



E-LETTER 379

15 December 2022



East Midlands Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** and all the Synod officers and staff send their warmest greetings and pray that you will enjoy great peace and much joy this Christmas.

These designs feature on the Moderator's Christmas cards this year: the holy family was depicted by **Bryan Clarkson** and the stars shining on Christ's manger by **Janet Clarkson**, both of **The Dales URC** in Bakersfield, Nottingham.

Joint winners of our competition to design the Moderator's cards, Janet and Bryan are avid members of the Art Club at The Dales. The Club next meets on **Monday 16 January** and would gladly welcome any new attenders, whether you bring your pencils or simply drop in to enjoy free coffee and chat in the warmth.



Opening Reflection by Revd Geoffrey Clarke Moderator of the East Midlands Synod

Enough to Get By



In these times of financial pressure and hardship – as individuals and as congregations – having “enough” equates to something along the lines “enough to get by”. The image of scarcity dominates our budgets and mindsets. Many of us know the challenge of trying to make savings in what we spend; having the central heating on for less time and/or at a lower temperature (and for some maybe not turning it on at all); and working out what we might now regard as luxury rather than necessity. All of these efforts are not in order to accumulate bigger bank balances but merely to “get by”.

And this year Christmas itself may well have been subjected to greater scrutiny. Where can we make savings on our Christmas plans? How can we have a Christmas in which we “get by” and how can we minimise the chance of having to pay back across the next few months what we have spent at Christmas? And whilst it is all too easy to admit that many of us buy more food and “stuff” than we need, it is a much bigger challenge

and discipline to forego some of the treats and indulgences we enjoy – particularly if we regard this time of year as an opportunity to compensate for the tough times we have faced together across the year.

From Get By to Be With

By contrast, at the heart of Christmas is the affirmation that God is the source of infinitely more than “enough to get by”:

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory, the glory of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.*

(John 1: 14, New Revised Standard Version)

By becoming flesh and living among us God enables us to do more than simply “get by”. The birth of the Christ Child is God’s pledge to **be with us**. As one of us, donned in our flesh and loving among us, God embraces the budgets and mindsets of scarcity and reveals a glory, grace and truth that are found not in the expensive and extravagant of presents but in that precious and life-giving of gestures – “presence”, being with us. In one of the less well-used carols, **Thomas Pestel** puts it this way:

*Behold the great Creator makes
himself a house of clay,
a robe of human flesh he takes
which he will wear for aye.*

**Hark, hark, the wise Eternal Word
like a weak infant cries!
See in a servant's form the Lord
as God in cradle lies.**

(Rejoice and Sing: 171: 1-2)

Our budgets may be so tight that the best we can hope for is to “get by”, but the great Creator opts not for palace but *house of clay*. As the wonderful hymn in Philippians puts it: **Christ Jesus ... *did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness*** (Philippians 2: 5-7). God came among us to **be with us**. God’s presence enables us to “get by” and to have “enough” and more besides.

Last Christmas I found inspiration in **The Humble Church**, by **Martyn Percy**, former Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. This Advent I have been reading it again. I offer these words in the hope that they will renew our sense of God’s presence with us – and transform our budgets and mindsets to reflect God’s grace and truth:

The grounding of the incarnation lies in God choosing to become flesh – Jesus dwelling among us, and sharing our life with all its pain, uncertainty and anxiety, as well as hope, joy and love. In Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, God enters history in an entirely new, decisive way – yet it is done in the midst of squalor, birth, potential shame (Joseph is not the father) and on a journey that no one is exempt from, as the military and political masters of the region have decreed that there will be a census. Christmas cards depicting nativity scenes, however, are often deceptive. Most portrayals of Jesus’ birth offer clean-swept stables, fresh straw, unvarnished oak and pine, and thick woollen shawls and throws, that sanitise and romanticise poverty; a country-style birth straight from the glossy pages of an up-market home furnishing catalogue. The truth is probably more surprising; Jesus was surrounded by animals and filth, with nought for company save a few rough shepherds.

(*The Humble Church: Renewing the Body of Christ*, Martyn Percy, pp. 144-45.

© Martyn Percy 2021. Canterbury Press. ISBN 978-1-78622-315-9)

“Nought for company save a few rough shepherds.” Christmas invites us to remember that we have his company – God-with-us – not because we deserve it but because God chose to do so.

*Join then, all hearts that are not stone,
and all our voices prove,
to celebrate this Holy One,
the God of peace and love.*
(Rejoice and Sing: 171: 5)



With my prayers for the churches and communities of East Midlands Synod,

Around the East Midlands

Induction of the Revd Paul Ellis



L-R: Revd Lythan Nevard, Revd Geoffrey Clarke, Revd Paul Ellis, Mrs Jill Ellis, Revd Leslie Gill (Interim Moderator).

On Saturday 3 December, Enderby United Reformed Church hosted the joyous occasion of the Induction of the **Revd Paul Ellis** as Resource Minister for the **West Leicestershire Area**. The newly formed Resource Area comprises **Braunstone, Christ Church, Enderby, Groby** and **St Stephen's URCS**. East Midlands Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** led the Induction service and the sermon was preached by the **Revd Lythan Nevard**, Moderator of the Eastern Synod.

We warmly welcome Paul into the Synod and pray that his ministry here will prove fruitful and fulfilling.



Eco Church Bronze Award

We send our congratulations to **St Andrew's with Castle Gate URC**, Nottingham, which has become the latest church in the East Midlands Synod to attain the **Bronze Eco Church Award** and is now pressing on toward silver.

For more information about joining the **Eco Church** scheme, offered free of charge through **A Rocha UK**, please visit:

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>



URC Anniversary Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration

New date: Saturday 15 April 2023

On **Saturday 15 April 2023**, the new date after the rail strikes affected us in October 2022, join us in London to give thanks and to celebrate the URC's 50 years.

From 10.00am-12.00noon at United Reformed Church House at 86 Tavistock Place, London, an **Open Church House** event will be held,



with dozens of activities and crafts related to the jubilee including: a Living Library, our Mersey Synod with LICC/LYCIG, Free-to-Believe, GEAR, the URC History Society and Westminster College Cambridge, a Prayer Labyrinth, an Enquirers' Conference, Greenbelt, a cafe, Christian Aid, Roots for Churches, Single Friendly Church, The Trussell Trust, an exhibition from the archives, Church Related Community Workers offering activities around Café Church, community work and engagement, many staff teams offering conversations and discussion activities, Fresh Expressions plant-based activities and reflections, badge-making and craft activities, a puppet show, an exhibition of Reform magazine's 50 years, the URC Bookshop and more.

Between Church House and Methodist Central Hall there is a **Walk to Westminster** with self guided tours for all ages packed with buildings of interest to the Church and things to find for younger walkers.

At **Methodist Central Hall**, Westminster, London, from 2.30pm, where the Uniting Assembly of the URC took place in October 1972, a service will take place to give thanks and to celebrate the five decades of the United Reformed Church.

Tickets

Tickets for all of these events are free. Please book them now to avoid disappointment at <https://bit.ly/urc50>. Once booked, you will receive an email from Eventbrite which you must bring on the day - either printed out or on the Eventbrite app - to gain admission to the venues.

If you already booked for the original date and are able to come to the event on April 15, please do nothing - your ticket is still valid. Please bring it/them on the day. If you would like more tickets, please visit <https://bit.ly/urc50> and amend your order. If you are no longer able to attend, please email <https://bit.ly/urc50> and select Cancel Order. This will free up your tickets for others. Or email 50@urc.org.uk and we can cancel the order for you. Use the same [email address](#) for any other queries.

Get more closely involved

If you would like to sing in the Anniversary Choir, you can find out more details and the dates of the rehearsals by visiting <https://bit.ly/urc50-choir>. If you are willing to volunteer as a Steward at the service, please email 50@urc.org.uk.

Join our Evening Prayers for Advent

Sharing the Christmas Story

Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** and the Evening Prayer team warmly invite you to join us for our ongoing Advent reflections, shared every evening at 9.30pm on [Facebook](#).

During this special season, we are delighted to share readings and meditations from the book [Sharing the Christmas Story](#) by **Sally Welch**, published by BRF for Advent 2022. The book is used by kind permission of the author and of BRF. More information about this Christian Charity can be found at: <https://www.brf.org.uk/>

Our Advent series also features beautiful contemporary liturgies written specially for us by the **Revd Thom Shuman**, our Ohio-based friend and fellow member of the nightly prayer team. Evening Prayers are shared live every evening at 9.30pm on the Synod's [Facebook Page](#): simply search "URC East Midlands Synod".



Leading Church in Change

Wednesdays, 26 April – 21 June 2023

The image is a promotional banner for a course. On the left is the Trinity College logo. In the center, it says 'PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY'. On the right is the University of Glasgow logo. Below the logos, the main title 'LEADING IN CHURCH CHANGE' is written in large, white, bold letters. To the right of the title, it says 'Postgraduate Level', 'Wednesday Mornings', 'Online (8 classes)', and '26th April - 21st June 2023'. At the bottom right, it says '£499 for recognised UK church leaders'. At the bottom left, it provides contact information: 'For more information, email: trinitycollegeglasgow@gmail.com' and 'www.trinitycollegeglasgow.co.uk'. The background features a stylized green and blue wave pattern and a white sailboat.

This online course, conducted within a supportive cohort, will assist recognised pastoral leaders/clergy to evaluate their critical change challenges, engage with recent organisational change practice and equip with tools and perspectives for faithful and strategic responses. For more information visit:

www.trinitycollegeglasgow.co.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.

At **East Midlands Synod** we bring you the news of the death of the **Revd Douglas Watson**, on Sunday 4 December.

Douglas served the Nottinghamshire District and Burton Joyce between 1993-2000. He ran the East Midlands Synod bookshop with his wife for many years. Funeral arrangements are to be confirmed but are very likely to be mid-January 2023. Our thoughts and prayers are with Douglas's family.

The Mersey Synod bring us the news of the death of the **Revd Harold Dixon**, on Saturday 3 December.

Harold was living in the Chester area of Mersey Synod. He served at Eignbrook, Hereford 1980-1992 and at Pickering 1992-1998. Our thoughts and prayers are with Harold's family.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Wednesday 18 January 2023 – Wednesday 25 January 2023

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has published resources for **The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023** at: <https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2023/>. This week of prayer is traditionally observed from the 18 to the 25 January – the octave of St. Peter and St. Paul.

For this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we are guided by the churches of Minneapolis as we seek to explore how the work of Christian unity can contribute to the promotion of racial justice across all levels of society. Through this resource, the CTBI writers' group has also focussed our attention on the 30th anniversary of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, which we mark in 2023. The work of restoring hope through justice undertaken in Stephen's memory continues to inspire and change lives for the better. As we join with other Christians around the world for the Week of Prayer we pray that our hearts will be open to see and hear the many ways in which racism continues to destroy lives, and to discern the steps we can take as individuals and communities to heal the hurts and build a better future for everyone.

Holocaust Memorial Day Resource for Churches

from the Council of Christians and Jews



The theme for **Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD)** on **27 January 2023** is 'Ordinary People'. **CCJ** are delighted to launch their Holocaust Memorial Day resource for churches for 2023, with reflections from a broad range of community leaders and scholars. CCJ explain that the resource develops the theme, set by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, of 'Ordinary People': because it was ordinary people who lost their lives in the Holocaust, it was ordinary people who perpetrated unthinkable acts of cruelty and murder and it was ordinary people who performed heroic acts to save others. What can we as ordinary people do in our communities today to remember and stand together?



The resource contains reflections from two CCL Presidents, **Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg** and **Revd Fiona Smith**, as well as a reflection from **His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos**, on the importance of marking HMD as people of faith. It also includes practical advice for churches on how to commemorate the Holocaust in churches, prayers for HMD, all genocides, and Christian-Jewish relations, and four reflections on ordinary people who demonstrated extraordinary faith. To download the resource visit:

<https://ccj.org.uk/resources/holocaust-education>.

Reminders of Other Forthcoming Events

Faraday Institute Workshop

Friday 13 – Saturday 14 January 2023

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?



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



Explore these questions and many others at this 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/>

URC Youth Assembly 2023

Friday 27 January 2023 – Sunday 29 January 2023

Each year the **URC Youth Assembly** brings together a diverse group of under-25s from across Scotland, England and Wales for a weekend of business and fun combined, exploring issues and topics relevant to Church, society and life through workshops, seminars, discussions and creative activities.

- Age range: Year 10/S3 to 25 years inclusive.
- Dates and venue: 27 – 29 January 2023 at the Whitemoor Lakes near Lichfield.
- Cost: £149 – if money is an issue, please contact us on 020 7916 8683 or email children.youth@urc.org.uk as financial support is available. Assistance may also be available through the Synod: please email cydo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk.



The weekend is organised by young people for young people and includes a mix of workshops, discussion and debates, worship, entertainment and social times too. Held at the Whitemoor Lakes Centre near the National Arboretum in Staffordshire, the event is all-inclusive with catering and accommodation provided with specific dietary and accommodation needs facilitated.

Bookings close at the end of December, so don't miss out! To book your place visit: [URC Youth Assembly - United Reformed Church](#).

Events for Youth Leaders

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

Northern College, Thursday 2 February 2023 – Friday 3 February 2023

Youth Mental Health First Aid training for people living, working and volunteering with young people:

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

Subsidised places available
Book via the link below

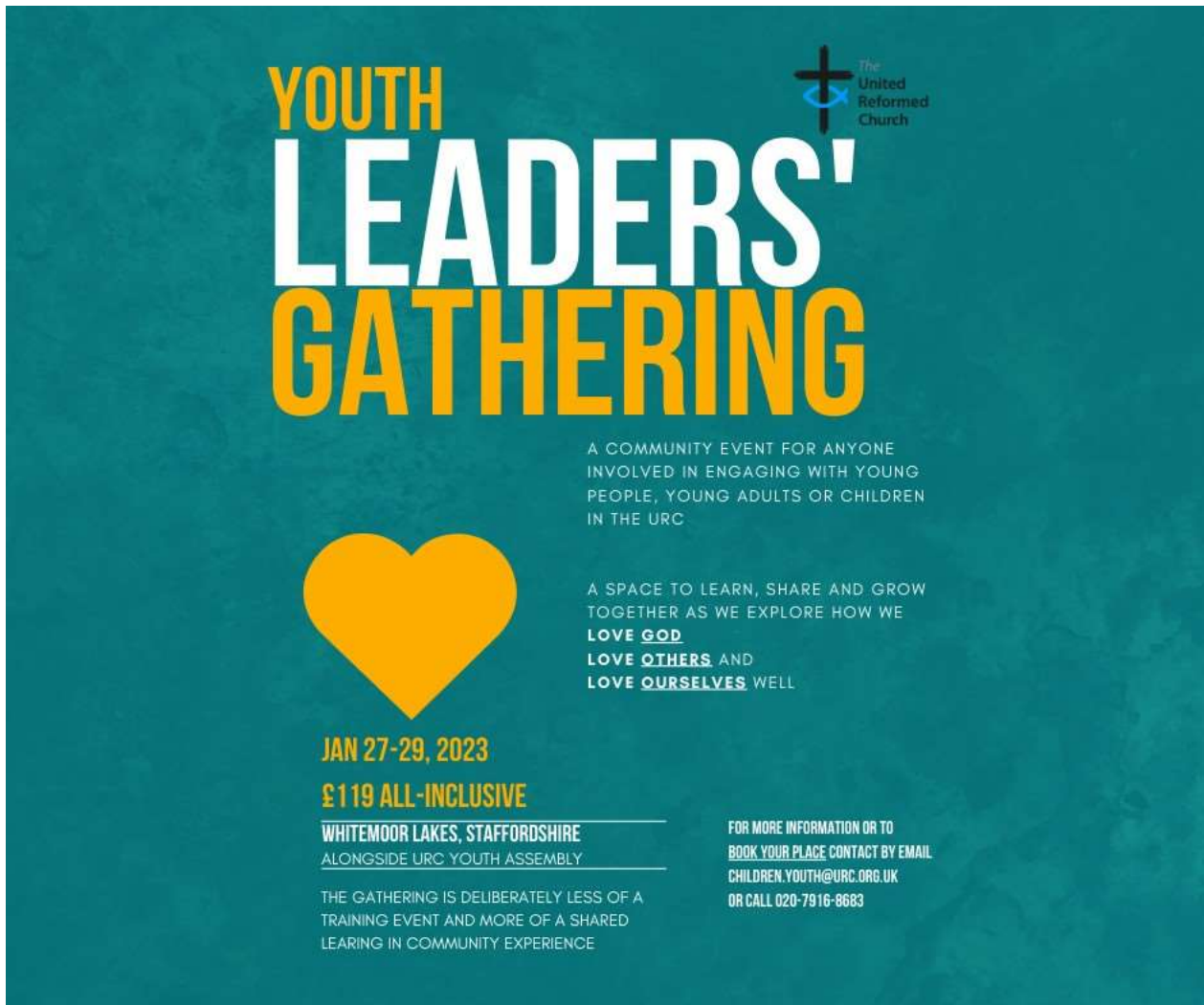
www.bit.ly/february-mhfa




2 Feb - 3 Feb 2023

Northern College,
Manchester M14 5JP


Youth Leaders' Gathering
Friday 27 January 2023 – Sunday 29 January 2023



YOUTH
LEADERS'
GATHERING

The United Reformed Church

A COMMUNITY EVENT FOR ANYONE INVOLVED IN ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, YOUNG ADULTS OR CHILDREN IN THE URC



A SPACE TO LEARN, SHARE AND GROW TOGETHER AS WE EXPLORE HOW WE
LOVE GOD
LOVE OTHERS AND
LOVE OURSELVES WELL

JAN 27-29, 2023
£119 ALL-INCLUSIVE
WHITEMOOR LAKES, STAFFORDSHIRE
ALONGSIDE URC YOUTH ASSEMBLY

THE GATHERING IS DELIBERATELY LESS OF A TRAINING EVENT AND MORE OF A SHARED LEARNING IN COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK YOUR PLACE CONTACT BY EMAIL
[CHILDREN.YOUTH@URC.ORG.UK](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk)
OR CALL 020-7916-8683

The **Youth Leaders' Gathering 2023** is a dedicated programme run alongside URC Youth Assembly at Whitemoor Lakes, Staffordshire between 27-29 January. It will follow this year's children and youth work theme 'Love is...' in our own dedicated space. We will explore this theme by reflecting on the greatest commandment – 'Love God and Love others as yourself'. There will be space to share, learn, reflect, worship and relax together as a community. Join with others so that you might be both encouraged and recharged for your ministry with young people.

The Gathering is deliberately less of a training event and more of a shared learning in community experience – with great coffee, cake and the chance to hear about the latest resources and initiatives from within the URC and beyond. You bring your experience and stories to share with others so we that we can all contribute. Financial support is available from the Synod to anyone wishing to attend. A creche is available for any children aged 0-5 that are accompanying you. For more information or to book your place contact by email children.youth@urc.org.uk or call 020-7916-8683. **Please note bookings close at the end of December, please don't miss out!**

Situations Vacant



VACANCY - EAST MIDLANDS SYNOD CLERK

Applications are welcome for the role of East Midlands Synod Clerk.

The Synod Council is looking to recruit a new Synod Clerk in a voluntary capacity for, on average, 15-20 hrs per week. The role holder is required to spend time in the Synod office in Nottingham but will be mainly home based with travel across the geography of the EM Synod.

Applications are welcome from URC elders, members, retired ministers and ministers, including non-stipendiary ministers.

The role of the Synod Clerk in the East Midlands Synod has four principal elements:

- To serve as Clerk to the Synod and Synod Council
- To be responsible for enabling Synod engagement with General Assembly
- To provide advice, guidance and support on the structure, governance and procedures of the United Reformed Church
- To serve as one of the Synod Officers alongside the Moderator and Treasurer.

The role description, person specification and application forms are available from Mrs C Willis at the Synod office. To arrange an informal discussion with the Moderator and/or current Clerk please contact the EM Synod Office admin@urc5.org.uk or 0115 960 9241

Closing date for applications: 15th January 2023

Sector Minister – Director of MK Christian Foundation

A unique and exciting opportunity to explore and develop new approaches to mission and church through social enterprise. The appointee will:

- hold, with others, the mission, vision and values of the MK Christian Foundation and our particular emphasis on the practical outworking of the gospel;
- oversee the on-going sustainability and development of our social enterprises and training of young people.

The MK Christian Foundation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff to share this commitment. An enhanced DBS check is required for all successful applicants. We value diversity and welcome applicants from all sections of the community.



MK: Christian Foundation
Growing people and community through social enterprise

Salary Package: £43,000 plus pension. The deadline for applications is 12.00noon on 27 January 2023. For an application pack please go to <https://mkchristianfoundation.co.uk/jobs/>.

Mission Development Officer East Midlands Synod



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

Mission Development Officer (Ref MDO)

This is a full-time post for 37.5 hours/week

(including evening and weekends) on a permanent contract.

Salary: £40,000 per annum for a lay person or a minister from outside the URC. A URC minister will receive the current ministerial stipend, a manse and related benefits in accordance with the Plan for Partnership. This post is subject to an Enhanced DBS Disclosure.

The purpose of this role is to help equip churches in their missional discipleship and growth and to facilitate the sharing of good news, practice and opportunities across the Synod and beyond, holding the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way at the heart of their work.

The successful candidate will work to promote, encourage and undertake the promotion of mission to the whole people of God to facilitate the development of the life of the church at all levels by helping churches to identify and understand their particular priorities in mission and, to develop and release people to engage in that mission.

The Officer appointed will be a member of a collaborative Synod team and therefore good team working skills are essential.

For an application pack (no CVs) please contact:

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

Closing date for applications: 28th February 2023

Interviews to be held: 23rd March 2023

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

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**.

Find Us Online



The [East Midlands Synod website](http://www.urc5.org.uk) is the one-stop shop for all essential information:
<https://www.urc5.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.

Please note that the Synod Office is closed for the Christmas period from Thursday 22 December and reopens on Wednesday 4 January 2023.

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

Charity bags photo by [Nico Smit](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Nativity photo by [Walter Chávez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next edition: Thursday 12 January 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 9 January 2023**