

Opening Reflection by the Revd David Featonby Convenor of the Lay Ministries Group

Trust and Obey

Back in the 1960s, I used to attend a local **Crusader** group (now called [Urban Saints](#)). Every Sunday afternoon, about 40 boys gathered to learn about the Bible and sing ‘choruses’, usually just one-verse hymns. One song that I remember very well was ‘[Trust and obey](#)’, the words of which have stuck with me over the succeeding years. It was only some time later that I discovered the words were the refrain from a five-verse hymn, the first of which I quote here :

*When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

But it was those key words, ‘trust and obey,’ that resonated with me then as they have throughout my life.

We are living in days where truth seems in short supply. From the very apex of public life to the ordinary person in the street spreading gossip and conspiracy theories, it is challenging to know who or what we can trust. The **Covid 19** enquiry has revealed some disturbing facts, some even challenging the advice we were given at the time. In the United States, the evangelical right-wing church led an anti-vaccination campaign, which led to the tragic death of some of their members. So who can we really trust?

I literally thank God that truth is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ. When the disciples were concerned and confused with Jesus’ behaviour, especially his talking of suffering and death on a cross, Thomas asked him, “we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). To which Jesus responded with one of the best-known verses in the Bible, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

We test a person’s trustworthiness by their ethics, their integrity, their words and actions and truthfulness. The Jesus that we meet in the Gospels strikes me as one we can fully trust and follow his teachings. Jesus isn’t claiming to be a truth. Rather THE truth. Jesus is not only true, he is truth itself.



There are lots of other people and religions claiming to have the truth. Jesus is making an exclusive claim here that he embodies all things that are true and that we can put our faith and our lives confidently in his hands. Our response is to obey his teachings to the best of our abilities and with the help of the Holy Spirit. Of course, we will fall short from time to time, but because we can trust Jesus, we know that if our hearts are right, we will be forgiven for our frailty and shortcomings.

An important aspect of our obedience is to be truthful and trustworthy ourselves, both in our personal lives and in our corporate church life.

So if you are exhausted with the lies and distortion of the truth emanating from those who should know better, comfort yourself in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the truth and we can have every confidence in following him.

Around the East Midlands

Holiday Club at Matlock Methodist and United Reformed Church



Matlock Methodist and United Reformed Church is celebrating the success of the extended summer operations of its **Toddler Stay and Play Group**, which were supported by a Small Grant from the URC's Children's and Youth Work Office.

The Stay and Play Group has long stayed open for part of the summer holidays for pre-school children, but the church's Mission and Outreach worker identified the need for a church in Matlock to provide summer holiday activities for older children: both the big brothers and sisters of the toddlers who attend the group now, and those who came when they were younger. Alongside the toys for the younger children, it provided craft activities for those of Primary School age and hospitality for their parents.

Over four weekly sessions, the activities explored the story of Moses. Each week a tableau was set up in the welcome hall to show the children the story they were about to learn about: first Moses as a baby, then the burning bush, the

ten plagues and finally the parting of the Red Sea. At the end of each session, they took their own storyboards and their craft items home as a lasting reminder.

For the church, this was also part of a process reviewing how to reorganise its activities, in order to make best use of a large and cost-intensive building to focus on its mission. To help establish what works, the summer Stay and Play sessions were held in the sanctuary rather than the community rooms. Many parents commented on how welcoming they found both the space and people and overall the experiment was judged a great success.

To enquire about the **Small Grants Fund** from the **Children's and Youth Work Office**, email children.youth@urc.org.uk or visit <https://bit.ly/48oektr>.

New Members at Stamford United Reformed Church



Stamford United Reformed Church was delighted to receive a magnificent seven new members into the church. Two were new worshippers at the church, four were long-time adherents who wished to make a commitment and one was by transfer. The membership increased by 30% and gives a great boost to the confidence and future hope of the congregation, who are now looking to redevelop their hall as an expression of commitment and outreach to the local community.

Synod Meeting

Important Notice for All Churches and Synod Reps

Saturday 7 October 10.30am – 4.00pm
Loughborough URC

Our Synod meeting is to be held at **Loughborough URC** on **Saturday 7 October** from 10.30am – 4.00pm. **Please ensure your church is represented.** If your usual rep is unable to attend another member can represent your church. This is a time when you can find out what is happening across the Synod.

Children and Youth Event at Synod Meeting

There will be **Children's and Youth Activities** running alongside the Synod meeting this October and we would love to see young people there. Activities are planned for those from **Reception - Year 6** and from **Year 7 - Year 11**. Attendance is not restricted to children/young people of parents and carers attending the Synod meeting, but open to all.

To book simply visit: [Children and Youth Event at Synod Tickets, Sat 7 Oct 2023 at 10:30 | Eventbrite](#)

If you have any queries please email **Hannah Holmes**: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk

Excepted URC charities in England and Wales

The United Reformed Church has received a letter from the **Charity Commission** to assist its churches in opening **bank accounts** and any other accounts they believe will aid them in pursuing their charitable purposes, where these churches may not have charity registration numbers, since they do not meet the annual turnover requirements.

Please visit: <https://urc5.org.uk/content/excepted-urc-charities-england-and-wales> to view the letter.

Safeguarding Symposium



Thursday 12 October
1.30pm – 4.00pm via Zoom

URC Safeguarding's 2023 symposium takes place on **Thursday 12 October** from 1.30-4.00pm via Zoom. At the event, **Good Practice 6**, the URC's manual for policy and good practice guidance in safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk, will be launched and **Dr Leroy Logan MBE**, a former superintendent in the Metropolitan Police and founding member of the **Black Police Association**, will be the keynote speaker.

Tickets are free. Click on the following link to book: [SGSymposium](#)

Faraday Courses for Church Leaders

The **Faraday Institute** offers two upcoming courses for church leaders.



The first is **Mental Health Challenges: A Christian Response**, a day course on **Saturday 4 November**, both online and in Cambridge. This course will consider how the church can engage with issues surrounding mental health. See the flier at [Courses | Faraday \(cam.ac.uk\)](#) for more information.

The second course **AI, Genuine Care: Helping Church Leaders to Think about Technology** is a mixture of in-person (2 sessions) and online (3 sessions). Each session has a different speaker so although there is continuity, it is not crucial to attend all five. They run from **Wednesday 22 November 2023 to Wednesday 1 May 2024**. See more information here: [Courses | Faraday \(cam.ac.uk\)](#)



Community Audit Sampler Day

Mackworth URC, Derby
Saturday 30 September 10.30am-3.30pm
led by Vicky Longbone



Do you want your church to be more relevant to its local community? Would you like help in discerning what your local mission should be? Are you eager to reach out to the people in your vicinity, but not sure of the most fruitful way?

Then you will want to find out about running a **Community Audit**. This is a tailored process, in which you combine existing information sources with your own close observations and encounters to form a complete picture of your geographical community and its most pressing needs. It will help your church to learn exactly who your neighbours are – and what you can do for them.

The East Midlands Synod is offering a free **Community Audit Sampler Day** at **Mackworth URC**, Derby (DE22 4DG) on **Saturday 30 September** so that you can find out what this process might do for your church.



The Sampler will be led by **Vicky Longbone**, our Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) in the **Derby A2C** project and a passionate advocate of making churches relevant to their neighbourhoods by identifying and meeting local needs. Come along and be inspired by Vicky's enthusiasm for reaching out and rooting churches in the immediate community in the best way possible.

The Community Audit Sampler Day is provided **free of charge** and is open to all URC and LEP members, elders and ministers throughout the East Midlands. Refreshments will be provided, so you need only bring a packed lunch. To register, please email trainingpa@urc5.org.uk

Trusteeship Training Day for Elders

Loughborough URC
Saturday 4 November 10.30am-3.30pm

Led by **Jim Wild**, East Midlands Synod Trust with **Derek Graham**, Training & Development Officer

Elders often find that they are, by default, also appointed Trustees for the churches they serve – but what exactly does this entail? Online training is regularly provided about the Safeguarding responsibilities of Trustees – but what about its other aspects?

Our free **Trusteeship Training Day** aims to take the fear and anxiety out of the role of Trustee, as we explore its responsibilities in terms of accountability, governance and legal and financial obligations. We are delighted that **Jim Wild**, long-serving member of the East Midlands Synod Trust, has agreed to share his professional expertise in trusteeship and that **Loughborough URC** have agreed to act as hosts for anyone across the Synod who wants to understand more about what it means to be a Trustee.

This is an opportunity to set Trusteeship in its place, as part and parcel of good leadership, without letting it overshadow the all-important spiritual and pastoral dimensions of Eldership.

The Trusteeship Training Day is provided **free of charge** and is open to all Elders, church members and ministers throughout the East Midlands Synod. Please bring a packed lunch; tea and coffee will be provided. To register, please email trainingpa@urc5.org.uk.



Training & Development Interest Group

Wednesday 27 September, 7.30pm

The Synod's **Training and Development Core Group** has launched a new initiative, which sees us recruiting **Training and Development Networkers**. We are delighted that we now have the beginnings of a very strong team from across the counties.

T&D Networkers will have local knowledge of training and development needs, and as a Core Group we are committed to broadening the range of lay training and development events and activities to ensure that these are relevant. In particular, we aim to offer events and activities which provide opportunities for spiritual refreshment.

Are you interested in hearing more about what the role of T&D Networker involves? If you are, then please come along to our Training and Development Interest Group meeting on **Wednesday 27 September** from 7.30pm on Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84012978202?pwd=MU5ISzdyWFYvWVZ1R0JibXlaMS90dz09>

To let **Hannah Holmes** know that you will be joining us or for any queries please email:

trainingpa@urc5.org.uk

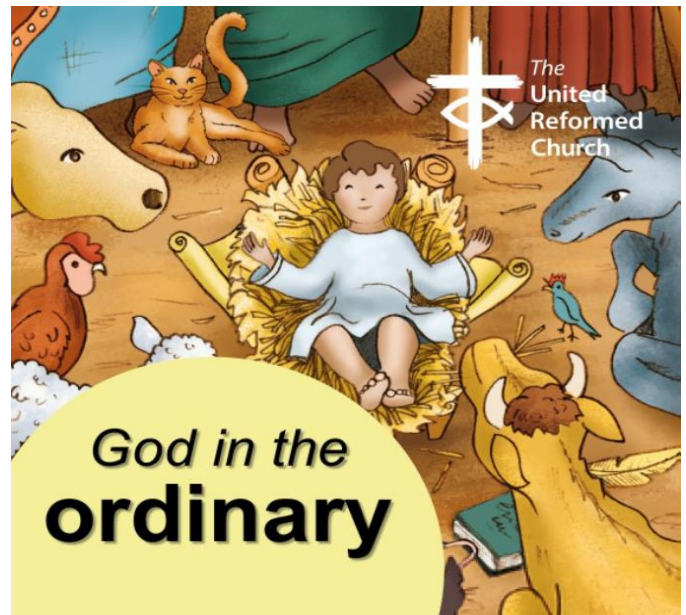
URC Advent Resource

The URC Children's and Youth Work team is producing a family Advent resource this year! It is available for pre-order until mid October.

East Midlands Synod is offering to cover the cost of these for churches who would like them. Look out for more information in future newsletters or contact **Hannah Holmes**: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk

There's a giant poster, four mini-books, stained glass windows to colour and lots of ideas for things to do, all in an envelope which may be used for invitations to church events.

The themes will run parallel to [Faith Adventures for Children Together](#) and suggestions will be provided online for how you might use the Advent resource for outreach and engage with it with your congregations.



A Celebration of Black and Womanist Theologians

Saturday 21 October
10.00am – 4.00pm

**A CELEBRATION
OF BLACK AND
WOMANIST
THEOLOGIANs**

**AT THE CAMBRIDGE
THEOLOGICAL FEDERATION**

A Celebration of Black and Womanist Theologians is an event organised by the **Cambridge Theological Federation** to mark **Black History Month**. It will be hosted by **Westminster College, Cambridge** on Saturday 21 October. The event is free, with an optional lunch for £10.

The keynote speaker is **Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson**, an Associate Tutor of Westminster College and current Moderator of the URC's General Assembly.

Please register here if you would like to attend:

<https://www.westminster.cam.ac.uk/celebration-of-black-and-womanist-theologians>

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.

The **North Western Synod** brings us the news of the death of retired minister, the **Revd John Hopkins** on Tuesday 12 September.

John served at Hollinshead Street (later Chorley) United Reformed Church from his Ordination and Induction in 1980 until his retirement in 2002.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all who hold John dear.

Keeping up to date with Synod News and Events

If you would like to subscribe to receive this **Synod Newsletter** please click here <https://bit.ly/URCEletter> or scan the QR Code below:



If you would like to subscribe to receive our **Synod Children and Youth Newsletter** which includes news about resources, events and lots more please click here <https://bit.ly/CandYNews> or scan the QR Code below:



Find Us Online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.urch5.org.uk/) is the one-stop shop for all essential information:
<https://www.urch5.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](#), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGGeZU5SgN95g>

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

The inclusion of items in this newsletter does not constitute endorsement by the East Midlands Synod. Any views expressed do not represent the views of the East Midlands Synod or any of its officers or staff except where explicitly stated.

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Next edition: Thursday 5 October 2023

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both:
trainingpa@urc5.org.uk and training@urc5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 2 October 2023**