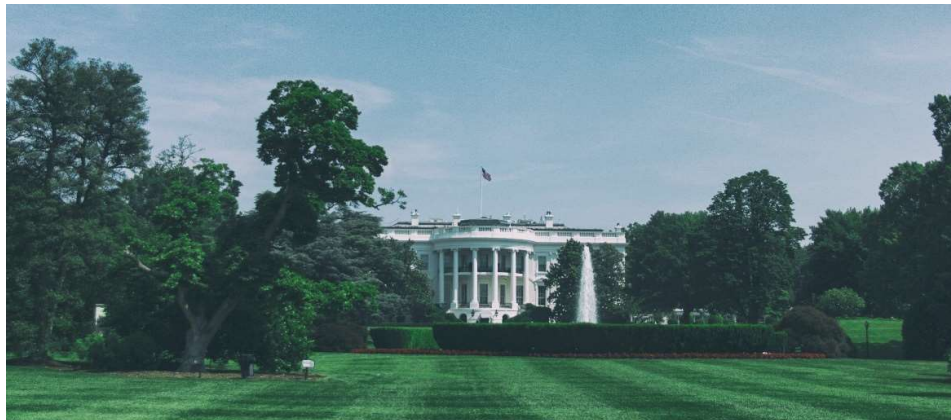


### Opening Reflection by the Revd Geoffrey Clarke

Moderator of the East Midlands Synod

#### *Bland cliché or courageous word ...?*



This edition of our E-letter is published the day after the Inauguration of **Joe Biden** and **Kamala Harris** as President and Vice President of the United States. Ahead of the ceremony all 50 state capitols were on high alert for potential violent protests so it comes as a great relief that the swearing-in was not, as feared, impacted by violence and the Inauguration Day itself passed off peacefully. Through our Synod's friendship with the **Revd Thom M Shuman**, a minister of the Presbyterian Church, USA in Ohio, we have been urged to pray for our American sisters and brothers and have been made aware of the divisions present and the continued potential for unrest.

For many, if not all, of us it might seem obvious that the followers of Jesus would struggle to endorse the kind of presidency that **Donald Trump** has embodied. The reality is that a significant number of those identifying as Christians not only elected him but have continued to endorse what he stands for.

By contrast, an article in the *Chicago Tribune* on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2021 told of the courage of **Father William Corcoran**, parish priest at St. Elizabeth Seton Church in the Chicago suburb of Orland Hills. At the weekend's Masses he felt compelled to refer to the violent uprising at Capitol Hill, saying, "On this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we drink in the last goodness and glories of the Christmas season, and begin ordinary time on Monday. Goodness and glory are not two words that we would use describing our past week when we saw an angry and violent mob seize our United States Capitol and interrupt Congress in its duty of certifying the State Elector votes for President and Vice-President. Such an action has left many of us angry, and hurt. Since then we have entered a typical moment of finger pointing, blame, and holding people responsible for what happened. Such finger pointing is not new. In the very story of creation Adam points his finger at Eve for

tempting him with the apple, and Eve points to the snake as the cause for all the trouble. Finger pointing often leads to avoidance of responsibility. I too want to engage in finger pointing,” said Father Bill, “and point to myself, and accept personal responsibility in part for what happened in the Capitol this past Wednesday.” Corcoran went on to name the many times he failed to speak out about Donald Trump’s ugly behaviour.

He talked about the German Roman Catholic Church’s failure to condemn Adolf Hitler, about the failure of the American Roman Catholic Church when faced with the sexual abuse committed by priests. “As President Trump has lied about so many things,” he told the congregation, “I have never spoken out, and fear we are teaching the young that truth and facts do not matter.” Some 30 or so members of his church walked out; he received emails criticising the sermon. Others, however, thanked him for his courage. “I didn’t think it was courageous,” he said. “I thought it was necessary.”

In his book, *Keeping Alive the Rumour of God*, **Martin Camroux** (retired URC minister) writes:

*One sociological study in California found that only 6% of sermons were mainly devoted to social and political issues. Most preachers, when they did address the issues, tended to deal with social topics by “touching upon” them. “It is clear that often the clergy speak only in bland, ambiguous and vague ways on such topics.” Many clergy “manage to take up a controversial topic from the pulpit without revealing their own moral or ethical positions.” Thus, the authors conclude, “Many [pastors] who say something say it very circumspectly”.*

A key problem identified in the report is that of satisfying church-goers who vary widely in age and political outlook. “They can walk out and never come back.” (Fr Corcoran discovered that!) Camroux cites a former Methodist colleague who admitted that when it came to contentious issues, “I’m trying not to say anything at all. I don’t want to upset anyone.”

Discerning when a matter demands that we move from bland cliché to courageous word is not easy but in the company of the prophets, John the Baptist and, ultimately, Jesus it is not something we can expect to avoid. In partnership with the Baptist Union, Methodist Church and Church of Scotland we are well served as a denomination by the **Joint Public Issues Team**. A visit to their website highlights the call to courageous words and actions: <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/>



With my prayers for the churches and communities of **East Midlands Synod**,

## From the Joint Public Issues Team

- The [Reset the Debt](#) campaign encourages people to write to their MPs, calling on the Government to recognise and respond to the mounting Covid debt crisis weighing heavily on low-income families. Over 900 people had written to their MPs by the end of 2020 – but the campaign continues. To join in by writing to your own MP, [click here](#).
- How meaningful are the Government's recent commitments to climate action? A [fresh blog post](#) marks some successes for campaigners, including the Churches, but charts where work remains to be done.
- The [latest edition](#) of JPIT's **Faith in Politics** podcast features an interview with **Louise Davies**, director of Christians on the Left.
- JPIT has been sharing daily prayers for the world since last March: you can sign up to receive the daily [Stay & Pray emails](#) or follow them on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

You can find details of these and more in JPIT's [latest newsletter](#):



## Induction of the Revd Camilla Veitch to North Derbyshire

**Saturday 23 January 3.00pm**

The Derbyshire Pastoral Consultants are delighted to announce the Induction of the **Revd Camilla Veitch** as Area Minister to the North Derbyshire Resource Area. Her Induction will take place this **Saturday, 23 January 2021** at 3.00pm on **Zoom**.

The North Derbyshire Resource Area currently comprises Buxton, Tideswell, Holymoorside, St Andrew's Rose Hill and Calow URCs, with Wirksworth eventually becoming a full member of the Area. Camilla will serve Wirksworth 25% of her time and the North Derbyshire Area for 25% of her time – as well as being Synod Clerk for 25%. There is currently a vacancy for a full-time minister for the Area. When a minister has been called to this post Camilla will work with that minister in the Area. Her role will be to support, equip and encourage the churches in their worship and witness.

You are warmly invited to join in supporting Camilla and welcoming her to this new role by joining this Act of Induction on Zoom. Please email **Hannah Willey** on [modpa@urc5.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urc5.org.uk) no later than 2.00pm tomorrow (Friday 22 January) to obtain the joining details.

## Ordination and Induction of Matt Rigden to SE Lincolnshire

**Saturday 30 January 2.00pm**

Our Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** is delighted to be conducting the Ordination of **Matt Rigden** as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, alongside his Induction as a Pioneer Minister in the **South East Lincolnshire** New Housing Area.

This Act of Ordination and Induction marks the beginning of a brand new journey, both for Matt and for this exciting Pioneer Ministry. It will take place on **Saturday 30 January 2021** at 2.00pm, at Trinity United Reformed Church, Lincoln with only four people present owing to the continuing pandemic restrictions, and all contributions to the service being virtual ones. The **Revd Robert Bushby**, Interim Moderator, will also be present in person to share in the Act of Ordination.

You are warmly invited to help welcome and support Matt in his new role by watching the live broadcast on **YouTube**:  
[https://youtu.be/v\\_Y\\_Hukju9c](https://youtu.be/v_Y_Hukju9c)

## Call to Prayer for the NHS

Many churches and individuals will have been praying for those who work in the NHS throughout the current pandemic. However, as Covid-19 threatens to overwhelm our health service and continues to inflict pain and loss, this is a key period in which we are called to stand together and renew our commitment to **sustained prayer**.

- Pray for all the NHS staff for their own safety, energy and peace in dealing with each and every patient.
- Pray for those in hospital leadership, for wisdom and for good decisions to give the best outcomes for patients.
- Pray for patients; for healing, for peace and ultimately to fight this disease and get home and pray for their relatives who feel helpless.
- Pray for the vaccine, that it will and is working against this latest strain of Covid-19.
- Pray for a reprieve and an end to Covid-19.

This call to prayer has been initiated by the **Baptist Union of Great Britain** and is endorsed by **Churches Together in England**, which urges that all member churches should share in it. Full details can be found at <https://baptist.org.uk/>



## Available from the URC shop



This intergenerational Lent resource is available now from the URC shop at a cost of £4.50 plus P&P (£4 plus P&P per pack if purchasing 15 or more).

Order now to avoid disappointment. Dispatch will be in early February.

If buying multiple copies, the packets will be unsealed to enable you to add any additional material before posting on.



Visit the URC shop: <https://urcshop.co.uk/>

## CTBI Magazine and Lent Course

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has published its [CTBI Magazine, Spring Edition](#).

This issue highlights the important work taking shape around **Climate Sunday**, the **Churches' Refugee Network**, racial justice and inter-religious issues.

The magazine also details resources such as CTBI's Lent resource for this year '[The Poet's Gospel](#)', amongst other news and information designed to equip individuals, churches or organisations.

Due to the pandemic, this third edition of the **CTBI Magazine** is only available as a PDF to read and download [online](#).



# Practical Advice for Churches

Our Synod Property Officer **Geoff Milnes** draws the attention of all Church Secretaries and Property Officers to the following:

## Asbestos

Some time ago churches were advised to have an Asbestos Survey carried out on all their buildings to determine the presence, or otherwise, of this dangerous material, and to enable measures to be taken to protect members, visitors and anyone working on the buildings.

Following an incident concerning one of our Churches this is a reminder for those who have not had an Asbestos survey carried out arrange to have one done immediately. Those who had a survey undertaken should make sure that all the remedial actions mentioned in the survey have been carried out and documented. An Asbestos Register must be kept at all Church premises and be available for contractors and anyone carrying out works on the property.

Asbestos was banned in construction in 1999, so any property built after that date will not contain asbestos.

## Fire Risk Assessments

Some Churches have been approached recently by companies offering to undertake Fire Risk Assessments. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 moved the responsibility for the fire risk assessment of buildings from the Fire Service to the building owner or occupier. Each Church must have its own Fire Risk Assessment and appoint a 'nominated person' to be responsible for its production, implementation, and to ensure it is kept up to date. Templates for the Assessment are readily available - there are standard templates to be found at [www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/fire-risk-assessments](http://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/fire-risk-assessments). If Churches feel competent to carry out these Assessments, there is no need to pay for them. That said, it may be advisable for larger Churches to engage professional Assessors.

The matters covered include fire prevention, firefighting equipment, means of escape, and appropriate notices etc.

If you have not carried out a Fire Risk Assessment and/or not appointed a 'responsible person' please do so as soon as possible – it could save lives and **it is a legal requirement** to do so!

## Subsidence Insurance

It has come to my notice that not all Churches are insured against subsidence to their buildings. This is often an extra on the insurance schedule, and can be added at an additional, but not usually large, premium. Churches are strongly advised to check that they are covered for subsidence, as costs of dealing with buildings affected by it can be very large indeed. If they are not covered, you should pay the extra premium and add subsidence cover to the policy.

# Holocaust Memorial Day

Wednesday 27 January

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust is encouraging people across the UK to mark this year's **Holocaust Memorial Day** (Wednesday 27 January 2021) by lighting a candle and placing it in their windows at 8.00pm.

If possible, you are encouraged to share a photograph of your candle through social media with the hashtags **#HolocaustMemorialDay** and **#LightTheDarkness**. You may also wish to take part in the national ceremony, streamed online from 7.00-8.00pm and culminating in the lighting of candles.



Whether or not you attend the national ceremony or post on social media, please take a moment to place a lit candle in your window at 8.00pm on 27 January, to remember those who were murdered for who they were, and to stand against prejudice and hatred today.

For full details, and to register for the HMDT national ceremony, visit <https://www.hmd.org.uk/uk-holocaust-memorial-day-2021-ceremony/>

# URC Youth (dis)ASSEMBLED

Saturday 30 & Sunday 31 January

It may not be possible for Youth Assembly to gather as normal this year, but it takes more than that to stop **URC Youth**. Together in spirit, if not in body, it is planning a series of online events on the theme of **Heroes and Villains** throughout the year. These begin with two evenings at the end of this month, open to all young people aged 14 to 25 with a connection to the URC.

A social evening on **Saturday 30 January 2021** from 8.00 - 9.30pm features the fabulous comedy folk band [Folk On](#), known to many from their appearance at the last Greenbelt festival, and an appearance by comedian [Paul Kerensa](#). An evening of worship, prayer, discussion and chat follows on Sunday from 8.00pm.

TOGETHER IN SPIRIT  
IF NOT IN BODY

**FUN WITH 'FOLK ON'**  
SATURDAY 30 JANUARY 2021  
8-9.30PM

**WORSHIP**  
SUNDAY 31 JANUARY 2021  
8-8.45PM

(STAY FOR PRAYER, DISCUSSION  
OR CHAT UNTIL 9.30PM)

OPEN TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE  
AGE 14 TO 25 WITH A  
CONNECTION TO THE URC



Both events can be booked directly to [Eventbrite](#):

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/urc-youth-dis-assembled-2021-tickets-131014348443>

Please note that you will also need to read and submit some simple paperwork, which can be found on the [URC Youth](#) page: <https://urc.org.uk/urc-youth-urc.html>

Spread the word: it is hoped that this event may go down as a high point in **URC Youth** history!

# New Webinar Series from CWM Europe



## BUILDING LIFE FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES

A SERIES OF WEBINARS WITH CWM EUROPE



### REVD. DR. PETER CRUCHLEY

'WHITENESS AND ANTIRACIST PRACTICE: FROM TALK TO ACTION'  
MONDAY 8TH FEBRUARY (14:00-15:30)

Can whiteness and white privilege be dismantled? Peter's presentation will aim to help participants move from talk to action regarding more effective antiracist practices in the church.

### REVD. MELANIE SMITH, REVD. DR. AL BARRETT & DAVID JONATHAN

A PANEL DISCUSSION ON LIFE-FLOURISHING ACTIVISM  
MONDAY 22ND FEBRUARY (14:00-15:30)

The panellists will be exploring 'what would life-flourishing activism look like and mean'. This would include new ways of grassroots activism towards transformation. These three colleagues are involved in local community advocacy in a variety of ways.



### CAROL TROUPE

'LOOKING BACK: LOOKING FORWARD'  
MONDAY 8TH MARCH (14:00-15:30)

Carol is a Research Associate on the CWM Legacies of Slavery project and has been exploring LMS mission magazine archives. She reflects on her journey so far, and wonders what, if anything, can be drawn from the archives to help the church reflect on issues of mission, race and justice in the present day.

### DR. EVE PARKER

WHAT WOULD A LIFE-FLOURISHING CURRICULUM FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION LOOK LIKE?  
MONDAY 22ND MARCH (14:00-15:30)

In her presentation, Eve will focus on case studies from her ongoing research - addressing the barriers to belonging in theological education, whilst exploring the liberative potential of engaged and transformative pedagogy and curriculum.



For each presentation, individual Zoom links will be provided. Please contact Sai & Michael at [cwm.europe@cwmission.org](mailto:cwm.europe@cwmission.org)



# Webinar for Elders and Trustees from the Charity Commission

The Charity Commission, in partnership with Churches Together in England and Cytùn, offers a free one-hour seminar which promises a helpful briefing for Elders, trustees and managers.

The same webinar is offered on both **Saturday 23 January** and **Wednesday 3 February 2021**:



Churches Together in England  
Cytùn: Churches Together in Wales  
Cytùn: Eglwysi Ynghyd yng Nghymru  
in partnership with  
Charity Commission for England and Wales



## WEBINAR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN CHURCHES: EXPECTATIONS OF THE CHARITY COMMISSION

This webinar, delivered by the Charity Commission's Faith Outreach team, provides an **overview** of the Commission's expectations as regulator, including:

- Trustee duties & risk management
- Financial management and reporting in a faith charity context
- Sending money internationally
- Safeguarding in places of worship

The webinar is suitable for trustees and managers of church charities, particularly those with limited experience of their role and charity law.

The same webinar will be run twice at the following times:

- Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021  
09.30 – 10.30am
- Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021  
11am – 12pm

To book your place:

You must register to attend by clicking on the link below:

<https://bookwhen.com/cte-cytun>

Or by using this QR code:

Please click on the event on the date you wish to attend. You will receive confirmation of your booking via e-mail.



# Annual Church Returns and Roll of Elders

Church Secretaries are respectfully reminded that the **Annual Church Return** must be submitted to the Synod Office by 31 January 2021 at latest.

A new feature of this year's Annual Returns is the request to list the Elders in each church. The URC's Secretary for Ministries, the **Revd Nicola Furley-Smith**, has issued a letter explaining why this has been introduced and where to find the associated Privacy Notice:

In the United Reformed Church, the eldership of a local congregation is a significant ministry – the Elders share responsibility, with the Minister of Word and Sacraments, for the spiritual oversight of the congregation. The Elders' meeting is intended to be a distinctive and vital part of every URC congregation – with the Elders collectively possessing the abilities, skills and spiritual gifts of leadership. At its best, the Elders' meeting is at the heart of every local congregation, providing impetus and positive influence on the mission, witness and service of the church. In short, Elders play an essential role in enabling the congregation to live fruitful lives as God's people.

In 2016 the Past Case Review Learning Group report identified that we have a significant ministry of Elders but no **Roll of Elders** although we keep such a roll for all other authorised ministries within the life of the denomination. It is for this reason that this extra information is now being sought on the Annual Church Return. The reason we require this information can be found on our data privacy policy at:

[https://urc.org.uk/images/Ministries/Ministries%20Committee/CY\\_EL\\_Ministries\\_CRCW\\_Privacy\\_notice.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/Ministries/Ministries%20Committee/CY_EL_Ministries_CRCW_Privacy_notice.pdf)

In case of any further query about your Annual Church Return, please contact **Chris Willis**, Synod Administrator, at [admin@urc5.org.uk](mailto:admin@urc5.org.uk) or by calling 0115 960 9241.

## Enquirers' Event: Saturday 27 February

Please share news of this online event with anyone in your church who may be interested in exploring worship leading, lay preaching, working with young people, or any other form of ministry:



# 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 or Church Related Community Work.

**Enquirers' Event** Saturday 27th February 2021  
10am - 3pm online  
Register with [ministries@urc.org.uk](mailto:ministries@urc.org.uk)  
to receive Zoom details

## Personal News

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

The **Revd Bernard Wesley Grimsey** (South Western Synod) died on Friday 4 December 2020. Bernard served at Brislington, Bristol (1984-93). His funeral is to be held on Monday 25 January.

The **Revd Ann Cole** (Southern Synod) died on Sunday 27 December 2020. Ann served at: Grafton Square & Battersea Road, Clapham (1983-87); Seaford (1987-98); and Alfriston (1993-98). Her funeral service was held in Polegate Free Church on Wednesday 20 January.

The **Revd Anthony James Wilkinson** (North Western Synod) died on Saturday 9 January 2021 at the care home at which he had been living for a few years. Tony served at: St Helens (1966-73); Brownhill, Blackburn (1973-83); Audley Range, Brownhill and Westbury Gardens, Blackburn (1983-88); Freetown and Park, Ramsbottom, Bury (1988-94); and Park Green and Bollington, Macclesfield (1994- 2006). He is survived by his three children and their families, and the two children of his late wife, Sue, and their families.

The **Revd Norman Edsall** (Wessex Synod) died on Friday 15 January 2021. Norman served at: Burgess Hill (1967-72); Elstead & Milford (1972-81); Hershaw (1988-95); and Cobham (1981-2000). He is survived by his wife Maureen and their family.

The **Revd Tom Bush** (South Western Synod) died on Wednesday 20 January 2021 in the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. Tom served as a NSM at: Dawlish and Teignmouth (1987-98); in Devon East District (1998); and Teignmouth (2005-14). Tom is survived by his wife Jacky, son Robin and grandson James.

## Situations Vacant

### Churches Together in England

#### Web content assistant



**Churches Together in England** (CTE) is seeking to appoint an organised and efficient **web content assistant** for a fixed term of 25 days, over approximately 12 weeks. This short-term, home-based position offers the opportunity to play a key role in the launch and delivery of CTE's new **WordPress** website, with responsibility for uploading a range of content across the site.

Applications close on Monday 8 February 9am, with interviews on Friday 12 February and a projected start date the week commencing 22 February.

Further details, including an application pack, are available at: [cte.org.uk/wca](https://cte.org.uk/wca)

## Find us online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.urch5.org.uk/) remains the one-stop shop for all essential information:  
<https://www.urch5.org.uk/>



Our [East Midlands Synod Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/) continues to host the Evening Prayers led by our Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** and others during the continuing pandemic. If you are a Facebook user, please consider **Liking** and **Sharing** this Page and its posts:  
<https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/>

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



On our dedicated [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. Evening Prayers are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

## Contacting East Midlands Synod

Owing to the renewed lockdown mandated by the UK government, the building of the **East Midlands Synod Office** remains closed. All members of staff continue to work from home: please email them in the usual way. Please continue to use the Office address for any postal business, including Annual Returns. Mail is collected weekly. The office number **0115 960 9241** is answered from Monday to Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm and calls will be forwarded as necessary.

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

CCL1067405

Free-to-use photography sourced on Unsplash: White House by Srikanta H.U; NHS mural in Manchester by Matthew Waring; candle in window by Anne Nygård.

***Next edition: Thursday 4 February 2021***

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: [modpa@urch5.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urch5.org.uk) and [training@urch5.org.uk](mailto:training@urch5.org.uk)

Copy date for next edition: 12 noon on Tuesday 2 February 2021