

Opening Reflection by Donna Gordon Synod Safeguarding Officer

Have no fear

It seems the most popular phrase for April 2022 is “everything has gone up!” And those of us that make this declaration with a furrowed brow are absolutely right, it has.

As the realisation dawns that we are in for a tough year financially, I can’t deny the niggling worry that sits in the back of my mind about it all. Managing a household, driving a car, food bills and supporting a family... the list goes on.

Then I ponder the bigger picture. We all see it, beamed into our households every minute of every day, if we allow it to be. Wars, famine, poverty, corruption, heinous crimes. Enough to make you weep, throw your hands in the air in frustration or bury your head in your hands as a gesture of hopelessness. It really can be quite scary.



When things begin to feel overwhelming for me, scripture, as always, offers refuge, wisdom and solace. There’s a myriad of texts that speak to the situation. Proverbs will offer sage advice, Psalms will offer comfort, Acts will give encouragement to practice good deeds but the one, no two, even three or more, that sit well with my soul at this time remind me of these things:

‘There is no fear in love’, ‘God is love’, ‘let us love one another’ and ‘fear not for I am with you’.

Comforted, I resolve to have faith in the awesome power of love, to show love to those I can reach and do it fearlessly, knowing I am never truly alone.

With thanks to **1 John chapter 4** and the 365 times the Bible reminds us not to be afraid. That’s one for every single day of the year.

General Assembly Moderator Speaks Out on Immigration

The **Revd Clare Downing**, Moderator of the URC General Assembly has issued a statement regarding recent developments around immigration policy.

This follows the government's recent announcement of a plan to send some asylum seekers arriving in the UK to Rwanda, prompting widespread criticism from faith leaders and others. Subsequently, the House of Commons has voted to reject amendments to the Nationality and Borders Bill made by the House of Lords and urged by church leaders in order to make immigration rules more humane.



In her statement, Revd Downing says:

“Church leaders have been criticised for joining the debate about asylum and immigration plans. But in the face of unfair and cruel proposals, to fail to speak out would be a denial of our gospel calling. The Biblical mandate is that righteous nations ‘welcome the stranger’.

[...]

“As we said in our [letter to MPs ahead of the vote in parliament](#), we will not stop advocating for love to be shown to our neighbour through the policies and practices in our asylum system. Our churches will continue to come alongside those who remain in desperate need of our friendship and welcome.”

For the full statement, and to see how you can get involved, visit <https://urc.org.uk/moderator-speaks-out-on-asylum-plans/> .

Online Book Group: The Radical Disciple

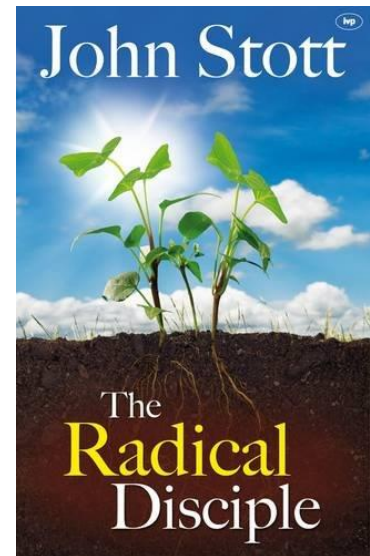
Beginning on Tuesday 24 May at 7.30pm

Now is the time to enrol for our new Synod **book group**, live on Zoom, and dig down deeper into what it means to follow Jesus. Beginning on 24 May, we look forward to exploring **The Radical Disciple** over four successive Tuesday evenings, each led by the **Revd Matt Rigden**.

Published in 2010, **The Radical Disciple** represents the final word of **John Stott**, one of the UK's most celebrated Christian writers and teachers. In eight short and highly readable chapters, Stott explores eight key aspects of Christian discipleship which deserve to be taken seriously – and challenges us not to pick and choose only those which sound the most appealing.

Matt, who is Community Minister for the Heath Christian Partnership in Lincoln, will lead us in four weekly sessions, exploring two chapters at a time. The sessions will each last around 90 minutes and conclude in a time of prayer.

The Radical Disciple (RRP £9.99) is available new from online sellers such as www.aslanchristianbooks.com/ (which offers an 11% discount and free shipping), while second-hand copies are available from www.wob.com and similar sites.



To join our exploration of **The Radical Disciple**, please email training@urc5.org.uk to receive the Zoom codes. The first session, on **Tuesday 24 May** at 7.30pm, will explore chapters 1 (Non-conformity) and 2 (Christlikeness) – so there is still good time to order a copy and get reading.

“This book is faithfully biblical, deeply engaging, firmly challenging and profoundly moving ... I can think of no better teacher on this theme than John Stott, whose lifetime of personal commitment to radical discipleship shines out from every page.”

David Stone, Team Rector, Newbury

Enquirers' Event – this Saturday

SATURDAY 30TH APRIL ENQUIRERS' EVENT

9.30am-12.30pm
on Zoom



Do you see new possibilities?
Do you feel God calling you to witness in
new ways in your local community?
Do you hear the need for 'church' to be different?

Come along and hear more about
lay pioneering and the proposed
URC Pioneering Hub



Contact Ministries@urc.org.uk for more information and Zoom link

Hybrid Church Meet- up



Hybrid Church Meet-up

Tuesday 3rd May 2022, 7:30-9pm

Come along to YOUR space to share and learn..

- Share ideas and good practice 
- Hear valuable, experienced input 
- Gain inspiration on Children's and Youth Work, Community Outreach, Technology and Worship 



More info, email:
jenny.mills@urc.org.uk



Meeting ID: 892 8553 7599
Passcode: 655777

Lay Preachers' Weekend at Northern College

Thursday 12 – Saturday 14 May



**NORTHERN
COLLEGE**

The annual **Lay Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Conference** offered by **Northern College**, Manchester (Luther King House) runs from **Thursday 12 to Saturday 14 May**. It is possible to attend all three days, or Saturday alone.

This year's theme is **The Church in and of the Community** and the schedule includes a visit to a community project. All lay preachers in the East Midlands Synod are eligible for funding to enable them to attend. For details of the programme and information, please email training@urc5.org.uk.

Online Youth Mental Health First Aid

It is still possible to join the **Youth Mental Health First Aid Training** with MHFA England, offered online by the URC's Southern Synod.

Evening courses will be taking place online on the following evenings in May.



Session 1 – **Tuesday 17 May**, 6:30pm-9:30pm

Session 2 – **Thursday 19 May**, 6:30pm-9:30pm

Session 3 – **Tuesday 24 May**, 6:30pm-9:30pm

Session 4 – **Thursday 26 May**, 6:30pm-9:30pm

Bookings are open via: - <https://may-mhfa.eventbrite.co.uk/>

Southern Synod are able to offer spaces at a subsidised rate of £27.75 per person to help cover costs of MHFA England course manuals. Participants are required to attend all four sessions and must complete independent learning activities before each of the sessions.

Further details about the course content is available on the MHFA England website - <https://mhfaengland.org/individuals/youth/online-youth-mental-health-first-aid/>.

URC Buildings Forum – Online Event

Living the life of Jesus through our buildings Wednesday 25 May 7:30-9.00pm

The **URC Buildings Forum Online** shares an invitation to an online event on **Wednesday 25 May**, entitled “**Living the life of Jesus through our buildings**”.

If God is present in every aspect of our lives, calling us to engage in God’s Mission, what role should our buildings play in our discipleship?

Join **Simon Peters**, project manager for *Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today*, to explore differing examples of how buildings can be used to support people in recognising God in everyday life, not just in worship on a Sunday.

To register for this event please contact mission@urc.org.uk.



The Return of Crossfire



Wednesday 1 – Saturday 4 June
Stathern Lodge, Melton Mowbray



This year sees the much-anticipated return of **Crossfire**. A camp for young people aged 12+ years (year 7 upwards), [Crossfire](#) is held here in the East Midlands at **Stathern Lodge Farm**, outside Melton Mowbray.

Organised by **GEAR** (the Group for Evangelism and Renewal in the URC) in partnership with **URC Youth**, it's a fun weekend of talks, small group sessions, sung worship led by the Crossfire worship band and fantastic cooked food. Expect a great weekend of learning more about Jesus, fun activities and meeting new people.



Returning to Crossfire is speaker **Christopher O'Shaughnessy**, who uses a unique blend of storytelling, humour, and provocative insight to convey the grace and love of a relentlessly compassionate God. UK-born, Chris has lived and worked across the globe and to date has ventured to more than 80 countries! Tales from these experiences make up part of the fabric of Chris's engaging presentation and have helped shape Chris's passion for bringing the love of a God unwilling to give up on creation to an often confused and hurting world.

The early booking rate of just **£30** has been extended, with tent hire available from £5. To find out more and book to attend, visit www.crossfirecamp.org.uk.



Crossfire is a GEAR Event



In Conjunction with URC Youth

From the Ground Up – JPIT Conference

Saturday 11 June

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) has now published further details of its day conference **From the Ground Up: Unearthing Hope and Seeking Justice**, to be held in London and online on **Saturday 11 June**.

The day will feature exciting, engaging and interactive workshops, all led by practitioners and designed to inspire hope and equip you to seek justice:

from the GROUND UP
Unearthing hope and seeking justice

TICKETS NOW ON SALE!

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

EQUIPPING FOR ACTION

11 JUNE 2022

HOSTED BY THE JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM

IN LONDON AND ONLINE

JPIT

- **Environmental justice**, with JPIT
- **Tax justice**, with Church Action for Tax Justice
- **Refugees**, with RESET UK
- **Community organising**, with Citizens UK
- **Peacebuilding**, with ECCR
- **Racial justice**, with Richard Reddie
- **Healthcare**, with Fran Kissack, URC Hospital Chaplain
- **Housing for all**, with Housing Justice
- **Poverty and inequality**, with the Poverty Truth Network
- **Theology**, with Revd Simon Woodman

Tickets are now on sale and full details are available on the [JPIT website](#).

Politics in the Pulpit? – New Host

JPIT has also announced that the **Revd Jenny Mills** is to take over as host of [Politics in the Pulpit?](#), the teaching resource whose free weekly episodes mine current lectionary readings for the justice issues which will help us to be good news in the world today.

Jenny, the URC's Secretary for Education and Learning and former East Midlands minister, will chat each week with a different guest to discuss the political dimensions present in the Scriptures and reflect on how they connect with the week's current news and our role in the Kingdom of God.

For the full story, see the URC website:

<https://urc.org.uk/urc-minister-to-host-political-series/> .



Politics in the Pulpit? is available as both a podcast and YouTube video, published each Tuesday with discussion of the texts in the Revised Common Lectionary for that coming Sunday. Further details of the resource are available at: <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicsinthepulpit/> .

Personal News

It is with great sadness that we bring news of the deaths of the following. We give thanks to God for all that has been achieved through their lives and ministries.

With sorrow we announce the recent death of our Synod Recognised Lay Preacher **Glen Beck**. Glen lived in Milton Keynes and served throughout the southern part of East Midlands Synod, including Newport Pagnell and Olney. We hold his wife and all those who loved Glen in our prayers.

The Southern Synod informs us of the death of retired minister the **Revd Alistair Hutcheson**, shortly before Easter. Alistair was ordained in 1963. He served at Egremont (1962-63); Ipswich (1963-69); Blyth (1969-1978); Alexandra Road & Claremont, Blackpool (1978-86); and St James's, Edgware (1986-96). Following his retirement in 1996 he lived in South London. We hold all those who loved Alistair in our prayers.

Partnership with Botswana Synod

In addition, **Judith North** (World Church Coordinator) shares the following:

It was with sadness we heard of the death of the **Revd Malebogo Muriel Mothibi**, a minister of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) **Botswana Synod**, who died on Good Friday, 15 April. There were services each day both at her home and her church until her funeral at 6.00am on Friday 22 April. She was a former Moderator of the Synod and accompanied the choir that visited our own Synod in 2010. She was also involved in the planning of the exchange programme for the young people. Whenever we made a visit to Botswana she would always make time to meet with us. She will be sorely missed.

Our Faithful Queen – Commemorative Booklet

[HOPE Together](#), in partnership with Biblica, has produced a colourful 64-page gift book entitled **Our Faithful Queen**. This may be of particular interest to churches who are planning to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in services or events on or around **Sunday 5 June** (Pentecost Sunday).

Our Faithful Queen will help readers appreciate the Queen's Christian faith and may also be used as a conversation-starter for talking to friends and relatives about prayer and the Bible, highlighting the significance of the Holy Spirit and her anointing to serve. Beautiful pictures tell the story of her life from carefree childhood to the responsibilities of monarchy, the joy of family life and the grief of loss. The publication also includes a rarely-seen set of prayers written by the former Archbishop of Canterbury **Geoffrey Fisher** for the Queen's own use in preparation for her Coronation.

Single copies cost £5 but the book costs just **£1 a copy** for bulk orders of 50 or more to encourage churches to give copies away to attendees at Jubilee events. Copies are limited and must be ordered as soon as possible for delivery by the Jubilee weekend. To preview the book, and to order, please visit the [Hope Together website](#).



Find Us Online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.urch5.org.uk/) is 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 ongoing 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](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/UCzXFUjKn8XOGGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUjKn8XOGGeZU5SgN95g>

Contacting East Midlands Synod

The **Synod Office** is now open from **Monday to Thursday** each week. Please contact staff members by email in the first instance, as this will receive a direct response from the person with whom you wish to correspond. The Synod telephone line (**0115 960 9241**) is answered Monday-Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm.

Arrangements remain under regular review and any update will be posted at: 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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Refugees crowding boat: photo by Ggia, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

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Next edition: Thursday 12 May 2022

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both:

trainingpa@urch5.org.uk and training@urch5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 9 May 2022**