

Opening Reflection by the Revd George Mwaura Convenor of the Ordained Ministry & Churches Group (OMCG)

Friends,

The season of **Pentecost** is with us and with it a sense of hope that something new and good is going to happen in our lives and communities. The last 18 months or so have been a catastrophe on a global scale as a result of the pandemic. Millions have lost their lives, jobs and traditional businesses have been wiped out. The devastation has been in all sectors of life, the church not being an exception.

The origin of the SARS Covid-19 virus remains an academic exercise with some folks favouring the zoonotic angle, while a renewed section led by America is challenging China's role in the creation and spread of the virus, perhaps accidentally. What is not in any doubt however, is the effects the pandemic has had on global communities, our churches included. Many, including here in our own Synod, have had to close or are in the process of closing. The prolonged financial exposure has left them vulnerable while largely elderly congregations are fearful of returning of to any physical meetings. Witnessing the devastation that new variants are causing, their fear is justified.

Amid this gloomy picture, we read the words of Isaiah with a heightened sense of expectation and hope: *...see I am doing something new! Now it springs up, do you not see it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland (Isaiah 43:19).*

It's in this sense of expectation that I start my stint as the convenor of **OMCG** (to be more accurate, I started after March's Synod meeting). The role is a challenging yet exciting one as it allows the Convenor to interact widely with the whole Synod, listening, facilitating and walking alongside the churches. It's a pivotal moment in the life of the



churches and the role calls for pastoral sensitivity as these church fellowships are at the moment walking in fear of what the future holds. To walk with them in their hour of need will call for compassion and care from all of us and not just the Convenor. To these churches, Isaiah speaks hope of renewal and 'green shoots' emerging from the chaos of the pandemic.

And yes, even though we have sadly closed some churches and will in all honesty likely close some more, new ways of doing and being church are being embraced by fellowships and individuals who would not have dreamt of such radical technological adjustments in their lives 17 months ago! When I led virtual worship at **Newport Pagnell URC** a couple of months ago, the first person to log on was a 90-year-old who said to me they no longer miss any service because they can attend it from the comfort of their living room come rain or snow!

Admittedly, Zoom meetings are not an exact replica of physical meetings and certainly Zoom coffee doesn't have the same aroma! But Zoom and other digital platforms are a new way of life and they replace old ways that we need to leave behind as we strive to locate a balance between our worship and our responsibility to this planet. I might not get the same buzz from a virtual OMCG meeting but just imagine the savings we are making for our Synods and the wider global reduction in Co2 by holding virtual meetings. Granted, there will always be some aspects of church life and business that demand physical attention.

The coming of the **Holy Spirit** as Christ had promised his disciples in lockdown (the upper room of Acts 1:13) heralded a new chapter in the disciples' lives. Hitherto timid, uneducated folks from Galilee started preaching and doing ministry in ways that have shaken and transformed the world for over two thousand years. I strongly believe that this same Spirit is abroad today! We might feel desperate as the pandemic sweeps across the globe and closes some of our church fellowships, but let's not forget others have been there before us. The disciples must have felt as if their entire world had collapsed after Christ's death on Good Friday and certainly a sense of being orphaned when he ascended to heaven. But life took a new and dramatic turn for them when the Spirit came on Pentecost Sunday and I am more than hopeful that this Spirit of Renewal will do the same for us. The church of Christ has survived unbelievable persecution and hardship over the centuries and I have no doubt it will outlive the present upheaval.

In the meanwhile, be sensible and be safe. Go and keep your vaccine appointment if you are invited. A healthy population means that we can keep the doors of our churches open.

May the Spirit be with you!

Refugee Week 2021

This year's [Refugee Week](#) begins on Monday, running from **Monday 14 to Sunday 20 June**.

CTBI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) offers a series of worship resources about refugees, migration and sanctuary, including Bible studies, hymns, prayers and liturgies and suggestions for services and multi-generational work. These can be found at: <https://ctbi.org.uk/god-with-us/>

The last of CTBI's three Bible Studies exploring these themes on Zoom, **God with us... in strangers**, takes place on Monday 14 June, 8.00 – 9.00pm: you can register to take part [here](#).

This **Sunday, 13 June**, the URC's online **Sunday Service** will also reflect on this ever-important topic, marking the beginning of Refugee Week. The service, led by the **Revd Sarah Hall** from Southampton, will be available in time for a 10am start via: <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>

Join in with General Assembly Sunday Worship



The Moderators of the URC's General Assembly are warmly inviting members of the denomination to join General Assembly's Sunday worship service on Sunday 11 July.

The **Revd Clare Downing** will preach at the service, which will be livestreamed from the URC's national website and Facebook page from 11.00am.

The Moderators hope this will offer a number of possibilities for United Reformed churches:

- Churches worshipping in their building or doing 'hybrid' worship might play the livestream for the congregation present
- Churches worshipping virtually might encourage/invite members to join the livestream from home (or in small groups)
- Churches not currently able to offer any worship might inform members so they may be able to join online.

Moderators of General Assembly the **Revd Clare Downing** and **Mr Peter Pay** say, "We hope you will feel able to explore this possibility, maybe as a novel experience. Thank you for all you are doing to nurture the spiritual health of our communities."

To view the livestreamed service from the URC's website or Facebook page, visit bit.ly/URCwelcome or bit.ly/URCfacebook.

Racial Justice Advocates Sought for the Synod

As mentioned in our previous edition, we are looking to appoint one or two people for this voluntary role in the East Midlands Synod. The URC is fully committed to being an inclusive, anti-racist church and we want to promote and raise awareness of this in our Synod. The advocate/s would take a lead in ensuring this happens.

For a full role description and to express interest in taking this role on, please contact our Synod Clerk, the **Revd Camilla Veitch**, at: clerk@urc5.org.uk

Take part in Christian Aid's "Wave of Hope" for the G7

The **G7 Summit** of world leaders is hosted by the UK in Cornwall this weekend, from 11-13 June. Amongst other things, this meeting of the world's richest nations is an important milestone on the way to the COP26 Climate Change conference in Glasgow this November.

Christian Aid is amongst those urging us to use our prophetic voices to help shape a more just world – a world that provides vaccines and healthcare for all, fights poverty and injustice and helps end the climate crisis.

The aid agency invites us to show the Prime Minister that we stand alongside each other to tackle injustice by taking part in a "Wave of Hope": drawing, tracing, printing or painting a hand and displaying it in our window as the G7 commences.

Details are available at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/take-action-ahead-g7>



Church Finances

The **Synod Finance Group** met last month and considered many items, but wishes the following to be passed on to churches for early consideration, please.

Finance Group considered a way for churches to calculate **M&M offers** for 2022. As this will be based on the 2020 accounts, a 'revision' is being developed and accounts information will be used to assist and avoid 'distorted' calculations in many instances.

Most church financial years end in December and accounts should normally be completed and copies sent to the office by 31 March each year, or 3 months after the financial year ends if a different date is used.

It is fully recognised that there may well have been difficulties in preparation and getting the accounts inspected (audited as appropriate) and then agreed by Elders. If this has been done - great - please send to the office without delay. Thanks for those received already.

Where it has not been possible yet to get the accounts agreed then please send in the draft accounts, again without delay.

David J Greatorex, Treasurer
on behalf of the Finance Group

News and Courses from ACAT



The Association of Church Accountants & Treasurers (ACAT) has published new guidance for those new to the role of church treasurer. Entitled “**What to consider when you’re asked to become a Church Treasurer...**”, and prepared by ACAT founder and trainer **Robert Scott-Biggs**, this invaluable new guide steers readers through some of the role's intricacies. Further details are available at: <https://www.acat.uk.com/news/acat-publishes-new-online-guidance-for-those-mulling-church-treasurer-role/>

ACAT continues to offer training opportunities. Its course **Being a Treasurer: The Basics** course will recommence on **Saturday June 26**. In July, it offers a two-session course for churches required or opting to prepare their annual accounts according to the accruals basis, named **Accruals Accounting – Accounts for Larger Churches**. Details of all courses may be found at: <https://www.acat.uk.com/training-events/>

Recent news reported by ACAT includes:

- Five recent changes to **charity law**, designed to make life easier for trustees
- The **divestment** by Epworth Investment Management of all oil and gas stocks
- Updated guidance from HMRC for churches claiming **Gift Aid**
- The increasing number of churches raising additional funds through **easyfundraising**

The full stories may be found at: <https://www.acat.uk.com/news/>

Personal News

The **North Western Synod** is sad to report the death of the **Revd Kenneth Hall**, who died on Sunday 23 May 2021.

Kenneth served at: Trinity URC, Bridlington (1957-60); St Andrew’s, Sedgley (1960-66); and Bishopsworth, Bristol (1966-75). We hold in our prayers his wife Harriet and his children Malcolm and Christine.

Situations Vacant



Synod/Trust Finance and Governance Officer East Midlands Synod

Full time – 37.5 hours per week

Annual Salary £35,000 - £40,000

The East Midlands Synod and Trust are seeking a qualified and experienced person for this important role.

Experience in financial management, banking and investments along with the governance needs of the charity are essential.

An application pack can be accessed by emailing **Mrs Chris Willis** on admin@urc5.org.uk or via the Synod website:

<https://urc5.org.uk/content/advert-synodtrust-finance-and-governance-officer>

Closing date for applications: midday on Monday 26 July 2021

Interviews: Wednesday 1 September 2021

Church Regeneration Worker Oxford

Are you being called to help the church grow?

Are you the prayerful, passionate and imaginative person we need to help a small but energetic congregation fulfil its vocation to be the church for all ages at the heart of its community?

Can you help us pioneer new forms of church ministry and community outreach while developing the existing congregation?

The United Reformed Church (Wessex Trust) is seeking to employ a Church Regeneration Worker to be based at Collinwood Road Church, Oxford, from November 2021.

Salary: £25,000 - £27,500 plus 15% employers' pension contribution. 3 years fixed term.

An information pack and application form can be downloaded from <https://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/are-you-being-called-to-help-the-church-grow/> and should be returned to office@urcwessex.org.uk by 12 noon on Wednesday, 23rd June 2021.

There is an occupational requirement that the postholder holds a personal Christian faith, under the Equality Act 2010, Schedule 9, Pt 1. Appointment will be subject to satisfactory DBS and Barred List checks.

For an informal discussion contact Revd. Ray Stanyon on 07890-909488 (dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk)



The
United
Reformed
Church

Content Editor London

Permanent contract, 17.5 hours per week
Salary: £16,365

Do you have experience of writing and producing a monthly or weekly magazine or website?

The busy and thriving Communications team at the United Reformed Church seeks a Content Editor to commission, proofread, sub-edit and write copy for *Reform*, the URC's monthly magazine, and to help with other communications too. You will play a key role in the production of *Reform*, working alongside others to ensure content is delivered, copy adheres to house style and maintaining consistency across a range of high-quality resources produced by the team.

You'll love this job if:

You love to capture and convey a compelling story;
You are a confident, compelling and empathetic communicator, both in written and verbal contexts;
You enjoy working across and with a wide range of communication tools and approaches;
You are well organised and good at multi-tasking;
You want to be a part of producing resources for mission and Christian life.

You will be educated to degree level with an excellent command of English. A clear written style and attention to detail is essential. We can offer you a flexible and friendly work environment with a generous final salary pension scheme.

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.urc.org.uk/vacancies

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Friday 25 June 2021 Interview date: Thursday 15 July 2021



The
United
Reformed
Church

Designated Safeguarding Lead London

Permanent contract, 35 hours per week
Salary: £46,070

Are you a motivated and dedicated professional who has a strong conviction to safeguarding all people?

In this role you will be responsible for continuing the strategic development of safeguarding within the United Reformed Church and for promoting and disseminating a safeguarding culture throughout all Assembly level teams and programmes.

With extensive experience of advising on a range of safeguarding issues, you will have knowledge in safeguarding case management, preferably in the voluntary sector. Your knowledge of best practice and policy concerning issues related to the protection of children and adults at risk will be key to supporting the synods in the delivery of safeguarding procedures. You will be educated to degree level in a relevant field and have excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

We can offer you a flexible and friendly work environment with a generous final salary pension scheme.

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.urc.org.uk/vacancies

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Monday 21 June 2021 Interview date: Tuesday 20 July 2021

This post requires an enhanced certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Is Everybody In?



Saturday 12 June 10.00am-1.00pm

This weekend, **Eastern Synod** extends an invitation to take part in this discussion event considering our intergenerational, intercultural and LGBTQ+ welcome.

Speakers include the **Revd Alex Clare-Young, Karen Campbell, Nicola Grieves** and **Lindsey Brown**.

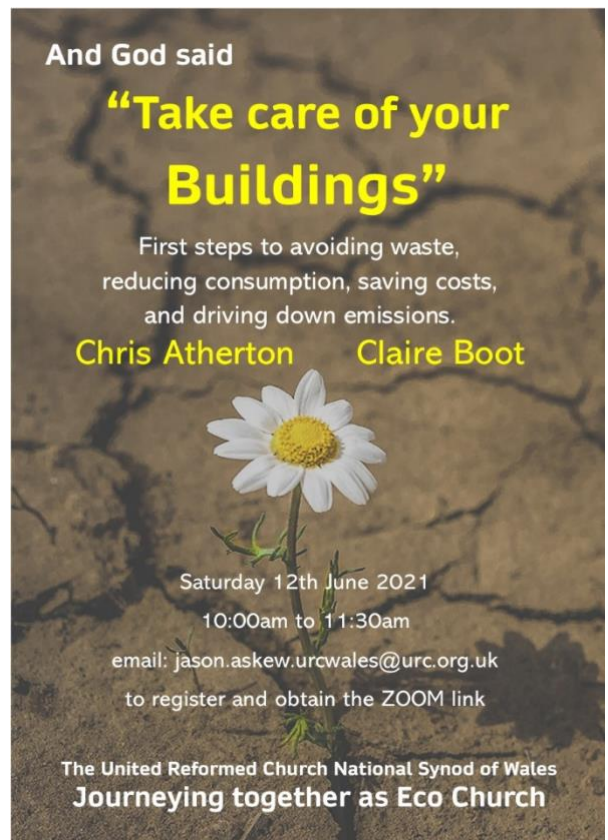
The link to join this event on Zoom is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4048288587>

“Take Care of your buildings”

Saturday 12 June 10.00-11.30am

Also this Saturday, the **National Synod of Wales** invites all those who are interested to take part in this ecological event on Zoom on the morning of Saturday 12 June. Speakers **Chris Atherton** and **Claire Boot** will address what churches can do to avoid waste, reduce consumption, save costs and drive down emissions.

To register and receive the Zoom link, please email: Jason.askew.urcwales@urc.org.uk



URC Buildings Forum

Following the well-attended **URC Buildings Forum** conference held on 19 April 2021, two further events are planned this year.

The next conference takes place on **Wednesday 21 July 2021** from 11.30am to 1.00pm. This will explore the vision and mission context for URC buildings and assets, including whether we need a building to be 'church' in the 21st Century. The speaker will be **Martin Haywood**, the convenor of the Mission Enablers Network and the Southern Synod Mission Officer, and it is hoped to have input from two separate places of worship about how they have creatively used their buildings: one in a rural community and the other in a multi-cultural community. **Please email mission@urc.org.uk to sign up for this event.**

The third and final conference for 2021, on **Thursday 14 October** from 7.00pm to 8.30pm, will focus on environmental issues for church buildings, including **Eco-Church and Eco-Congregation**.

Luther King Centre: Open Online Events



Join us for an hour to explore the possibility of studying with us at Luther King Centre.

Thursday 17 June
7.00 – 8.00pm

Saturday 19 June
10.00 – 11.00am

Maybe you have never considered studying theology. Maybe you have thought about it but never made the decision. Maybe you know you want to deepen your faith or take steps towards ministry. Wherever you are at, come along for an hour and find out what it might mean to be part of the learning community at Luther King Centre.

You will be able to:

- Meet members of the learning community at LKC, including those who teach
- Find out about our site, our library and our ways of learning
- Explore options for study, including on site and online
- Experience what teaching and learning is like at LKC
- Ask questions and discuss possibilities

Simply register by emailing us at learning@lutherking.ac.uk for one of the hour sessions. We will send you a link and all you have to do is log in on the day!

For more information about LKC, go to: <https://www.lutherking.ac.uk/>

Reminders of other forthcoming events

Christians on Ageing Conference Calls



Christians on Ageing's Conference Calls are a series of free Zoom discussions on aspects of Churches' work with and for older people. Early booking is advised by emailing discussion@ccoa.org.uk.

Supporting those who care for us - Tuesday 15 June at 10.30am

The Importance of Faith amongst Black Older Christians - Tuesday 20 July at 10.30am

Older people and spiritual strength in the world of nature - Tuesday 17 August at 10.30am

Rural Ministry Course

Tuesday 15 – Thursday 17 June
OR Tuesday 2 – Thursday 4 November



**Arthur Rank
Centre**

CONFIDENT RURAL CHRISTIANS

King's Park Conference Centre, Northampton

The Arthur Rank Centre's **Rural Ministry Course** is designed for lay and ordained church leaders entering a rural appointment for the first time, and those already in rural ministry who would appreciate a "refresher". Costing £300, this three-day residential programme is held in Northampton and runs from **Tuesday 15 – Thursday 17 June**, repeated from **Tuesday 2 to Thursday 4 November**. For more information, please visit: arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse



Congregational lament and growth: emerging from lockdown

A free online conference on Zoom from Northern College

Friday 25 June (2.00-5.00pm) & Saturday 26 June (9.30am-12.30pm)

OR Mondays 4, 11 & 18 October 7.00-9.00pm

Northern College's free annual conference for Lay Preachers, Worship Leaders and those in church leadership will be offered twice: on the afternoon of Friday 25 and morning of Saturday 26 June, and again on three successive Monday evenings on 4, 11 and 18 October. The sessions are:

Telling the Stories: Old Testament as resilience playbook, led by **Dr Meg Warner**

Sharing the Tears: The Gospels join our weeping, led by the **Revd Dr Rosalind Selby**

Touching the Wounds: Post-traumatic growth and worship, led by the **Revd Dr Adam Scott**

To register, please email: paul.barrett@lutherking.ac.uk

Find us online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.urb5.org.uk/) remains the one-stop shop for all essential information: <https://www.urb5.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 others during the continuing pandemic. 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/>

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/UCzXFUjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. Evening Prayers are also uploaded here. Please subscribe: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

Contacting East Midlands Synod

In view of government guidelines regarding the current pandemic, the **East Midlands Synod Office** building is presently closed. All members of staff continue to work from home: please email them in the usual way. You may continue to use the Office address for any postal business and mail is collected at least once a week. The office number **0115 960 9241** is answered from Monday to Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm and calls will be forwarded as necessary.

Any update to these arrangements will be posted on our website: www.urb5.org.uk

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

Free-to-use photography: green shoot Photo by [Sushobhan Badhai](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next edition: Thursday 24 June 2021

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: modpa@urb5.org.uk and training@urb5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Tuesday 22 June 2021**