

Opening Reflection by Ron Kenyon

Chair of the East Midlands Synod Trust



One of the joys at this time of year is to drive down Nottingham's University Boulevard when the **rhododendrons** are in bloom. Great swathes of colour – magenta and crimson, pink and white. The difficulty for the driver of course is keeping your eye on the traffic and your speedometer!! – and if you missed them this year, not to worry because they'll be back next year.

Rhododendrons really became popular in Britain during early Victorian times and it was all through one man, **Joseph Hooker**. He was a botanist and an explorer and spent years travelling in Asia and America but returning often to explore The Himalaya mountains, visiting isolated and dangerous places no European had ever seen. He brought back many new flowers, including the rhododendrons which inspired other people to go out and search for more.

You do not need all that information to enjoy the flowers but if it had not been for Joe Hooker we might not have them to enjoy at all. We all build on foundations laid by other people. It is the hard work of people long gone which gives us most of the things we enjoy today. So as you drive along the University Boulevard let us spare a moment of thought for Joe Hooker and his rhododendrons, and then let us thank God the creator, who organised everything in the first place.

Rewilding the Church: Virtual Book Group Starts Soon

Order your discounted copy now to join our Synod Reading Group –

begins **Wednesday 28 April**

What is the future for our churches? How can we connect with more of the people around us? What does God want us to continue doing, to stop doing – or perhaps even to begin?

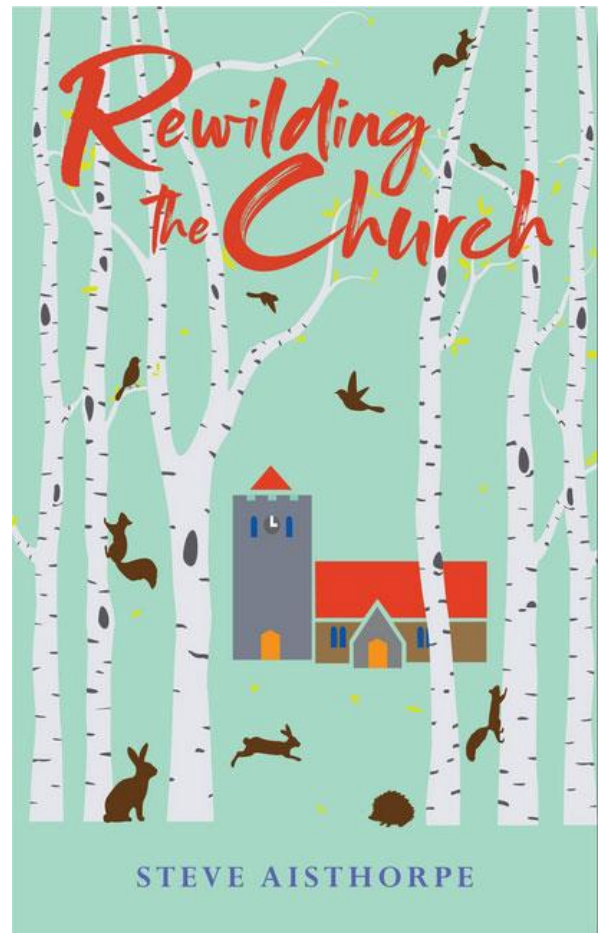
These are pressing questions for many of us, thrown into sharper relief by the Covid-19 pandemic. As restrictions begin to ease, this is a moment to reconsider. You are warmly invited to explore topics such as these in friendly company with our virtual reading group, running on Zoom for five weeks from **Wednesday 28 April**.

We will be working our way through **Steve Aisthorpe's** stimulating book **Rewilding the Church**, which prompted the theme of our recent Synod Meeting. **Aisthorpe** urges us to take heart from the ecological concept of reverting landscapes to their natural state, with “rewilding” becoming a metaphor for our need to simplify and get back to basics, with Jesus Christ at the heart of everything. God is already renewing the Church, he writes: how can we join in?

Over five weekly sessions, our Mission Development Officer the **Revd Robert Bushby** (Mission Development Officer) will lead us in discussing the ideas raised in **Rewilding the Church** two chapters at a time, to consider what this might mean for us in our own churches and settings. The meetings begin at 7.30pm each Wednesday and you can take part in as many or as few of the meetings as you wish. **Steve Aisthorpe** himself has kindly agreed to join the third meeting, on **Wednesday 12 May**, to share in our discussion and take our questions.

The publisher St Andrew's Press has generously arranged a discount for those who would like to take part. Purchase the book at <https://bit.ly/Rewilding21> and you will **save £2** on the cover price. To receive this discount, simply enter **URCREWILD21** in the “voucher code” box (at the Shopping Basket stage) before proceeding to the online checkout. The discount offer ends on 30 April 2021.

Everyone with an interest in the church's future is invited to take part. To find out more, and to receive the Zoom joining details, please **email Derek Graham** (Training and Development Officer) on training@urc5.org.uk.



This Monday: Meeting for Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders

Monday 19 April 2021, 7.30-9.00pm

All **worship leaders and lay preachers** in the East Midlands Synod are invited to a networking meeting on the evening of **Monday 19 April**, led by our Lay Preaching Commissioner **Mark Hodgson**.

This will be an opportunity to share experiences and mutual support as we consider with hope what worship may look like post-lockdown. It will include a briefing on the latest national developments, training opportunities, mentoring and worship resources for forthcoming times in the church year, with guest speaker **Charles Jolly** talking about the **Season of Worship** and associated materials.

To register, please email **Derek Graham**, Training & Development Officer, on training@urc5.org.uk.

This Tuesday: JPIC Forum on Food Poverty

Tuesday 20 April 7.30-8.30pm



Free for all to attend, this open forum event hosted by the Synod's **Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation** group (JPIC) will focus on the timely subject of **food poverty**. The hour-long meeting takes place via Zoom this coming **Tuesday, 20 April** at 7.30pm.

The current pandemic has forced ever more households into hardship and in response, many churches have stepped up their support – for example by running, staffing or helping to supply a food bank in their locality. Here is an opportunity to hear from church members who have

responded creatively to the food poverty around them, to compare notes between the situations of different churches – and to consider together whether needs may change as the pandemic eases and restrictions on work and movement are gradually lifted. What might God be calling us to do in this next phase?

You are warmly invited to join the JPIC team and guest speakers for a lively discussion of food poverty and the wider issues that surround it.

Please email **Tom Veitch** on tomveitch20@gmail.com for further details and to receive the Zoom joining details.

Earth Day

Thursday 22 April

A challenge on behalf of JPIC

Then God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of the earth, and every tree yielding seed: it shall be food for you . . . I have given every green plant for food: and it was so.'

One of our most pleasant duties as humans is to enjoy 'Nature'. We are part of God's wonderful Creation, so spending time caring for plants and animals (including protecting wild spaces for them) is healing for our bodies, our emotions and our souls. Never feel guilty about time spent walking the hills (now that Covid restrictions are being relaxed) or tending flowers on the windowsill!

Sadly, much of Creation, including much of humanity, is under stress. One reason, which we do not like facing up to, is that vast areas (often stolen from rainforests) grow plants to feed meat and dairy animals. But let's be positive: God, in God's mercy, has inspired scientists and technologists to produce meat-alternatives that are tasty and nutritional. Let's celebrate that on **Earth Day** (and as often as you like!).



Simplest is 'Quorn and two veg' (but check that the Quorn product does not include egg-white). Or select from the vegan cabinet in the supermarket. To be a little more adventurous, substitute Quorn or TVP 'mince' for meat in your favourite cottage-pie or bolognaise (I just add lightly fried onion, TetraPak tomatoes and flavouring). You may need to visit a health-food shop for the TVP – but as a bonus it should be cheaper than meat. Or, if you would really like to push the boat out and do not already possess a vegan cookbook, there are many simple vegan recipes online.

A grace: Bountiful Creator, thank you for your wonderful variety of plants and for the ingenuity of people in developing and preparing them. May this food nourish our bodies and your Word nourish our souls. Amen.

Charles Jolly

Green Apostle

O God who longs to make us whole:

a hymn for the NHS and Key Workers

As churches begin to plan a return to public worship, some may wish to schedule services of thanksgiving or celebration for everything the NHS, key workers and volunteers have done for us throughout the public health crisis.

The **Revd Michael Forster**, one of our retired East Midlands Synod ministers and a member at Loughborough URC, generously offers the following hymn words set to the tune Kingsfold (which may be found at *Rejoice & Sing* no 201).

Michael originally wrote this hymn for a 1998 service at Leicester Cathedral, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the NHS, but has reworked and expanded it with a new passage (verse 3) to give thanks not only for those in healthcare but for all key workers.

1

**O God who longs to make us whole in body, spirit, mind,
we praise you for the hopes and dreams you share with humankind:
for those in pow'r whom you inspired to share the nation's wealth,
that rich and poor alike might know security and health.**

2

**We give you thanks for those who strive that knowledge might increase;
for all in office, ward or home whose efforts never cease;
for those who give of wealth or self, who care or who campaign,
and all who bravely watch and wait to share your people's pain;**

3

**for those in countless walks of life who daily work and strive
to keep each other safe and well, and help the weak to thrive;
for those who go beyond the call in myriad other ways,
and keep alive the light of hope in dark and cheerless days.**

4

**O give us grace to trust your love when hope remains concealed,
to watch and pray beside the ones who are not swiftly healed.
And grant us faith, when death itself provides its own release,
to trust in your undying love to give them perfect peace.**

5

**Give us, O God, your loving zeal to comfort, heal and save,
to care for one another 'from the cradle to the grave'.
Then north to south, and east to west, let love and hope extend,
until the universe is whole and justice knows no end.**

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Michael's hymn "In glad and sad remembrance", suitable for memorial services for those who have died in the course of the pandemic, may be found in the East Midlands Synod e-letter of 17 September 2020: <https://www.urc5.org.uk/content/emurce-letter-327-17th-september-2020>

Around the East Midlands



The **Revd Jane Wade**, minister at Abington Avenue and Paulerspury and our Deputy Moderator, is supporting the [VaccinAid](#) campaign, which aims to “give the world a shot” by funding **UNICEF** to deliver two billion vaccines around the world by the end of 2021. Jane and her daughter plan to walk or run at least 10,000 steps a day for two months to raise money toward the appeal.

Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** writes: “Jane is among those who have known the personal cost of Covid-19 through

the death of her husband, Mark, last year. She has also been an inspiration to many of us through her embodiment of faith and confidence in God. It is a pleasure to commend her fundraiser - for such a great cause. Friends across our Synod may like to make a donation - perhaps in memory of our own loved ones.”



Jane’s fundraiser can be found on Facebook at:

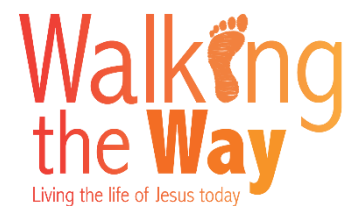
<https://www.facebook.com/donate/539071207076537/277359630603347/>

Online Discipleship Discussion Session

Thursday 29 April 2.00-3.30pm

In order to meet demand, **Walking the Way** is offering a further Zoom session dedicated to discussion of online discipleship, to consider the following questions:

- How has online technology helped/hindered/ affected (or not) your church during lockdown?
- Are there any lessons which our churches should take about online technology beyond this time?
- What does being a whole-of-life disciple of Jesus mean to you in online spaces?
- What support could the **Walking the Way** steering group offer to your work in this area?



This session is open to all. The Zoom space will be opened on **Thursday 29 April from 2.00 to 3:30pm**, including breakout rooms for anyone who would like to engage in deeper conversation.

To register for this session, please e-mail wtw@urc.org.uk

Constance Coltman: Book Launch

Tuesday 18 May 7.00-8.00pm

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 Coltman.

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.

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

Family and Youth Ministry

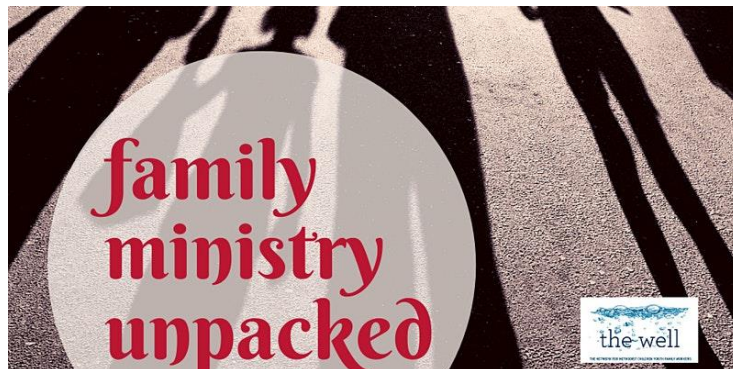
Final Fridays – a Monthly Joint Midlands Synod Youth Event



Friday 30 April is the next opportunity in the **Final Fridays** series for young people to connect and have fun together, on the last Friday of each month and co-hosted by Young Adults from URC Youth in both the East Midlands and West Midlands Synods. It is open to all young people included in the URC Youth age range (11-25 years), although a consent/permission form will be needed for those under the age of 18 if their local congregation does not already hold one. Young people can join and participate as individuals or household groups, or even as a youth group “trip” with a leader.

For more information and to arrange to join, please contact **Richard Knott** via cydo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk. You can also register at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/final-fridays-joint-midlands-synod-urc-youth-event-tickets-146537863695>

Family Ministry Unpacked – an online course in intergenerational ministry



The **Family Ministry Unpacked** course, open to all with an interest in **family and intergenerational ministry**, continues fortnightly on Tuesday evenings from 7.00-9.00pm:

- Tuesday 27 April **Seasons of Family Life**
- Tuesday 11 May **Family Relationships and Wellbeing**
- Tuesday 25 May **Intergenerational Ministry**
- participation in the Intergenerate Conference or guided self-learning
- Tuesday 8 June **Faith at Home**

Find details and sign up at:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/family-ministry-unpacked-tickets-145975076383?fbclid=IwAR0qcOuhFFIbl_PL6qgm2wFbJNGINUecSxGnq2MsOQI5I5YFM0zML3ekqU

News from the URC



The Revd Lythan Nevard has been nominated to be the next Moderator of Eastern Synod.

Lythan was a member of the URC's Ginger Group in the 1980s, a group of young people that visited churches around the country and led a variety of church related projects, based at Yardley Hastings here in the East Midlands Synod. She has served as a minister in Hartlepool, Romford, Brixham and Babbacombe, and most recently at the Cornerstone ecumenical project in Cranbrook, Exeter.

Lythan said: "The Holy Spirit has led me on many adventures, and I am both delighted and awed that the next one is as Moderator of Eastern Synod. I'm really looking forward to working with the churches and Ministers of the Synod and finding out how we can grow in discipleship and serve God's kingdom together."

The URC has expressed its sadness at the death on Friday 9 April of **HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh**, and published liturgical resources for use by churches and individuals to help mark his passing. These include suggested readings, a reflection and prayer and can be found at:

<https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3787-the-death-of-hrh-prince-philip-the-duke-of-edinburgh>

URC European Partnership

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

URC/Pfalz Theological Consultation (via Zoom)

Thursday 16 - Friday 17 September 2021

The URC/Pfalz Partnership also invites anyone with an interest in sharing fellowship and theology to attend a virtual conference on **16 & 17 September**. Around 20 volunteers from the URC are sought and there is no requirement to be a German speaker, a minister or a theologian to attend, only an interest in the planned themes:

- Partnerships between the churches in the post-Brexit period
- The Church in Covid times
- The New Normal
- How Covid has changed perspectives on Communion, Worship and Fellowship

To register your interest in taking part in the Theological Consultation, please email carole.sired@urc.org.uk

Personal News

It is with great sadness that we report the deaths of the following retired URC ministers. We remember their families and friends in our prayers.

Formerly of our own Synod, the **Revd Dr William McGuigan**, known as Bill, died on Sunday 5 December 2020 in the United States of America. Bill served at Toller URC, Kettering (1965-75) and Friary URC, West Bridgford (1975-c.1980) before becoming pastor at Calvary Presbyterian Church in Riverside, California. We are grateful to Janet and Alan Thompson for bringing Bill's death to our attention, along with an obituary available online: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/pe/obituary.aspx?n=william-mcguigan&pid=197284109>

Formerly of the Northern Synod, the **Revd Rhona Jones** died on Tuesday 13 April 2021, also in the United States of America. Following a first ministry in Atlanta, Georgia (1983-87), Rhona served the Northern Synod at: Chester-le-Street (1987-96); Bishop Auckland (1996-99); as Director of the North East Ordination Course (1996-99); and at Wideopen (1999-2001).

Reminders of forthcoming events

'Building for the Future'

A Zoom conference, for all interested parties, to consider strategies for churches and church buildings

19th April 3pm-4.30pm



The **Revd Dr John Bradbury**, URC General Secretary, is the keynote speaker at this conference from the [URC Buildings Forum](#), to be held via Zoom on **Monday 19 April** from 3.00-4.30pm. Please email mission@urc.org.uk by 16 April to register, stating which church you represent.

2040: free film screening for Earth Day

Thursday 22 April 7.00pm

Approach the future of our planet and children with hope, in [this feature documentary](#) showing how we have all the solutions we need already in our grasp to mitigate the effects of climate change. **Global Sleaford** kindly invites anyone in the East Midlands Synod to join their online screening of 2040 on Thursday 22 April, to mark this year's Earth Day.



To accept this invitation and book your tickets, free of charge, visit:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/global-sleaford-2040-screening-event-tickets-144035741781>

The last in the current series of **free Zoom webinars** about each of the **Stepwise** streams focuses on **Faith-filled Confidence** and takes place on **Tuesday 27 April** from **7.00-8.00pm**.



To register, and learn how **Faith-filled Confidence** might help you develop your own discipleship, please email stepwise@urc.org.uk.

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



Social media for beginners: Thursday 29 April 7.30pm
Improve your social media: Thursday 13 May 7.30pm
Both led by **Oli Deeks**

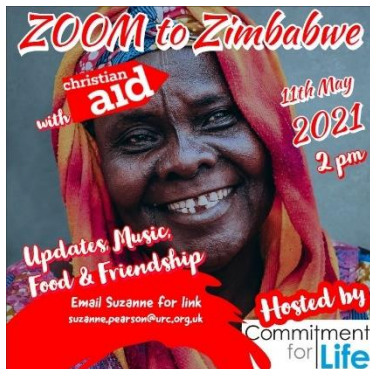
Inclusive worship using signs and symbols - session 1: Thursday 20 May 7.30pm
Inclusive worship using signs and symbols - follow up session: Thursday 17 June 7.30pm
Both led by **Lorraine Webb**

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.



Zoom to Zimbabwe for Christian Aid Week

Tuesday 11 May 2.00pm

To mark Christian Aid Week, **Commitment for Life** is holding a "Zoom to Zimbabwe" on Tuesday 11 May at 2.00pm.

Organised in partnership with Christian Aid, this offers an afternoon of updates, music, fellowship and more. To obtain the Zoom link, please email Suzanne Pearson: suzanne.pearson@urc.org.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. However, 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

CCL1067405

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Food bank by Joel on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/)

Next edition: Thursday 29 April 2021

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 27 April 2021**