

Opening Reflection by Pippa Hodgson

Convenor of the Training and Development Group

In [Christian Aid Week](#), we are all being asked to support the Charity's work as, with their partners, they address some of the effects of the climate crisis and the disproportionate impact it is having on those already living in poverty. This year, the campaign is highlighting [Florence from Kenya](#) who had to walk for six hours a day before **Christian Aid**, working with the community, built an earth dam to provide a local supply of water.

Many churches, across the 41 sponsoring denominations in Britain and Ireland, are raising money and awareness this week to support the work of **Christian Aid**. This month, with others from our church, I am taking part in a collaborative **virtual pilgrimage** around holy places throughout Britain and Ireland. Our daily mileage is recorded and totalled and we receive updates on the places we are 'visiting' and their Christian significance. We started in Nottingham and have, so far, journeyed to Canterbury, up through key places in Scotland and, as I write this, we are making our way across the Irish Sea to Belfast.

This approach to pilgrimage means that every step counts towards the total; everyone's contribution is valued, however large or small. As importantly, we are sharing the journey together and walking in virtual fellowship.

As we all journey out of lockdown, gradually able to travel further afield and to meet up again with friends and family:

- Let us remember, with every step we take, those who have to walk to fetch fuel, food and water or away from places of violence or despair.
- Let us be reminded that we can all play our part in climate change and that every step and decision matters.
- Let us take action to change what we can, however small, and to support the work of those that can make a real difference to communities like Florence's.



JPIC Forum on Food Poverty

The East Midlands Synod's **JPIC** group (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) hosted the second of its periodic **Open Forum** events on Tuesday 20 April, with a focus on the timely subject of **Food Poverty**.

The guest speaker **Paul Morrison** is a member of the national Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) but spoke mainly in his capacity as a Trustee of the **Trussell Trust**. Paul outlined how poverty and inequality had already been growing, with 2.4 million people in the UK classed as vulnerable to hunger even before the Covid-19 pandemic. The temporary increase of £20 to Universal Credit has not prevented a huge increase in hunger since it took hold.

At first it was feared that food banks would not cope with the increased demand, dependent as they often are on older volunteers who had to isolate. Instead, many people – including many churches – stepped up to help, with over 1000 new food banks launched in 2020. However, Paul urged us to heed what it had taken the Trussell Trust 15 years to accept: that if all we do is give out food to those in need, we serve to facilitate an unjust system.

Poverty can only truly be remedied by policy. It was political will that improved the lot of pensioners, now the group least likely to experience hunger: 14% of pensioners live in poverty as opposed to 33% of children. Meanwhile, the current narrative that work is the surest way out of poverty is disproven by the fact that of the 14 million now below the poverty line, 9 million are in work - 3.3m of these in households where both adults are earning. The pandemic has only served to increase wealth inequality.

If our objective is to end hunger, then, we also need to help build communities resilient to hunger – and to campaign against poverty.

Attendees heard details of two projects within our Synod which are addressing food poverty in multiple ways. Derby-based Church Related Community Worker **Vicky Longbone** described how her work distributing food parcels to families on a local basis had now become part of a coordinated city-wide project. Low income and low aspirations were at the root of poverty; the new "Food for Thought" alliance is addressing this with ten Community Shops, but also an advice café where people can access guidance about budgeting, work opportunities etc and be directed to services and resources that may help.



The **Revd Liz Adams** described how **Castle Hill URC** in Northampton had identified food poverty as a mission priority prior to the pandemic, using the delivery of hampers to develop relationships rather than dependency. When Covid-19 hit, they went from supporting 15 families to 100 – which could easily have become unsustainable. Instead, the church has entered into partnership with other faith and secular organisations in the town. The resulting network has been able to pool resources, unlock funding (including a £127k grant from DEFRA), and to supplement food parcels with practical help with form-filling, seeking work and even cooking healthy meals from donated ingredients.

Going beyond the food bank model, then, key components of tackling food poverty include partnership, the signposting of resources, advocacy and empowerment – giving those in poverty a voice.

JPIC hopes to revisit the topic in future. If you would like to receive a fuller account of the meeting, please email Graham Ghaleb on grahamghaleb50@gmail.com.

Your Climate Sunday Service



Climate Sunday

If you are planning a **Climate Sunday Service** for your church, you may find it helpful to look at the inspiring material on the [Climate Sunday website](https://climatesunday.org). In particular, the **Revd David Coleman**, who is the United Reformed Church Green Apostle for Scotland, has prepared valuable worship resources for a complete service.

We do highly recommend looking at this, even if you go on to prepare a service with your own resources.

You can either navigate to climatesunday.org/service-resources and scroll down (quite a long way down), or [click this link](#) to view the document directly. If you would find the Word version more useful then please email Charles.jolly13@btopenworld.com.

Charles Jolly

Green Apostle

On behalf of the JPIC group

Black History Monthly

Reflections on Poetry by Black Writers

Monday 17 May 7.30-8.30pm

The next session in the United Reformed Church (URC's) **Black History Monthly** initiative takes place on 17 May from 7.30-8.30pm.

This month's theme is 'Black Voices Speak Out' and will share and reflect on a selection of poems by Black writers through the ages – from slavery to the present day. The session promises to be poignant, challenging, inspiring and humorous.



Black History Monthly is for everyone in the URC and is just one response to its commitment to journey from being 'not racist' to actively 'anti-racist', adopted by Mission Council in November 2020. For more details, visit the URC's **Legacies of Slavery** webpage: <https://urc.org.uk/our-work/legacies-of-slavery.html>

Rural Ministry Course

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

King's Park Conference Centre, Northampton



Arthur Rank
Centre

CONFIDENT RURAL CHRISTIANS

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". The three-day residential programme employs a variety of approaches, including practical sessions, group work and workshops led by practitioners, and includes sessions on understanding rural contexts, mission and growth, leadership, farming and work with children and young people in the countryside.

The course is held in Northampton and runs from **Tuesday 15 – Thursday 17 June**, repeated from **Tuesday 2 to Thursday 4 November**. Participant fees of £300 include a year's subscription to the Centre's magazine **Country Way**. For more information, please visit: arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse

Training for Trustees



ACAT, the **Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers**, has opened bookings for a new series of its popular **Trustee Training for Churches**. This course is carefully devised to equip trustees with the skills they need to meet their legal and moral obligations and gives a helpful overview of church and charity governance.

The first of two sessions is on Monday 24 May from 6.00-8.00pm, via Zoom. For further information, and to book, please see: <https://www.acat.uk.com/product/trustee-training-for-churches-session-1-2/>

Children's and Youth Work

New Resource for Holiday Clubs



Get your detective hat and coat on, grab your magnifying glass: there are some cases to solve and Supersleuths need you!

Picking up the URC Children's and Youth Work theme for 2021, Heroes and Villains, the Children & Youth Work team have come together to write their **first-ever holiday club programme**. Packed with Bible stories, drama, prayer, games, activities, snack ideas, original songs and much much more, Supersleuths is set in a 1950s Detective Agency and explores the stories of seven Bible characters from both the Old and New Testament.

The pack is accompanied with:

- Suggestions on how to adapt the material for use over Zoom as well as face-to-face and some suggestions for outdoors
- A pick-and-mix selection of ideas with suggestions of how these might be used for a holiday club lasting a week, 2 days or even 1 day
- Appendices on how to extend the material for 11-14 year olds, for an intergenerational gathering, for a vintage holiday club
- Guidelines on setting up and ideas for decoration
- Advertising material
- Video material on our YouTube channel for use over Zoom or for churches where volunteers are less experienced/confident in story-telling and drama
- Reflections for leaders

The material will be available to download from urc.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth from 1 June

Grants to support Holiday Clubs

Children's and Youth Work Committee has extended its small grants scheme to encourage churches running a holiday club. Grants of £50 or £100 are available to help with the purchase of craft materials, snacks, decorations, games equipment, Zoom licences etc. For more information, and to apply, visit:

<https://urc.org.uk/grants.html>

Final Fridays

Joint Midlands Synods Youth Events

Next date: **Friday 28 May 7.30-9.00pm**



On the final Friday of each month, young people aged 11-25 who are connected in any way with your congregation and related groups are invited to the Joint Midlands Synod Youth events, entitled "**Final Fridays**". These informal evenings have included quizzes, online games and escape room style activities. They are an ideal opportunity for young people to connect with other young people in a low key, friendly and fun environment. Each event is hosted on Zoom and young people can register to attend via the **Eventbrite** booking platform [here](#).

URC Youth re-ASSEMBLED

Each month throughout the year, URC Youth explores a different theme or topic in its series Youth re-ASSEMBLED. This month's theme is Hostile Environments.

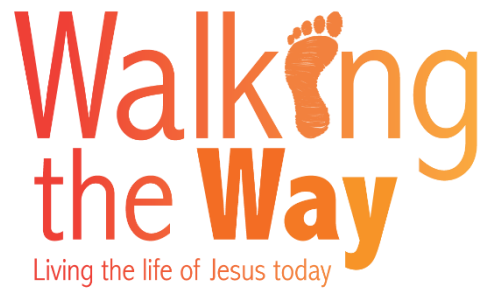
For each theme there will be a range of social media posts, along with [Dialogues](#) (URC Youth's live discussion panel broadcast on YouTube fortnightly), free Zoom events as well as practical ways that people can use to make a difference from the comfort of their own homes.

The programme of events follows on from URC Youth (dis)ASSEMBLED held digitally from 30-31 January after URC Youth made the difficult decision to cancel its Youth Assembly due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.



To find out more and follow this month's theme, simply search for #urcyouth on social channels.

Walking the Way updates



Online discipleship and Hybrid Church

The relationship between life, faith and technology is constantly changing and growing – never more so than in the past year. The Walking the Way **Steering Group** has been hosting sessions about online discipleship, while the URC's **Northerly Synods** also held a recent conference to share wisdom and good practice.

Churches Together in England along with the **Evangelical Alliance** and **HOPE** are considering the development of hybrid forms of church, which combine and maximise physical and online ways of being church.



In this interview from **Talking Hope**, Dallas-based practitioner **Matt Smith** describes his church's next steps after streaming worship: <https://youtu.be/IPx-aQRoL4>

New podcast series

The URC is launching a new podcast, exploring a range of issues about life and faith today. The first series includes Covid-19 a year on, money, climate justice and anti-racism and how we can respond as disciples of Jesus. Walking the Way Project Manager **Simon Peters** co-hosts with **Ann-Marie Nye**, URC Communications Officer. Published fortnightly, the podcast begins later this month: follow the URC on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) for updates.



Conference Calls from Christians on Ageing

Christians on Ageing has issued an invitation to its latest series of Conference Calls – discussions on important issues to anyone interested in the work of the Churches with and for older people. The sessions, on Zoom, are free and are typically fully subscribed: early booking is advised by emailing discussion@coa.org.uk



Christians and hospitals

Tuesday 18 May at 10.30am

How can churches best support older and disabled people and their close family and friends if they have to go into hospital? Chaired by **Marion Shoard**, author of [How to Handle Later Life](#), with presentations by the **Revd Jane Harris** (Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust) and the **Revd Elizabeth Baughen** (Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust).

Supporting those who care for us

Tuesday 15 June at 10.30am

What are the key issues for health and social care staff in our care homes and care at home organisations arising from the pandemic? Presented by **Maureen O'Neill**, Director of Faith in Older People.

The Importance of Faith amongst Black Older Christians

Tuesday 20 July at 10.30am

What are the distinctive ways that many older Black people turn to their Faith to define their identity, shape their day-to-day choices and build their resilience and positive attitude toward life? Presented by **Charles Kwaku-Odoi**, CEO of the Caribbean and African Health Network, working in Greater Manchester and beyond.

Older people and spiritual strength in the world of nature

Tuesday 17 August at 10.30am

In our busy everyday lives, how can we make sure we enjoy the emotional and spiritual benefits of experiencing nature? We are surrounded by the beauty of nature and immersed in its power: but how much do we really 'notice' in our busy everyday lives? Presented by **Barbara Stephens**, CEO of Dementia Pathfinders.

URC Holiday Forum

Zoom social drop-in evening
Saturday 22 May from 7.30pm



HOLIDAY FORUM
faith, fun and fellowship

As a taster ahead of this year's Holiday Forum, there will be a **Zoom social evening** on **Saturday 22 May** from 7.30pm. This is an opportunity to meet Forum friends from all over the country, with time to catch up in breakout rooms and some quiz rounds.

To join on Zoom, click on <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89587854872> or use the Meeting ID 895 8785 4872 (no password is necessary).


Holiday Forum 2021
Saturday 21
– Friday 27 August

The **Holiday Forum** itself is scheduled to return to The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, this August. Parts of the programme will also be streamed online.

As ever it promises a packed week of faith, fun and fellowship. This year's theme is **Living with and loving difference: the challenge of being human in a fractured world.**

Bookings are now being taken, whether you'd like to join in virtually or in person, via the website:

<http://www.urcholidayforum.org.uk/wpsite/booking-form/>



HOLIDAY FORUM 2021
(21-27 AUGUST)

LIVING WITH & LOVING DIFFERENCE

Sadly, we live in a world where the impact of globalisation and social media means that we now know far more about each other than used to be the case, but also conversely, we seem as a human family to be far more divided than ever. Whether on the grounds of 'race', ethnicity, culture, political ideology, class, gender, sexuality, biological determinism etc. humanity seems to have become ever more tribal. We will explore our own identity and that of others.


COME & JOIN US!

We meet at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick. Come for the week, or join our virtual programme on Zoom.


Want to know why it's so good? Listen to what people are saying (<https://vimeo.com/390744130>)

For details, pricing and booking, go to www.urcholidayforum.org.uk.


SEE YOU THERE!



Theme: Living With & Loving Difference



Speaker: Prof Anthony Reddie



Worship Leader: Revd Jane Rowell

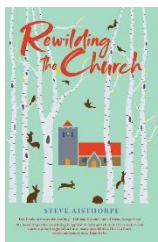
Rewilding the Church: Virtual Book Group

Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm until 26 May

At this week's meeting of our virtual book group exploring "Rewilding the Church", we were honoured to be joined by author **Steve Aisthorpe** himself for free-ranging discussion of the book's genesis and themes.

A recording of the session is available to watch as an unlisted YouTube video:

<https://youtu.be/413Uz6CttU0>



Anyone interested in how God is renewing the church and how we might join in is welcome to join either of the remaining sessions, led by Mission Development Officer the **Revd Robert Bushby**, on **Wednesdays 19 and 26 May**. For the Zoom link, or to find out more, please email **Derek Graham** (Training and Development Officer) on training@urc5.org.uk.

Reminders of other forthcoming events

Constance Coltman: Book Launch

Tuesday 18 May 7.00-8.00pm

Pioneer of women's ordination, **Constance Coleman** is the subject of a new book edited by **Janet Wootton** which celebrates the legacy of her courage and seeks to encourage women still struggling with women's leadership in the church today. To mark the launch of **Constance: Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher**, join contributors to the book, participants from the centenary conference, members of the URC, the Congregational Federation and the Council for World Mission and pioneers from around the world for an hour of worship, poetry, videos and speakers.

To attend the launch, please email mission@urc.org.uk with your name, email address and if appropriate, the church to which you belong or are representing.

A colorful poster for the book launch of 'Constance: Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher'. The poster features a grid of nine portraits of Constance Coleman in various colors. Text on the poster includes: 'The legacy of her courage is a perpetual challenge to the many churches who are yet to embrace the ordination of women. Lydia Neshangwe, Moderator of the Council for World Mission, the first African woman elected into this role.'; 'Join us online for the launch of Constance Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher Edited by Janet Wootton'; 'My prayer is that as you read this book, you too will be influenced, challenged and inspired by the stories of faith and courage to live out your calling and be true to yourself. Yvonne Campbell, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation, the first woman to serve in this role'; 'When a door long barred finally begins to open ... the first one to slip through it quietly is easy to overlook. Constance: Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher is to be commended for shining a timely light on the life and ministry of Constance Coleman. Kathy Galloway, writer and activist, the first woman Leader of the Iona Community'; 'This book is an encouragement for women who are still struggling with women's ordination and leadership. The Revd Najla Kassab, President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the first woman in this role'; '18 May, 2021 7pm-8pm BST (UTC/GMT +1)'; 'Please email mission@urc.org.uk for the link'; 'All are welcome'; 'Videos, Speakers, Poetry, Worship'; 'Constance Coltman - a pioneer of women's ordination'; 'To mark the launch of the new book Constance - Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher, join contributors to the book, participants from the centenary conference, members of the Congregational Federation, the United Reformed Church and the Council for World Mission and pioneers from around the world.'



Communications skills: free workshop series

This series of free workshops, jointly offered by **URC Children's & Youth Work** and **Education & Learning** to help improve communication skills, continues with:

Inclusive worship using signs and symbols - session 1: Thursday 20 May 7.30pm
Inclusive worship using signs and symbols - follow up session: Thursday 17 June 7.30pm
Both led by **Lorraine Webb**

Sharing stories more effectively - session 1: Thursday 27 May 7.30pm
Sharing stories more effectively - follow up session: Thursday 1 July 7.30pm
Both led by **Ann-Marie Nye**

Find out more and book to attend a single workshop, or each pair:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/series-of-workshops-building-skills-confidence-and-capacity-in-comms-registration-144181152709>

The sessions are recorded, and attenders connected with URC churches will have the opportunity to apply for small **grants** (up to £200) to enable the training to be put into practice by purchasing equipment, software or further training.

URC/Pfalz Communion Service for Pentecost (via Zoom)

Sunday 23 May 6.30 pm

Our East Midlands URC Youth representative **Ella Lemon** is amongst those leading worship in a joint service between the URC and its German partner the **Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz**, to be held online on **Friday 23 May** at 6.30pm. In the context of Coronavirus, climate change and changing European relationships are changing, the service asks where the Holy Spirit, who descended on the church at Pentecost, is leading us now?

Pfarrer Martin Henninger and the **Revd Philip Brooks** will preside at the Pentecost communion, while Ella joins Dan Morrell, Katherine Buckland and their German counterparts in leading reflections and prayers, bringing the voice of youth to a service expressing hopes for the future.

The service will be conducted in both English and German, so there is no requirement to be bilingual to attend. To receive the Zoom link, please email carole.sired@urc.org.uk

Ministry with older people: Whole Person Healthcare

Wednesday 26 May 1.00-2.30pm



The Sheffield Methodist District generously shares an open invitation to its next **Ministry with Older People** webinar on **Wednesday 26 May** from 1.00-2.30pm. This webinar is for anyone of any denomination involved in ministry with older people, including volunteers, lay workers and ministers. It will be an opportunity to share experiences, ask questions, and explore new resources and approaches to support you in your ministry in your context.

The guest speaker is the **Revd Jonathan Edwards**, Vice Chair and Advocate for Parish Nursing Ministries UK, and formerly the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Jonathan will outline the **Parish Nursing** approach to caring for people's overall wellbeing, incorporating body, mind and spirit.

Find out more at: <https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/news/events-courses/communities-of-practice/ministry-with-older-people.html>

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 three 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.urch5.org.uk/) remains 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/) 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.urch5.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

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Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: modpa@urch5.org.uk and training@urch5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Tuesday 25 May 2021**