

40 THINGS I love about us

United Reformed Church general secretary, **Roberta Rominger**, finds 40 things to celebrate as the URC marks its 40th anniversary this month

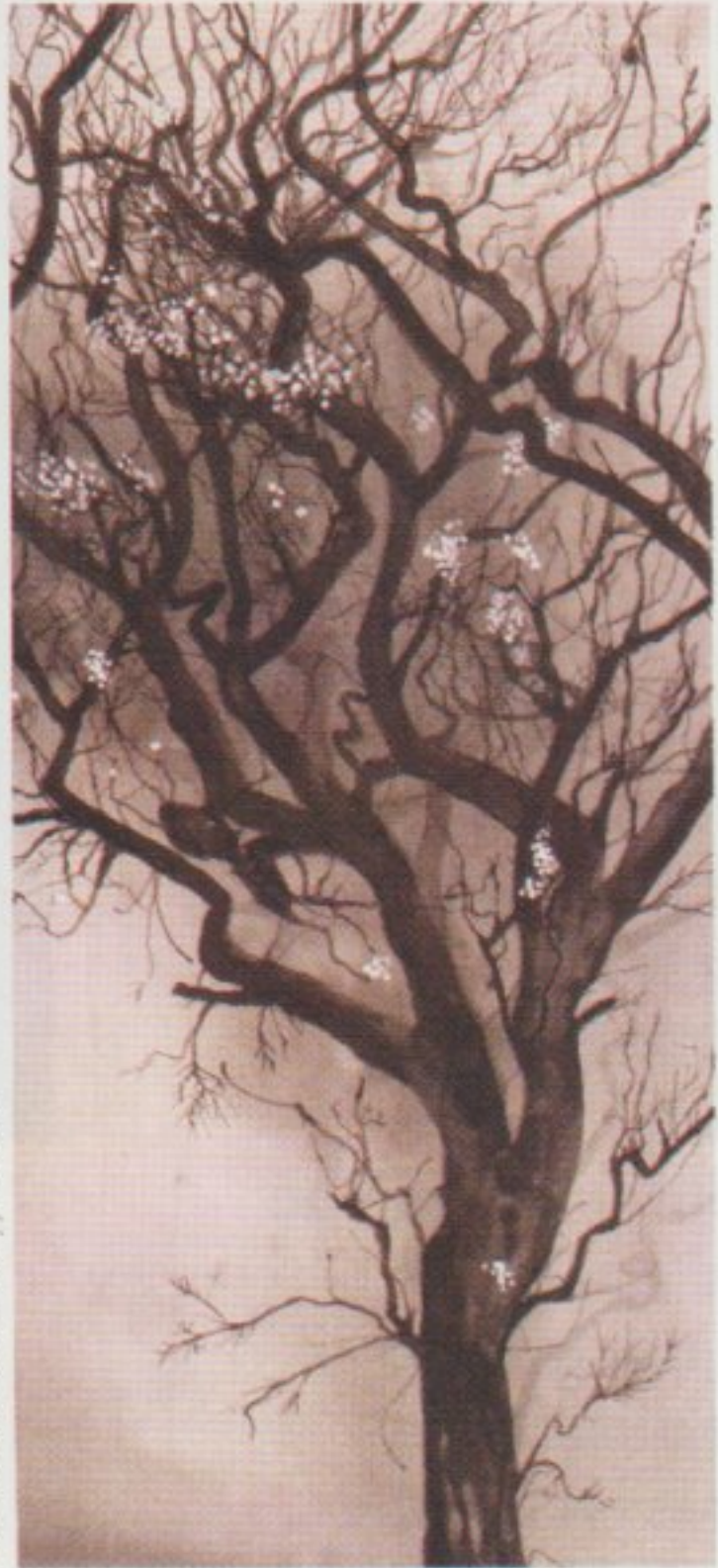


Illustration: ©Butterfly/Fotolia

1. I encounter God in the lives of our churches and councils everywhere I go.
2. Fantastic people, including many of my closest friends.
3. Openness to change, arising from a strong commitment to following where the Spirit leads. (In the 2001 Church Life Profile, the URC topped the league table in the category of "Ready to try something new" – I believe it!)
4. We are an inclusive community. In many places the doors are genuinely open.
5. We are growing in diversity through people of many cultures.
6. We are a church in three nations, each with a proud history and culture for us to embody.
7. We are theologically diverse. It is a gift, though not an easy one.
8. We are free to craft worship as we feel led. Across the theological spectrum, our worship is regularly uplifting and challenging.
9. Our little church has produced a wealth of fantastic hymnwriters.
10. I love our particular mixture of dignity and informality.
11. We are committed to conciliar decision-making. It's about the Spirit and the people, not hierarchical leadership.
12. You don't have to leave your brain at the door – the URC welcomes intellectual enquiry and wants faith to be intellectually rigorous.
13. We are good at Bible study – regularly the best part of our meetings.
14. Our historical roots are inspiring. Lots of amazing stories to challenge us to be courageous and faithful.
15. We believe in the ministry of the whole people of God.
16. The church thrives thanks to a legion of faithful volunteers.
17. That means women are well represented in our leadership.
18. Young people make a real contribution, especially at General Assembly.
19. The "Charter for Children" is still the bravest affirmation of any of the churches.
20. Other churches are jealous of our Children's Assembly.
21. Elders offer spiritual and practical leadership.
22. Ministers are called to churches. Very different from being appointed.
23. Equality of stipend means that we give equal value to a wide range of callings.
24. Resource Centres for Learning open their doors to all of us, offering dynamic, creative learning opportunities.
25. Training for Learning and Serving is the best.
26. Our two moderators of Assembly, a minister and an elder, are equals, not senior and junior. We sent Val to meet the Pope!
27. We've been ordaining women for 95 years now.
28. Special category ministers show our commitment to mission beyond our local churches.
29. Local churches also serve their communities with energy and vision.
30. Church-related community workers, a URC invention, combine professional community work skills with theological insight.
31. The community awards are a thrilling highlight of Assembly.
32. We still hold the ecumenical vision in our three nations.
33. We offer ecumenical leadership locally out of all proportion to our size.
34. Internationally, our passion is for genuine mutuality. Belonging to the World Church embodies this.
35. Commitment for Life has enabled powerful support for Christian Aid.
36. Though many of our churches are nearing the end of their life span, there are also many green shoots.
37. Through Vision2020 we all have ownership of all the excellent work others are doing.
38. Synods and Assembly staff strive to offer real support to local churches without overburdening. At its best, this holds us together while enabling our freedom.
39. REFORM Magazine – bravo!
40. We exist thanks to brave decisions. We are still willing to take them.

Can you name 40 more? ■

The 40th anniversary of the formation of the United Reformed Church falls on 5 October 2012