



January 2017

## New Year Message from the Moderator

As we enter 2017, we do so within a global context that seems to be changing fast and possibly beyond recognition. This time last year we knew that there would be an EU referendum, but many of us were not expecting Brexit. We knew that there would be a new US President, but would not have expected President Trump. One wonders what the next twelve months might hold in store! The news inevitably continues to inform us about crises around the world, the latest 'hotspot' being, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, The Gambia. I believe it important for us to keep a global perspective and am grateful to the likes of Christian Aid and the Joint Public Issues Team for all the help they give us in that.

More locally and internally, our biggest issues as a Synod continue to be focussed around deployment. As we struggle to get the numbers of ministers where they should be, we face some difficult thinking and deciding. I know that is challenging for many of us, and that includes myself. However, we do need to address these issues and trying to attract relatively significant numbers of new ministers to the Synod, apart from being a means of grabbing an unfair share of the number of ministers, is simply likely to result in frustrating very long vacancies. I am grateful for the constructive and open way in which the vast majority approach these challenges.

On other fronts, God is with us – and we rejoice in that. The future may not be entirely easy, but if it is God's future, it will take us where we need to be. I am writing at the beginning of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with its theme of reconciliation and of crossing barriers. May that indeed be what drives us forward.

A little belatedly – a happy New Year!

*Revd Paul Whittle*



## Spiritual Direction course, Autumn 2017-Spring 2019

The Spiritual Direction course, held at the Chelmsford Diocesan House of Retreat, Pleshey, Essex, is an ecumenical one. Sponsored by the Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops of the diocese, it is open to lay and ordained Christians of all traditions. It explores the nature of Spiritual Direction; individual faith journeys and spiritual pilgrimage; listening skills; images of God; different traditions of spirituality; the interface between spirituality, gender, personality and human development; and practical skills needed in Spiritual Direction.

The course runs from September 2017 to March 2019 and includes three residential periods and fourteen whole days. Applications must be returned by the 15th March, 2017 and please note that prospective candidates will be invited for interview, with selection interviews taking place on 2nd and 3rd May. Do have a look at our [website](#) for details.

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## Mission Committee October 2016 Feedback to Synods

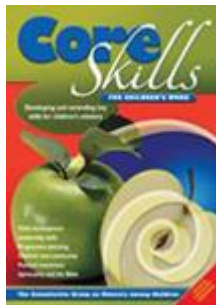
The [report](#) from the October 2016 Meeting of the World Council of Churches Central Committee in Trondheim Norway, is now available on the website. Trondheim is a pilgrimage centre for devotion to St Olaf. Meeting there enabled the WCC to both renew its relationship with the churches of Norway and across Scandinavia, as well as include Trondheim within its pilgrimage of justice and peace. The meeting consisted of worship, bible study, plenary presentation, committee meetings and decision-making sessions.

A review of Commitment for Life is being undertaken. Information and ideas to celebrate CFL's 25th Anniversary will be available on the following [site](#) in due course.

A task group on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory is to be set up to explore the follow up to General Assembly resolution. For further information, do please have a look at the [website](#).

*Revd David Sebley, Synod Representative to Mission Committee*

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## Children's Worker Training Course - Core Skills

This two-part course will give you the confidence, understanding and skills you need to work with children and to nurture them in their journey of faith, whether you are experienced or new to children's work, or indeed hoping to start. Running at Castle Hill URC, Dryden Road, Ipswich.

Part One is on Saturday 21st January and Part Two is on Saturday 25th February. For more information on the modules and the booking form, do have a look at our [website](#).

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## News from Shipdham URC

Revd Denis Simons tells us that Mary Woodcock has served as organist at Shipdham URC since she was a teenager, at the end of WWII. After some, almost 70 years, of faithful service, he gives thanks to God for her faithfulness and prays her time will now be free to enjoy her extended family. She received a framed certificate as a thanksgiving.

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## Sundays with CWM

As a useful resource for personal meditation, group discussion or a worship resource the [Sundays with CWM handbook](#) is well worth downloading.



It contains reflections and prayers from across the world as well as some well-known URC contributors.

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## Church Returns - a message to Church Secretaries

A big thank you to those of you who have kindly already sent in your Church Return; this is greatly appreciated. For those who have yet to send them in, your kind help would be really much appreciated in seeing that they arrive before the 31st of January. *Jane and Tina, PAs to the Moderator*

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## The Comedy Agency presents...



The Comedy Agency is very excited that they are now working with comedy magician [John Archer](#) for all live work.

John does a lot of outreach events and his one man show works particularly well as an Alpha (or similar) invitational, but it could be just good clean fun for the community.

[Booking now for 2017](#), with a few gaps before Easter and plenty afterwards.

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## Rural Evangelism Network: a one day rural mission consultation, Monday 27th February

To be held on Monday 27th February from 10.30am to 4pm at the Diocese of Chelmsford, [Rural Mission Consultation](#) is a day for all who are involved in or interested in rural mission and will be facilitated by Revd Barry Osborne and Cpt Gordon Banks CA of the Rural Evangelism Network, who bring much experience and understanding on how we can develop faith in the countryside. For more details email [Dub Gannon](#) or [Charlie Kosla](#).

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## Lent Retreat at the Windermere Centre

The Lent retreat is running from 6th-9th March, 2017 and uses the film "Jesus of Montreal" as the starting point for an exploration of the Easter story. Do have a look at the [website](#).

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## March Synod, 2017

This year's Synod will be held at Bishop's Stortford, Water Lane, CM23 2JZ on Saturday 18th March. Do check our [website](#) for further details.

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### York Courses 2017

Receiving Christ in five different ways - this is an ecumenical course in five sessions for discussion groups & individuals comprising course booklet, CD and transcript booklet. Ideal for Lent 2017.

In a course crammed with discussable questions, John Young teases out from the New Testament various ways in which we receive Christ, demonstrating that St John's theology in his magisterial Gospel has very practical implications for our day-to-day lives. Do check our [website](#) for details.

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### Congregational & General Charitable Trust

Announcing their new website, this independent grant-making charity says: our aim is to support churches, particularly those of the United Reformed and Congregational denominations, in the provision and repair of suitable buildings. Full details of how to apply are on the [website](#).

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### 'Thy Kingdom Come 2017'

In the days leading up to Pentecost, 25th May - 4th June 2017, we are inviting prayer for the renewing and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit to make Christ real in our midst, and to bring us closer together and the enrichment this brings.

Do have a look at the [website](#).

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## URC FEASTS AND FESTIVALS – diary dates

For more information about events nationwide, please have a look at our [website](#).

### A Day of Preparation for Lent, Saturday 28th February, 2017

As part of Feasts and Festivals Westminster College have 'A Day of Preparation for Lent' on Saturday 18th February - book [here](#).

### Children's and Youth Synod - Saturday 18th March, 2017 - 'The Big Picnic'



In celebration of Feasts and Festivals, the theme for this year's Children's and Youth Synod, at Bishop's Stortford Water Lane URC, will be 'The Big Picnic'. Discovering God's big story, by exploring the meaning of 4 bible meals. Contact the [CYDO](#) to book.

### URC Big Day Out - Saturday 20th May, 2017

To be held at Warwick Castle, this [exciting event](#) will give a special opportunity to share in our fellowship and celebrate together the richness of shared heritage, cultures and experiences. This will be the flagship event of the Feasts and Festivals year.

### Eastern Synod - Celebration Day, Saturday 10th June, 2017



Please put the date in your diary! We are looking forward to seeing you at the Eastern Synod Celebration Day, to be held on the 10th June, 2017 at Suffolk Showground, Trinity Park, Suffolk, IP3 8UH.

This is a day of celebration for all ages. More information will follow and in the meantime, keep an eye on our [website](#).

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## Forthcoming events

You will always find [forthcoming events](#) on the Synod website under Events.

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### 2017 Dates for your diary:

21st January, 2017 - Core Skills, Children's Worker Training Course Part One, 10am to 3.45pm at Castle Hill URC, Dryden Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 6QF

25th February, 2017 - Core Skills, Children's Worker Training Course Part Two, 10am to 3.45pm at Castle Hill URC, Dryden Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 6QF

27th February, 2017 - Rural Mission Consultation, 10.30am to 4pm at Diocese of Chelmsford, 53 New Street, Chelmsford CM1 1AT

6th-9th March, 2017 - Lent Retreat at the Windermere Centre

18th March, 2017 - Synod, including Children's and Youth Synod, at Bishop's Stortford, Water Lane, CM23 2JZ

20th May, 2017 - Pilots URC Big Day out at Warwick Castle, CV34 4QU

10th June, 2017 - Eastern Synod Celebration Day at Suffolk Showground, IP3 8UH

September 2017 - March 2019 - Spiritual Direction, House of Retreat, Pleshey, CM3 1HA

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Newsletter no 32 will be sent out in mid-March, please send your articles by end February to the Moderator's PA, on [modpa@urceastern.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urceastern.org.uk) or post to: Moderator's PA, The URC Eastern Synod, Duxford Road, Whittlesford, Cambs CB22 4ND.

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*Office hours are 9 am to 1 pm and 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm - tel no: 01223 830770*