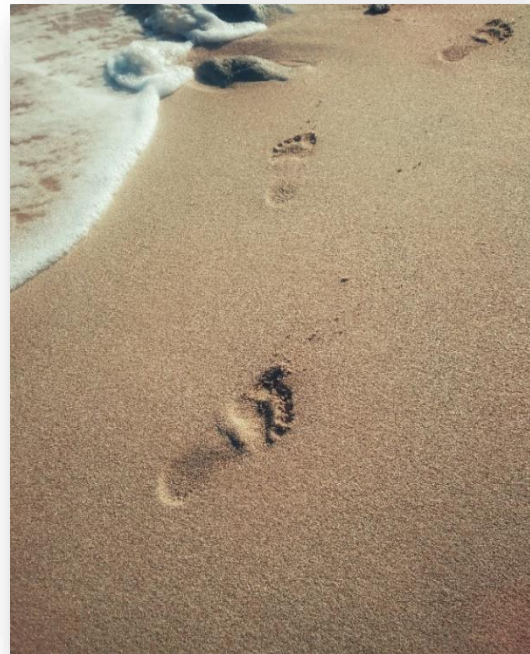


Opening Reflection by the Revd Robert Bushby Mission Development Officer

We are living in difficult times. We are gradually coming out of a pandemic that has in many ways changed our way of life and especially our church life; we are in a ‘new normal’. The environment and the climate emergency are at the front of many people’s minds. And now there is war in Ukraine which has caused a humanitarian crisis and much fear in our world.

The Bible doesn’t hide the fact that life is often tough for God’s people, but it also shows us that God is there to support us when things are difficult. Many characters in the Bible had a tough time, but they knew that God was with them; for example, **Jacob** was scared to meet his brother and God wrestled with him the night before he met Esau; **Hannah** was sad and lonely because she had no children and in the sanctuary she pleaded with God for a child and God answered her prayer; **Jeremiah** preached at a time when Jerusalem was surrounded by an enemy army and the king had him thrown down a big pit, but he knew God was with him; **Peter** was thrown into prison and faced death, but an angel rescued him. Although life is tough at times like this, God is with us.



At the heart of the Christian faith are the events leading up to Easter and **Jesus’** road to Jerusalem and death on a Roman cross on Good Friday. His mission on earth wasn’t cut short, but actually reached its fulfilment in the suffering of the cross. We believe that Jesus stood in our place and His death paid the penalty, not for His own wrongdoing, but for ours.

Jesus’ friends were grieved that He had died on the cross; they went into hiding. However, on the third day Jesus rose again and was seen by His disciples and many other people. Through all this they were changed and instead of being timid and wanting to hide, they became bold and began to tell others what they had seen and heard. They began to live in a ‘new normal’.

We celebrate Easter, not just once a year, but every week as we worship on a Sunday because that is the day of resurrection, a weekly reminder that we live in a new era. We are able to rejoice in hope because Jesus Christ died and rose again. Millions of people in our world today and in the past have come to put their faith in Jesus and found God to be with them whatever their situation. May God bless you this Lent and Easter as you navigate the ‘new normal.’

Annual Church Returns & Safeguarding Returns

Annual Church Returns

All Secretaries please note: the **Annual Church Returns** were issued online at the end of January and need to be completed by Thursday 31 March at the latest. These were issued by email to each Church Secretary (or by post where the Church Secretary did not have an email). To date there are still 50% of churches who have yet to complete this document online. If you are having difficulties, please contact **Chris Willis** on admin@urc5.org.uk or call the Synod Office on **0115 960 9241**.

Safeguarding Returns

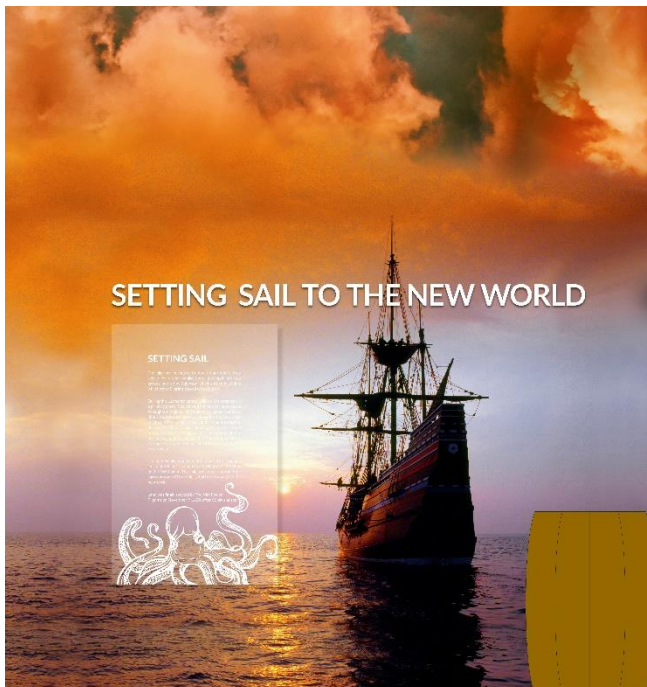
All Safeguarding Coordinators were sent the **Annual Safeguarding Returns** at the end of January. These also need completing by Thursday 31 March. If you are having any problems accessing or uploading your information, please contact **Hannah Holmes** on trainingpa@urc5.org.uk or call the office on **0115 9609241**.

Around the East Midlands

Heritage Mornings at Gainsborough URC

The Mayflower Room at **Gainsborough United Reformed Church**, Church Street, Gainsborough DN21 2JR, will be open on Thursday 7 April (10.30am-12). Future Heritage Mornings will take place on the first Thursday of each month (10.30-12).

The church's Mayflower Room contains a fascinating all age exhibition telling the story of John Robinson and the Pilgrims and the history surrounding the building of the church. The exhibition was created and installed by Createlnn of Retford.



The church also contains a commemorative tablet to John Robinson, known as the 'pastor to the Pilgrims' and a display created by Bassetlaw Christian Heritage. The foundation stone was laid by the American ambassador, Hon. Thomas Francis Bayard, on 29 June 1896. The two manual pipe organ built by Forster and Andrews is an instrument of national heritage importance.

A booklet recounting the history of the church is available at a cost of £3.

Tea/coffee will be available in the café.

For further information about local Pilgrim churches, visit <https://bassetlawchristianheritage.com/>

Visit of GA Moderator Clare Downing



Clare (right) at Bulwell URC with Ruth Maddison

The **Revd Clare Downing**, Moderator of General Assembly, recently undertook a four-day visit to the East Midlands Synod.

Her visit began on Sunday 6 March, when she preached and presided at Holy Communion at **Bulwell URC**, Nottingham.



On Monday 7 March, Clare visited the **Community of Grace** garden at **Wycliffe URC**, Leicester, where she was hosted by **Ben Brown** and the **Revd David Howlett** and accompanied by Synod Clerk the **Revd Camilla Veitch** and Treasurer **David Greatorex**.



Clare at the Community of Grace garden with (L-R) Revd David Howlett, David Greatorex, Ben Brown



Day three of Clare's visit saw Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** join her for a conversation with the **Revd Sue Steer**, Pioneer Community Worker at **Lubbesthorpe**. The visit included a walk around the estate - currently 700 homes, projected to be 4000 - and supper with some of the residents, who expressed appreciation of Sue's post and for the URC's support, as part of Churches Together in Leicestershire.



Right: (L-R) Revds Clare Downing, Sue Steer & Geoffrey Clarke



On her fourth and final day in East Midlands Synod, Clare visited the **Mead Centre** at **Newport Pagnell URC** in the morning. That afternoon, Geoffrey joined her to tour some of the projects of **Milton Keynes Christian Foundation (MKCF)**, which she found passionately supported by community members young and old.



Last Call for Free Workshop – Demystifying Worship

Build your confidence in planning worship
at an interactive development day led by **Lesley Moseley**

Saturday 2 April 10.00am-3.30pm
at **Christ Church URC, Leicester**

Please register by Monday 21 March

A **free one-day workshop** for:

- elders and members who are occasionally asked to lead worship or parts of worship
- all those who would like to know more about putting a service together
- anyone who thinks God might be calling them to help with praying or preaching in their own church

Take the worry out of worship-leading at this friendly, interactive workshop, kindly led for us by the **Revd Lesley Moseley**. Lesley will lead you through the essentials of structuring a service before guiding you in how to choose readings and hymns. Try your hand at producing and populating an Order of Service and progress to writing a prayer or even the outline of a sermon.

There will be tea, coffee and of course times of worship to enjoy. By the end of the workshop, you will have a sound grasp of the basics and be bolstered to go back to your church and play a part in leading its people in praise.

If you have ever been asked to consider preparing worship, or worried you wouldn't know how to go about it, our **Demystifying Worship** day is designed for you. It will be held with sensible Covid precautions in place.

To register to take part, free of charge, please email training@urc5.org.uk by this Monday, 21 March.



**Demystifying
Worship**

The
United
Reformed
Church
East Midlands
Synod

A free one-day workshop
led by
Lesley Moseley

Grow your confidence in
planning and leading
praise and prayer

Saturday 2 April 10.00am-3.30pm
at Christ Church URC, Leicester
To register, email: training@urc5.org.uk

Photo: Nycholas Benita on Unplash

Begin your Stepwise Journey

Our online Faith-Filled Life group begins on Thursday 31 March

More and more people across Britain are taking part in **Stepwise**, the URC's special programme to help you discover more about your own discipleship. It's carefully designed so that everybody can take part in their own style – no matter how young or old, no matter how well-versed or freshly-formed they might be as followers of Christ.



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
email: stepwise@urc.org.uk

Stepwise The United Reformed Church

Stepwise begins with the short **Faith-filled Life** stream – and now is a perfect opportunity to jump in.

The Synod is launching a group for people from different corners of the East Midlands, who will come together via Zoom to share and support one another in their explorations. The Facilitators will be the **Revd Jenny Mills** (URC Secretary for Education & Learning) and **Derek Graham** (EMS Training & Development Officer).

This virtual Stepwise group will begin on **Thursday 31 March**, meeting fortnightly on Thursday evenings for around three months.

If you would be interested in one of the remaining places, please email training@urc5.org.uk as soon as possible.

We would also be delighted to help other Stepwise groups form locally and meet in person: simply get in touch.

There is no obligation, but after **Faith-Filled Life** you can go on to explore **Faith-filled Confidence**, **Faith-filled Community**, **Faith-fuelled Leadership** or **Faith-filled Worship** (which forms a large part of the pathway to becoming a Locally Recognised Worship Leader but can also be done just for its own sake).

Not sure yet if Stepwise is for you? [Click here](#) to enjoy a short video featuring a few of the people who have been already inspired and encouraged in their growth as disciples. 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.

Last call: if you'd like to join in our new virtual group starting on 31 March and explore how to make a difference in your life and the lives of others, email training@urc5.org.uk now.

Grant Applications – RMHF and CBF



All applications for grants from the **Retired Ministers Housing Fund** and the **Church Buildings Fund** should now be submitted to the Property Officer using the new forms, which are available on our website:

[Resources](#) | [East Midlands Synod \(urc5.org.uk\)](http://East Midlands Synod (urc5.org.uk))

You will also see guidance notes to accompany each form to assist you in your request. Any queries regarding this should be directed to the Property Officer by email: property@urc5.org.uk

Worship from the URC: Wedding Service

Important – action required

The United Reformed Church's Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship, the Revd Adrian Bulley, asks us to share the following urgent message:

We have been alerted by the General Register Office (GRO) that the legal words included in the Wedding Service in '[Worship from the URC](#)' do not meet the requirements of Section 44(3) of the Marriage Act 1949.

The offending phrases are contained in Section 10 'The Vows' on pages 171 and 172, and in Section 21 'Alternative Vows' on pages 177 and 178. In both instances the word 'do' has been inserted in error; the correct vows should read "**I, XX, take you (thee), XX, to be my wedded wife/husband ...**" in each instance.



'Worship from the URC' book two was published in 2004, leaving me to wonder how many wedding services have been conducted using these slightly incorrect words in the past eighteen years. Fortunately, the GRO is not raising any questions about the legality of those weddings (!); merely seeking an assurance that the four extra dos will be removed as quickly as possible and those who use 'Worship from the URC' notified of the changes.

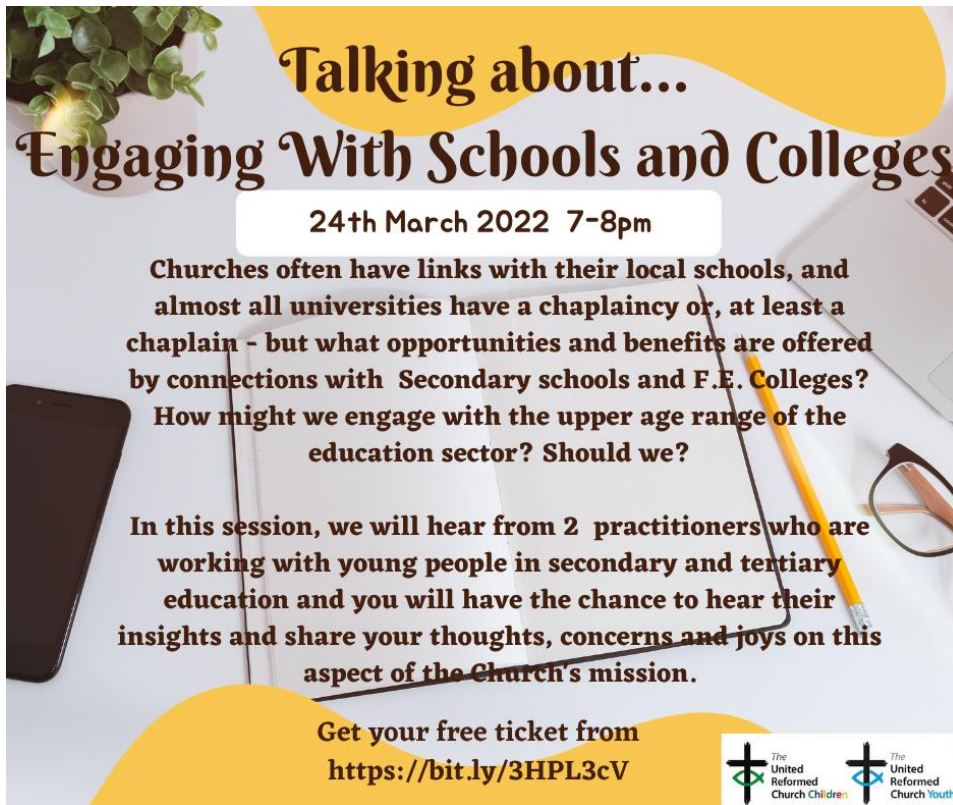
The four errant words are in process of being removed (or obscured) from the version of 'Worship from the URC' on the URC website. Accordingly, I am now asking that:

1. if you own a printed version of 'Worship from the URC' book two, you amend it immediately.
2. If your computer system includes a PDF version of the service, you have created your own service based on 'Worship from the URC', and/or you have prepared handouts for couples which include the vows, you find a way to amend those documents immediately.

I am hopeful that if everyone takes these actions as soon as possible we can avoid any repetition of the error going forward.

Talking about... Engaging with Schools and Colleges

Thursday 24 March 7.00-8.00pm online




Talking about...
Engaging With Schools and Colleges

24th March 2022 7-8pm

Churches often have links with their local schools, and almost all universities have a chaplaincy or, at least a chaplain - but what opportunities and benefits are offered by connections with Secondary schools and F.E. Colleges? How might we engage with the upper age range of the education sector? Should we?

In this session, we will hear from 2 practitioners who are working with young people in secondary and tertiary education and you will have the chance to hear their insights and share your thoughts, concerns and joys on this aspect of the Church's mission.

Get your free ticket from
<https://bit.ly/3HPL3cV>



Hybrid Church Meet Up

Wednesday 30 March 7.30-9.00pm on Zoom



Hybrid Church Meet-up

Wednesday 30th March, 7.30-9pm

Following on from our successful launch event, 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 and Worship 




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


Meeting ID: 892 8553 7599
Passcode: 655777

For more information contact jenny.mills@urc.org.uk

Lundie Memorial Award

The **Lundie Memorial Award** celebrates the good work a child or young person is doing for their church and community.

If you know a child or young person who is playing their part in the mission of God in their church or Synod, their local community or the wider world, please nominate them for a Lundie Memorial Award and help shine a light on their achievements.

Each month, a medal and certificate will be awarded to one of the nominated children and young people, along with a financial gift of £100 to be spent to benefit children and/or young people in the church, Synod or local community, however the award winner chooses.



NOMINATION AREAS

Good work can be interpreted in many different ways, so there are no hard and fast categories for this award. Suggested nomination areas are:

- a young carer
- a young person running a holiday club
- a child volunteering at a dementia café
- a young person fund raising for a Messy Church outing
- a young person providing live music for services
- a child raising money for an overseas development project
- a young person training older people in the use of technology
- a child who turns up early every week to set out the chairs for a club
- a young person volunteering as a peer mentor at college
- anyone under 26 who is playing their part in the mission of God in any way

For further information and to make a nomination please visit: [Lundie Memorial Award - United Reformed Church](#) where you can download a nomination form. Forms from East Midlands are to be sent to Richard Knott: cydo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk

A reminder – Worship Resources Competition

Don't forget: the URC is holding a special competition for new worship resources to help celebrate its 50th Jubilee this year. But hurry: the closing date is **8 April 2022**.

Winners will be chosen in four categories:

- **traditional hymn/song**
- **poem**
- **contemporary hymn/song**
- **rap**



The winning entries will be announced and performed at General Assembly in July, before being shared for local churches to use in their Jubilee celebrations and/or Sunday services. Find the full details at: <https://urc.org.uk/who-we-are/our-50th-anniversary/urc-at-50-worship-resources-competition/>

Standing with Ukraine



A dedicated page on the URC website brings together some of the ways we can help support those affected by the war in Ukraine, in both prayer and action:

<https://urc.org.uk/our-news-stories/crisis-in-ukraine/>

These include:

- How to donate to the Disaster Emergency Committee's [Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal](#)
- A wealth of prayer and worship resources, including resources to help support children
- How to support refugees through Welcome Churches' [Ukraine Welcome](#) programme and others
- News of URC churches taking direct action for Ukraine, such as collecting emergency supplies

Also included on the website is the story of East Midlands Synod minister the **Revd Jo Clare-Young**, who has joined together with the **Revd Alex Clare-Young** in having peace tattoos inked onto their skin in solidarity with those fleeing or trapped in Ukraine.

Read the full story at:

<https://urc.org.uk/ministers-tattoos-show-of-support-for-ukraine/>



The **Revd Dr John Bradbury**, URC General Secretary, the **Revd Clare Downing**, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, along with 18 other URC representatives have joined 300 delegates at the Churches Together in England (CTE) Forum in calling for an immediate end to the war in Ukraine. Read more at:

<https://urc.org.uk/churches-call-for-immediate-end-to-war-in-ukraine/>

WORDS FOR WORSHIP IN A TIME OF WAR

[Words of Worship in a Time of War](#) is a prayer service created by **John L Bell** and members of the **Wild Good Resource Group** to help churches, groups or individuals pray for the restoration of peace in Ukraine.

This is offered as a free download at:

<https://soundboard.giamusic.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/WordsforWorship8.5x11ver.pdf>

JPIT Conference – From the Ground Up

Saturday 11 June 2022
In London and online

The poster features a central graphic with three speaker portraits. Above the portraits, the text reads '11 JUNE 2022', 'IN LONDON AND ONLINE', and 'HOSTED BY THE JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM'. A starburst graphic on the right says 'TICKETS NOW ON SALE!'. Below the portraits, the text reads 'MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED...'. The JPIT Conference logo is in the bottom right corner.

from the **GROUND Up** unearthing hope and seeking justice

11 JUNE 2022 | **IN LONDON AND ONLINE** | **HOSTED BY THE JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM**

TICKETS NOW ON SALE!

ZRINKA BRALO,
CEO OF MIGRANTS ORGANISE

BISHOP MIKE ROYAL,
GENERAL SECRETARY OF CTE

EMMA REVIE
CEO THE TRUSSELL TRUST

MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED...

JPIT
CONFERENCE

Bookings are now open for the next **Joint Public Issues Team** Conference, taking place both online and in London on **Saturday 11 June**, and entitled '**From the Ground Up: unearthing hope and seeking justice**'.

The conference will focus on the increasing significance of the 'local' in action for change. During the pandemic, the local has taken on a renewed importance, and the needs, characteristics and opportunities in our communities have been seen in different ways. The local is playing a new role in the political landscape too, with the 'levelling up' agenda and regional and national identities assuming prominence, and grassroots community organising bringing new power to campaigning.

Beginning here, the conference will ask how we can listen to our communities and amplify local voices in order to work for change at national and international levels.

Keynote speakers at the conference will include **Emma Revie**, CEO of The Trussell Trust, **Marsha De Cordova MP**, **Zrinka Bralo**, CEO of Migrants Organise, and **Bishop Mike Royal**, incoming General Secretary of Churches Together in England.

The conference is open to anyone who is inspired about working for change, from those already active to those who don't know where to begin. There will be opportunities to respond creatively, to share in worship and to gather the tools needed to go out in hope.

To make it as accessible as possible, free tickets are offered for those who have low incomes and for anyone aged under 25. These tickets are supported by the opportunity for other attendees to 'donate a ticket' when they purchase their own. Tickets can be booked at bit.ly/JPIT2022

The conference will be an opportunity to come together and be re-energised to speak, pray and act boldly as Christians committed to seeing transformation in our communities and beyond. For full information visit: www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/conference

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 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, with places priced £185 per person.

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

Situations Vacant



Finance Assistant London

Permanent contract, 21 hours per week
Salary: £18,524

Are you keen to ensure excellent financial services are maintained to support a busy team?

The Retired Ministers Housing Society (RMHS) exists to assist retired and retiring ministers to meet their housing needs during retirement, aiming to provide appropriate housing suitable for long-term occupation. We maintain around 300 properties tenanted by retired ministers, arranging inspections and repairs and manage around 20 properties occupied as manses by centrally appointed ministers.

We are looking for a dependable team player to provide finance administrative support to a small team. In this role you will record and process all invoices and keep and maintain accurate records. You will already have experience of working in financial administration within a service organisation and have operational knowledge of finance systems and databases.

You are an excellent communicator with good numeracy skills. Accuracy and attention to detail are essential. An AAT Book-keeping (or similar) qualification and experience of working in the housing sector would be distinct advantages.

We can offer you a flexible and friendly work environment.

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, Monday 21 March 2022 Interview date: Thursday 31 March 2022



Digital Content Assistant

Permanent contract, 21 hours per week
Salary: £18,524

Are you ready to help the discipleship and mission of the Church through digital worship?

Working in the creative Communications team and closely with the Minister for Digital Worship, this role supports the teams purpose to promote effective communication and celebration of the Gospel in and beyond the URC; giving voice to good news and facilitating regional and national communications.

You already have experience in website content development, extensive knowledge of digital platforms and experience of managing internal and external digital communications. You have a wide set of digital editing and production skills, with experience in online videos, images, podcasts, social media, websites, PowerPoints, and emails. You possess excellent English language skills including writing for social and digital media. You are highly organised with an ability to multi-task and work to tight deadlines. An awareness of Christian mission and language, and appreciation for worship in varied formats is essential. Experience of managing focus groups and delivering training events would be advantageous.

We can offer you a friendly work environment: flexibility to be home-based or hybrid working from United Reformed Church House in London and from home (following a successful probationary period).

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.unc.org.uk/jobs

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Friday 25 March 2022 Interview date: Wednesday 20 April 2022

Find Us Online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.unc5.org.uk/) is the one-stop shop for all essential information:

<https://www.unc5.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/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGGeZU5SgN95g>

Contacting East Midlands Synod

Following the relaxation of the government's Covid guidance, the **Synod Office** is now open again from **Monday to Thursday** each week. Until the end of March, members of staff continue to work on site two days per week in two alternating "bubbles" and otherwise from home. 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 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

CCL1067405

Footprints in the sand: photo by [AbdolAzim Mollaie](#) on [Unsplash](#)
Marriage ceremony: Photo by [Wedding Photography](#) on [Unsplash](#)
Ukraine protest: photo by [Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next edition: Thursday 31 March 2022

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 28 March 2022**