



Dear Vision4Life signed-up local church contact

Welcome to the Vision4Life Bible Year!

It is great to have you on board and a real encouragement to know that your church has signed up to this process. As we begin Advent together we also begin a three year process which we believe will bring transformation and new life to the United Reformed Church. We believe God is very much at the heart of this and as a steering group we have been excited and encouraged at the way such a diverse group of people have been led to this process of spiritual development.

By now your church should have received the printed booklets. These were sent out to the normal list of church secretaries used for other national mailings, and were also sent to every church. This is not what was planned and there were a couple of reasons for this.

- One is that there was such a tight time pressure on printing and distribution that it was, in the end, impractical to deal with two different mailing lists. That means that it may not have been you who received the booklets, but be assured, someone should have!
- But the other reason is simply that we are so convinced this is going to impact the church as a whole that **we wanted everyone in this first year to see the materials**. The rate of signing up has risen almost exponentially in the last few weeks and we are fast approaching a third of local churches signing up (we are currently over 450 sign-ups). As more churches were coming on board, even as we distributed the booklets, it became obvious that we needed to send out to everyone. This is a reflection of the fact that Vision4Life has exceeded all our expectations and planning! It has become **one of the most supported URC initiative ever** and we have been bowled over by the enthusiasm of so many people.

There has been understandable frustration and disappointment about the fact that material has been made available later than anticipated and intended. This has worried some churches that have been relying on the material to plan their year. We hope you will understand and accept that this has nothing to do with the *Vision4Life* Steering Group slacking on the job! The fact of the matter is that we are a team with no full time staff and have been working flat out on *Vision4Life* while trying to hold down very busy and demanding day jobs. It has not been at all easy and our resources have been outstripped by the amazing response of the church.

We believe passionately that this is where God is calling the United Reformed Church to be. In our experience, though, it has been a bit like surfing the wave of the Spirit: the best you can do is stay upright; you can't control the speed or direction of the wave! So, as well as finding it frustrating, we hope you will also be encouraged, and see in it the signs of the Spirit's activity as much as the shortcomings of organisation. Be encouraged rather than the opposite: God is at work in our collective lives! There are exciting times ahead, even though, at the moment, it's all been very rushed.

A Process – not a programme

The frustrations, though, also show up the fact that some Churches still see *Vision4Life* as a programme rather than a process, and it's important to stress again that it isn't a programme. The material that has been produced is there as a resource; the whole idea of the menu is that churches involve themselves in the process of engagement with the Bible, and make use of the material in whatever ways they find most helpful. The original plan was only to produce website materials, but as it became clear that the introductory materials were so well received and that there is something important about having printed materials in your hands, we decided to go to print for each year as well. We have done a very limited run on these booklets – enough for 2 copies per local church with some spares available. Because of the very limited URC budget, if you require extra copies you will have to purchase these from the URC Bookshop (details at www.urch.org.uk) at a cost of £2.00 each including P&P. The bookshop has further details of quantity orders but please bear in mind that you should only need one of these per leader as they are designed as leader's notes and not for every church member. There are also very limited further supplies. Alternatively they are all downloadable from the V4L website so you can print locally.

However the booklets are purely a starting point. As the year progresses **more materials will appear on the website** and we would encourage you to make full use of it. There will be further official materials which are being produced as we write, and these should be posted up over the coming few weeks (some in the next few days). These will include two further main course bible studies as well as extra nibbles, starters and deserts. There are some seasonal materials which will be up there very soon and could also be used in subsequent years. In addition there will be unofficial materials, both those we will commend, and others we will have had little chance to check over but which local churches and individuals will have used successfully in other places. If you want to submit any materials, please do so via Janet Lees our Bible Year coordinator at bible@vision4life.org.uk or through the website email. We will also be providing a links page with further resources that can be obtained elsewhere – some of these will have reviews attached to them.

So we hope you can see that there are lots more to come and that we are only just starting!

We pray that as the year goes by, God will do a collective work of transformation in us all. We will be continuing to work on your behalf to facilitate this as best we can, but we are all sharing this together so you have a vital part to play. We hope you will sense God at work as we have.

With every blessing for a fruitful Vision4Life year

The Vision4Life Steering Group

Vision4Life
Transforming the church

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