

Opening Reflection by Ben Twelves

Synod Safeguarding Officer

Since 2006, I have always been sure of who I was. Whenever anyone asked me what I did, I could confidently, happily, and sometimes proudly declare, “I am a teacher.” Everyone knew what that meant, so the safe, socially acceptable conversation could carry on without any awkwardness.



However, a few weeks ago, I was asked the usual question, “So what do you do?” and a realisation dawned in me that I wasn’t sure what I was! I had just started my new job as Synod Safeguarding Officer and the thought of explaining what a synod was seemed very complicated. A garbled explanation of the conciliar structure of the URC fell out of my mouth and the other person must have been left with a mixture of confusion and a strong desire to go and speak to someone else.

Even if I had managed to convey the meaning of synod, the word safeguarding is not well understood either.

In our churches we have a habit of using fancy words. Often, they are useful, because they help us name huge concepts beyond our own understanding so that we can discuss them, although they can cause barriers to those that don’t understand the words and make people feel left out. One of these fancy church words is *salvation* which we use to describe the process of being saved from sin and its consequences. However, *salvation* has the same origins as the word *safeguarding* and they both carry the meaning of “Keeping Safe”. Salvation just has a bit of ecclesiastical Latin thrown in to make it sound churchier! It seems strange that we use the two words in such different contexts, but I suspect that it might be seen as a bit over the top if I asked to change my job title to Synod Salvation Officer.



Jesus was obviously interested in Salvation, but he was also really into Safeguarding. One of Jesus’ most dramatic statements occurs in Matthew 18:6, when he says:

“If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in me - to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

It's a horrible picture, but it tells us how passionate Jesus was about safeguarding, as well as salvation. Safeguarding is not just a legal duty or a vital part of being a good citizen, but it is our Mission. As followers of Jesus, we are called to safeguard the most vulnerable members of society. Safeguarding is often dismissed as needless bureaucracy, or a waste of time, but when it is done properly, it is showing the love of God to the world and being the hands of Jesus to those in need.

It wasn't a new message that Jesus brought. In Psalm 82 v 3-4, the writer calls us to:

"Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

In Proverbs 31v8, a king was taught by his mother to:

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves"

Yet now, in the 21st century, we are fortunate to live in a time where such power does not just lie with kings. We too, are called to speak up for those whose voices cannot be heard.

So, what do I do? I am here to help you on your mission. I'm here to ensure that you have the resources that you need to keep children and vulnerable adults in your church safe. I'm really looking forward to meeting people and being of service to the churches in the synod so please get in touch with me with any queries or concerns, so that I can support you. Email: safeguarding@urc5.org.uk or call: 07935 991545

My name is Ben Twelves and I (just like you) am in the salvation business.

Statement on Nottingham Attacks

In response to the distressing attacks in Nottingham in the early hours of Tuesday 13 June, East Midlands church leaders including our Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** issued a statement of support.

Published jointly by the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches in the East Midlands, the statement reads:




The thoughts and prayers of the Christian Community are with the families and loved ones of those killed and those injured in this morning's tragic events in Nottingham City Centre. We express our thanks to all the emergency services involved in responding to this incident.

In the face of such horror in the heart of Nottingham, our response must be one of a greater commitment to continue working together to build peace, solidarity and hope on our streets and in our City. We continue to work together with other faith leaders across the city as we support one another during this difficult time.

During this time, churches are open for anyone at all who might wish to seek some quiet space to reflect and process this morning's terrible news.

Geoffrey's fellow signatories are the **Rt. Revd Patrick McKinney** (Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham), the **Rt. Revd Paul Williams** (Bishop of Nottingham and Sherwood), the **Rt. Revd Andy Emerton** (Bishop of Sherwood), the **Revd Andy Fyall** (Chair Designate of the Nottingham & Derby Methodist District) and the **Revd Mike Fegredo** (Regional Minister, East Midland Baptist Association).

St Andrew's with Castle Gate URC, situated in Nottingham city centre, has dedicated its "Prayer for the Week" to all those affected:

A graphic with a blue-to-white gradient background and a semi-transparent grey text box. The background image shows a cityscape at dusk or dawn, with buildings and a church spire visible. The text is white and centered within the grey box.

A PRAYER FOR OUR CITY

Following the tragic events of 13th June, we invite you to join us in holding in prayer:

- those who have been bereaved and injured
- the families and friends of those affected
- members of the emergency services and those supporting individuals impacted
- everyone in the community who is distressed by this incident

Everlasting God, be with us, our city and all who need to feel your love at this time.
Amen.

A **Nottingham Together vigil** is to be held today (**Thursday 15 June**) at 5.30pm in the city's Old Market Square, to show solidarity with those who are grieving and take a stand against violence and division. The Lord Mayor **Clr Carole McCulloch**, Leader of the Council **Clr David Mellen** and University of Nottingham Vice Chancellor **Shearer West** are to be joined by representatives of Nottingham's faith communities in leading a minute's silence at 6.00pm from the steps of the Council House. People are invited to join from home by lighting a candle in their window or doorstep.

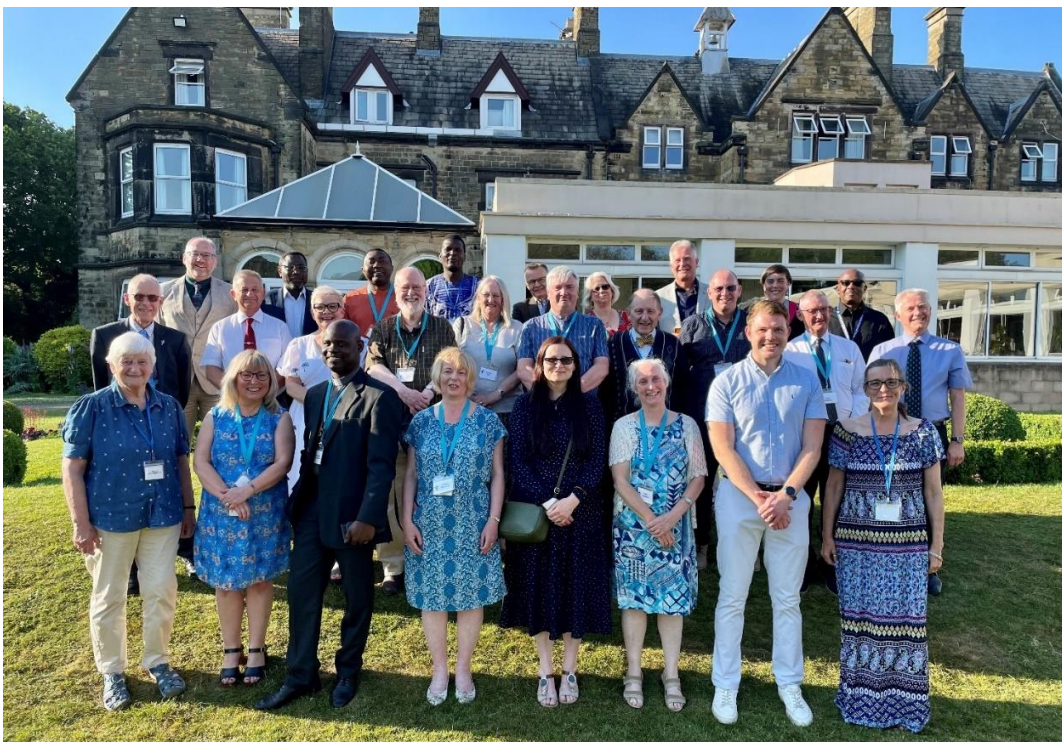
Around the East Midlands

Fifty Years a Minister



The **Revd The Malcolm Clarke** marked the 50th anniversary of his Ordination at a service at **Hinkley URC** on Sunday 4 June. With Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** in attendance, Malcolm was presented with a certificate in honour of his half-century's service as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. We add our congratulations to Malcolm on this significant milestone.

Sun Shines on Summer School



Ministers and CRCWs of the East Midlands Synod have been gathered together for their annual **Summer School** this week (12-15 June). With the sun beating down on The Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire, the attenders have been inspired by complementary sessions from the **Revds Peter Ball** and **John Proctor** on the theme of “Fringe Benefits: Hope for the Church on the Fringes of Society”. They have been equally privileged to join in worship led by the **Revd Sheila Maxey**, Chaplain for the week.

Personal News

It is with 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.

The Yorkshire Synod is greatly saddened to bring us news of the death of Church Related Community Worker, **Mrs Rosie Buxton**, who died on Wednesday 31 May 2023.

Prior to taking early retirement and moving to the East Midlands in January this year, Rosie had been serving in the Huddersfield URCs group of churches. She previously served at St Davids, Bettws (2006-11) and Swansea Region Churches in Community (2011-18). We hold Rosie’s husband and all their family in our prayers.

Further to the sad news of the death of our retired minister the **Revd Tony Jones** in our edition of 4 May, we can now share details of the Service of Thanksgiving in his memory. This will be held at Bingham Methodist Church on 27 June at 2.15pm and all are invited to watch a live stream of the service (whether in real time or later) via YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VDds-Q7h08> . Those who wish to make a gift in Tony’s memory are asked to donate directly to [Christian Aid](#).

Register Now to Follow the Bible Course from the Start

Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm via Zoom

**Tuesdays 27 June, 4, 11 & 18 July,
then Tuesdays 12, 19, 26 September & 3 October**

There’s still time to sign up to join East Midlands on Zoom for **The Bible Course** and explore the BIG story.

Over eight interactive sessions, [The Bible Course](#) combines video teaching, group discussion, reflection and easy-to-manage daily readings. With no assessments and no pressure, it’s a chance to further your acquaintance with the whole sweeping story, from Genesis to Revelation.



Synod Training & Development Officer **Derek Graham** will act as facilitator for the weekly sessions, each lasting about 1¼ hours.

Beginning on **Tuesday 27 June**, we'll run for four weeks (through to **Tuesday 18 July**), then resume for a second block of four weeks from **Tuesday 12 September to 3 October**.

You don't have to take part every week, and you can even join partway through - but please **sign up by Monday 19 June** to receive a free copy of the **Bible Course Manual** (worth £4.99) in time for the first session.

Simply register by emailing **Hannah Holmes** on trainingpa@urc5.org.uk to sign up.

Christians on Ageing



Conference Calls @ Christians on Ageing

A new way to exchange ideas and share experience - the final sessions in this series

- **Tuesday 20 June 2023**

Preparing professionals to help people with issues of spirituality and belief as they are approaching the end of life with **Dr Karen Grove**.

Dr Groves is a consultant in Palliative Care Medicine and Director of Medicine and Education at Queenscourt Hospice in Southport. In association with colleagues at Edge Hill University she has created and delivered innovative educational courses in aspects of palliative and end of life care over a number of years. Karen will share her experiences in helping with the realities faced by professionals, patients and families

- **Tuesday 18 July 2023**

The Spirituality of Ageing by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Professor Emeritus with **Peter Coleman**.

Peter Coleman is Professor Emeritus of Psycho-gerontology at The University of Southampton. He is a long-standing member of Christians on Ageing and had contributed generously to research and teaching in the field. He provided friendship and support to Metropolitan Anthony in his later years. Peter will speak to the issues raised in this classic [Christians on Ageing](#) publication and reflect on his own views on the subject

Conference Calls gather people together to share knowledge and experience on things that matter. They are open to all and are free via a Zoom link which is provided nearer the date of the Call. Each Conference Call starts at 10.30am and ends around noon. The discussion is introduced by a person familiar with the issues involved in the topic.

Register your interest today by e-mail: discussion@coa.org.uk

Enquirers' Day and Stepwise Sampler

Saturday 24 June
at the Synod Meeting Room, Sherwood, Nottingham

Synod Enquirer's Day

Saturday 24 June, 10.00 – 12.30pm

at the Synod Meeting Room, Sherwood, Nottingham

Do you feel God is calling you to serve in some way, but you are not sure what? Or how? Then here is an opportunity to come along and hear people share stories and answer questions about a whole range of vocations in the United Reformed Church.

Elder

Children and Youth Worker

Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher

Locally Recognised Worship Leader



Pioneer

Chaplain

Minister of Word and Sacraments

Church Related Community Worker

Beginning and ending in prayer, this morning offers a relaxed, no-pressure space to explore what your own calling might be.



Stepwise Sampler



Saturday 24 June, 1.30 – 2.30pm

at the Synod Meeting Room, Sherwood, Nottingham

The same day, here's a great opportunity to find out how the URC's discipleship programme Stepwise can help you take your next steps in faith and to enjoy a short sample of the introductory stream Faith-Filled Life.



To book your place at one or both please email Hannah Holmes at the Synod Office: trainingoa@urc5.org.uk

Explore Pioneering with the Newbigin Hub

Tuesday 4 July 7.00pm via Zoom

Do you see...

- New possibilities?
- A way where there is no way?
- Ideas for mission in your community that just might work?
- A new community of disciples where there is none?
- How your local community can flourish in God's love and shalom, but know this can't happen alone?

If you can see even a glimpse of any of these, then come and be part of the Newbigin Pioneering Hub and see if your hopes can be realised together with us.

There is an opportunity to connect and find out more about the 'Community of Pioneers' and the 'Certificate in Pioneer Mission' programme that is run by the Newbigin Pioneering Hub.

On **July 4th at 7pm** we are offering an Enquirers' Evening, led by the Rev Dr Ash Barker. This explores what pioneering is and how you might be involved.

Enquirers' Evening zoom link : <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2844925967>

Meeting ID: **284 492 5967**



The Newbigin Pioneering Hub is a collaboration between the United Reformed Church, the Congregational Federation, Church Mission Society and Seedbeds, named in honour of Lesslie Newbigin, the inspirational URC minister and mission theologian. Find out more here: <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/more-about-ministry/newbigin-pioneering-hub/>

Train to Be a Supervisor

Monday 20 – Friday 24 November
Westminster College, Cambridge

The United Reformed Church
www.urc.org.uk

What is God asking of YOU?

How can I train to be a supervisor?
URC Ministries Department has partnered with Westminster College and Wesley House in Cambridge to provide training for the Certificate in Pastoral Supervision

To apply for the training contact: ministries.pa@urc.org.uk

Holy Anarchy

Saturday 8 July 10.00am-1.00pm

Christ Church, Sheffield S3 9AQ

10am—1pm

Saturday
8th July
2023

Christ Church
Pitsmoor Rd
Sheffield
S3 9AQ

Free
Admission

RSVP
office@utu
sheffield.org.uk
or
0114 2709907



NORTHERN
COLLEGE



FOR THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY



HOLY ANARCHY IS CLOSE AT HAND!

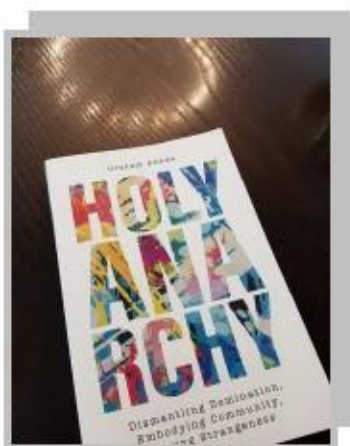


An opportunity to explore:

- Why may the Kingdom of God be like 'holy anarchy'?
- How could this help us to see the world differently—and seek to change it?
- What does this mean for the church, our worship and other things?

*The event will also be livestreamed—
let us know if you would like the link*

Graham is a Congregational minister and Tutor in Mission at Northern College, part of Luther King Centre for Theology and Ministry.



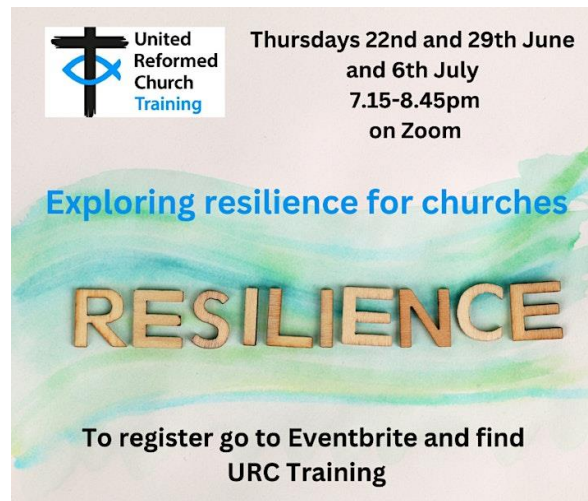
"Holy Anarchy is a refreshingly honest and insightful vision for a journey that is compelling, joyous and inclusive, one in which all persons are supported and loved and no one is considered inconsequential or irrelevant to the community of fellow travellers."

- Prof. Anthony Reddie

Reminders of Forthcoming Events

Exploring Resilience for Churches

Three FREE Zoom sessions from the URC



Self-Care and Resilience led by the **Revd Dr Adam Scott**

Thursday 22 June 7.15-8.45pm

Resilience and Community Care led by the **Revd Dr Adam Scott**

Thursday 29 June 7.15-8.45pm

Enabling Resilience (Making Safe Spaces) led by the **Revd Dr Alex Clare-Young**

Thursday 6 July 7.15-8.45pm

For further details, and to book onto any of these sessions free of charge, simply go to the Eventbrite link:

<https://bit.ly/Resilience4churches>

Rural Poverty: Positively Rural Web Conference

Wednesday 5 July 7.30pm via Zoom

Exploring the rural-specific contexts of poverty



The **Positively Rural** team extends an open invitation to join the conversation around **rural poverty**, its impacts and how we as Christians can respond. Hear more about two research projects, **Life on the Breadline** and its update **Rural Hidden Hardship**, and how they might help inform our local rural contexts.

Positively Rural is hosted by the Yorkshire Plus Methodist Learning Network and is open to anyone involved in rural ministry, whatever their denomination. For this web conference it has joined forces with guest speakers **Deacon Eunice Attwood** (Methodist Church at the Margins Officer) and **Dr Chris Shannahan** and **Dr Stephanie Denning** of [Coventry University](https://www.coventry.ac.uk/)'s Centre for Trust, Peace & Social Relations.

To register, visit <https://PositivelyRural230705.eventbrite.co.uk> by the deadline of Sunday 2 July.

Appreciating Church Conferences

Saturday 30 September

Parallel conferences on Zoom and at the Priory Rooms, Birmingham



Appreciating Church

Annual Conferences
Saturday 30 September 2023

Onsite: The Priory Rooms, Birmingham 10.30-16.00
Online: Media4Ministry Zoom 09.30-16.30

Appreciating the tough stuff

How do we.
How can we.
How might we.

Speakers from the church and beyond will reflect on using Appreciative Inquiry in challenging situations.

Practitioner-led event with interactive workshops

Fee for either conference: £130. Early bird booking by 30th June £100

Bookings: enquiries@appreciating.church

Situations Vacant



The
United
Reformed
Church

Moderator Wessex Synod Full-time, seven-year termed appointment Minister's stipend

General Assembly wishes to appoint a United Reformed Church minister to serve as Wessex Synod Moderator from December 2023 or shortly afterwards

As Christians, our primary call is to be disciples of Jesus. As members of the United Reformed Church we are to follow that call together, whatever our age or ability.

As our Synod Moderator you will be leading us in how we follow our synod strategy, the basis on which we have sought to develop our work supporting and equipping the churches in walking the way as disciples of Jesus. A key opportunity will be leading us in the next phase of our life as a synod, in how we share ministry which sustains the life of our congregations and enables the future mission and growth of our churches.

[About the Synod - URC Wessex Synod](#)

The successful applicant will be an authentic example of faith, a strong and enthusiastic encourager, and a sensitive leader able to celebrate the joys and grapple with the sorrows that are a reality for our churches. A sense of humour is of vital importance!

An information pack and application form can be found on the jobs page of the website www.urc.org.uk/jobs
If you wish to nominate a minister for this post, please write to Deepti Upadhyaya at recruitment@urc.org.uk by Sunday 18 June 2023
If you wish to apply for this post, please complete an application form and send it to [Deepti Upadhyaya at recruitment@urc.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@urc.org.uk)
Human Resources, The United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, 020 7691 9871 by 12 noon Monday 17 July 2023

Interview date: Wednesday 30 August 2023

In accordance with the Equalities Act 2010 Part1: 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 also requires an enhanced DBS 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/UCzXFUrkN8XOGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrkN8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

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.

This E-letter is produced on behalf of:

The URC East Midlands Synod, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AA.
Telephone: 0115 960 9241

CCL1067405

Opening Photo by [REGINE THOLEN](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next edition: Thursday 29 June 2023

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both:
trainingpa@urb5.org.uk and training@urb5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 26 June 2023**