

From: East Midlands Synod <trainingpa@urc5.org.uk>
Sent: 30 November 2023 09:46
To: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk
Subject: [Test] News from the East Midlands Synod

[View this email in your browser](#)



E-LETTER

30 November 2023 - No. 401

In this edition:

- All through Advent, [Tom Donoghue](#) is looking for God at work in the everyday
- Join our special [Evening Prayers](#) online in this season of waiting
- Help Bangladeshi women out of poverty in [Christian Aid's](#) Christmas Appeal
- If you can't have a White Christmas, try a green one with our [Eco Tips](#)

Visit our website



URC East Midlands Synod Facebook Page

Opening Reflection by Tom Donoghue

Mission Development Officer



My preaching mentor, Christine, sadly died in December last year after a long battle with cancer. She was someone who was instrumental in shaping my faith and discipling me. One of the things I remember her teaching me, as we approached Christmas, was to appreciate the advent season rather than rushing into the Christmas story and one of the ways in which she encouraged me to do this was to

include Advent hymns in the Advent Sunday services as well as one or two Christmas carols!

My favourite Advent Hymn can actually be sung all year round: [Tell Out, My Soul, the Greatness of the Lord](#). It was written by **Timothy Dudley-Smith**, after he read a modern paraphrase of the **Magnificat** in Luke 1:46-55 (New English Bible), which began with the same opening words which he used and provided the inspiration to write his hymn.

The tune certainly helps this to be a well sung hymn, which reflects for me the passion in which Mary spontaneously sings her song of praise to God. It is said that Mary's Magnificat is inspired by Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:2-10 and I love the way the song has been passed on and told through the generations - as the hymn concludes: "Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord to children's children and for evermore!"

The similarities of the message are found in the praising of a mighty God, who acts, liberates and brings salvation to all of society and particularly lifts up the humble by making possible the extraordinary in the ordinary.

I'm using the URC's [God in the Ordinary](#) Advent resource with my family and enjoying the challenge to be intentional about noticing God in our ordinary lives. As we use this advent time to reflect on the extraordinary Christmas message and what this means for us, my hope is that we as a family are able to help others to notice God in their ordinary lives too.



The words of the hymn tell of a faithful God whose love endures. Our God, who was born into creation through an ordinary couple, who were willing to say 'yes' to God's amazing plan for their lives.

In this period of waiting during Advent, let us wait expectantly, full of hope and in anticipation to see God at work in our ordinary lives. I encourage us to share with our family, friends, colleagues about the extraordinary ways we have seen God in our own ordinary lives. As we get ready for Christmas it is an amazing opportunity to welcome and provide hospitality at our Christmas events and services, and to share the joyful Christmas message of Jesus Christ. But it is also a chance for us to tell the extraordinary ways that we have been noticing God in our ordinary lives this Advent season so that we can share that the story of God's extraordinary love continues today.

Around the East Midlands

Honorary Doctorate Awarded to URC Member

Dr. David Jones, member and serving Elder at **Abington Avenue URC**, Northampton, has been awarded an honorary doctorate from London University in recognition of his national and international social work activities. Our congratulations to David on receiving the award.

Pray through Advent with East Midlands Synod

Evening Prayers on Facebook nightly at 9.30pm



You are warmly invited to join Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** and other members of our Evening Prayer team as they pray the way to Christmas, live at 9.30pm every night on our **Facebook** Page:

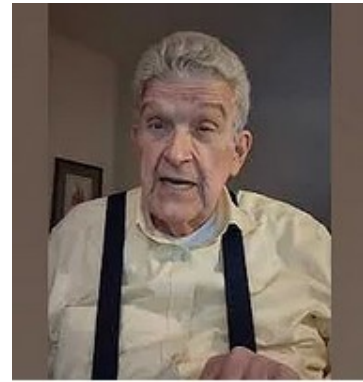
www.facebook.com/URCEastMidlandsSynod



This Advent, our nightly readings and reflections will draw on the brand new book by our good friend the **Revd Thom M Shuman**, an associate member of the Iona Community, who himself leads many of our Evening Prayers from his home in Ohio. Thom's writing is celebrated for a vulnerability, gentleness and childlike wonder that folk deeply connect with - perfect for Advent.

In This Season of Waiting is available from [Wild Goose Publications](#) and is shared with their kind permission.

You can join the prayer community any night that you're able to pray along with Geoffrey, Thom, Deputy Synod Moderator the **Revd Jane Wade** and other members of the team.



If you're not able to join in live at 9.30pm, you can catch up on the daily prayers any time, either on [Facebook](#) or later, on our **YouTube** channel [URC East Midlands Synod](#).

Carolling Advent



Monday 4 - Friday 8 December nightly at 7.30pm

[URC Spirituality](#) is hosting an free online event via Zoom called **Carolling Advent**. Each evening a member of the Spirituality committee, having chosen an Advent carol, will explain their choice, play that carol and pray the words, as follows:

Monday 4 December: **Revd Kathryn Price** (The Cherry Tree carol)

Tuesday 5 December: **Mark Argent** (Personent Hodie)

Wednesday 6 December: **Ann Barton** (Star Child)

Thursday 7 December: **Dr Lesley Thomson** (The angel Gabriel from heaven came)

Friday 8 December: **Revd Helen Garton** (Born in the night)

There will be time built in for personal prayer and quiet time.

Please contact **Ann Barton** at ann.barton@hotmail.com to receive the Zoom link, which will be valid for all five evenings. You are free to attend one or all of the evenings. There is also a booking form on the **URC Spirituality** website (urc-spirituality.org.uk).

Leaving the Bethlehem Candle Unlit

Do you light Advent candles in your Sunday services during Advent?

This year the United Reformed Church is calling on congregations **not** to light the second Advent candle - often referred to as the **Bethlehem Candle** - as an act of solidarity with our church partners in the Holy Land and all who are suffering there.



The action of keeping the second candle unlit is suggested in memory of all those who have been wounded and killed during the current devastating conflict.

Further details, with a suggested Liturgy for the second Sunday in Advent and ideas for further action, are available at: www.urch.org.uk/your-church/church-local-and-global/commitment-for-life/israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/

A wealth of other URC resources is also available for Advent and Christmas:

- **Worship Notes** containing ideas for every Sunday of Advent (and beyond) can be found [here](#), including regularly updated Weekly Intercessions.
- Worship can also be downloaded as a **PowerPoint file** and used as a form of pulpit supply, including four Advent services, a Carol Service, a Midnight Communion for Christmas Eve, a Christmas Day morning and an Epiphany service. Find out more and download them [here](#).
- **URC Children & Youth** offer two creative resources for **all-age worship**: [Faith Adventures for Children Together](#) and Youth Resource and [Families on Faith Adventures at Home](#). Both of these resources have an index of Bible passages and where to find the material.

Christian Aid Christmas Appeal

In **Bangladesh**, the Bengali word for Christmas is **Borodin** - or 'the big day'. Decorations are hung, all kinds of tasty treats are made and there's plenty of singing. Not so different from how we celebrate Christmas in the UK. But the rest of life is different – especially for the women and girls of Bangladesh.

The country is one of the world's most densely-populated. It is low-lying, on a delta of rivers which empty into the Bay of Bengal, and vulnerable to flooding and cyclones. In one of the most disaster-prone areas, Kurigram, in the north, life is challenging. The people who live there have done little to contribute to the climate crisis and yet are among those hardest hit by its effects.

But there is hope. The district is home to an extraordinary group of artisans and entrepreneurs who are embracing new technology to revive traditional crafts such as beadwork, quilting, and making colourful clothing to sell online.



"I didn't have any dreams a few years ago. Now I am in the first year of my degree course. Girls in my locality need education. If they get married at an early age they don't understand the value of education."

Kakoli Khatun

Twenty-one-year-old **Kakoli Khatun** is from Kurigram. In her local area, most people are dependent on farming which can be heavily affected by annual floods. In her community, there is little scope for women and girls to stay in education, with most girls married under the age of 18.

Kakoli wants a different path - to expand her new Nakshi kantha business, making

embroidered quilts using a centuries-old Bengali art tradition, to support her parents and other families in the community.

Khaleda Begum is from the same area; she was married at an early age and said she cannot describe her suffering. She decided to do something for herself and learned to do beadwork.



“From 10am to 12pm when I do my beadwork it’s my favourite part of the day.”
She describes her daughters as, *‘my favourite people in the whole world,’* and says, *“I want my children to be educated.”*

With a little help, women like Kakoli and Khaleda are transforming their lives and looking forward to bright futures. Thanks to supporters throughout the UK, **Christian Aid’s** partner, **Aid Comilla**, has provided training, equipment and funds. They work with women who then bring others on board to start their own enterprises. Training and mentoring are available on everything from gender rights to E-commerce; funds are provided for equipment such as smart phones; and internet access points have been installed to connect this remote area to new global markets.



This year, Christian Aid’s [Christmas Appeal](#) is about small changes which can make a big difference. It’s about helping women and girls find what they need, be that skills, tools or funding, to earn a living and break free from poverty.

More than 5,800 women have been given a chance to shine in Kurigram. Kakoli added, *“Now we’ve had this training, we feel confident and successful.”*

Christian Aid invites us to help more people use their talents to open up a world of choices. Every prayer, every gift, every action helps transform lives: £1 could provide two Wi-Fi cards, so women can access online platforms to sell their products from their phone; £23 could provide funds to help one person to start up a small business; and £100 could provide training for five women on e-commerce to introduce them to online business platforms, enhance their knowledge of the digital market, and make effective use of their smartphones.

How can you help? Why not light up your church and community with a carol concert or street carolling? Everything you need to create some festive fun is on the [Christian Aid website](#), including a guide to [permissions](#), a flyer with ideas, carol sheets and [sheet music](#) for Christian Aid's song [When Out of Poverty is Born](#). You can also sign up to their [Digital Advent Wreath](#) to receive four reflective films for each Sunday of Advent [here](#). Visit www.christianaid.org.uk and click on Appeals to find out more.

ECO Tips for Christmas

On behalf of our Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation group (JPIC), Charles Jolly makes some seasonal suggestions:



These tips are based closely on ideas by **A Rocha**: <https://arocha.org.uk/our-twelve-tips-for-a-greener-christmas/> .

A Rocha also produced this image of Christmas biscuits to help get us in the Christmas mood! The ideas here that could make a world of difference and a difference to the world. Please consider them prayerfully: why not try one or two or more? And remember: changes, like puppies, are for life and not just for Christmas!

1) Start with your Advent calendar. Make sure that the calendar and any chocolates are Fairtrade certified. This ensures that workers in poor countries are paid a fair wage and encourages them to farm in an ecologically sustainable way.

2) Save a tree. Dress up a living tree outside [with (rechargeable) battery fairy lights]. Add fat balls and feeders for the birds. Or plant a living tree with good roots in a substantial pot, keep it watered and bring indoors each Christmas.



3) Make a natural wreath & decorations. Buy or collect small amounts of holly sprigs, ivy, pine-cones, rose hips from bushes that are growing wild if you can do so

safely and without trespassing. [Note: collecting from the wild is illegal if done for any commercial purpose.] Then get creative!

4) Re-use cards & wrapping. Cut gift tags from old cards & make reusable drawstring gift bags for family and friends from remnants of fabric and ribbons. Recycled brown paper has a lower footprint than Christmas wrapping paper and young children may enjoy decorating it.

5) Create home-made gifts. For example: baked goods or buy a pretty glass jar from a charity shop and fill with chocolates or flowers. A kilner jar or similar filled with small items also makes an attractive gift.

6) Make sure your gifts don't cost the earth. Try to avoid products made with unsustainable palm oil. That is not easy but this web-site provides comprehensive guidance on products and shops: <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/palm-oil/palm-oil-free-list>.

7) Give the gift of time. Maybe you can think of something, say, once a month for a year that someone would appreciate. You could then make a voucher and enclose it in a card. Examples: coffee meet-up, mowing the lawn, dog walk, grocery shopping, babysitting.



8) Dim the lights. LED Christmas lights save energy. If you have suitable holders and can afford it, use candles or tea-lights made from beeswax, soy, coconut or other vegetable source. Avoid paraffin-wax candles: they are cheaper but that's more fossil fuels producing CO2.

9) Remember the reason for the season. Can you think of someone who would otherwise spend Christmas Day on their own to invite to join you? It will also reduce energy consumption because they will share your heating and cooking!

10) Would your family consider a meat-free Christmas meal? If they insist on meat rather than a tasty vegetarian or vegan dish, make sure that it is free-range or organic and if possible from a local farmer or independent retailer. Avoid lamb or beef (ruminants produce lots of methane).

11) Review your recycling. To be sure about what your local authority recycles enter your postcode to this web-site: <https://www.recyclenow.com/recycling-locator>. NB Always remove sellotape. And if Christmas wrapping paper springs back after scrunching, it isn't recyclable!

12) Continue the good habits started at Christmas through the coming year. [We'll think about New Year Resolutions next month!]

Sign up to **Wild Christian**: <https://arocha.org.uk/wild-christian/> for more ways to defend, nurture and enjoy Nature.

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.

Wessex Synod brings us the news of the death of retired minister, the **Revd John Johansen-Berg**, who died on 17 November 2023.

John served at: Luton 1962-70; Rock Church Centre 1970-77; St Andrew's, Ealing 1977-86; Moderator, General Assembly 1980-81; Moderator, Free Church Federal Council 1986- 87; Community for Reconciliation 1986-2001; Rubery 1992-2001.

John's funeral will be a natural woodland burial with his immediate family only. A Service to celebrate his life at will be held at **2.00pm on Saturday 16 December** at **Collinwood Road United Reformed Church, Oxford**. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who hold John dear.

Southern Synod brings us the news of the death of retired minister, the **Revd John Braund**.

John served at: Ash, Sandwich & Deal Group 1991-98; Birchington 2000-06.

John's funeral and thanksgiving service will take place at Vinters Park Crematorium on Friday 15 December at 1:15pm. Everyone is welcome to the service at the crematorium which will be followed by refreshments at Maidstone Baptist Church. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who hold John dear.

Christian Women's Fellowship

Sunday 23 - Tuesday 25 February 2024

Christian Women's Fellowship



The Hayes
Conference Centre
Swanwick,
Derbyshire,
DE55 1AU

23rd – 25th Feb
2024

£200 for Full Board

including

Ensuite Room

2024 Conference Theme!!

Caring in our society today

GUEST SPEAKER:

Tarn Bright
(Home for Good)



**home
for good**

**Calling all Christian Women, and
Non-binary (assigned female at birth)**

We would like to invite you to join us for a weekend away in the beautiful Derbyshire countryside staying at the Hayes Conference Centre. We meet every year for a great weekend of fellowship, meeting old friends and new, we explore themes with the help of guest speakers, we enjoy Bible study and worship together

Website:

<https://cwfmktg1927.wixsite.com/website>

Fun & Fellowship

Activities!!

For more information, please contact:

Ruth Filsak:

Ruth.Filsak@gmail.com

Or Vicky Longbone:

vickylongbone@gmail.com

Holiday Forum in a Day

Saturday 24 February 2024

9.30am-12.30pm and 7.30-9.30pm

Save the date! Join **Holiday Forum** friends on Zoom on Saturday 24 February for [HF in a Day](#) and have a taste of what to expect at next year's summer conference.



Joining on Zoom will be the **Revd Fiona Bennett** to outline the theme and the **Revd Kuraone Mutimwii** as worship leader. They'll give a flavour of their sessions to come in the summer to whet your appetite and there will be lots more to get stuck in to throughout the morning and later in the evening.

The day will run in two parts: first, from 9.30am-12.30pm and then later, from 7.30pm-9.30pm (with the option to join from 6.30pm to meet and share dinner virtually).

To experience Holiday Forum in a day, mark the date in your diary and a Zoom link will be shared in the new year. For more about next summer's Holiday Forum at the Hayes Conference Centre, [click here](#).

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Thursday 18 - Thursday 25 January 2024

The [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#) is traditionally observed from 18 to 25 January – the octave of St. Peter and St. Paul. However, some areas observe it at Pentecost or some other time. The theme for 2024 is ‘You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself’ (Lk 10:27) - in other words "go and do likewise".

Free resources are available to download in readiness. Find out more about the theme and access the resources at: www.ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2024/

Job Opportunities



The
United
Reformed
Church

Tenancy Manager

Permanent contract, 35 hours per week
Salary: circa £45,000

Are you ready to support a small team to deliver efficient, high quality housing and tenancy services?

The Retired Ministers Housing Society (RMHS) exists to assist retired and retiring ministers to meet their housing needs during retirement, aiming to provide appropriate housing suitable for long-term occupation. We maintain around 300 properties tenanted by retired ministers, arranging inspections and repairs.

In this role you will lead on the delivery of efficient, consistent, and proactive customer-focused housing and tenancy management services and contribute to the development and implementation of strategies, policies, procedures, and service improvements, focusing on achieving high levels of resident satisfaction.

You are educated to degree level (or equivalent experience), and already have experience of working in the housing sector, with good knowledge of housing legislation, regulation, and management processes. You are solution focused and an excellent communicator with strong negotiation skills.

The successful candidate will be a dependable and experienced line manager committed to teamwork. A CIH qualification (or equivalent) would be a distinct advantage.

We can offer you a flexible work environment with hybrid working from Church House in London and from home.

If you are interested in working for us and can meet the above requirements, please contact us/see our website for an application form (noting that we do not accept CVs):

Human Resources, the United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
020 7691 9871 recruitment@urc.org.uk www.unc.org.uk/vacancies

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Monday 11 December 2023 Interview date: Wednesday 20 December 2023



The
United
Reformed
Church

Recruitment Development Officer Volunteers

12 month Fixed Term contract, 35 hours per week
Salary: £35,794 -£37,243

Are you looking to support safer recruitment practices to enable meaningful change within the charity sector?

The URC is at a significant point of change, seeking to reimagine how we work and are structured as a denomination. The Church Life Review is bold and far reaching, aimed at enabling local churches to flourish and ease the burden of administration. Taking a new approach to volunteer recruitment is an important part of this process.

You are educated to degree level, or equivalent experience, already experienced working in an HR environment implementing Safer Recruitment principles and practices. You have excellent communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to work collaboratively. Knowledge of HR systems, policies and procedures and experience of delivering training is essential.

We can offer you a flexible and friendly work environment, working from Church House in London and/or from home.

If you are interested in working for us and can meet the above requirements, please send your application form to:

Human Resources, the United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
020 7691 9871 recruitment@urc.org.uk www.unc.org.uk/vacancies

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Tuesday 2 January 2024 Interview date: Friday 12 January 2024

WE'RE HIRING!

COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL LEAD



£25,000 - £28,000 PRO RATA

14 HOURS PER WEEK (0.4 FTE)

APPLICATIONS CLOSE: 8/12/23

INTERVIEWS FROM: 15/12/23



www.urcyorkshire.org.uk/CADL

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/) continues to host the **Evening Prayers** led by our Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** and friends every day at 9.30pm. If you are a Facebook user, please consider **Liking** this Page and **Sharing** its posts:

<https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/>

Similarly, the [Synod Youth and Children's Facebook Page](#) 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/UCzXFUjrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

To subscribe to our **Synod Children and Youth Newsletter**, for ideas, resources and news of further events please click here:

<https://bit.ly/CandYNews>

Contacting East Midlands Synod

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 Office is staffed from **Monday to Thursday** each week and 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.

Advent candles: photo by [Waldemar](#) on [Unsplash](#)
Christmas wreath: photo by [Erwan Hesry](#) on [Unsplash](#)
Christmas lights: photo by [Conor Luddy](#) on [Unsplash](#)

CCL1067405

Next edition: Thursday 14 December 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 11 December 2023**

This email was sent to trainingpa@urc5.org.uk
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
URC EMS · 1 Edwards Lane · Sherwood · Nottingham, NG5 3AA · United Kingdom

