

The URC

What is it and what does it mean to us?

The United Reformed Church was first formed in 1972 by a union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the majority of churches in the Congregational Church in England and Wales. It was joined later by the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ in 1981 and the Congregational Union of Scotland in 2000.

The oldest churches have a history going back to the 17th century and the Reformation. Other congregations were formed during the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century or by denominational expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Churches were opened in new housing areas in the late twentieth century, but many of these were joint ventures with the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union.

Across England, Scotland and Wales, the United Reformed Church has nearly 100,000 members and regular worshippers, in 1600 local congregations.

The United Reformed Church shares the Trinitarian tradition and creeds of all the major Christian denominations. The Bible is taken to be the supreme authority for the Church, together with certain historic statements of the United Reformed Church.

Respect for individual belief and a conviction that majorities are not always right mean that the Church is not dogmatic and embraces a wide variety of opinions.

The United Reformed Church takes the name 'Reformed' because it has its roots in the Reformation of the 17th Century, but also because it seeks to be continually reforming, to equip itself to be a Church for today. It is part of the worldwide family of Reformed Churches, which has a total membership of around 70 million people.

It has a strong commitment to church union and the ecumenical movement. Its local churches are often partnerships with other denominations, and in some parts of England, local United Reformed and Methodist churches work together in what is termed a United Area.

The URC is a trinitarian church whose theological roots are distinctly Reformed and whose historical and organisational roots are in the Presbyterian (Calvinism) and Congregational traditions. Its Basis of Union contains a statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church which sets out its beliefs in a condensed form.^[14]

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most difficult ideas in Christianity, but it's fundamental to Christians because it:

- states what Christians believe God is like and who he is
- plays a central part in Christians' worship of an "unobjectifiable and incomprehensible God"
- emphasises that God is very different from human beings
- reflects the ways Christians believe God encounters them
- is a central element of Christian identity
- teaches Christians vital truths about relationship and community
- reveals that God can be seen only as a spiritual experience whose mystery inspires awe and cannot be understood logically

Formed in an act of ecumenical union, the URC is committed to ecumenism. The denomination is a member of many ecumenical organisations, including Churches Together in England, Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales), the Enfys covenant, Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Council for World Mission.

How wonderful would it be for all the God-fearing people of the world to join and praise our God. To pray together for greater understanding and love between all mankind. Perhaps we could then achieve the purpose God gave us when we were introduced into his creation.

