

## Opening Reflection by the Revd Andrew Mudharara East Midlands Synod Joint Racial Justice Advocate

### Thirty Years On – Commemorating Stephen Lawrence



There have been a lot of significant changes that have taken place after the racially motivated murder of **Stephen Lawrence** in South-east London on 22 April 1993. But the reality on the ground is that we are still very far from the place that people from the Black and ethnic minoritised groups – and their white comrades who stand alongside them in the battle for justice and equality for all – would dream of in our society. Equality in law may be there on paper, but we are still continuing to dream of equal opportunities for some Black and ethnic minoritised communities in workplaces and communities.

The challenge for change to be rooted in our communities is that there are a lot of people who think and advocate that racism is not a problem in our civilised communities. The current findings still point to racism as a big challenge to the Metropolitan police and the recent findings also in the Fire Service across the country causes me to question if we have learnt anything as a country from the murder of Stephen Lawrence thirty years ago?

The question probably that is hardest to reflect on is whether the church has learnt anything from this and the many other racially motivated crimes committed against the ethnically minoritised in this country?

I wish the answer was that we have dealt with racism in the **United Reformed Church** well and will not allow racism to tear us apart from the love of God. The stories I hear and witness in the URC seem to suggest that we are a long way from the dream of a non-racist church. I should however admit that changes

are taking place and conversations are happening – but a lot needs to change if we have learnt anything from the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence.

I hope my daughter and the generations to come will not have to fight the beast of racism as we dream to move to a non-racist church by the time we are commemorating 35 years since the murder of Stephen Lawrence. I hope voices that are oppressed are being heard and action being taken to kick out racism in the Church and community.

We each as individuals have the job to listen and challenge this beast called racism when we see or suspect it – in the Church especially.

## Pursuing Racial Justice

The role of **Racial Justice Advocate** in the East Midlands Synod is shared by the **Revd Andrew Mudharara** and the **Revd Samuel Silungwe**.

Andrew recently appeared in the powerful short film “[Telling It Like It Is](#)”, commissioned by the **Legacies of Slavery Task Group**. The film takes an uncomfortable look at the very real barriers encountered in the United Reformed Church by many of its Black members. Holding Jesus as a beacon of justice before us, urges us all to listen and to act together to turn the URC into an actively anti-racist church.

Designed for screening to local congregations as a conversation starter, “Telling It Like It Is” is available at:

<https://youtu.be/1MrzfzX5gGs>



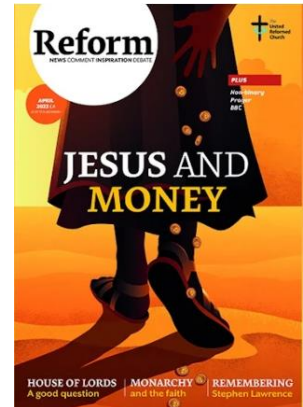
## Stephen Lawrence Legacy Conversations: a Video Resource

**Christian Aid** and **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland** (CTBI) recently brought together more than a dozen leading Christian thinkers and theologians, including the URC’s **Karen Campbell**, to discuss the legacy of Stephen Lawrence’s racist killing and the current state of race-relations in church and society in Britain and Ireland.



The results of these conversations are available in a stunning series of videos that can be seen via the CTBI and Christian Aid websites: [www.ctbi.org.uk](http://www.ctbi.org.uk) or [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk) . For further details, see: <https://urc.org.uk/stephen-lawrence-legacy-conversations-videos-launched/>

The murder of Stephen Lawrence is also remembered in the current edition of **Reform**, asking what has changed in society and Church since then – and concluding there’s still a lot of work for us to do. Andrew Mudharara is among the contributors. As one says, "It’s not a sprint but a gruelling marathon" – but are we making the running?



You can read an extract or subscribe to Reform for the full story at [www.reform-magazine.co.uk](http://www.reform-magazine.co.uk) .

## Around the East Midlands Synod



### A New Elder for Easter at Saffron Lane URC

We are delighted to share with you the news that on Easter Sunday, **Elizabeth Richardson**, from Saffron Lane URC was ordained into eldership in a service conducted by Eileen Williams. On the same day 62 years ago, Elizabeth Richardson and Sandra Clay were both baptised by full immersion on Easter Sunday.

### Worthy Lundie Award Winner at Castle Hill URC

We send our congratulations to **Tommy Smith** of **Castle Hill URC** in Northampton, March’s recipient of the [Lundie Memorial Award](#) for children and young people who are playing their part in the mission of God in their church, community or the wider world.



Twelve-year-old Tommy was nominated by Castle Hill’s minister the **Revd Liz Adams** for his participation in its community outreach programme. Liz says, “a selfless, thoughtful act of kindness from a child who has hardships of his own melted my heart and I felt compelled to nominate him for this award.”

At Christmas, the church provided small gifts for children and food, allowing families to have all that’s needed for a traditional dinner. In the past, the church has donated scarves, hats and pyjamas.

This year Tommy suggested, due to the energy crisis, that blankets would be useful to keep the children warm and reduce the need for the heating to be turned on. This was deemed an excellent suggestion and so the church applied for a grant and managed to purchase 210 blankets.

Tommy took it upon himself, with his mum's help, to wrap all 210 blankets. When asked why he offered to wrap them all, he said:

"I wrapped the blankets so that all the children had something to open on Christmas Day that would then keep them warm. I felt happy when wrapping them as I was thinking about who they would be going to and if they would like them. I was very tired at the end."

Tommy said he felt proud to receive the award as he'd only offered to get involved to help children who may not have anything else. He plans to meet with Liz to discuss how to use the £100 award.



## Meet the New Members of the Synod Team



**Richard Knott** began work with the East Midlands Synod on 17 April 2023 as Children and Youth Development Officer (CYDO).

Richard joins the Synod with a wealth of experience in children's and youth ministry in both lay and paid roles spanning more than two decades. Richard also has a degree in Children's and Youth Ministry following part-time study at Cliff College. Richard and his wife Sharon are in the process of relocating from Birmingham.

Richard says:

"I am absolutely delighted to have this God given opportunity to serve alongside you in seeking to connect with and to engage children, young people and families in a life of following Jesus. I am passionate about the church as the body of Christ which is at its best when all ages are fully involved together."

You are encouraged to make contact with Richard who would be delighted to hear from you.

Email [cydo@urc5.org.uk](mailto:cydo@urc5.org.uk) Mobile 07577867024

We are equally delighted to announce the appointment of a new **Safeguarding Officer** and **Mission Development Officer**.



On 1 May 2023 **Ben Twelves** will be joining us as our new Safeguarding Officer. Ben joins us with a teaching background and is also the Church Safeguarding Coordinator at Fountain Square LEP in Tideswell.



On 1 July 2023 **Tom Donoghue** will be joining us as our new Mission Development Officer. Tom is currently serving as an Evangelist at Cliff College and will remain with them until the end of the summer term.

We are sure that you will join us in welcoming Richard, Ben and Tom to the East Midlands Synod.

## Personal News

**It is with great sadness that we bring news of the deaths of the following servants of the Church. We give thanks to God for all that has been achieved through their lives and ministries.**

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**The Thames North Synod** brings us news of the death of the **Revd Jean Wilkinson** on Monday 10 April. She had been a minister for over 65 years. Jean's Ordination took place on 1 July 1957 from Memorial College, Brecon where she was the first woman student. Her first ministry after that was at Mountain Ash in Wales. She 'retired' in 1993 and after retirement was for over 20 years a member of a united church of Methodist and URC in Brightlingsea, Essex. She moved to Gerrards Cross in 2015. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who hold Jean dear.

# URC Jubilee Celebration



This past Saturday (15 April) saw the joyous occasion of the [Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration](#) marking the United Reformed Church's **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**, in the magnificent surroundings of London's Westminster Central Hall where the denomination's founding service itself took place in 1972.

Initially scheduled for our Jubilee year of 2022, the service was postponed from its original date owing to rail strikes but nothing could have prevented the eventual celebration. It was preceded by an **Open Church House** event at which Training & Development Officer **Derek Graham** helped represent Education & Learning, and an organised [Walk to Westminster](#) between the two venues.



At the opening of the service, Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** placed a candle to represent the East Midlands on a map of all 13 Synods. Worshippers from churches in Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Newport Pagnell, Northampton, Nottingham, Wellingborough and others ensured that the East Midlands Synod was equally well represented in the flesh. The **Revd Peter Stevenson** of ChristChurch Grantham/Stamford URC and **Ruth and David Maddison** of Bulwell URC were amongst the volunteers welcoming attendees as they arrived at the main door. Meanwhile, numerous others from our Synod were able to take part online via the [live stream](#).

The service featured a wealth of music from different eras and cultures, led by a specially assembled choir, and culminated in a mass celebration of Holy Communion. A full report of the service can be found on the URC website: <https://urc.org.uk/urc-celebrates-its-jubilee/>



In the closing stages, all those present joined in an **Act of Recommitment** for the United Reformed Church:

**May the quest for unity, forge us.  
May the celebration of diversity, sculpt us.  
May the vision of abundant life for all, steer us.**

**Transfused by God's grace,  
walking the way of Jesus Christ,  
bound together in the Holy Spirit,  
we commit ourselves  
to be signs and servants of God's new creation.**

God of the past, **together – we give you thanks.**  
God of the hidden future, **together – we place our trust in you.**  
God of our own time, **together – we will follow where you lead.**



Full details of the service can still be downloaded at [Service of Thanksgiving – Order of Service](#) and you can enjoy a full recording on [YouTube](#) .



**Church Safeguarding Coordinators' Forum**



Thursday 25 May 2023, 1.00- 3.00pm  
at The Synod Meeting Room

Join us for this two-hour 'in person' session which looks into the role of a Church Safeguarding Coordinator, led by **Carrie Kaunda**, URC Safeguarding Training and Development Coordinator.



The training will look at:

- Key Responsibilities
- Developing and supporting a culture that supports safeguarding
- How to manage concerns
- Completing annual church safeguarding returns
- Reporting to the elders/church meetings
- Ensuring the church has a Safeguarding policy and procedures
- Supporting Safer Recruitment
- Identifying and guiding on risk assessments

For more information or to book please email Hannah Holmes: [trainingpa@urc5.org.uk](mailto:trainingpa@urc5.org.uk)

## Good News: Training Events from JPIT with All We Can



**JPIT** (the Joint Public Issues Team) has joined forces with **All We Can** to offer three free training sessions asking: how can we be Good News when we preach and lead worship about social justice?



Alongside sessions in Manchester and London, one is set to take place in the East Midlands: at West Bridgford Methodist Church, Nottingham on **Wednesday 7 June** from 7.00-9.00pm.

The interactive sessions will explore how we can preach and lead worship on justice issues to share the good news, in a practical and action-focused opportunity to dig deeper together.

The Manchester and London events take place simultaneously from 10.30am-1.30pm on Saturday 3 June. Full details and the booking link are available at: <https://www.allwecan.org.uk/event/goodnews/>

Also in the latest newsletter from **JPIT**: ending UK poverty, church leaders take their statement opposing the Illegal Migration Bill to Downing Street, and a ten-minute guide to the IPCC's "final warning" climate report. [Click here](#) to read it in full.



## Situations Vacant



**MK: Christian Foundation**  
Growing people and community through social enterprise

**Sector Minister – Director of MK Christian Foundation**  
**Salary Package: £43,000 plus pension**

A unique and exciting opportunity to explore and develop new approaches to mission and church through social enterprise. The appointee will:

- Hold, with others, the mission, vision and values of the MK Christian Foundation and our particular emphasis on the practical outworking of the gospel;
- Oversee the on-going sustainability and development of our social enterprises and training of young people.

The MK Christian Foundation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff to share this commitment. An enhanced DBS check is required for all successful applicants.

We value diversity and welcome applicants from all sections of the community.

For an application pack please go to <https://mkchristianfoundation.co.uk/jobs/> . The deadline for applications will 12.00 mid-day on 2 May 2023, with interviews on Tuesday 9 May 2023.

**Moderator – South Western Synod**  
**Full-time, seven-year termed appointment**  
**Minister's Stipend**



General Assembly wishes to appoint a United Reformed Church minister to serve as South Western Synod Moderator from 1 October 2023 (or an alternative by agreement).

South Western Synod is seeking a prayerful, discerning and inspirational Moderator to guide the Synod as looks to fulfil God's mission. The Moderator will help us build on strengths and develop our response to the challenges which are faced both by churches and those who live in our cities, towns and villages.

You will bring to the role your enthusiasm for mission and outreach, desire to promote inclusion and social justice, and advocacy for environmental sustainability. You will have practical experience and an understanding of leading effective change in complex situations. You will have a vibrant interest in ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

Your interpersonal, management, communication and digital skills will help you to lead a Synod which covers a region of varied communities from rural and seaside villages to towns and cities, with many churches in ecumenical partnerships and some in united areas. The Synod is committed to encouraging and supporting its 110 churches in mission to their local communities and beyond.

You will bring experience in innovative, mission focused ministry in local churches, to support and encourage our churches to be authentic, outward looking, and rooted in their local community. Your consultative and collaborative style of leadership, and ability to relate well to people, will enable you to provide inspirational and pastoral leadership to the Synod staff team, ministers and churches in the South West.

If you wish to nominate a minister for this role, please write to: Deepti Upadhyaya at [recruitment@urc.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@urc.org.uk) by Sunday 23 April 2023.

If you wish to apply for this post, please read the role description and complete the role application form. Details can be found here: [Moderator – South Western Synod – United Reformed Church](#)

Deadline for applications: 12 noon, Monday 22 May 2023

Interview date: Monday 26 June 2023

In accordance with the Equalities Act 2010 Part 1; Schedule 9, there is a genuine occupational requirement for the post holder to be a Minister of Word and Sacraments of the United Reformed Church. This post requires an enhanced certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

## Find Us Online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.urb5.org.uk/) is the one-stop shop for all essential information:  
<https://www.urb5.org.uk/>



Our [East Midlands Synod Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/) hosts **Evening Prayers** every day at 9.30pm, led by our Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** and our prayer team, along with other posts. If you are a Facebook user, please consider **Liking** and **Sharing** this Page and its posts:  
<https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/>

Similarly the [Synod Youth and Children's Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/URCEastmidlandsYouth/) shares news and ideas related to our work with young people: <https://www.facebook.com/URCEastmidlandsYouth/>



On our dedicated [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

## Contacting East Midlands Synod

The **Synod Office** is open from **Monday to Thursday** each week. Please contact staff members by email in the first instance, as this will receive a direct response from the person with whom you wish to correspond. The Synod telephone line (**0115 960 9241**) is answered Monday-Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm.

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This E-letter is produced on behalf of:  
The URC East Midlands Synod, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AA.  
Telephone: 0115 960 9241

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Photos of the URC Jubilee Service: Derek Graham

***Next edition: Thursday 4 May 2023***

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both:

[trainingpa@urb5.org.uk](mailto:trainingpa@urb5.org.uk) and [training@urb5.org.uk](mailto:training@urb5.org.uk)

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 1 May 2023**