

Opening Reflection by Mark Hodgson

Lay Preaching Commissioner

News, change, significant difficulties, a new creation, celebrations and GOOD news



I am writing this in early September as much of the country (young or old!) starts a new “term” and we all move gradually into autumn. We often restart matters each year (the new Christian year starts again at the end of November 2021, of course) and we are always moving forward! It is a fact of life that we progress. We are a pilgrim people – always looking for new pastures to build the Kingdom of God. We are a uniting and reforming church and change is a good thing. It is to be welcomed and celebrated, although it can be a little daunting. At a time when much and difficult change has been forced upon us by precautions to deter the spread Covid virus, we may fondly wish for a return to “the way things were” but I believe it is dangerous to think like that because we have been moved and the move may just have been God-directed. I do not wish to belittle the difficulties faced and being faced by our churches because they are significant and horrible in certain circumstances but things are new – a new creation, perhaps. We are a new creation, in Christ. What good news!

As Lay Preaching Commissioner, I celebrate unashamedly at the recent success of a new Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher in our synod (the last who has gone through the Training for Learning and Service route) and who will be presented with a certificate and to the representatives at the next Synod meeting in October. The final months of the course have been seriously disrupted by the pandemic and this is a significant achievement. More good news.

Thinking of new terms and moving ahead, I also welcome the great news that the brand new method of training our Lay Preachers is about to commence at Northern College. This has been developed in an extremely short time. We often criticise our denomination for its slow processes but this new course has

emerged following a decision at General Assembly earlier this year. Ministries and Training at Church House in London and Northern College in Manchester have worked very hard and set up a new creation in next to no time. I celebrate both this new course and that three of our people are joining the first cohort to study for two years to become Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers. May God be with them in this time of change and development. At a time when more and more, the joy of leading worship in our churches is falling (that is an autumn reference not a criticism) to the laity, this is really good news!

I was suddenly required to take a funeral a week ago due to illness – a phone call in the morning and leading services in the afternoon. That was a big change to the day I had planned. I read words of comfort written by the minister who had originally arranged to take the service. “We come together today to celebrate and give thanks for a life shared with us,” and later, “Jesus’ cross declares God’s love to be without limit; his resurrection declares that death is overthrown. By his victory we are assured of the promise that You will never leave us or forsake us; that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, can separate us from Your love, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What everlasting good news!

So may grace and love and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all now and always.
Amen

Welcome Churches Emergency Afghan Fund

The charity [Welcome Churches](#) has launched an [Emergency Afghan Fund](#) in response to the unfolding crisis of men, women and children evacuated for their safety following the withdrawal of Western forces from Afghanistan last month.



The U.K. government has responded to the plight of the Afghan allies it was able to evacuate by offering them refuge. Typically, they have arrived without adequate clothing or basic possessions and have been separated from their extended family. Many are being housed in temporary accommodation with families split into different rooms and no place to cook or prepare food. The majority of those arriving cannot speak English but want to learn the language and some (including small children) are arriving wounded and traumatised. It is impossible to imagine the feelings of loss, fear and isolation that these families are experiencing at this time as they face a future full of questions and uncertainty.

Due to a chronic shortage of appropriate social housing, families are expected to face many months in temporary accommodation and challenges with accessing employment and education. Local initiatives are being launched to offer practical support with local churches providing warm clothing, shoes, toys and baby essentials, as well as helping the new arrivals access urgent healthcare and dentistry.



Donations to the Emergency Afghan Fund will be used to support mental health and well-being, helping Afghan arrivals to access support and services – and to provide training to local churches to help ensure a good, cross-cultural welcome. To find out more, and to support this work, please visit: <https://welcomechurches.org/donate/>

Induction of the Revd Craig Muir

Saturday 18 September at 2.30pm

The Elders and members of **Loughborough URC** and **Melton Mowbray with Freeby URC** look forward to welcoming guests to the Induction of the **Revd Craig Muir** into both churches and as a **Transitional Minister** for the East Midlands Synod.

Craig's Induction takes place this Saturday, 18 September at 2.30pm at **Loughborough URC**. The attendance list has now reached the building's safe capacity, but the service may also be followed on Zoom by clicking on this link at 2.30pm on Saturday:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89752441225?pwd=UG1QemwxOS81K1BRZUNaVGllb0ZRZz09>

Meeting ID: 897 5244 1225

Passcode: 735259

If you have already registered to attend in person, the Elders of LURC and MURC ask you to note the following precautions to ensure that everyone remains safe in the context of rising Covid infections:

- **You are requested to take a lateral flow test before you attend the service.**
- Sanitiser will be available throughout the building on entry to all the rooms.
- You are advised to wear a mask during the Church service and as you move to another area for refreshments afterwards.
- Inside your order of service, you will find a slip to fill in your contact details: please complete this and place it in a box on leaving the church.
- All rooms will be very well ventilated.
- Refreshments will now be served in two rooms downstairs as well as the upstairs hall.
- All food is individually boxed, special diets are catered for on request.
- Please take your time leaving the church: there will be plenty of food!
- There will be a one way system in operation in the upstairs hall.

Loughborough URC is located in Frederick Street, LE11 3BH. Please be aware that parking in the Church car park is limited and only for pre-booked spaces. Some car parking will be available at the **C of E School on William Street, LE11 3BY**, a short walk from the church. There is also a pay and display car park on Granby Street.

Stewards at the Church will direct you if you are unfamiliar with the area. Please allow extra time for this and share transport if possible. Thank you for your co-operation.

Hilary Roythorne

Church Secretary

Enquirers' Event

Saturday 2 October 10.00am-2.00pm



What is God asking of **YOU?**



Ministry Enquirers' Event
to help you think about God's call to Worship Leading, Lay Preaching,
Ministry with children and young people, the Ministry of Word and
Sacraments, Church Related Community Work or Chaplaincy.

Enquirers' Event

Saturday 2nd October 2021

10am - 4pm on Zoom

Contact **ministries@urc.org.uk**

to register and get programme details

Finance and Governance Officer for the Synod

We are delighted to announce that following a recruitment process **Donna Varley** has been appointed for the new role of **Finance and Governance Officer** for the Synod. This role has been created largely in response to the increased demands placed on the Synod to comply with legislative and regulatory requirements. The role holds senior level responsibility and accountability primarily for finance and governance, as well as working for the Trust.

We are delighted that Donna has been offered and accepted this role. Donna has worked as a contracted book-keeper for the Synod for many years and brings her experience of the workings of the Synod as well as extensive experience of accounting and management. She is dedicated and efficient and we look forward to welcoming her as a full-time member of the Synod Team. Donna starts her new role for the Synod on 1st November. Welcome, Donna!

Camilla Veitch

Synod Clerk

Watch the Nations' Climate Sunday Service

The **Nations' Climate Sunday Service** on Sunday 5 September marked the culmination of the Climate Sunday services already held this year by over 1600 churches in Britain and Ireland. The service was hosted at Glasgow Cathedral, in the heart of the city where the critical **COP26** UN Climate Talks will take place this November.

Unfortunately on the day there were some technical difficulties with the streaming of this service, but the service can now be watched online at <https://youtu.be/mAMGVkVRJmc> . It contains inspiring contributions from a wide range of churches and groups.



COP26 is only weeks away and it is important to keep up the pressure. See the Christian Aid website for suggested actions: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/engage-your-mp-cop26>

The YCCN Relay to COP26 in Chesterfield



Walkers prepare to leave Hucknall on Friday 3 September

“We are all in the same storm but we are not all in the same boat”

Some 20 people, from teenagers to over 80s, were welcomed to a climate change rally in Chesterfield town centre on Saturday 4 September after walking 11 miles from Huthwaite in Nottinghamshire. They had covered a stage of the **Young Christian Climate Network** Relay, a walk from the **G7** meeting in Cornwall in July to **COP26** in Glasgow in November. They had been joined the previous day by East Midlands Synod Moderator, the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke**, on the stretch from Hucknall to Huthwaite.

On Saturday’s leg the **Revd Paul King**, the Methodist Chair of Christians Together for Chesterfield, was taking part. That afternoon they were welcomed by the Mayor of Chesterfield, **Councillor Glenys Falconer** and her Consort and husband Keith, both members of **Rose Hill URC**. Chesterfield MP **Toby Perkins** was there to voice his support for the cause of climate justice and the Borough Council Cabinet member for Climate Change, **Councillor Amanda Serjeant**, told the rally of Chesterfield’s commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030. In the evening, walk leaders were welcomed to **St Andrew’s URC** for a meal and accommodation.



Synod Moderator the Revd Geoffrey Clarke with walk leader Tim Niblett



Saturday’s walkers in Tibshelf

On Sunday morning new walkers turned up at the church for breakfast and to join the Relay. Retired URC minister the **Revd Don Nichols** led prayers on the theme of pilgrimage for about 15 people in preparation for that day's walk to Sheffield.

The YCCN relay of walkers are carrying a message to COP26, and to everyone they meet along the way:

We are calling upon the UK Government to:

- 1. Reinstate the foreign aid budget to pre-COVID levels.**
- 2. Secure agreement from rich countries to double the commitment of \$100bn a year for climate finance.**
- 3. Collaborate with other governments and international organisations to develop a new regulated climate loss and damage mechanism which not only saves lives but livelihoods.**
- 4. Push for the debts of the world's poorest countries to be cancelled so they can better confront the climate crisis and other urgent priorities.**



Among those at the rally welcoming the walkers to Chesterfield are Toby Perkins MP (left), Mayor Glenys Falconer and her Consort Keith

The Relay demonstrated the extraordinary commitment of YCCN to engage the support of churches of all denominations and the wider community on a walk of over 1000 miles, zigzagging across the country from Cornwall to Glasgow. By the time the Relay reached Sheffield, the organisers calculated that over 1000 volunteers had taken part and there will be many more as the Relay progresses to Glasgow, using footpaths, bridleways and leisure trails, sleeping on church hall floors, relying on local people for meals, accommodation and support all the way.

As they said: "In years to come, we want the UK churches to look back on 2021 and say, "we did not sit at home while unjust decisions were made on our doorstep, we set sail towards a just future". We are proud that churches and members of the URC in East Midlands Synod were inspired to take part.

Helen Lidgett

St Andrew's URC, Chesterfield



Walkers after the prayer breakfast at St Andrew's URC, Chesterfield

Tune In to Creation



In the run-up to COP26, the URC's **Eastern Synod** is holding a series of sessions on climate justice throughout the month of October. These will take place on **Zoom**: please email training@urceastern.org.uk for the joining details.

Still available to watch is our own Synod's meeting on COP26 and divestment from fossil fuels arranged by the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation group (JPIC). This can be found on the **East Midlands Synod** [YouTube channel](#) at:

https://youtu.be/MgL_rjS0TS0

Joint Climate Change Statement by World Church Leaders

Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and **Archbishop Justin Welby** have come together to urge everyone to play their part in "choosing life" for the future of the planet.



In an unprecedented joint statement, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion have jointly called on people to pray, in this Christian season of creation, for world leaders ahead of the COP26 Conference this November. The statement reads:

"We call on everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to endeavour to listen to the cry of the earth and of people who are poor, examining their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the earth which God has given us."

The joint declaration issues a clear warning – “Today, we are paying the price...Tomorrow could be worse” – and concludes that, “This is a critical moment. Our children’s future and the future of our common home depend on it.”

The three leaders also spoke against injustice and inequality, saying, “We stand before a harsh justice: biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions, since we have greedily consumed more of the earth’s resources than the planet can endure. But we also face a profound injustice: the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the least responsible for causing them.”

The statement calls on people to:

- Pray for world leaders ahead of COP26.
- For individuals: To make meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the planet, working together and taking responsibility for how we use our resources.
- For those with far-reaching responsibilities: To choose people-centred profits and lead the transition to just and sustainable economies.

Read the full statement at: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sites/abc/files/2021-09/Joint%20Statement%20on%20the%20Environment.pdf>

Exhibition: Beyond the Mayflower



Invitation to a Private View:

Thursday 23 September 5.00-7.00pm

Nottingham Lakeside Arts has invited us to share an invitation to the opening of its new exhibition, **Beyond the Mayflower**. The exhibition will commemorate the sailing of the Mayflower in 1620 but will also look at what happened to those people who chose not to sail to the New World, exploring 17th-century religious history in Nottinghamshire and the foundation of nonconformist congregations after 1689. The exhibition features material relating to the former Castle Gate Congregational Church in Nottingham (now incorporated in St Andrew’s with Castle Gate URC).

If you would like to attend the opening, please email: mss-library@nottingham.ac.uk .



Beyond the Mayflower continues until **Sunday 16 January** at the Weston Gallery, Nottingham Lakeside Arts, and admission is free. For details of the exhibition, mounted in conjunction with Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham, visit: <https://www.lakesidearts.org.uk/exhibitions/event/5477/beyond-the-mayflower.html>

Christians on Ageing webinar

Wednesday 29 September 10.15am-4.00pm



In lieu of its cancelled annual Conference in Sheffield, [Christians on Ageing](#) offers a free Webinar on Zoom on **Wednesday 29 September** from 10.15am to 4.00pm. The day will include topics including:

- **Prison when you are old**
with extracts from a new play *Back Door Parole* presented by **Journeyman Theatre Company**
- **Music as therapy in dementia**
featuring **Kathryn Rowland** from All in Sound and **Barbara Stephens** from Dementia Pathfinders
- **Dying, death and assisted dying**
with retired Methodist minister **Graham Hawley** and **James Woodward**, Principal of Sarum College

To book your free place please email: treasurercco@gmail.com



You can also catch up on **Christians on Ageing's** series of **Conference Calls** on all these topics and more:

- Older people and spiritual strength and the world of nature
- The importance of faith amongst Black older Christians
 - Supporting care home staff and care-at-home staff
 - Christians and hospitals
 - Valuing the narratives of older people
- Are we dispirited? Older Christians and mental health

A full report on each of the Conference Calls can be found via:

<https://christiansonageing.org.uk/conference-call-2/>

Reminders of Forthcoming Events

Neurodiversity in the URC

Monday 27 September 7.00pm



All people who identify as neurodiverse and are connected to the URC are invited to an online event on **Monday 27th September** at 7.00pm. This will be an opportunity for neurodiverse people associated with the URC to share stories and experiences, hopes and dreams for how the URC might be more inclusive and support a celebration of neuro-diversity. For more information, and to book a free place, please visit: [Towards Appreciating Neuro-diversity in the URC Tickets, Mon 27 Sep 2021 at 19:00 | Eventbrite](#).

'Neurodiverse/neurodivergent' means having a way of thinking that differs from the norm. It is a developing field, but is currently understood to include ADHD, Autism, Dyspraxia, and Dyslexia. For the purposes of this event, we welcome all who self-identify as being neurodiverse/neurodivergent. If you would like more information about neurodiversity, please visit:

<https://exceptionalindividuals.com/neurodiversity/> or contact the **Revd Alex Clare-Young** at alex.clareyoung@gmail.com

Shaping Our Everyday Prayer

Wednesday 22 September 2.30-5.30pm



Are you seeking to grow in your prayer life? Looking for creative approaches to prayer in worship? The **Joint Liturgical Group of Great Britain (JLG)** offers Shaping Our Everyday Prayer, a free Zoom conference on the afternoon of **Wednesday 22 September**. Leaders **Fr. David Birchall** and the **Revd Peter Gardner** will explore how to enhance our ways of seeing and transform our everyday prayer, both as individuals and as worshipping communities.

For more information, visit www.jlg.org.uk. JLG encourages sharing of the **Zoom** link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89501586685>

There is no registration fee, but donations will be accepted on the day, for the costs of the day and JLG's on-going work.

Personal News

It is with great sadness that we bring news of the deaths last weekend (11-12 September) of the following retired ministers, who both resided within the Eastern Synod. We give thanks to God for all that He achieved through their lives and ministries.

The **Revd Basil Bridge** served a number of churches within the **East Midlands Synod**. Basil served at: Knowle, Warwickshire (1951-55); Bond Street, Leicester (1955-67); Abbots Road, Leicester (1955-74); Stamford & Bourne (1976-89); and Harrold (1989-94). Basil's wife Muriel died earlier this year. Our thoughts and prayers are with their family.

The **Revd John Gardiner** served: in the Bowland Group (1966-72); at Staplehurst & Sutton Valance (1971-75); West Cliff, Whitby & Robin Hood's Bay (1976-78); Hampton Park, Hereford (1980-85); Halesowen & Blackheath (1985-92); Great Baddow, Danbury & Howe Green (1992-99) and North Avenue, Chelmsford (1993-99); and in the Chelmsford Group (1999-2003). Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and family.

New CTE Presidents Take Up Office

Churches Together in England's incoming Orthodox and Pentecostal & Charismatic Presidents have signed the [Presidents' Covenant](#) as they started their new roles.



Archbishop Nikitas (*above left*) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Diocese of Thyateira and Great Britain) and **Bishop Tedroy Powell** (*above right*), leader of the pentecostal Church of God of Prophecy, met with their fellow CTE Presidents at Lambeth Palace.

CTE is represented by [six Presidents](#) from the major traditions of its [51 National Member Churches](#). They meet regularly to discuss matters concerning the churches in England, and together seek to serve as a sign of our unity. The Archbishop of Canterbury, **Justin Welby**, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal **Vincent Nichols**, and **Rev Dr Hugh Osgood** the Moderator of the Free Churches Group also hold this role. (The Fourth Presidency is currently "[not enacted](#).")

Situations Vacant



Re-Advertisement*

Designated Safeguarding Lead

**Permanent contract, 35 hours per week
Salary: Circa 50,000**

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 or equivalent in a relevant field and have excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

We can offer you a flexible work environment with hybrid working from Church House in London and from home.

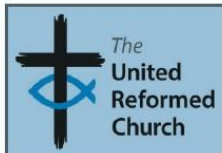
If you are interested in working for us and can meet the above requirements, please contact us/see our website for an application form (noting that we do not accept CVs):

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 8 October 2021

Interview date: Tuesday 9 November 2021

**Previous applicants need not apply. This post requires an enhanced certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.*



Minister for Digital Worship

**Full time, Home-based
Seven-year termed appointment
Minister's stipend**

Are you excited to help the church explore ways of extending worship and discipleship development digitally?

The Daily Devotions have become a treasured part of the life of the United Reformed Church. This new role is designed to ensure that Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Services are fully integrated into the worshipping life of the URC.

In this role you will extend and develop the Daily Devotions and the Sunday Services. You will explore how emerging digital initiatives can enhance worship, discipleship and mission for individuals and congregations. You will take time to explore the context of a wide digital community and possible ways in which this ministry can develop, and Christian community fostered.

You will be an experienced preacher with an excellent understanding of worship and liturgy in the reformed tradition - acknowledging the diversity of the United Reformed Church. Effective use of technology and a working knowledge of digital editing is essential. Experience of enabling new forms of ministry and supporting nascent Christian communities to flourish would contribute greatly to the impact this initiative can have on the reach and worship of the United Reformed Church.

If you wish to nominate anyone for this role please email recruitment@urc.org.uk by Sunday 12 September 2021

If you are interested in this role and can meet the above requirements, please contact us/see our website for an application form:

Human Resources, the United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
020 7691 9874 recruitment@urc.org.uk www.urc.org.uk/vacancies

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Monday 4 October 2021

Interview date: Wednesday 3 November 2021

**In accordance with the Equality Act 2010: Part 1, Schedule 9, there is a genuine occupational requirement for the post holder to be an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments of the United Reformed Church.*

This role also requires a satisfactory enhanced DBS certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.



General Secretary Churches Together in England

Full time/Flexible over 5/6 days per week incl. weekends/evenings, travel etc.

Salary range £55,204-£58,422 pa (dependent on experience) plus homeworking allowance.

Home based, accessible to London

Due to the impending retirement of the current post holder, Churches Together in England (CTE) is seeking an able and inspiring General Secretary to provide vision and leadership within CTE, whilst promoting the unity and mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ideal candidate will

- lead and manage the organisation and the staff team
- have wide ecumenical experience with diverse church traditions
- be a confident communicator
- be skilled at brokering and developing relationships
- take responsibility for external relations with member churches
- have experience of managing organisational change.

An application pack can be downloaded at www.cte.org.uk/GSV

To arrange an informal chat, please contact rowenaloverance@btinternet.com

Closing date: 12 noon on Friday 1 October 2021

Interview date: w/c 18 October 2021 (tbc)

There is a Genuine Occupational Requirement for applicants to be a practising Christian and an active member in good standing of a [Member Church of CTE](#) or [CTBI](#).

www.cte.org.uk

Find Us Online



The [East Midlands Synod website](#) is the one-stop shop for all essential information:

<https://www.urc5.org.uk/>



Our [East Midlands Synod Facebook Page](#) 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/>

Similarly the [Synod Youth and Children's Facebook Page](#) shares news and ideas related to our work with young people: <https://www.facebook.com/URCEastmidlandsYouth/>



On our dedicated [YouTube channel](#), 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 now open from Monday to Thursday each week. As a continued precaution, members of staff are attending the premises in two alternating “bubbles” and otherwise working from home. In the first instance please contact the staff by email in the usual way, as this will receive a direct response from the staff member you wish to correspond with. The office phone (**0115 960 9241**) will be answered Monday-Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm.

Any further update to these arrangements will be posted on our website: www.unc5.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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Free-to-use photography on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com): autumn haze over Nottingham, UK by [Tom Podmore](https://www.tompodmore.com)

Next edition: Thursday 30 September 2021

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: trainingpa@unc5.org.uk and training@unc5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 27 September 2021**