



E-LETTER 377

17 November 2022



Opening Reflection by Graham Ghaleb

Convenor of the Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creation group

Just for a moment there was a sense of pride and joy as the **Mead Centre**, a Newport Pagnell URC Community Project, was featured on **BBC Look East's** programme about the cost of living crisis.

Seeing the Mead Centre in use, "in the centre of the town and at the heart of the community", was the culmination of several years of hard graft, yet any sense of celebration was tempered by an appreciation of the context. The television cameras were there to film the queue of people snaking out into the High Street, waiting for the Community Larder to open, testimony to the increasing numbers of people in our communities struggling to make ends meet and to keep their children fed.



Not all in the queue were motivated by the prospect of reduced food bills, as some of the Larder members had joined through a commitment to reducing food waste, but for many the Larder has become an important resource at a time of tight budgets and rising energy and food bills. As some of the members were interviewed and spoke of the importance of schemes like the Community Larder and their struggles to pay the bills, it served as a timely reminder that this winter, and probably in the years ahead, projects like the Community Larder, or the Community Fridges around the country or the multitude of Food Banks, many linked to or sponsored by churches, will have a crucial role to play in helping our neighbours to feed their children.

Food poverty and food shortages have become a harsh reality for so many people in recent years, but in the bleakness of this season, we have seen people reach out in their communities throughout the country to provide resources so that neighbours and strangers will have a chance to survive this winter. For us in Newport Pagnell we have already established a Community Larder, a Homework Club where children will receive a hot meal (with some enjoying at least two helpings) and now there are plans to open a Warm Hub, where neighbours can "be", feel warm and enjoy food together. It is a chance for us to share food that will sustain us, to build community and to experience the true meaning of communion.

Yet for some people in our communities the help that is available may still not be enough. For some communities this may not be a new crisis, for it may simply be a continuation and exacerbation of a lifetime experience, and in some cases generations of experience. And for some, this may be the crisis that leads to destitution and collapse. So food banks and community larders and warm hubs may not be enough. As a Church this may be a time when we need to engage, not just in treating the symptoms, but in engaging in a prophetic call to bring about a systemic change, where we help create a world where the poor are not expected to eat the crumbs from the rich man's table and where all can eat at the same table as Christ desires.



So as we tread our way through the weeks of Advent, let us remember the hope we have in a God who brings sustenance to the hungry and thirsty, who clothes the naked and sets the prisoner free, who walks alongside the poor and the lonely and brings consolation to the grieving. As we work to develop our food banks or our community larders or debt advice services, let us always remember that we do so in the name of Christ who loves us.

But let us never forget in our journey through Advent the voice of John the Baptist, the call of the prophet, who reminds us constantly of our calling to act for justice. For it is a cruel reality that in a very wealthy nation, we distribute resources so unjustly that families, that our neighbours, cannot stay warm and fed.

Around the East Midlands

Induction of the Revd Paul Burton



L-R: the Revds Louise Gee, Darryl Root, Solomon Aryee-Brown, Geoffrey Clarke, Paul Burton & Paul Stokes

The Induction of the **Revd Paul Burton** as Non-Stipendiary Minister in the **North Nottingham Area Churches Partnership** took place on Saturday 29 October at Arnold United Reformed Church. The Induction was conducted by East Midlands Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke**, while the sermon was preached by the **Revd Paul Stokes**, Director of the Dunamis Fellowship Britain & Ireland and Academic Dean of the Dunamis Institute.

We pray that Paul's ministry in North Nottingham will prove both fruitful and fulfilling.



The Revd Paul Burton (R) with his wife Chris and the Revd Solomon Aryee-Brown

North Derbyshire Resource Area Service



On Sunday 23 October, members of the **North Derbyshire Resource Area** joined in worship and fellowship at Tideswell Fountain Square LEP, which included a drama.

Area ministers the **Revds Camilla Veitch, Caroline Andrews** and **Mark Houghton** (shown left to right) all took part in the service.





Media Attention for Responses to Cost of Living Crisis



As reported in this e-letter [last month](#), church leaders in Lincolnshire and Leicestershire have written to churches urging them to work together ecumenically as never before in order to respond to the cost of living crisis. Since then, their appeal has been relayed by **Churches Together Shire & Soke** (Northamptonshire, Peterborough and Rutland), and most recently in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

URC East Midlands Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** is signatory to all these letters and has played an important role in spreading the appeal throughout the East Midlands. The Shire & Soke version, in particular, has given rise to considerable media interest and Geoffrey has given several interviews. His appearance on Louise Hulland's **Radio Cambridge** show of 6 November can currently be heard [here](#) (from 2:14:00) and is quoted in a BBC News report:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-63533564>

Geoffrey's interview on Premier Radio is featured in a [report](#) in **Premier Christian News**:

"The Roman Catholic bishop said to us, 'Before we have the blessing and leave the building, we need to ask ourselves very seriously, what are we going to do as Christians in the face of the cost of living crisis?'"

Rev Geoffrey Clark told Premier, "If we're all asking that question together, why don't we try and deliver together? Both in terms of being united, which is a good principle, but equally, economically. Doesn't it make more sense to heat one building that we share for a piece of work or draw on a wider pool of volunteers?"

Meanwhile, Church Related Community Worker **Vicky Longbone** was interviewed by [BBC News](#) in Derby about her work supplying food parcels for NHS staff, through the **Derby A2C** community project supported by Mackworth and Ashbourne Road churches. Vicky was quoted as saying, "I think it's absolutely disgraceful that we were two years ago standing on our doorsteps clapping for these people and now they're going hungry."

If your church is acting to combat rising fuel bills and meet needs in the community, perhaps in conjunction with ecumenical partners, please share your story for a future e-letter by emailing: training@urc5.org.uk .



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** informs us of the death of retired minister the **Revd Norman George**, who formerly served in our own Synod. Norman died on **Tuesday 8 November 2022**. Norman served at: Porthcawl (1977-83); St Andrew's, Peterborough & Whittlesey (1983-94); Bideford & Y Appledore with Northam (1994-98); and the North Lancaster Pastorate (1998-2004). We hold his family and friends in our prayers.

The **North Western Synod** also informs us of the death of the **Revd Arthur Baker**, on **Thursday 10 November 2022**. Arthur served in Baptist ministry from 1956-74, then at Thatcham & Woolhampton (1974-82) and Thatcham (1982-89). We hold his family and friends in our prayers.

Further to the news of her death in our last edition, we can now confirm that the funeral of our Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher **Sheila Ashmore** will be held at **Sherwood United Reformed Church** on **Thursday 24 November** at 2.00pm, proceeding to Gedling Crematorium at 3.00pm.

More from our Jubilee Banner

Assembled by **Ally Ford**, our **Jubilee Banner** celebrates every church in the East Midlands Synod on the occasion of our 50th anniversary. If you would like to borrow the banner for a special service at your church, please call the Synod Office or email jubilee@urc5.org.uk.

Here are a few more of the individual panels featured in the banner, all representing local churches as places of encounter and ministry to the community.

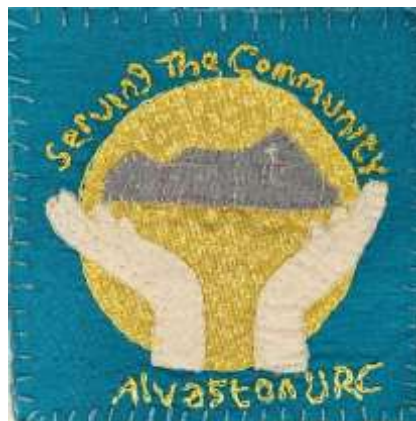


Sue Griffiths submitted the panel for **Abington Avenue URC**, Northampton on behalf of its banner group, featuring the church's logo and its mission priorities.

Judy van der Walt's panel for **St Andrew's URC**, Peterborough, shows the Holy Spirit descending on the congregation.



For **Alvaston URC**, Derby, known locally as Baker Street or “the friendly church”, **Tracy Lowe** reproduced the motto which appears above the door to the church buildings, “Serving the Community”. The open pair of hands represents the church as a welcoming space for other faith groups, voluntary, sporting and uniformed organisations to meet each week, as well as its own congregation and choir.



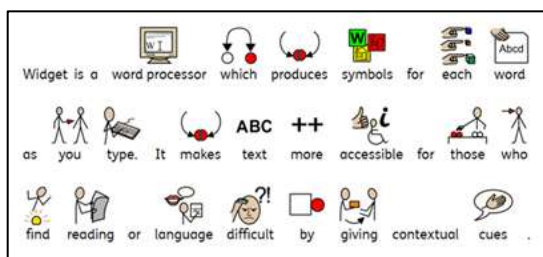
Christine Lillie crafted the panel for **Ashbourne Road Church**, Derby: she says, “the cross is at the centre with golden threads showing Christ’s love shining out in our city. The two hands at the foot of the cross represent our LEP of Methodist and URC traditions ... *open* hands, showing that we welcome *all* and represent our love in action in the local community.”



Crafted by **Anne Court**, the design from **Toller URC** is based on the image used for the church’s publicity in the 1990s, which inspired a large banner made to hang in church. Its central cross can also be seen as a T for Toller; it also represents the road that all the fellowship of Toller Church travel together.

Widget Training sessions in December and January

FREE online Widget Training
Saturday 3 December 9.30-10.30am or
Tuesday 10 January 7-8pm



Following the success of the Introduction to Makaton online training sessions, **URC Training** is offering an online session introducing Widget, a way of making text more accessible through using recognised symbols. Come and learn how to create more accessible signs, documents, posters and orders of service.

To book visit: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/introduction-to-widgit-tickets-431588050477>



Reminders of Other Forthcoming Events

22nd - 26th November 2022, online
7:30am - morning prayer,
12:30pm - digging deeper
7:30pm - discussion time

URC: Spirituality presents...

praying with those who wait

How might we learn from those on the edge of Christ's advent?
Come to one, some or all of these **free, online** sessions!
Sign-up / more info:
bit.ly/urcspiritualitynov22



St Andrews United Reformed Church

Ledbury Road, Netherton, PE3 9RF



Concert on Sunday 27 November at 3pm
to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the church.

Helen Didsbury *soprano*: Cassie Pattinson *violin*:
Fergus Black *piano*

Scottish music by Haydn, Beethoven, Arvo Pärt and Malcolm Arnold. As well as some music by real Scots.

Entry is free including seasonal refreshments. Donations to the church charities are welcome.
Booking is not needed, although seats may be reserved by emailing:
standrewsurcpeterborough@gmail.com



Youth Mental Health First Aid

Learn to support young people

- Gain an in-depth understanding of mental health and factors that can affect wellbeing in the youth sector
- Develop practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Feel confident to step in, reassure and support a young person in distress
- Enhance your interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening and learn to champion self-care

For more info and to book, contact:



Children's & Youth Development Officers
Mersey Synod - Steven Mitchell cydo@urcmerseysynod.org.uk
Southern Synod - Tom Hackett cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk

Visit the MHFA England website at mhfaengland.org
Find us on social media @MHFAEngland

www.bit.ly/november-mhfa



30 Nov - 1 Dec 2022
URC Church House,
London WC1H 9RT

www.bit.ly/february-mhfa



2 Feb - 3 Feb 2023
Northern College,
Manchester M14 5JP

ACC Workshop – Good Practice in Pastoral Care



Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care
Tuesday 29 November 2022, 7-8.30pm

The Association of Christians in Counselling and Linked Professions (ACC) aim to facilitate provision by Christians of quality counselling, psychotherapy and pastoral care.

This online workshop aims to enable individuals, churches and Christian organisations involved in the ministry of pastoral care, to develop their understanding and application of good practice, so that it can be offered safely, effectively and with integrity.

The cost is £15. For more information or bookings, click [here](#).

If you would like to find out more about who ACC are and what they do contact: office@acc-uk.org or visit their website: <https://www.acc-uk.org/>

Faraday Institute Workshop

13 – 14 January 2023



Faith and Science in the Local Church

Be equipped to engage with scientific issues in the day-to-day life of your church.

13 – 14 January 2023

Online and in Cambridge

faraday.institute/churchleaders



The Faraday Institute bring us news of their upcoming Faith and Science Workshop - How can we reconcile Genesis and evolution? What does it mean to be human in an age of AI? Does science remove the possibility of miracles? How do non-Christians think about science and faith questions? What does God think of IVF? How do we interpret the fall if the earth is billions of years old?

Explore these questions and many others at our two day workshop designed for Christian leaders – whether ordained, lay, or active and experienced members of a local church. Participants will be equipped to engage with scientific issues in the day-to-day life of their ministry context.

To book or for more information visit: <https://www.faraday.cam.ac.uk/event/faith-and-science-in-the-local-church-a-workshop-for-christian-leaders/>

Legacies of Slavery – An Update of Our Work

Confession and Apology

On 12 July 2022, in her first act as General Assembly Moderator, 2022-3, the Revd Fiona Bennett read out a statement that included these words: “We, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, mindful of our own history and that of our antecedent bodies, wish to confess and apologise for our role in transatlantic slavery, and the scars which continue to blight our society, our Church, and the lives of black people in our midst and around the globe today.”

<https://urc.org.uk/urc-apologises-for-its-role-in-the-transatlantic-slave-trade/>

For a vivid insight into the continuing problems of racism within our own church, see this fifteen-minute video [“Telling It Like It Is”](#)



(Karen Campbell, Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries)

Saying “sorry” is not enough: The Confession and Apology followed a process of consultation with synods across the URC and also discussion and decision in General Assembly itself. But Assembly also agreed that the URC must “find constructive ways by which we can move from saying ‘I’m sorry’ into concrete actions of ‘repairing justice’ and so contribute to the prophetic work of God’s coming kingdom.”

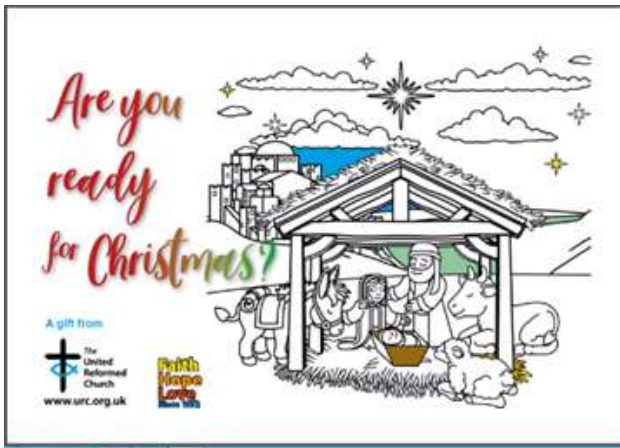
What might “Repairing Justice” mean? During 2022-3 the Legacies of Slavery (LoS) Task Group will draw up a shortlist of proposals and possible projects, which will be circulated to synods for consideration at their March 2023 meetings. The task group already received suggestions during its consultation earlier in 2022, including

- Strengthening our relationships with our CWM partner churches
- An education programme to help us understand the legacies of transatlantic slavery, particularly as they impact our life together today
- Seeking to add the URC’s voice to campaigns encouraging the UK government to release LoS countries and communities from debt owed to the UK

Any further suggestions and comments can be sent to global.intercultural@urc.org.uk

12 July 2022 was the start of a long journey towards creating an actively anti-racist church – a journey in which honesty about the past fosters real hope for the future. We pray God’s blessing as we continue the journey.

Free Advent Packs from the URC



Are you ready for Christmas? How often does someone ask that? Being ready means different things to different people. Being ready can feel like a huge 'to do' list. It might feel impossible in these challenging times.

URC Children and Youth Work has created a new Advent pack, available **free** via the URC Bookshop. The pack is ideal for churches to give to families as a Christmas gift, inviting them to explore how everyone got ready for the first Christmas.

The Advent pack is designed to give people of all ages some space and some fun, as they prepare for Christmas:

- Count down to Christmas using the poster – mark off each day.
- Each week spread out the activity sheet – then choose what to do:
 - read and share the story
 - solve the puzzles
 - do the challenges
 - colour and doodle
 - chat about the questions
 - find the 10 hidden pictures
 - make an advent ring



There is something for everyone – you can do as little or much as you like, dip in and out over the week, on your own or together with others. Each week there is also a link to **Families on Faith Adventure @ home** for anyone who wishes to explore further . You are warmly invited to claim some free packs, to help families celebrate God coming to be with us through the birth of Jesus.

URC Advent resource for churches to share with families and households – available for free (with an option to donate if able) from the URC Bookshop (pay P&P)

These A5 envelopes will be delivered unsealed so churches can add their own material and invitation to a Christmas Service – they can also include other items such as colouring pencils, play dough, or craft materials should they wish.

Situations Vacant



The East Midlands Synod
of the United Reformed Church
is seeking to appoint a

Children's and Youth Development Officer (Ref CYDO)

This is a full-time post for 37.5 hours/week
(including evening and weekends) on a permanent contract.

Salary: £32,796 to £33,624 depending on experience and
qualifications

This post is subject to an Enhanced DBS Disclosure

This post offers a challenging opportunity for an experienced and professionally qualified Children's and Youth Worker with training and development skills. We are looking for an enthusiastic and committed Christian to develop our strategy, serve the churches of the Synod in offering advice, training, and support to those working with children and young people and to work with the wider United Reformed Church. The Officer appointed will be a member of a collaborative Synod team and therefore good team working skills are essential.

If you share our passion for children and young people playing their part in the mission of God, please contact:

Mrs Chris Willis
East Midlands Synod Office
1 Edwards Lane
Sherwood
Nottingham
NG5 3AA
Tel: 0115 9609241
E-mail: admin@urc5.org.uk

Closing date for applications: 30th November 2022

Interviews to be held: 12th December 2022

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010: Part 1, Schedule 9, there is an occupational requirement for the post holder to be a practising Christian

We are committed to diversity and equality of opportunity. We especially welcome applications from women and Black and Minority Ethnic Groups who are currently under-represented in this area of work in the Church.

Mission and Training Officer Eastern Synod of the United Reformed Church

Full time: 37.5 hours per week (flexible, including some evenings and weekends)

Annual salary: £38 – £42,000 pa depending on experience

The Eastern Synod is seeking an experienced person who is motivated to stimulate and encourage growth within the Synod. The focus of the work is to assist local churches in their mission and in implementing mission initiatives and by encouraging them to be confident in sharing their faith.

In accordance with the Equalities Act 2010 Part 1; Schedule 9, there is a genuine occupational requirement that the post holder be a Christian.

Office based, with some working from home permissible, and regular travel around the Synod is an essential requirement.



An application pack can be accessed via the Synod website:

www.urc-eastern.org.uk or by emailing Marion Gentry on admin@urceastern.org.uk

Only completed application forms will be accepted. No CVs.

Closing date for applications is 5.00pm on **Wednesday 21 December**.

Interviews will be held on **Tuesday 3 January 2023**.

Church and Tenant Empowerment Worker - Hinckley

We are hiring Church and Tenant Empowerment Worker

Key Information

Based in Hinckley
8 hours per week
£23,701.33 pro rata
(£4,740.27 per annum)
Closing date: 2nd Dec 2022
Interviews: 12th Dec 2022

**Learn more
& apply**

www.coventry.hopeintoaction.org.uk/vacancies

Contact Adèle Harris:
Adele.Harris@hopeintoaction.org.uk
07305925777

Do you have a passion for the homeless and the local church?

Can you empower, develop and support church members working with tenants?

Do you want to make a real difference in people's lives?

If that's you, we would love to hear from you.



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](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrk8XOGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrk8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

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

Turning Point Photo by [Roger Bradshaw](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next edition: Thursday 1 December 2022

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

trainingpa@urch5.org.uk and training@urch5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 28 November 2022**