction in this important process.



## Global Church Visit to BSMP

Rev. Kelly and Libitina from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan for a three-day visit to BSMP, stayed at Maria and Barnabas' Manse and visited several places. On Saturday, 14th June, at the BSMP Summer Gathering at St Andrew and St George URC, we introduced the ministry of BSMP and learned about the history and ministry of Taiwan.



## Acorn: Invitational Church



Michael Harvey spoke at our BSMP Summer gathering about sharing God's love with our neighbours. Lawrence Heath-Moore analyses the impact of the Acorn Spiritual Practice across the URC North-West Synod in first 15 months.

### Origins of Acorn

During the lockdown, Michael Harvey was wondering how to invite people when he was stuck inside for the duration. What emerged was Acorn - developing a culture of invitation in churches. —————>



The North Western Synod has received a Developing Discipleship 3-year grant to work with Michael across the Synod and develop that invitational culture. In the process, we're discovering not only how Acorn is a very natural "fit" for the URC in terms of evangelism, but also how it turbocharges our pastoral care, church leadership and healing within congregations.

Here's how it works:

### **Acorn: the practice of invitation**

- We ask people to commit to the process for 3 (usually monthly) sessions that Michael facilitates.
- Each day, we pray, "Gracious God, today is there anyone you want me to connect with outside the church?"
- When a name comes to mind, we commit to making contact with that person today and asking, "How are you?" If they respond with "Fine!", we ask, "No, how are you really?"
- Then it's a case of going wherever the ensuing conversation takes us.
- At the session meeting (these are key to embedding a culture of invitation), those involved are asked to share their stories of what has happened. Michael's role is to help us begin to recognise how God is already at work in people's lives; our role is simply to be ready to listen for God's prompting and make contact.

What we've learned

Firstly, it works! Not because it's a technique to master but a pattern of obedience to God that we develop. God is the one doing the inviting - all we need to do is to be open to hearing and responding. That is transformative: we don't have to do the hard, risky work of persuading/enthusing people - God is invariably already doing that! It's natural to invite people to church because God is leading us to people who need what our churches have to offer.

Secondly, it plugs into the URC's passion of pastoral care. Michael is convinced that pastoral care is deep within the URC's DNA. This has been my experience: I know few people outside the church (sad but true!) and the names I get are 90% church people. Yet, when I get in touch and ask "How are you?", out pour stories of pretty desperate pastoral crises.

Thirdly, this is about discipleship formation. It begins as a spiritual practice of prayer and response; it becomes a daily discipline within a group within the church (those who meet regularly to share stories and encourage one another) and eventually becomes a way of life: joining in where God is already at work in people's lives.

Good theology!

I find church growth stuff very suspect theologically. Jesus didn't ever talk about it; he talked about growing the Kingdom. We are often driven by survivalist instincts - the desire to make a success of church rather than prioritising the growth of churches as communities of faithful followers of Jesus. We don't share Jesus' passion for the Kingdom and Jesus doesn't necessarily share our passion for the church! What animates Acorn is how we can let people who need what church can offer that it is there. Lawrence Heath-Moore



**Thank You,  
Richard**

We are sorry to lose Revd Richard Bradley, Convenor of the BSMP.  
With our sincere appreciation for your service with us, we wish you all the  
best on your ministry. **"Farewell and take care!!!"**

Barnabas asked me to write an article for the steering group newsletter as my time as convenor comes to an end. It has been a huge privilege to have stepped into the role as convenor albeit initially in a temporary capacity. I felt for you as the previous convenor had had to finish before his term ended due to the busyness of his ministry. I offered to take the role on so that the partnership wouldn't feel left in the lurch.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as convenor. I recall attending a steering group meeting very early on in the life of the partnership in 2018. They were difficult meetings for all concerned. I attended in my then role as Area Pastoral Committee Convenor. The next time I was involved was when I took on the convenor role about 2 years ago. I came into a very different steering group. You as reps worked well together and shared openly and discerned the mind of Christ and you continue to do so.

It has been a real privilege to see you all grow into your roles as reps for your respective churches. It has been great to see the ordained ministry team develop and grow. It has been a privilege to oversee the call of Barnabas and Maria to the partnership. I have said before and will say again: I will watch with real excitement as you grow together over the coming years, living out your calling as sisters and brothers in Christ.

I will continue to hold you all in my prayers and as I write this I do so on Pentecost Sunday, and I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in and through you all. I pray for my successor who is yet to be called! And I pray that she or he will feel the same sense of family that I have felt in the Steering Group.

Thank you for being such a great group of people to work alongside,  
and may God continue to bless you richly.

God bless, your servant in Christ,  
Richard



**Central Area of the North Western Synod  
Bolton & Salford Missional Partnership**

**Convenor:** Vacancy

**Mission Mentor:** Lawrence Heath-Moore  
lawrence.Moore@nwsynod.org.uk

**Ministers:**

Rev'd Barnabas Shin (barnabas.shin@nwsynod.org.uk)  
Rev'd Frin Lewis Smith (c.lewissmith@gmail.com)  
Rev'd Maria Lee (maria.lee@nwsynod.org.uk)  
Rev'd Mark Cowling (markcowling@gathermovement.org)  
Rev'd Walt Johnson (walt.johnson@nwsynod.org.uk)

**Partnership Churches:**

Bank Top URC  
Church at the Centre, Tonge Moor URC  
Egerton URC  
Deane URC  
Farnworth URC  
New Chapel URC  
Red Lane URC  
Rose Hill URC  
St Andrew and St George URC  
Worsley Road, Swinton URC  
Christ Church Little Lever LEP  
Cornerstone-Westhoughton LEP  
Wharton & Cleggs Lane LEP