

• Table fellowship and techno dancing

Head of Evangelism and Ecumenism at the United Reformed Church, Lindsey Brown, attended the Landessynode of the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz in Speyer, Germany.

15 July 2026 | 4 mins read

[Home](#) → [News](#) → Table fellowship and techno dancing

A cab collected me at 4am to get me to St Pancras for the Eurostar, the beginning of a day of 500 miles of trains, most of which were delayed*. Despite missing every connection, I still managed to get to Speyer only 20 minutes behind schedule, and in time for a stop at the Memorial Church with its imposing statue of Luther and its remarkable windows and symbolism, before meeting other ecumenical guests and staff members for dinner. Speyer is the birthplace of Protestantism, where in 1629 princes and states protested against the Holy Roman Emperor's ban on Martin Luther's teachings. The church is an imposing 19th century memorial to that moment.

Most closely equivalent to the URC's General Assembly, items on the [Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz \(EKP\)](#) Landessynode agenda included updates from a major transformation project (part of a nationwide restructuring of the Protestant churches); innovative "blessing" projects which reach out into the margins of communities; and the painful decision to close a much-loved church school.

I have about six words of German, and so I was surprised that I was able to make out so much of the business. On the first day this was down to excellent briefings before each Paper was brought and close listening for tone during discussion. Speakers were generally incredibly neutral, with very little in the way of giveaway shrugs or gestures or face-pulling, but even so I got the gist of which way the debates had gone. Votes were done electronically: none of the white, green, orange and blue card-waving of a URC Assembly!

On the second day, there were presentations done with slides, and against my principles (!) I used Google Lens to instantly translate them, which, I admit, made proceedings a great deal easier. I also had URC/EKP link person Pastor Martin Henninger translating for me, summarising the main points of each contribution.

At the end of that day's first main session, I was taken by surprise when the screen behind the main table lit up with swirling colour and the words *Activ Paus*, accompanied by indescribably loud techno music. About two-thirds of the delegates immediately stood up and, in their places, began a form of aerobic 'dancing'. No one cracked a smile. All had completely straight faces. This was designed, of course, to reenergise the delegates after a long morning of sitting and listening. Maybe too hard a sell for the upcoming URC General Assembly at The Hayes?



Pictured with Lindsey (centre) are Pastors Martin Henninger, who represented the Pfalz Church at URC General Assembly 2026 (for the 12th time) and Anja Behrens.

The long and moving history of the URC's Covenant of Pulpit and Table Fellowship with the Protestant Churches in the Palatinate region of Germany goes back over 60 years. It came about as part of a post-war movement to build bridges between Christians, and still stands post-Brexit as a testimony to God's kingdom taking precedence over the borders of nations. Around twenty local URC's are twinned with partner German churches from the region, and regular exchanges and youth visits take place each year: shortly after my visit two young people from the URC travelled to the EKP's youth assembly, also by train. We also share a biennial theological consultation, which this year will be hosted by the URC and focus on the church's prophetic voice.

To have represented the URC at the EKP Landessynode was a great privilege and only served to deepen our ties. Attending one another's decision-making bodies provides wonderful opportunities to further establish existing relationships and make new connections. Listening to and learning from Christian partners both deepens our appreciation of our tradition and opens the door to new possibilities and ways of being. After only two full days there, I came home to have rich conversations with our own Ministries and Faith in Action teams about ideas that we might learn from. While my return journey was also fraught with missed connections, the joy of making new ones was all I was thinking about.

*It is URC policy for travel within Europe to be by train where possible.

[Find out more about the United Reformed Church.](#)

[Share this story](#)

Related news and stories

[Sarah Mullally: 100 days since historic installation](#)

[Rev Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson on why the presence of a Black woman at the Archbishop of Canterbury's installation still matters.](#)

[URC Youth seek 'unity for the common good'](#)

[United Reformed Church Communications Officer Laurence Wareing reports from the 2026 gathering of the church's annual Youth Assembly.](#)