

### Opening Reflection by the Revd Camilla Veitch Clerk of the East Midlands Synod

#### New Year – New Dawn

Have you made any New Year's resolutions? I haven't – because I know I wouldn't be good at keeping them! Even so, a new year brings with it a sense of anticipation and starting afresh. We wonder what lies ahead and what the next 12 months will bring. It's like looking out of the window when the world has been covered in snow and no one has yet made any footprints in it. What footprints will we leave this year? Which direction will we go in? Whose footprints will join ours?

This year, more than ever, as we stand at the threshold of a new year, how we long for new beginnings! We long for an end to the pandemic and its crippling effect on our lives and the world. We long for relief for our world which has suffered so much in the past two years. We long for newness of life for ourselves, as our lives have been affected and limited in so many ways by the impact of the virus.

At the heart of Christmas is the story of new birth and new beginnings. The birth of a child always brings with it a new dawn of fresh possibilities and potential. The birth of Jesus brought the promise of a new dawn for all the world. John the evangelist writes that his birth brought life and light to all people. He brought glory, grace and truth and he made known to the world the God whom no one has ever seen. The light and life he brought is ours to share, as he gave us power to become children of God.



As the New Year dawns and the memory of Christmas is already fading away, the true gift of Christmas remains: that as God's beloved children we have been given the gift of hope, light and life and the promise that the darkness will not overcome the light.

Let us therefore pray that we, and all the world, will be ready to receive the light and life which God has revealed to us in Jesus. Let us pray for a new dawn in our world, where vaccines will be equitably shared, where God's beautiful world will be cared for and protected and where those who give without counting the cost will know themselves blessed. Let us pray for a new birth where life will triumph over death and hearts will be overflowing with generosity and grace.

As we look with longing and hope for God's justice and peace, healing and health to flow this coming year, may God bless us with hope and grace upon grace, out of the fullness of his love.

## Induction of the Revd Jo Clare-Young

**Saturday 22 January 3.00pm**

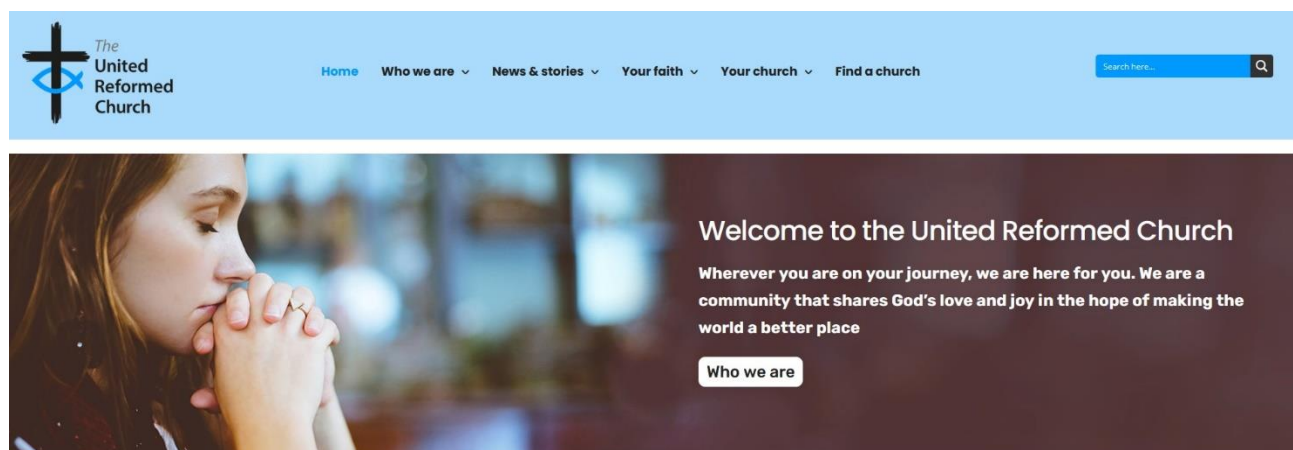
We are delighted to confirm the Induction of the **Revd Jo Clare-Young** as Minister of **Newport Pagnell URC** and the Mead Centre and of **West End United Church**, Wolverton.

The Induction is due to be held on **Saturday 22 January** at 3.00pm at Newport Pagnell URC, with further details to follow. For enquiries, please email the Revd Ruth Maxey (Interim Moderator) in the first instance: [ruth@mk-communityministry.org.uk](mailto:ruth@mk-communityministry.org.uk).

## New URC Website

During December, the URC website, [www.urch.org.uk](http://www.urch.org.uk), had a transformation as the brand new site was unveiled. This is a project that **Catherine Kelliher**, Digital Content Officer, has been working on for some time. Please have a look at the new user-friendly site!

The old website will be available at [www.urch.org.uk/archive](http://www.urch.org.uk/archive) for older content, should anyone need to access it. Some pages on the new website are a work in progress and these will be finished in the next few weeks.



The screenshot shows the top portion of the website. On the left is the logo for 'The United Reformed Church', featuring a stylized cross with a blue and white design. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links: 'Home', 'Who we are', 'News & stories', 'Your faith', 'Your church', and 'Find a church'. Further right is a search bar with the placeholder text 'Search here...' and a magnifying glass icon. Below the navigation is a hero section with a background image of a young woman with her hands clasped in prayer. The text in the hero section reads: 'Welcome to the United Reformed Church', 'Wherever you are on your journey, we are here for you. We are a community that shares God's love and joy in the hope of making the world a better place', and a button labeled 'Who we are'.

## Around the East Midlands

**Wellingborough United Reformed Church** – also known within the community as High Street, or “the Congo” - shares news of last month’s **Christmas Tree Festival**:



The weekend of 11 and 12 December 2021 saw High Street URC join in with the Christmas celebrations throughout the town.

Our first **Christmas Tree Festival** was a real success. It answered questions from Facebook such as:

“Is the Congo still open?”

“We got married there and I would like to see it again.”

“Is it open during the week?”

“Why is called the Pork Pie church?”

It gave us another chance, after lockdown, to say, “Yes we are open! Come and see!”

Christmas trees were contributed by local businesses, schools, groups, individuals from church, the Library, the town council, a Hindu temple, Multifaith and Victoria Centre, to mention but a few of the 40 trees that formed a dazzling display.



It was even more special as the daylight faded and the lights were dimmed.

We were able to serve hot drinks and cupcakes. Covid rules were strictly followed: in on the left, follow the arrows and exit on the right. Masks and hand sanitiser all available.

The **Wellingborough Afro Caribbean Association (WACA)** ran away with the competition for favourite tree, with a joyous riot of colours, voted for by all the visitors.

Others showed themes of recycling, caring for society and Bumps, Babies and Toddlers. A delighted 3-year-old exclaimed, "I made an angel and it is here!"

Christmas trees were also made from plastic four-pint milk bottles, wood off-cuts and what looked like coat hangers!

A total of 210 people - not counting the children - came in and we raised awareness of the Hub Project, collecting £870 as a result. People were fascinated by the model made by Jim, a church member – not forgetting the lovely organ music played by Terry.



*This report and its accompanying photographs are kindly shared by **Cheryl Bhagwandin** of Wellingborough URC.*



**We are delighted to share news of the inspiring work and witness of local congregations around the East Midlands Synod. Please send your text and pictures to [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk) and [trainingpa@urc5.org.uk](mailto:trainingpa@urc5.org.uk).**

*(Please note that any individuals who can be identified in photographs will need to complete a consent form before publication.)*

## Lay Preachers' Forum

**Monday 24 January 7.30pm**

The first of 2022's Forums for Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders will be held via Zoom on **Monday 24 January** at 7.30pm, chaired by Lay Preaching Commissioner **Mark Hodgson**.

These online Forums have proven an excellent way of comparing experiences and sharing ideas. To register to attend and receive the Zoom code, please email **Hannah Holmes** at [trainingpa@urc5.org.uk](mailto:trainingpa@urc5.org.uk).

## Commitment for Life – Zoom Events

**Workshop with Charlotte** – an update on Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Central America  
**Wednesday 9 February 2.00pm**

**Coffee with William** – a report on “Where is Palestine?”  
**Thursday 17 March 11.00am-12.15pm**

**Commitment for Life** is the **United Reformed Church’s** global justice programme. Its goal is to enable local congregations to make global justice a core foundation of their mission. It offers resources to facilitate prayer, advocacy, and effective action for the most vulnerable people in the world, working in partnership with **Christian Aid** and **Global Justice Now!** This gives rise to two special events on Zoom:



Commitment for Life

Commitment for Life ZOOM Event

**Workshop with Charlotte**

Christian Aid's Church Relations Officer in the UK  
Charlotte Scott updates us on Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, & Central America

Wed 9th February @ 2pm  
**Meeting ID 828 1061 2970**

christian aid

The United Reformed Church  
www.urc.org.uk



A Commitment for Life ZOOM EVENT

**COFFEE WITH WILLIAM**

JOIN US ON ZOOM TO HEAR WILLIAM BELL SHARE ON THE IMPACT OF THE 2021 CHRISTIAN AID REPORT 'WHERE IS PALESTINE?'

christian aid

THURS 17th March 2022  
11am-12.15pm GMT

ZOOM Meeting ID: 826 2918 7235

Commitment for Life


The United Reformed Church  
www.urc.org.uk

More information about Commitment for Life can be found at: [www.cforl.co.uk](http://www.cforl.co.uk)

# Join in a Song for the Commonwealth

Thursday 2 June

To celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's **Platinum Jubilee**, all church choirs are invited to join with others in singing "A Life Lived with Grace", a newly written Song for the Commonwealth. This will form part of the lighting of Jubilee Beacons around the UK and Commonwealth Capitals on Thursday 2 June 2022. For details visit: [www.commonwealthresounds.com](http://www.commonwealthresounds.com) .



**Calling all Commonwealth Choirs!**

CALLING ALL CHOIRS IN CATHEDRALS, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES IN THE UK AND THROUGHOUT THE COMMONWEALTH AS PART OF THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE BEACONS  
2ND JUNE 2022

This is your opportunity to play a unique role in history by signing up to sing  
**A SONG FOR THE COMMONWEALTH**  
'A Life Lived with Grace'

As the Beacons are lit at 9.45pm throughout the UK & Commonwealth that evening  
in Celebration of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee  
Music by Vincent Atueyi Chinemelu from Nigeria | Lyrics by Lucy Kiely from Australia

Alison Cox OBE  
Founder and Chair of Trustees  
The Commonwealth Resounds

Bruno Peek LVO OBE  
Pageantmaster  
The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons

[www.commonwealthresounds.com](http://www.commonwealthresounds.com)



## URC Line Management Training 2022

The United Reformed Church has announced the 2022 dates for its line management course **Why Manage**. Training will be delivered online due to Covid-19. This course is for anyone working within the URC with direct line management responsibility. Further information can be found in the guide [Essential line management](#), on the [URC website](#).

### SPRING DATES

#### **Why Manage – Day 1**

Date: **Thursday, 10 February 2022**

Time: 9:30 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

Topics: Line Management (The Basics), Managing Performance – Induction, Probation, 1-2-1s, Appraisal

#### **Why Manage – Day 2**

Date: **Tuesday, 15 March 2022**

Time: 9:30 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

Topics: Line Management – Working Hours, Managing Absence, Flexible Working

#### **Why Manage – Day 3**

Date: **Thursday, 7 April 2022**

Time: 10 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

Topics: Line Management – Equality and Capability (Policies)

#### **Why Manage – Day 4**

Date: **Thursday, 12 May 2022**

Time: 10 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

Topics: Line Management – Disciplinary and Grievance (Policies)

### AUTUMN DATES

#### **Why Manage – Day 1**

Date: **Thursday, 8 September 2022**

Time: 9:30 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

Topics: Line Management (The Basics), Managing Performance – Induction, Probation, 1-2-1s, Appraisal

#### **Why Manage – Day 2**

Date: **Thursday, 13 October 2022**

Time: 9:30 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

Topics: Line Management – Working Hours, Managing Absence, Flexible Working

#### **Why Manage – Day 3**

Date: **Thursday, 10 November 2022**

Time: 10 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

Topics: Line Management – Equality and Capability (Policies)

#### **Why Manage – Day 4**

Date: **Wednesday, 7 December 2022**

Time: 10 am – 12 noon

Training delivery mode: online

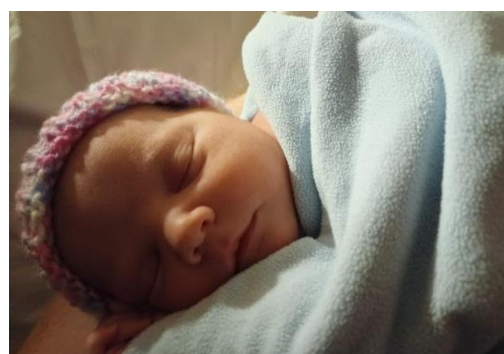
Topics: Line Management – Disciplinary and Grievance (Policies)

To reserve a place on these training sessions, please email [deepti.upadhyaya@urc.org.uk](mailto:deepti.upadhyaya@urc.org.uk)

## Personal News

We send our warmest congratulations to **Matt and Sasha Rigden** on the birth of **Eveline Lois**, a sister for **Cara**, born on Monday 27 December 2021.

Matt is Pioneer Minister for The Heath Christian Partnership (Lincoln).



## Obituary Notices

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

The **North West Synod** regretfully informs us of the death of the **Revd Geoff Tolley**, a retired minister, who died on Friday 17 December 2021. Geoff was ordained in 1967 and served at: Adlington (1967-1979); Bank Top, Bolton (1968-1979); Bolton North Group (1979-1986); Darwen Group (1986-2001); Revidge Fold and Trinity Blackburn (2002-2006). Geoff leaves his wife Edith and family, and we hold them in our prayers.

It is with sadness that the **East Midlands Synod** announces the death of retired minister **Revd Margaret Taylor** on Christmas Eve, 24 December 2021. Margaret was the first woman to be accepted for training and ordination by the Presbyterian Church of England at Westminster College. Her ministries were at: Nunthorpe (1964-81); Eston (1976-81); Christian Education Secretary (1981-84); Faith & Life Secretary (1984-86); Doddridge Memorial, Northampton (1986-99); Training Officer East Midlands Province (1986-99). We hold her family, brother Bruce and sister Ella, in our prayers. Funeral details are not yet known: please contact [trainingpa@urc5.org.uk](mailto:trainingpa@urc5.org.uk) if you would like to know the arrangements when available.

## Mr Peter Pay, Moderator of the URC General Assembly



It is with deep sadness that the United Reformed Church announced in December the death of **Peter Pay, Moderator of the URC General Assembly**, a former Synod Clerk and an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher who was a member of Salisbury URC.

Mr Pay had been living with a malignant brain tumour for some time and had bravely continued with his commitments until he was forced to step back towards the latter part of 2021. He died on Saturday 18 December.

The **Revd Clare Downing**, who served as Moderator of the URC General Assembly jointly with Mr Pay, said: "Peter has been a valued colleague and friend in various capacities over the years. His clear thinking and ability to ask pertinent questions has been a real asset to the life of the United Reformed Church. He brought a serious mind, tempered by a well-developed sense of humour to dealing with difficult issues. He will be much missed within Wessex Synod, the wider URC, and ecumenical partners."

A full report of Peter Pay's life, career and service to the church can be found at: <https://urc.org.uk/peter-pay-moderator-the-urc-general-assembly/>



# Deepen Your Discipleship in 2022

## Explore your faith with Stepwise

**Stepwise**  
Discipleship development  
for everyone

An exciting programme of  
learning and discovery –  
find out where God might  
be leading you and how  
you can make a difference  
in your church and world

Get ready to join in, share, grow your  
discipleship – and enjoy!  
Deepening faith | Walking the Way | Following Jesus

To find out more, visit [urc.org.uk/stepwise](http://urc.org.uk/stepwise)  
email: [stepwise@urc.org.uk](mailto:stepwise@urc.org.uk)

**Stepwise**  
The United Reformed Church

**Stepwise** is the United Reformed Church's very own discipleship development programme. It is designed for everyone who is keen to reflect on their Christian faith, who is ready to be stimulated and challenged, and wants to make a difference in their own life and the lives of others.

The programme is shaped around individual strengths and needs and emphasises the importance of living out your faith in your daily life. It is designed for people of all ages and backgrounds and aims to strengthen and deepen discipleship and help you grow in faith.

The programme consists of five broad learning streams which include topics and themes for individuals and groups to explore. Every **Stepwise** journey begins with the **Faith-filled Life** stream, after which participants can if they wish, go on to any of the other four streams: **Faith-filled Confidence**, **Faith-filled Community**, **Faith-filled Worship** and **Faith-fuelled Leadership**.

[Click here](#) to enjoy a short video about the development of **Stepwise** and the way it has inspired people in their discipleship – and helped to drive communities forward during the pandemic.

This video is also available on the **Stepwise** website page at <https://urc.org.uk/stepwise/> alongside recorded webinars about each of the five **Stepwise** streams and other resources to help you find out more.

The East Midlands Synod will be offering a Synod-wide **Faith-Filled Life** stream, beginning in spring 2022 and meeting online: details will follow. We also encourage and support the setting up of local **Stepwise** groups who prefer to meet in person, where it is safe to do so.

To receive further details or register your interest please contact **Derek Graham**, Training and Development Officer on [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk). Two groups in the Synod have already completed Faith-Filled Life: could yours be next?

# Free to Believe National Conference

## Keeping Hope Alive

Thursday 14 – Saturday 16 July 2022



**Free to Believe**, an ecumenical network of Christians striving for an open, inclusive and thinking Church, holds its next National Conference at **High Leigh Conference Centre**, Hoddesdon, from **Thursday 14 to Saturday 16 July 2022**.

### Speakers include:

- **Fiona Bennett:** “Respair” - the return of Hope after despair.
- **Karen Campbell:** URC Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministry.
- **Alex Clare-Young:** Beyond Binaries: Hoping for peace in a world of conflict.
- **Helen Garton:** Are we where it's at? Why being Radical is not being Radical at all.
- **Iain McDonald:** Hope frustrated and fulfilled - a personal journey.

FTB Chair the **Revd Dr Martin Camroux** describes the conference as offering hopeful voices at a time we need to hear them. Booking is now open and there are still plenty of places, priced £185 per person.

Booking forms are available on the FTB website: [Conferences \(freetobelieve.org.uk\)](https://www.freetobelieve.org.uk)

## 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/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g), 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

Following the current government guidance to resume working from home where possible, the **Synod Office** is again closed until further notice. However, staff members continue to be available as usual: in the first instance please contact them by email, as this will receive a direct response from the staff member with whom you wish to correspond. Mail will be checked periodically and the Synod telephone line (**0115 960 9241**) will continue to be answered Monday-Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm.

Any further update to these arrangements will be posted on our website: [www.urch5.org.uk](http://www.urch5.org.uk)

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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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Opening Photo by [Vincent Branciforti](#) on [Unsplash](#)

***Next edition: Thursday 20 January 2022***

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: [trainingpa@urch5.org.uk](mailto:trainingpa@urch5.org.uk) and [training@urch5.org.uk](mailto:training@urch5.org.uk)  
Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 17 January 2022**