

Paper 11

Mission Committee
Greenbelt 2017

United
Church
Reformed
Church
2017
Church 2017



Paper I1

Mission Committee

Greenbelt 2017

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Steve Summers steve.summers@urc.org.uk
Action required	Information is provided to circulate to local churches.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To inform members about the United Reformed Church's association with Greenbelt and to build support for this involvement.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Reformed Church is an Associate Sponsor of Greenbelt for 2016 and 2017. • The Greenbelt Festival is from 25 – 28 August 2017 at Boughton House, Kettering, Northamptonshire. • Individuals and local churches are invited to participate with the <i>URC at Greenbelt</i> project.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council discussions in 2014-15, most recently minute 15/3. Paper I3, Mission Council March 2016.
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Committee, Communications department, General Secretariat, Chief Finance Officer.

Summary of Impact

Financial	This project is fully-funded by a Legacy Fund grant.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This involvement will expand our contacts and witness, in the context of a well-known and widely-supported Christian festival.

Greenbelt 2017

1. Greenbelt is a collision of the arts, faith and justice. Engaged with culture, inspired by the arts, sustained by faith, Greenbelt aspires to be an open generous community reimagining the Christian narrative for the present moment. This vision is primarily lived out annually, with a festival and rich programme of music, visual and performing arts, spirituality, comedy, talks and discussion. But thinking of Greenbelt as just another 'festival' doesn't do it justice. It is also an idea, a way of seeing, a gathering of the clans – part movement, part moment. Its genius is that it defies easy description. Celebrating artistry and nurturing activism, the Greenbelt Festival is an act of imagination – inspirational, provocative and fun. Energised by a progressive Christian worldview which is politically and culturally engaged, Greenbelt creates a festival that is inclusive, open-minded, participatory and generous in spirit.
2. Since 1974, Greenbelt has equipped and re-energised Christians to be imaginative and effective disciples in their local communities. Greenbelt and the United Reformed Church signed an agreement in January 2016, making the denomination an associate sponsor of the Greenbelt festival for the first time. The partnership is a natural fit, building on the URC's rich Nonconformist history of exploration of radical Christian faith and working for justice, and the dynamic and creative energy of the Greenbelt festival.
3. The aims of the *URC at Greenbelt* project include:
 - to generously invest in, join with and contribute to a festival which has an outstanding and unique track-record for encouraging and equipping Christians with their discipleship and ministry for more than four decades. Greenbelt continues to provide a crucible for faith and praxis where people return home enthused and envisioned to develop their local churches, neighbourhoods and communities.
 - to accompany Greenbelt as we collectively explore God's mission for today, envision how we may be and do Church more imaginatively and discover how disciples of Christ might live out their faith more effectively.
 - to encourage, gather together and strengthen the sense of community for the numerous URC members who have been part of the Greenbelt movement for many years and to provide a recognisable presence for URC members new to Greenbelt.
4. These aims were successfully addressed via our activities at the 2016 festival and will continue to be addressed this year. The large, uniquely-decorated and distinctive 'U', 'R' and 'C' letters that were displayed and collectively transformed outside our URC Tent symbolised the image of the URC that our project conveyed. Awareness was particularly raised about the JPIT, CRCW ministry, Reform, Commitment for Life, Pilots, CreateTalk, Luther King House, East Midlands Synod, TLS, Discipleship and Pioneer Ministry by conversations and displays in the URC Tent. URC Youth representatives took on invaluable roles and responsibilities that should be particularly recognised. Another benefit of this venture has been closer working relationships among colleagues across the different teams with representatives of Mission, Communications and Discipleship playing equally valuable roles. Blog articles from Grace Pengelly, Ann Honey, Ruth Maxey and Francis Brienen were circulated to 20 000 subscribers each and comments and photos about the URC uploaded via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram sites.

5. The highly-visible *URC at Greenbelt* team members were often asked about the meaning of their 'Scrap the Church?' tee-shirts that they were wearing. This, plus the different URC activities connecting with our theme, naturally led to conversations about the URC's dissenting tradition and our desire to continually be discerning God's mission for today in contemporary society. Over 500 people wrote down their comments about what the Church could scrap or improve and the URC activities stimulated conversations and personal reflection about the role and effectiveness of Church in society. One of the most encouraging aspects of the URC's formal presence at the festival was the high number of URC people who came along to our activities and emphasised how good it was to see the URC so prominent as part of Greenbelt. Additionally, a good number of URC members came along to the festival for the first time due to our Association with Greenbelt. The 27 volunteers involved with our *URC at Greenbelt* team felt a strong sense of belonging, identity with and commitment to the project and the URC.
6. Following on from the success of the *URC at Greenbelt* project in 2016, plans are well underway for our involvement with the 2017 festival. Relationships with Greenbelt staff are strong and the URC is viewed as a key player as Greenbelt moves forward. The festival is held this year from 25 to 29 August at Boughton House near Kettering, Northamptonshire. The theme for this year's festival is 'The Common Good', how can we collectively transform life for the sake of the world? Please see: www.greenbelt.org.uk for more information.
7. Our *URC at Greenbelt* presence sits within the current *Feasts & Festivals* celebrations; the festival is a given while the feasts and food focus lends itself to many activities and discussions. Within our URC theme of 'More than Welcome', URC-organised activities at Greenbelt 2017 will include a 'giant picnic table & shelter' art installation; 'Pop-up picnic liturgy' with a number of 'eucharistic moments' happening around the village over the weekend, depicting stories from the gospel that incorporate food; a Discussion Panel exploring the theme, involving those who feel more-or-less welcome in society and church; a 'Cake & debate' session as part of the youth programme; and the 'URC Banqueting Tent' in the Greenbelt Takeaway Area where people can relax, meet with others, listen to stories, learn to knit, attend workshops and discuss key issues around the theme. The popular URC 'treasure hunt' will involve searching the site for hidden picnic hampers, answering questions on food and feast stories from the Bible and collecting knitted food to bring to our Banqueting Table so that it gradually becomes laden over the weekend. The aim is to illustrate The Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24), to explore how to enact more than mere tokenistic or lukewarm welcome, and to consider who is missing from our conversations, our communities and our churches. On the final day, festival-goers will be invited to take an item of food back home as a gift from the URC, along with an action card encouraging them to identify and build relationships with those who feel less-than-welcome in their communities and churches.
8. Last year's festival 'treasure hunt' showcased the brightly and uniquely-decorated stars designed by church groups and synods across the URC. For this year's 'treasure hunt', local knitters and crocheters are invited to produce as much knitted or crocheted food as possible! Interested individuals, community groups and churches should email crcw.admin@urc.org.uk for patterns and information about where to send the produce. A large amount of wool will also be needed for the festival so if you have any to spare, please also contact this address.



9. Individuals and local churches are encouraged to email the project coordinator: steve.summers@urc.org.uk if they would like to know more about the *URC at Greenbelt* project or expect to attend this year's festival. There is a Greenbelt page on the URC website and URC Communications have created a URC Greenbelt event on their Facebook page where the latest information about the *URC at Greenbelt* project will be posted. Whilst recognising your individuality and the different strands we represent within our URC-tapestry, we encourage you to become 'knitted together' for The Common Good!

A short presentation about Greenbelt will be given to Mission Council.

