



Under Loving Care: A glimpse of God's beautiful creation at Cardiff Bay

Contents

Greetings

Revd Mark Cowling - p.2

Partnership Churches' News and Stories - p.3-23

New Chapel URC - p.3

Tonge Moor URC - p.6

St AGs URC - p.7

Rose Hill URC - p.10

Egerton URC - p.12

Farnworth URC - p.14

Worsley Road URC - p.15

Red Lane URC - p.19

Bank Top URC - p.20

Cornerstone LEP - p.22

Wharton & Cleggs Lane LEP - p.22

Christ Church Little Lever LEP - p.23

Deane URC - the photos of Thanksgiving
service - p.23

Bolton & Salford Missional Partnership News - p.13-22

BSMP Ministry Structure Review - p.24

Beetle Drive - p.24

New Songs & Praise - p.25

Wider URC Community News

Greetings from the new Moderator - p.26

Partnership Directory - p.28

Greetings Friends

I believe with all my heart that reconciliation is the call on every human being.

We live in a divided and hurting world. Conflict exists within ourselves, our families, our communities and our nations. Yet the Christian story begins with a God who is lavish in reconciliation.

Through Jesus Christ, God pours out peace and forgiveness so generously that it cannot be contained. We receive reconciliation not as something to keep, but as something that overflows into the world around us. The church is called to be a peacemaker because it has first received peace.

How do we live this calling? I find three habits especially important: be curious, be present, and reimagine.

First, be curious. In the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus looks beyond a man's reputation and sees a person worth knowing. Curiosity begins when we stop making ourselves the centre of attention and become genuinely interested in others. One way to cultivate this habit is through prayer, especially for those we struggle to understand or even dislike. Prayer opens our hearts and helps us see others as people made in God's image.

Second, be present. Jesus demonstrated this in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. He gave her his full attention, crossing barriers of ethnicity, gender and social status. Presence means listening deeply, staying engaged, and refusing to turn away from another person's pain. People are changed when someone is truly present with them.

Third, reimagine. In the story of Ruth and Boaz, what seemed a hopeless situation became a story of belonging, love and new possibility. Reconciliation invites us to imagine futures beyond conflict and division. It asks us to believe that, through God's grace, relationships can be healed and communities renewed.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Reconciliation begins with curiosity, grows through presence, and flourishes when we dare to imagine a different future.

The Christian calendar says we are now in Ordinary Time, the long period of growth and discipleship until Advent begins again. Google tells me the word ordinary comes from the Latin ordinalis, meaning numbered or ordered. Let us open our hands, our minds and our hearts to the ordering of God's kingdom, in Jesus name



Partnership Churches' News and Stories

NEW CHAPEL URC

https://www.facebook.com/newchapelurc/?locale=en_GB



Over the Easter period, New Chapel held their usual services with some new faces turning up at the events.

Before Lent began, **Sunday Club**, a group aimed at children, young people and their families, made the usual pancakes, which were thoroughly enjoyed. They also talked about what Lent means and how it is celebrated in different countries: traditionally in the UK, the 'pancake bell' was rung at 11:00 to summon Christians to be 'shriven' so Sunday Club played handbells; donuts were decorated as these mark Shrove Tuesday in Iceland, Poland and Denmark; tin can alley was played as in Lithuania, they use Shrove Tuesday as a time to reenact and celebrate winter being defeated by spring in a festival called Užgavėnės. During the Easter period, Sunday Club also followed the path from Bethphage to the Cross, hearing about the Easter story on the way, finishing with making crosses and Easter gardens.



Lastly it talked about Jesus being the Good Shepherd which included a walk to find sheep and the making of marshmallow sheep cakes! **Family services** are held on the 2nd Sunday of every month at 10.00am to which everyone is invited – activities,



crafts and fun, all religious-themed.

During Lent we have a collection for a different charity each year, and this year we chose Water Aid, raising over £80.

We also held a **Spring Wreath-making Evening**. The lady who leads these has done quite a few sessions creating various arrangements and will be leading some more. For more information contact New Chapel.

Mothering Sunday was day of celebration, with the children handing out presents that they had made during Sunday club. These were not only for the Mums, but all the ladies in the church.

We started Holy week with our **Maundy Thursday Service** and Supper, which is growing in number every year. The solemnness is interspersed by eating a meal to represent the Last Supper.



On **Good Friday** we held a service when a few people other than members attended. We covered the whole of the last day of Jesus' life through reading, pictures and reflections.



Then came **Easter Day** with lots of rejoicing, celebrating and creating our cross of flowers. Following the service the cross was taken out to into our gardens for passers-by to see – taking Jesus out into the world to show he is risen. Again, we had several 'outsiders' worshipping with us which was lovely.

We have held some events since the last Newsletter, including the wreath-making.

A fashion show at a local dress shop in Horwich raised over £250 for church funds – always well-attended and new clothes bought for summer !! 

We are holding **Bible Study groups** on a Wednesday morning at 10.30. At the moment we are looking at various people in the Bible which is proving very interesting indeed.

We shall be running the **Well-being course** again from September. More details from Linda at New Chapel.

We are delighted to welcome a lovely family to NC who only come to occasional services, but as they have a small baby this is understandable. When they DO come, however, they participate fully and thoroughly enjoy joining in – even to having a Bible Reading thrust upon them at the last minute. We do only ask those who we know will willingly participate. Such a joy.

On Saturday 13th June we held our **Annual Afternoon Tea**. It was a huge success again with us being full to capacity. A large variety of sandwiches for all tastes and requirements, large pots of tea or coffee and a scrumptious selection of cakes all filled the cake-stands and were enjoyed by all.

And we must not forget the Prosecco – or orange juice – which flowed, served by our ‘Barman’ and the back-wards bingo, guess the number of sweets in a jar, a food quiz and the usual raffle.



A good time was had by all, but a huge thanks goes to the catering and clearing up team, as without them the event wouldn't run at all. Many, many thanks.

Here is one of the comments after the event ... *‘Thank you to everyone that made our afternoon tea such a lovely experience.*

The best afternoon tea we have had. Look forward to seeing you all again. All my friends would like to say how much we all enjoyed it and for all your hard work you put in to make it a wonderful afternoon.’

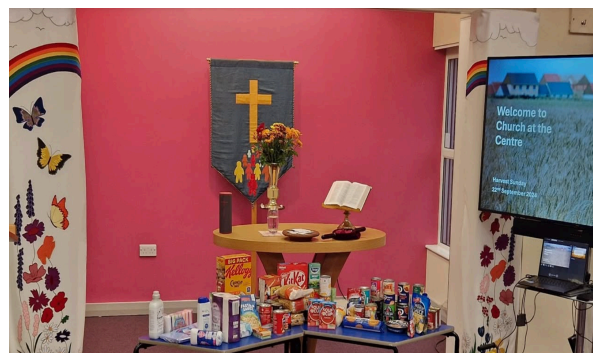
New Chapel send greetings to all the other churches in the partnership.



2026 Social Events Dates for your diary

- Harvest Quiz & Supper (Friday evening, 25th September)
- Macmillan Coffee Morning & New To You Sale (Saturday 3rd October)

Linda Gillett



Easter Sunday, we shared
Communion made Easter cards
and gave everyone an Easter egg.

The young people decorated
a ginger bread easter egg.

We discussed the significance of
Easter Eggs in relation to Christianity.

The egg symbolises the empty tomb.
The hard shell represents the sealed
tomb and cracking it signifies the
resurrection and new life.



We were learning about
the power of voices.

Rachel played a clip of a famous
person's voice and the congregation
had to guess the voice.

We each read out a couple of
sentences from a prayer and
Lillian and Zoe read out the closing
prayer together and then
we all said the grace.

Maureen Harrison



St ANDREW & St GEORGE URC

<https://stagurc.com/>



Palm Sunday and Good Friday –

On both Palm Sunday and Good Friday, St Andrew and St George joined together with Victoria Hall Methodist church for these two important dates in the Church's calendar. On Palm Sunday, everyone received a Palm cross to keep with them throughout the coming year. On Good Friday, each person brought forward a piece of broken pottery which was exchanged for a red carnation, as a symbol of Jesus' unconditionally accepting our brokenness and graciously granting us reconciliation.

On Good Friday, after the service, and together with Bolton's Salvation Army (under the umbrella of Churches Together in Bolton Town Centre), we did a walk of witness down Knowsley Street to the steps of Bolton Town Hall, where we held a short service: a reading from Matthew's Gospel, prayers for Bolton and a hymn. We were joined by several passers-by who were moved by a Christian presence in the town centre.



Church Away Day –

on 8 April 2026, many folk from St Andrew & St George URC were joined by friends from Deane URC and other churches for an away day which was held in the conference suite at The Anderton Centre in Rivington. The programme included range of activities, including short presentations, reflections, a quiz and a game of Beetle! After lunch, there was free time to enjoy the beautiful Spring sunshine and to relax and share in one another's company. The day ended with a short service of Communion and a roast dinner.



Final Service led by the Revd. Tony Burnham (24 May 2026)

for many years, Tony Burnham has been a regular preacher at St Andrew & St George URC. Tony is a retired minister. Tony's ministry has mainly been in the North-West, as a minister, lecturer, Synod Clerk and Moderator. He also served as General Secretary of the URC (1992-2001). Tony has now decided to retire from 'active retired' ministry. We are grateful for the wisdom and insight God has granted through Tony. Thank you!

Patchwork and Bolton Pride –

St Andrew & St George URC is home to "Patchwork", an LGBTQ+ group which meets twice monthly at the church (1st and 3rd Mondays, 7-9pm). The group comes together to talk, to pray and to sew. In its 4 years, we have created a patch-work elephant (the symbol of Bolton).



On Saturday 23 May, Bolton held its annual Pride event. The Patchwork group, under the umbrella of Churches Together in Bolton Town Centre, had a stall of welcome, where members of the public were invited to contribute on a piece of material using fabric paint something which expresses their identity. These patches will be sewn together to form a new patchwork.



On the same evening, Bolton Parish Church was host to an ecumenical service for Bolton Pride, and it was led by the Revd. Michaila Roberts, the Assistant Vicar of Bolton. The Revd. Walt Johnson preached on



Isaiah's radical message of inclusion (Isaiah 56:1-8) and Jesus' encounter with the Roman Centurion and his sick servant (Matthew 8:5-13).

A theological reflection: **Who wrote the Bible?**

Arthur Lawrie (a member of St AGs URC)

A great deal of academic endeavour has been expended over the matter of Biblical authorship. Much effort goes into identifying exactly who wrote which fragment of text, and whether this fragment predates that one, and so on. However, to determine who wrote the Bible, we need look no farther than the Bible itself, as follows.

We all know the story of Abraham offering Isaac for sacrifice. Most people think of it as a test of Abraham's faith, but it seems to me a somewhat different story, for Abraham already knew that he would father a great nation. It was unlikely that Isaac would not be a part of this. Therefore, it appears that Isaac would surely survive whatever God had planned for that day.

The episode involves three main characters – Abraham, Isaac, and Abraham's servant. In my perspective The term "servant" is a misnomer. If Abraham had died void of issue, his servant would have inherited all his worldly goods. That makes him more of a business partner than a servant. His name was Eliazer, which means comforter. Comforter is one of the titles or functions of the Holy Spirit. Thus, going to a hill to make a sacrifice, it seems as though we have a father, a son, and a holy spirit. The son is going to be sacrificed. He will be sacrificed on wood, and it is understood he is thirty years old. The text gives us directions as to the location of the sacrifice. It turns out to be on the same spot where Jesus will be crucified two thousand years later. At the last moment a ram is substituted for Isaac. However, there is no mention in the text of Isaac coming down the hill. Of course, he is actually there, but this omission may be a deliberate rhetorical contrivance, intended to emphasise a point. When the episode is over, the servant is despatched to find a Gentile bride for Isaac. To my mind, this presages the Holy Spirit finding a bride (the Church) for Jesus.

Now, this text was in existence centuries before the birth of Christ. Do we explain its accurate allusion to future events as the author just guessing correctly? If so, we have a problem, for it feels as if the whole of the Old Testament is like this. This gives rise to the saying: the New Testament is, in the Old, concealed; the Old is, in the New, revealed. In other words, in order to understand anything in the Old Testament, even the most esoteric, I have come to understand that simply putting Jesus at the centre makes it all clarify. That is how I have come to view that Abraham was acting out prophecy rather than having his faith tested.

Only one explanation makes any sense. It seems that a single intelligence is behind the whole Bible. That intelligence must be the Holy Spirit, who may have inspired forty writers over millennia to write what they wrote.

We might see the Bible as an integrated whole, from which we may gain a deeper understanding of its individual fragments.



ROSE HILL URC

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Rose-Hill-United-Reformed-Church-100064768236016/>



Since Easter, life at Rose Hill has continued at a gentle pace, with opportunities to gather, worship and share fellowship together.

We enjoyed a lovely Easter celebration led by our Elder Heather, reflecting on the hope of the resurrection. The children particularly enjoyed taking part in our Easter egg hunt, which brought plenty of smiles and excitement to the day.

One of the real joys of recent months has been welcoming Leila and Mohammed into the life of our church family. They have been worshipping with us for some time, and we are delighted that both will be baptised on 21st June. This is a special milestone in their faith journey, and we look forward to celebrating this important occasion together.

Looking ahead, we will once again be supporting Urban



Outreach through the Summer Lunches programme, helping to provide meals and activities for local families during the school holidays. We are grateful to everyone who volunteers their time and energy to make this possible.

While the church calendar may seem quieter than in previous years, we were delighted to celebrate the baptism of a lovely couple on Sunday 21st June. We continue to value the opportunities we have to worship together, support one another and share God's love within our community. We look forward to all that the coming months will bring.



Mira's London Adventure: (Sunday School children news)

Mira recently turned 8 and has been attending drama classes since she was not quite 5 years old. Over the past few years, she has taken part in a number of auditions, mostly through self-tapes, and is now represented by an agent.

Last week, she was delighted to be invited to a recall audition for a film project following a successful first audition. This meant a last-minute trip to London, which was organised almost overnight!

Regardless of the final outcome, the experience itself was a wonderful achievement and a great opportunity for Mira to learn, grow in confidence, and enjoy a very exciting day in London.

Mira's mum



Pentecost Café Church



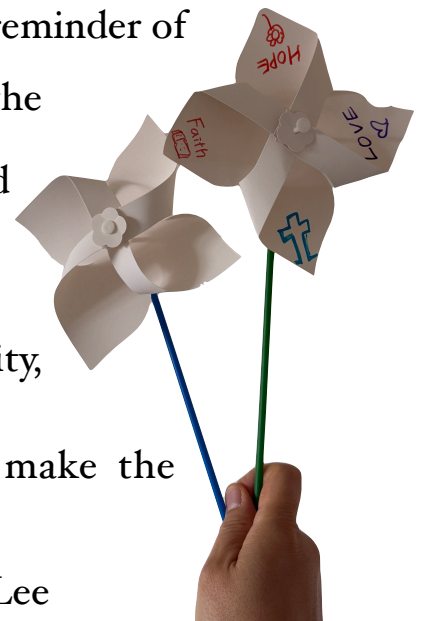
On Pentecost Sunday, Rose Hill URC enjoyed a joyful Café Church service with a light meal shared around tables.

Together, we made windmills as a reminder of the

wind of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and we shared greetings in many different languages, celebrating that God's love is for all people.

It was a warm and welcoming time of worship, creativity, fellowship, and fun for all ages. We give thanks to everyone who helped prepare the food, lead the activities, and make the morning such a special celebration.

Revd Maria Lee





EGERTON URC

<https://egertonurc.org.uk/elders-4/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1818970312288347>



Good Friday & Easter Sunday

On Good Friday Revd Maria Lee led a Reflective Service 'Seven Words From the Cross' (Stages on the Way- Iona Community). These included:

'Father forgive them. They do not know what they are doing', 'Today you will be with me in paradise' & were followed by a silence & a reflection read by two members of the congregation. Finally Maria read the Seventh 'Father into your hands I commit my spirit'.

We sang traditional Good Friday Hymns & after each of the 'Seven Words' were read, a Sheet with those words was laid at the foot of the bare cross.



We celebrated with a short '**Sunrise**' Service at 6.15am on



the Cross Gun's Car Park on Blackburn Road. Maria shared a moving reminder of the light, hope & joy which was the womens' when they found the stone rolled away from the tomb & were told that Jesus had risen. We asked the Risen Christ to roll our 'stones' back so that we can show & share that light, hope & joy in our

lives.

After a breakfast of fruit & toasted hot cross buns we celebrated again with hymns accompanied by Ruth on the organ, Maria on piano & the handbell group. Afterwards we went out into the garden to give the Easter Acclamation, 'Christ is Risen!' 'He is risen indeed!' Alleluia!



Egerton Catch Group

This is a picture from the Egerton Catch Group 'Easter Film Club' on Thursday 16th April 1.40pm to 4pm when we showed the film 'Lilo & Stitch' to a group of 12 children & 9 adults. The children were sitting on big cushions on the floor!



Egerton URC-Upcoming Events

Quiz Nights Following the very successful Spring Quiz Night which raised £540, Doreen is holding an Autumn Quiz on Friday 11th September at 7pm. There will a Pasty & Pea Supper at the interval, Tea & Coffee. Please bring your own drinks & glasses.

Film Club The Film Club is held every 2nd & 4th Wednesday in the month at 6.30pm. Everyone welcome to a relaxing & enjoyable evening with a variety of refreshments.

Rachael Cronshaw

Egerton Summer Coffee Morning



On Saturday 26th June, Egerton URC enjoyed a lovely Summer Coffee Morning filled with friendship, laughter, and plenty of delicious treats. It was wonderful to see so many people gathered

around the tables, sharing conversation over tea, coffee, cakes, scones, toasted teacakes and pies.



A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped prepare, serve,



wash up, welcome guests, and support the morning in many different ways. The kitchen team worked so cheerfully, and their kindness helped create a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

We are delighted to share that the Coffee Morning raised £328. Thank you to everyone who supported so generously.

We give thanks for this joyful time of fellowship and community at Egerton.

Our **Christmas Coffee Morning** will be held on **Saturday 28th November**. Please keep this date in your diary and pop in — everyone is welcome!



Revd Maria Lee



Farnworth URC

Farnworth Parent & Toddler Group

There has been a Parent and Toddler Group at Farnworth URC for over 60 years. It was originally started by the wife of our minister at the time Rev Leslie Pugh

and supported by the new mums and friends associated with the church. My eldest son was born in April 1971 and obviously I attended the group with him. In October of that year many of the original children had started school and no longer attended the group. Also Mrs Pugh was getting older and ready to retire, so I stepped in as leader. We supply toast, drinks and biscuits, celebrate birthdays, Easter and Christmas and generally have a nice time. Just before covid, our ageing church buildings and our elderly congregation was taking it's toll and the decision was made to sell the church buildings. We were lucky in the fact that the purchasers, a building firm J.P.S, allowed us to stay. They made us a small church room in the building behind the church which also housed the toddler group upstairs. However, in January this year we got the devastating news that J.P.S had merged with a bigger company and needed our playgroup room for a bigger office space.

What was to happen to the toddler group? With help from Farnworth Family Hub, Bolton C.V.S and the council we were eventually offered space at St John the Evangelist Church for a weekly donation.

There we have a room to store the toys, use of the kitchen and toilets and a carpeted space for the children to play with heaters. Although the room is not as big as we are used to at least we are still able to meet. Most of our parents have followed us there and I have found it very emotional at the amount of support they give. We have had a few new members since being at St John. I am very grateful for the help given to me by family and friends both in the kitchen and entertaining the children. Also 2 of our Elders who police the premises and keep us safe.

Kath Prescott



WORSLEY ROAD URC
<https://www.worsleyroadurc.org.uk/>



Sunday School: Lent & Easter

A cake sale was led by the older Sunday school members and was for the homeless, through the Booth centre in Manchester.



There is very often a sweet treat involved and so they made very creative biscuit designs of the empty tomb and decorated cakes for Good Friday.



The daffodils and cards were for Mother's Day.



A lovely trip to Smithies Farm.

All in all a busy few months for our young people.



Fellowship Society



What wonderful people Julie and Peter Richardson are working week in week out, organising the lovely Fellowship events for our congregation and the wider community. Highlights here are the annual Easter bonnet competition - this year won by Roy Chilton (3rd picture blue fleece). We also celebrated Rita Ashworth's 90th birthday. Every special birthday is celebrated with cake! We are so blessed to have this at Worsley Road.



Gill Russell

Lent Group with Tom Miller



Easter Sunday Service



Summer fair: Saturday 20th June

We held our Summer Fair at the church last Saturday.

The fair gives us the opportunity to welcome people from our local community into our church, to encourage youth groups to perform on our stage, to give visitors the opportunity to explore our stalls and enjoy refreshments throughout the day.

For the children there is the excitement and adventure experienced by being involved in many activities in the community room and Mike's golf game.



If, however, you were just wanting to relax, meet friends, enjoy refreshments in a quieter area there is no better place than sitting in the church.

My thanks goes to everyone who set up and designed the stalls, the stall holders, Kate and her team working in the kitchen



and serving the refreshments in the large hall and church starting with the bacon and sausage butties; everyone, led by Helen and Beth, who supervised the activities in the community room and those who donated items and attended the fair.



A special thanks must go to everyone who, despite having been working all day at the fair, stayed behind to clear the stalls and church and return the building to some form of normality.





Many excited children entertained us throughout the day.

My personal thanks has been passed on to the 3rd Swinton (Holyrood) Squirrels, Urban Stage School of Performing Arts, Miss Joanne Farnell School of Dance and The Bridgewater Youth Choir.

A final thanks must go to Robert and Roy who remained in the vestry after we had all gone home counting and confirming the proceeds from the fair.

Preparation and planning for the next fair will start in the Autumn and I am sure that you will be delighted to hear that the Christmas Fair will be held on Saturday 28th November.

So many thanks to everyone on raising an amazing £2870.

Bruce Sutherland



Red Lane URC

Red Lane URC AGM 2026

At our AGM, we took time to give special thanks to Jean for her many years of faithful service as an elder. Jean has served Red Lane with commitment, kindness and friendship, sharing many gifts in the life of the church. In particular, her creativity and artistic talent have blessed many people through community art groups, fellowship activities, and many other acts of care and service within the congregation.

We also give thanks that two new elders were elected: Jackie Barmby and Colin Barmby. The congregation is deeply grateful for their willingness to serve, especially at this important time in the life and future of Red Lane Church.

We pray God's blessing on Jean, Jackie and Colin, and give thanks for all who continue to serve Christ through the life of Red Lane URC.

Revd Maria Lee





Bank Top URC

<https://banktopurc.org.uk/>



Bank Top hosted the Partnership **Lent Course** led by Maria. Around twenty members from Bank Top were joined by a few members from other churches. Maria's subject was ordinary women who were mentioned in the bible. We all found the three sessions really inspiring. The fourth session was a **Maundy Thursday supper**, culminating in communion and a very quiet exit from the building. We all found it quite emotional.

Our **Good Friday Service** was led by Andy and Heather Guthrie, and our **Easter Sunday service** was a Family Service, led by our Worship Group.

The Partnership 5th Sunday Service, **New Songs & Praise**, in May was hosted by Bank Top and was attended by lots of people from Bank Top as well as Worsley Road. It was lovely to meet them and chat after the service when we enjoyed a cuppa and cake.

Our Thursday afternoon **'Talking Tables'** sessions are growing from strength to strength and now attract over twenty people. We have lively chats and lots of laughter and were joined recently on two



occasions by year nine boys from nearby Sharples High School. They were a delight to talk to and mixed well with all our regulars. On their second visit, they brought cakes which they had made and had fun joining in our bell ringing session, led by Maria.

We decided a few months ago to bin our plastic poppies, which we crafted many years ago, and which were looking rather worse for wear. So, we decided to start early and **knit poppies** for our Remembrance Display this year. We held a workshop in May and were pleased to seek 12 ladies who are all very willing little knitters.





We gave them each a pattern and a ball of red wool and set them off. Fingers crossed they all manage to get through their ball before November 2026!

Once again members from Bank Top are volunteering to help with the **Summer Lunches** at Red Lane and Rose Hill.

Going forward; we are holding our **Annual Village Fair** on Saturday, 4th July and we are all very busy with preparations for that. It usually attracts 200-300 people from the local community and beyond and it's a lovely occasion when people come together to join in all the fun of the fair.

Valerie Singleton



(These photos were taken on the day of Annual Village Fair.)



Cornerstone Church (LEP)

<https://cornerstone-church.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Westhoughtonurc/>



Sunday Jam

In addition to our weekly Sunday morning services, Glen Atkinson is continuing the Sunday Jam sessions on the 3rd Sunday of every month, 6.30pm. These sessions are very well received, Glen is introducing more contemporary Christian songs and tea and coffee is flowing.

Everyone is welcome, and while the sessions are officially an hour, often folk are staying to chat longer, which is always a blessing.

Annual Church Auction

This year the Church Action will be held on Saturday 25th July. Church will be open for browsing the lots from 10 am and the auction starts at 1 pm prompt.



Wharton & Cleggs Lane Church (LEP)

<https://www.facebook.com/WhartonCleggsLane/>

[WhartonCleggsLane/](https://www.facebook.com/WhartonCleggsLane/)





Christ Church Little Lever Church (LEP)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1411273485786742/media>



Thanksgiving Service for Deane URC (Saturday 11th April 2026)



Giving thanks for the past, trusting God with the future ...

Bolton & Salford Missional Partnership News

BSMP Ministry Structure review:

As many of you will know, since 2025 the Bolton & Salford Missional Partnership (BSMP) has been operating with two focus groups. During 2025, Barnabas oversaw Group A and Maria oversaw Group B, with the groups being swapped in 2026.

This arrangement was introduced to help Revd Maria Lee and Revd Barnabas Shin provide more focused pastoral support and leadership, rather than each working across all 13 churches (now 12 following the closure of Deane URC) simultaneously, while our ministry team continues to work collaboratively across the whole partnership.

As we approach the end of this initial two-year period, the BSMP Steering Group has been reviewing the current structure and considering how it might be strengthened for the future. We hope to agree an updated structure at the July Steering Group meeting, with a view to implementing it from January 2027.

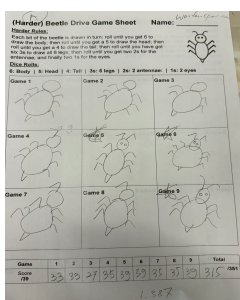
We would be grateful for your continued prayers and active support as we seek to strengthen our partnership and our shared ministry across all 12 churches.

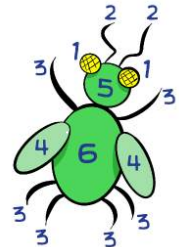
Beetle Drive

On Saturday 27th June, 27 people from five partnership churches gathered at Red Lane URC for a fun-filled Beetle Drive fellowship event. It was my very first Beetle Drive, and I am sure everyone enjoyed the afternoon as much as I did!



A huge thank you to Revd Walt Johnson for organising such a wonderful afternoon of fellowship, and to everyone at Red Lane URC for their warm hospitality and the delicious selection of homemade cakes. Thanks also to everyone who came and made the event so enjoyable. We are already looking forward to the next Wellbeing fellowship event!





BSMP New Songs & Praise

It was wonderful to praise the Lord together with around 40 people from four partnership churches – Bank Top, New Chapel, Egerton and Worsley Road URCs. I am so thankful to everyone who made the journey, whether near or far, to be part of this gathering.

We learned a few new songs, including two suggested by Andy and Walt. It was a joy to hear such vibrant voices lifted in worship to the Lord. We are also grateful to Bank Top URC for their warm hospitality and the delicious cakes they provided.

As it was a very warm afternoon, we opened the church doors to let in some fresh air. While I was playing my guitar and we were singing My Jesus, My Saviour, I noticed a lady walking past with her dog. She stopped at the open doorway, joined in singing, and lifted her hand in praise. For a few precious moments, a stranger became our sister in Christ as we shared in worship and celebrated the goodness of God. It was a beautiful reminder that God's invitation to worship is open to everyone.

Our next New Songs & Praise will be held on Sunday 30th August at 4.00 pm at Egerton URC.

Do come and join us as we sing the praises of the Lord together!



All are welcome!

Come and join

New Songs & praise

A joyful, Spirit-filled gathering with a blend of familiar hymns and new worship songs.

30th August 2026

Sunday 4 pm

Egerton URC

What to expect:

- Easy-to-learn contemporary songs
- Short reflection & sharing
- Interactive elements: clapping, simple percussion ...
- Singing your favourite hymns
- Refreshment with tea/coffee

Whenever there is a 5th Sunday in the month @ 4 pm

The United Reformed Church

Bolton & Salford Missional Partnership

Wider URC Community News

I am delighted to share a piece from our new Moderator. As you will read, the Churches within our Missional Partnership were central to his calling as a Minister and now as our Moderator.

The new Moderator of North Western Synod - An introduction

What an honour it is to be able to introduce myself to you all as the new Moderator of North Western Synod. Although my induction is not until Saturday 5th September, I started in the role after Easter. I shall share a little more about that in the next newsletter.



So, who is your new Moderator? Call me Mike!

I was born and grew up in Swinton, Salford, and attended Worsley Road URC. It was there that my faith developed and my involvement in all things church grew. I started to lead worship and was involved as an Elder, offering a younger perspective to the meetings. I gradually got involved with 'Fury' - as it was at the time - and then went on to spend time working at the National Youth Resource Centre in Yardley Hastings. I was the District Youth Secretary for a period, and helped Leo organise a few events. My faith grew and grew, following assessment, I trained for ministry at Northern College in Manchester and had placements in Bangladesh, Reddish, Leyland, Eccles, Fiji, Manchester Airport and Bury. Being supported and trained by many (now retired) ministers still within the Synod.

I was called, then Ordained and Inducted in 2002 to the Bolton West Pastorate (Adlington LEP, Lee Lane LEP, New Chapel URC and Somerset Road URC), sadly during that time both Somerset Road URC and Lee Lane Church closed. I was also honoured to be the Chaplain to Horwich Air Cadets and worked hard to help connect the Churches to the communities they served.

The next call was to Army Chaplaincy. I had felt a sense of call to military chaplaincy for many years - having visited all 3 services it was the army where I felt God was leading me. I joined as a Chaplain in 2006, and served over the years in the UK, Germany, Iraq, Afghanistan, Italy, Canada and New Zealand. It was a pleasure to serve in a variety of different units. My last post was as Senior Chaplain of 20th Armoured Brigade, leading a team of Chaplains across Germany and the UK as well as several deployments, supporting over 6,000 soldiers and their families.

In 2018, I was called to be the Minister of High Cross Church, Camberley, a Methodist / URC Local Ecumenical Partnership. High Cross is a busy church with over 1,500 people a week passing through the buildings, with a variety of church and community groups using the premises. I was also the Chaplain to several local organisations, including Camberley town centre and Camberley Air Cadets. The vision of the church was to be 'A Church at the heart of community', and this was something that was achieved by building relationships and a strong presence in the town. During this time, I served on a variety of Synod Committees as well as being the Denominational Ecumenical Officer for Surrey.

It was this time last year that someone (I can't remember who) suggested I should consider whether God was calling me to be the Moderator of North Western Synod. I wasn't looking for a move at the time, but God clearly had a plan.

I would describe myself as a reluctant student, but have enjoyed studying over the years, gaining a BA (Hons) in Contextual Theology from the University of Manchester, a PGCE from the University of Southampton and a MTh from the University of Glasgow. Studying has helped me to reflect more and develop my theological awareness and understanding. I am also honoured to be a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and a Member of the Order of St John.

I am married to Sue - a teaching assistant and forest school leader (we met through the URC Waldensian Fellowship and married at New Chapel URC), who is in the process of finding a new job for September. We have 2 children; Alexander who is hoping to go to University and Eve who is hoping to join the RAF.

You may ask what gives me joy in Ministry? Well, honestly all of it - I love the pastoral and the preaching, the challenges and the opportunities, and above all seeing how God acts in the lives of people and communities. As the new Moderator, it is clear my role is to be the 'Minister of the Ministers' and the 'friend of the Churches', as we explore where God is leading us together. I look forward to journeying with you in the coming years.

Revd Mike Thomason

PS: If you are on Facebook, please follow my page 'Revd Mike Thomason URC Minister' to keep up to date with all I have been doing.

.....

The Induction Service for the Revd Mike Thomason as the North Western Synod Moderator will be held at Worsley Road URC on Saturday 5th September 2026 at 2:30 pm. You are warmly invited to attend this special occasion. In order to be clear about numbers, please let your church leader know if you plan to attend.

United Reformed Church <https://urc.org.uk/>

North Western Synod <https://www.nwsynod.org.uk/>

Convenor: Vacancy

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)

Mission Mentor:

Lawrence Heath-Moore (lawrence.Moore@nwsynod.org.uk)

Partnership Churches:

Bank Top URC

St Andrew & St George URC

Egerton URC

Tonge Moor URC (Church at the Centre)

Farnworth URC

Worsley Road, Swinton URC

New Chapel URC

Christ Church Little Lever LEP

Red Lane URC

Cornerstone LEP

Rose Hill URC

Wharton & Cleggs Lane LEP

BSMP Vision 2026

Churches,

GROWING, NURTURING & SERVING

Their Places As Part Of One Body

Sharing Faith

Community
Transformation

Building
Together

Wellbeing
(Shalom)