

## Opening Reflection by Graham Ghaleb

### Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group

#### Keeping Faith with Fruitfulness

“Have you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’. Therefore I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the Kingdom.”

*(Matthew 21.42-43, NRSV)*

During the past 20 years it has been a rare and often surprising moment to walk through my garden and see several bunches of grapes swelling on the single vine that has its very own place in my garden. The grapes may not amount to much, but even so there is a sense of pride that despite the wind and the rain and now the warm sunshine something has been achieved, a creative gift, a symbol of joy. From past experiences and many years of disappointment the bunches of grapes will be neither particularly sweet nor nutritious, but they are at least a sign that following careful husbandry there can be a good harvest. Yet this story of grapes swelling and ripening stands as a classic reminder of God’s call to us to be a people capable of producing some of the fruits of the Kingdom.



That is our call, and yet how often do we, like the Pharisees, fall short of the requirement to produce good fruits reflecting the image and fertility of God? How often do we turn away from the way we have been called to live out our lives to follow Christ’s way?

Recent weeks and days are a painful reminder of the ways in which an aggressive and destructive understanding of life can bring pain and sorrow. In a strange irony the felling of the Sycamore tree adjacent to Hadrian's Wall, which has sparked outrage and sadness, was one such moment. Just one tree, a single tree, but a tree which had clearly touched the lives of so many people; promises made, proposals accepted, lives changed. Yet in one act of brutality everything has been undermined - an almost magical presence of God's creation cut down, and for what?

In the grand scheme of things it was just one tree, and yet the destruction of that one tree stands as a powerful reminder of just how significant every loss can be: one tree at a time when many trees have been destroyed by fire or floods and many thousands of people washed away in the swirling rage of catastrophe; one tree when hundreds and thousands of people have experienced the loss of life and the death of loved ones, and the loss of home, community, life.

It is one powerful symbol that speaks of the power and yet the vulnerability of God's created world and the struggle to maintain a life worth living; one sign of hope that without a belief in God, expectations for life can be so easily thrown away, leaving sorrow and dejection where hope once stood; one sign of life that announces the power of God's creative presence, but which in a moment can be thrown away and destroyed. As we see the darkness that at times surround us, how is it that we fail so often to challenge the powers of oppression that threaten our existence? Those powers we see in so many parts of the world as individuals, groups and governments seize hold of power, enslaving those who are powerless to withstand; the watering down of climate targets or aspirations for a greener world, the closing of opportunities for people to share their hopes for a freer world, the ending of joys that the peoples of the world might produce the fruits of the Kingdom.

At times it is hard to work against the powers that can so easily crush us or divide us, but our hope in Christ must rest on the thought that Christ offers us life in all its fullness, a life based on a God who loves each one of us. This journey for life may not always be easy to discover, but the path we follow with others who search for God will be a journey of exploration and companionship and hope, for it will be through life and love that we will find the way and through life and love that we will experience God.

As we reflect on the increasing challenges we face in a world of aggression and doubt, and on the threats that can lead us away from your Kingdom, let us in prayer bring before you our thanks for your love and for the strength to live out your hope for a world in which we can produce the fruits of your Kingdom.

**In prayer (based on a [Green Christian](https://greenchristian.org.uk) prayer - <https://greenchristian.org.uk>):**

**We offer grateful thanks to our God for the fruits of the earth, the down-coming of the rains, the ripening warmth of the sun, and the seeds and fruits of every year.**

**As we feel the challenges of this world, may we always walk gently upon this earth, in right relationship, nurtured by your Love, taking only what we need, giving back to the earth in gratitude, and sharing what we have, honouring all with reverence, reconciling and healing, mindful of those who will come after, and recognising our proper place as part of your creation.**

**Grant us the strength and courage, we pray,  
for such radical transformation into your Kingdom.  
That we, too, with the very stones will shout, Hosanna!**

## Around the East Midlands

### Ordination and Induction of the Revd Jonathon Greenwood to Eastgate Union

We are pleased to announce the Ordination and Induction of Baptist Minister the **Revd Jonathon Greenwood** to **Eastgate Union Church, Louth**, on Saturday 2 September. The **Revd Cecil White**, Lincolnshire Ecumenical Officer, attended on behalf of the East Midlands Synod, bringing greetings from the United Reformed Church. We warmly welcome Jonathan to Lincolnshire and pray he will enjoy a fruitful ministry at Eastgate Union.



(Revd Jonathon Greenwood)



(Revd Jonathon Greenwood with Revd Dr Nick Ashton from the EMBA)

### Licensing of the Revd Jason Kennedy to the Haven Christian Centre

The Licensing of the **Revd Jason Kennedy** took place on 14 September 2023. A member of Anglican clergy, Jason is half time Enabling Minister at the Haven Christian Centre, Derby. The **Revd David Miller**, Derbyshire Pastoral Consultant, attended on behalf of the URC East Midlands Synod and was involved in the laying of hands and prayers by the ecumenical partners. David also read a letter of greeting from the Moderator. We warmly welcome Jason to Derbyshire and pray he will enjoy a fruitful ministry at the Haven.



Revd Jason Kennedy and his wife Leslie with Bishop Malcolm Macnaughton



Revd Jason Kennedy, Revd Mike Fegredo, Revd Stuart Bell, Revd David Miller

## New Bishop of Peterborough Announced



The Church of England reports that its next **Bishop of Peterborough** will be the **Right Reverend Debbie Sellin**, as announced by Downing Street on 28 September. Currently serving as Bishop of Southampton, Bishop Debbie will be installed at a service in Peterborough Cathedral in early 2024. She has already undertaken a short tour of the Diocese, demonstrating her interest in ecumenism with a visit to Northampton to see how Christians from different denominations have been working together to impact their

communities. We pray for our partners in the Diocese of Peterborough and for Bishop Debbie as she prepares for her move among us here in East Midlands.

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## Disability Awareness Sunday at St Andrew's, Peterborough

**St Andrew's URC in Peterborough** held a 'Disability Awareness' service on Sunday 10 September. The service was led by a group of Elders who chose 'I see you!' as the theme.

A member of the congregation who is unable to speak used their communication device to read the Call to Worship, reading [1 Peter 4:10-11](#), which perfectly set the tone for the morning. Prayers and readings suggested by the 'Through the Roof' charity were used as well as a video of Rose (who is deaf) and her professional partner Giovanni dancing suddenly in total silence during Strictly Come Dancing in 2021. As not everyone watched Strictly that year, it made a big impact.

The highlight of the service was a dance performance by Chloe's Dance Company (CDC) - Thursday Club. The dancers all have Down's Syndrome and range from teenagers to young adults.

The dancing was full of energy with choreography by Chloe Wilmot. Dancing to [Million to one](#) by Camila Cabello included signing, while [You're gonna know my name](#), and Meghan Trainor's [Better when I'm dancing](#) gave the group the opportunity to demonstrate some of their free style moves too. It was pure joy to watch.



# 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](#)

# Church Investment Conference

**Tuesday 7 November 10.00am-4.00pm**  
**Euston Road, London**



## Financing a Liveable Future Conference

Church Investment  
in Climate Solutions

**Tuesday, 7th November 2023**  
**10am - 4pm**



The **Financing a Liveable Future Conference** takes place in London on Tuesday 7 November. This is a joint enterprise between [Operation Noah](#) and [FaithInvest](#) and comes at a crucial juncture: this year, the **International Energy Agency** predicts that investment in renewable energy will exceed investment in fossil fuels for the first time, yet investment needs to approximately treble from current levels in order to meet targets.

The event is being organised for Church investors, bursars and investment professionals who are responsible for the management of the financial investments of Church institutions.

The focus of the conference will be on developing the journey of Church-based investors in impact investing, focusing on investment in climate solutions.

Topics will include:

- **How other Churches have been investing in climate solutions**
- **The theological reasons for investment**
- **How to invest across different levels of assets under management**

The keynote speaker will be **Lorna Gold**, CEO of FaithInvest and Chair of the [Laudato Si'](#) Movement. The day will involve a variety of panels related to investment in climate solutions and will feature talks from investment professionals and testimonials from stakeholders.

You can register [here](#) for the event, or email [julia.corcoran@operationnoah.org](mailto:julia.corcoran@operationnoah.org) or [pippa.arnold@faithinvest.org](mailto:pippa.arnold@faithinvest.org) if you have any questions.

*Charles Jolly of our Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation group (JPIC) shares the following updates:*

## COP 28 in Dubai

As the nations slowly, too slowly, forge agreements to tackle the climate emergency and commit to effective action, every COP (Conference of the Parties) meeting is important. **COP 28** in Dubai runs from 30 November to 12 December, but much of the preparatory work is completed or underway. If we want to add our weight to a successful outcome, now is the time for prayer and for encouraging our government to promote bold solutions.

If you have not yet done so, you might like to join **Christian Aid's Loss and Damage Campaign**:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/climate-change/loss-and-damage>



*Bonn 10th June. photo by IISD/ENB / Kiara Worth, with permission*

At **COP 28**, watch and pray for substantial progress on the following key issues:

- Responses to the Transition Committee's measures to get the **Loss & Damage Fund** underway (poor countries want grants to pay for losses but, unsurprisingly, the rich prefer bank loans etc)
- The first global stocktake since the 2015 Paris Agreement to keep **warming** well below 2°C. It was published on 8 September (the Agreement has inspired action but *much* more ambition is needed)

- Progress towards agreeing to **phase out fossil fuels** (contentious because some fossil fuel companies and governments increasingly favour unproven carbon capture and sequestration instead).
- Agreeing a framework for the **global goals on adaptation** or GGA (which mean building resilience, reducing vulnerability and measuring progress in adaptation, as called for in the Paris Agreement).
- Negotiations making progress towards a new climate finance target to replace the old 'commitment' of \$100 billion per year (which rich countries had not achieved). The deadline for agreement is 2024.
- Agreements on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food systems, which are estimated as 30% of all emissions. (This is new priority at COP 28, introduced by the president-designate.)

Note: These are complex and contested issues, so treat my brief summaries with caution!

Many environmentalists are concerned that the UAE, which hosts COP28, has a poor record on climate mitigation and human rights and that H.E. Dr Sultan Al Jaber, president-designate, heads the state oil company ADNOC, which has a policy of expanding fossil fuel production.

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## Some Good Environmental News

On Wednesday 20 September, with nearly 70 other nations, the UK signed the treaty to protect 30% of the oceans by 2030. However, implementation needs parliaments to pass the treaty into law.

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## A Diary of the Journey to Microgeneration with Photovoltaic Solar Panels

The back story: Following a **Christian Aid [Talking Climate Justice](#)** event, the URC in Durham chose installing solar panels on its south-facing roof as a top action. Implementation was delayed by urgent repairs to the stonework, now nearing completion. So we asked several PV installers to quote, but all assumed a single phase electrical supply, limiting us to about 14 panels. After talking to another church planning a large PV installation with a 3 phase supply, we looked closely and behold, there are 3 incoming wires! So we spoke to the Synod expert, which would have been a better starting point and, as this goes to press, we are awaiting a detailed electrical inspection.

Planning a heat pump and willing to share your journey? Contact [charles.jolly13@btopenworld.com](mailto:charles.jolly13@btopenworld.com)

## 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](mailto:trainingpa@urc5.org.uk).

## Autumn Jazz with the Shipstone Street Jazz Orchestra

### The Shipstone Street Jazz Orchestra

With Sarah Simmonds



**Saturday 28th October 2023  
at 2pm**

**Tickets £5**

Email: [janecook2708@btinternet.com](mailto:janecook2708@btinternet.com)  
Tel: 07773412605

Some free tickets available for low income or unwaged

**St John's Church, Oakdale Road NG4 1BP**

Find us on Facebook @ShipstoneStreetJazz

**THE SHIPSTONE STREET  
JAZZ ORCHESTRA**

**Tickets £5  
(£3 concessions)**

**Guest singer  
Sandy Bailey**

**Saturday 18th  
November 2023  
2.30pm**

**St John's Church  
Graylands Road NG8 4FD**

**Tickets: [shipstonestreetjazz@outlook.com](mailto:shipstonestreetjazz@outlook.com) or 0775 3122139**

Supported by the Lottery Community Fund. Some free tickets available for low income or unwaged

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## An Evening with the Northampton Male Voice Choir

**Northampton Cathedral  
Friday 20 October 7.30pm**

Join the **Northampton Male Voice Choir** for an evening of music and entertainment. Performed in the stunning Northampton Cathedral, this event will raise money for the Cathedral Healing Garden.

**JOIN US AT NORTHAMPTON CATHEDRAL  
FOR AN EVENING WITH  
NORTHAMPTON  
MALE VOICE  
CHOIR  
FRIDAY  
20TH OCTOBER  
7:30PM**

Tickets cost **£15** and are available here: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/northampton>  
Tickets can also be purchased by calling 01604 714556, by emailing [parish.cathedralhub@northamptondiocese.org](mailto:parish.cathedralhub@northamptondiocese.org) or in person from the St Thomas Centre.



## Keeping up to date with Synod News and Events

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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.unc5.org.uk/) is the one-stop shop for all essential information: <https://www.unc5.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.

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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Sycamore Tree - Unsplash In collaboration with Jonny Gios

***Next edition: Thursday 19 October 2023***

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

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 16 October 2023**