

Opening Reflection by Vaughan Griffiths

Convenor of the East Midlands Synod Finance Group

I have a scar on my right arm. It runs from my elbow to my wrist in a gentle “S” curve. If you look closely, you can still see the marks of the 49 metal staples that held the cut together while it healed.

If you are already speculating about what accident or trauma caused this injury, let me say straight away that a doctor did it deliberately. About seven years ago I was told I needed heart bypass surgery and to get one of the “tubes” they needed, the doctors removed one of the arteries in my right arm. I didn’t know until then that there was more than one in each arm! - but I’m very grateful for the extra one.

In the course of 6 months’ rehab, going from being exhausted by a walk to the corner of our road and back, to fitter than I had been for years (and, being an accountant, all recorded on a spreadsheet!) I learned to see the scar as a sign, not of the trauma, or of the surgery, but of a new lease of life.

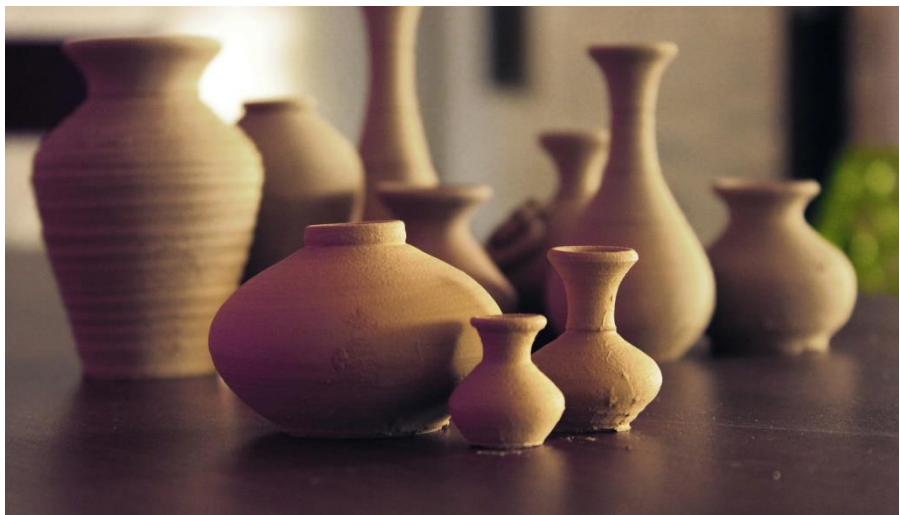
Since that time, God has led me into areas of service both surprising and unexpected; but also, it seems, fruitful in His Kingdom.

As we come out of lockdown many (all, probably) churches will feel scarred by the experience. Some will not survive as separate congregations. Some will have lost key people. Some will feel it will never be the same again. They are right – it won’t!

Individual Christians will be scarred by the isolation of not being able to meet together for so long, by the absence of congregational singing when we have met together, by not having been able to celebrate, or to mourn, together.

But consider this: the cross is a symbol of cruelty and death but adopted by the church as its symbol of new life in Christ. If you like, God’s life-saving surgery for terminally sin-sick humankind.

In *2 Corinthians* chapter 4, Paul talks about the light of Christ shining in us, and continues (v.7) “...we have this treasure in jars of clay...” He then goes on (v.10): “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”



How is this possible? By the light of Christ in us; or alternatively, one might say, by the active work of the Holy Spirit within us. To quote verse 7 in full: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God, and not from us.” Only thus can God’s light shine through our cracked jar exterior.

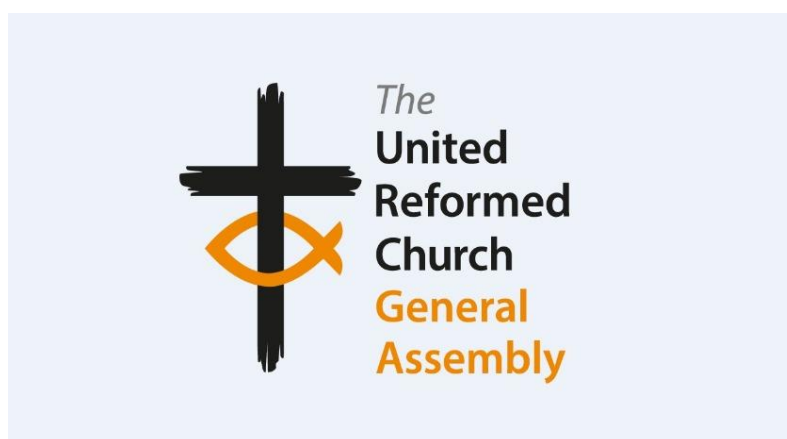
The effects of lockdown and closure will scar us, but through our seeking the renewing power of the Spirit in our lives those scars can become the signs of new life for us who are already part of church, and also for those we seek to introduce to our scarred Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray God it may be so amongst us.

Grace and peace to you all,

Vaughan Griffiths

General Assembly 2021



The URC’s **General Assembly** for 2021 is taking place online from **Friday 9 to Monday 12 July**.

General Assembly is the URC’s key decision-making body, which meets annually to celebrate, discuss, worship and make decisions about the life and work of the denomination. Members of General Assembly will take part via Zoom, while the meeting will also be livestreamed on the URC’s website, Facebook page and YouTube channel for all to watch.

Topics on the agenda this year include the new URC learning hub, action towards an anti-racist church, the Israeli and Palestinian conflict, the URC’s 50th jubilee, the future of Pilots, disciplinary processes for ministers and office holders, safeguarding, and the URC’s pension scheme.

Papers, including the **Book of Reports**, are now available at <https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-archive.html>



In particular, URC churches and members are warmly invited to join in with General Assembly’s **Sunday worship service** on Sunday 11 July at 11.00am – whether at home or perhaps even shared at church.

The **Revd Clare Downing** will preach at the service, which will be livestreamed from the URC’s national website and Facebook page from 11.00am: visit bit.ly/URCwelcome or bit.ly/URCfacebook.

JPIC Forum

Save the date: Thursday 15 July 7.30pm

The next open **Forum** event from East Midlands Synod's **JPIC** group (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) will take place via Zoom on **Thursday 15 July** at 7.30pm.

This will be an opportunity to focus on the Climate Crisis and other pressing environmental themes from a Christian perspective, as we continue to count down to the crucial **COP26** gathering of world leaders in Glasgow this November. How can we make a difference, as churches and as individuals, and help to safeguard the future of the planet?

Details of guest speakers will follow: please mark the date in your diary.



New: the United Reformed Church Podcast



The United Reformed Church has launched a new series of podcasts, with the first episode now available at <https://anchor.fm/theurcpodcast>, on Spotify and elsewhere. This series will look at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus across all aspects of our lives, as we respond to the concerns, issues and topics we encounter in the wider world.

In the first episode, lasting 15 minutes, URC Communications Officer **Anne-Marie Nye** interviews **Simon Peters**, the Project Manager for **Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today**, to find out just what **Walking the Way** is all about.

A new episode will be released fortnightly, every second Wednesday, exploring what discipleship and mission mean in different aspects of everyday life.

Become a Lay Preacher or Worship Leader



Have you ever considered training to lead worship? The United Reformed Church has devised new pathways to become an **Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher**, or to work toward the new designation of **Locally Recognised Worship Leader**.

A new course to train as an **Assembly Accredited Worship Leader** begins this September, led by one of the URC's Resource Centres for Learning. Funding support is available. If you would like to find out more, please contact Lay Preaching Commissioner **Mark Hodgson** (markgoodwillhodgson@gmail.com) and Training & Development Officer **Derek Graham** (training@urc5.org.uk).

Fresh Expressions Post-Covid

Is the long-awaited “new normal” here – and how does it look in your church? Have you discovered any new ways of being Church as we emerge from lockdown? Did you reach out in new ways during the pandemic, and what happens to those as we return to gathered worship? Have you launched any “Fresh Expressions” post-Covid – and what is the status of any that you were running before the pandemic struck?



fresh expressions

Fresh Expressions is conducting a fact-finding exercise across the UK to find out whether any new expressions of Church are emerging as restrictions are lifted, and whether our new normality has made us more or less open to different ways of being Church. We would like your help to create a fuller picture of what is happening around the East Midlands Synod before our upcoming meeting with **Linda Rayner**, who co-ordinates Fresh Expressions for the URC nationally.

Please send us news of any fresh initiatives, things you have done differently, or even things you are thinking of doing as we look forward to a post-lockdown world. We would be grateful to receive your thoughts by **Thursday 8 July** via email to rjbushby12@gmail.com and training@urc5.org.uk.

Revd Robert Bushby, Mission Development Officer &
Derek Graham, Training and Development Officer

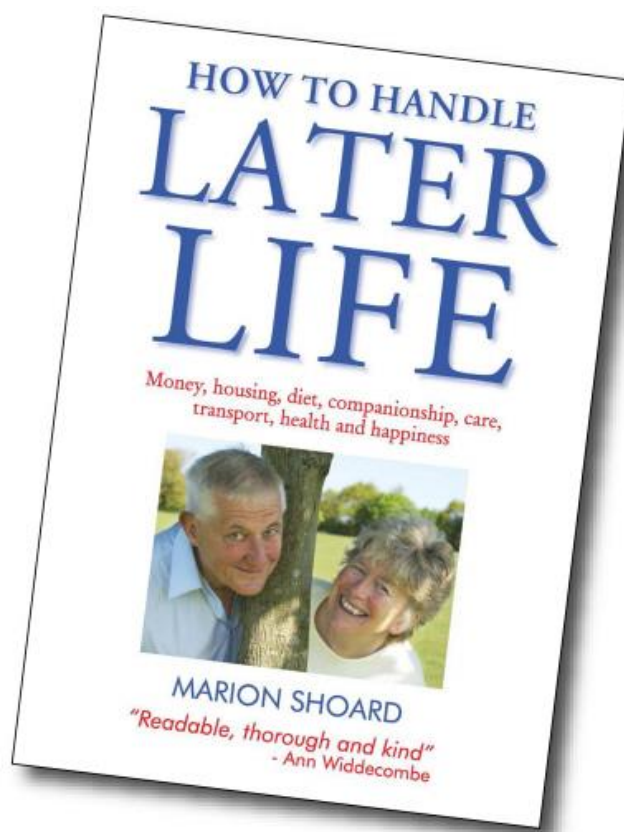
How to Handle Later Life: Free Book Offer

Marion Shoard - URC Elder, contributor to [Reform](#) and trustee of ecumenical group [Christians on Ageing](#) - is sharing a special offer to all those who would like to receive a copy of her 2017 book **How to Handle Later Life** – a handbook for older people, exploring the choices we all face as we grow older and how to navigate the potential pitfalls.

Straight-talking and comprehensive, the book deals with everything from housing to finance, social contact to healthcare, transport to the law – as well as the nutritional, exercise and psychological needs of the ageing mind and body – and you can obtain a copy **free of charge**.

Aimed mainly at older people and their families, the book has also been praised by professionals from nurses to psychologists. **Eric Midwinter**, a founder of the U3A movement, wrote:

“It would be difficult to visualise a more complete and wide-ranging compendium than this on how to cope with the pressures and perils of later age. ... Health, housing, legal matters, finance and all other facets of later life are comprehensively and sympathetically treated, with a user-friendly structure and presentation. There should be a copy in every library, council office, doctor's practice, MP's surgery, Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK office, if not in every household.”



The book is available for £15 from the publisher Amaranth Books, on whose website you can sample its contents: <http://www.amaranthbooks.co.uk/titles/how-to-handle-later-life/>

However, Marion has obtained a quantity of copies and is offering them **free** to anyone in churches, lay or ordained, who is seeking to engage with older people. If you would like a copy, please write to **PO Box 664, Rochester, Kent ME1 9JB** with your name, address and a cheque made payable to Marion Shoard for **£3.70** (to cover postage and packing). For any questions about the offer, please email marion@marionshoard.co.uk.

Personal News

It is with great sadness that we report the death on Wednesday 16 June of the **Revd Roy Eames** (Thames North Synod). Roy served at: Hackney Group (1981-83); Wheathampstead (1983-86); and Woodhall Lane, Welwyn Garden City (1985-89). He is survived by his wife June, their daughters Gillian and Margaret and their families. We hold all who loved Roy in our thoughts and prayers.

Take Part in National Thank You Day

Sunday 4 July

The **Together Coalition** (with a steering committee chaired by CTE President the Archbishop of Canterbury) is working across the country with communities and organisations to build the first ever **National Thank You Day**. The concept is to celebrate all that has got us through the past 18 months - inviting communities throughout the UK to get together to say "Thank You" to everyone who has helped us, from shopkeepers and teachers to friends, families, next door neighbours and people from our places of worship and community groups.



Following the lead of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, **Churches Together in England** commends the **National Thank You Day** on Sunday 4 July to all churches, as an opportunity to give thanks with the whole United Kingdom.

You could host a Thank You party for your church or wider community, or incorporate a Thank You into your scheduled services – it doesn't matter what you do, as long as you encourage all ages to come together and say "thank you" to each other. Full details and further ideas for ways to say "thank you" (some with funding available) can be found via:

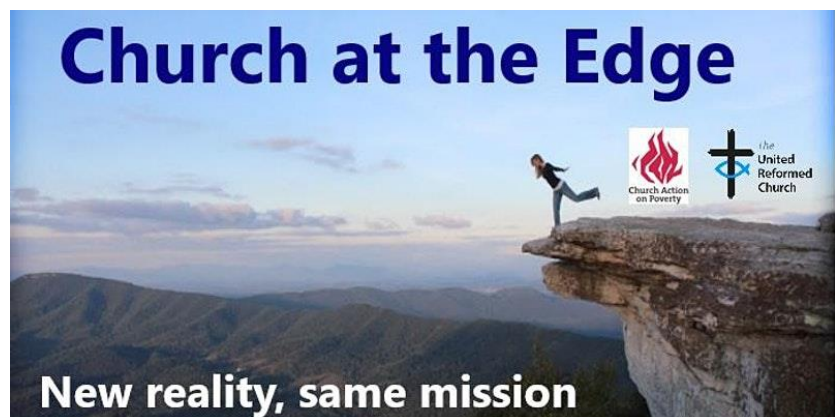
https://cte.org.uk/Articles/612919/Home/News/Latest_news/National_Thank_You.aspx

New Reality, Same Mission

Thursday 8 July 2.00-3.00pm

Are you engaged in community ministry (however you might choose to interpret that term)? Do you need a space to meet with others, to be open and honest about difficult situations, and to seek support from each other in living through these challenging times? Then you are invited to sign up for the hour-long "Church on the Edge"

sessions, brought to you monthly on Zoom by **Church Action on Poverty** and the URC's "New Reality Same Mission" group (comprising Children's & Youth Work, Church & Society, Walking the Way & Church-Related Community Work).



The next session, on **Thursday 8 July** from 2.00-3.00pm, will be led by **Eunice Attwood** who is Church at the Margins Officer for the Methodist church.

Eunice brings over 20 years' experience of ordained diaconal ministry from a variety of contexts, including city- and town-centred ministry amongst marginalised and vulnerable communities, where she helped start and grow many fresh expressions of church. Now a Tutor in Pastoral Theology at the **Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education**, Birmingham, she is also one of the launch team leaders for **New Inclusive Church Birmingham**, a church plant started out of a deep commitment to living out the love of Jesus in practical, unexpected, and transforming ways.

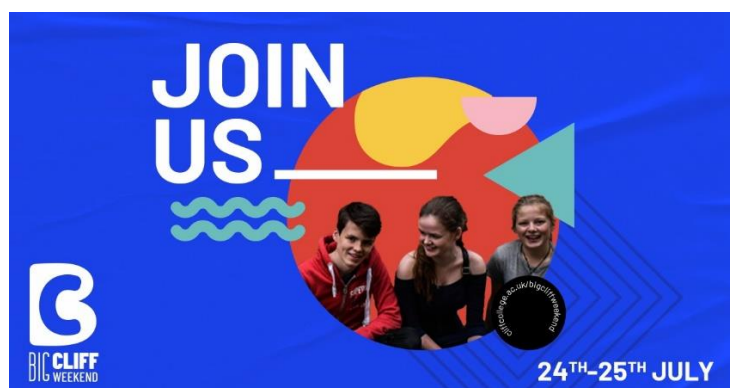


Please register for a free place at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/church-at-the-edge-tickets-154843588341>

To see the inspiring talk given by dynamic young Pentecostal leader **Shermara Fletcher** at the June event, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeH2FI0Rof8> .

The Big Cliff Weekend

Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 July 2021



The **Big Cliff Weekend** is a one-off gathering on the **Cliff College** site to worship, learn, relax and celebrate together.

Philippa Hanna and **Tom Smith** (Soul Survivor) will be leading worship and performing some of their own music, and there are also appearances from **Daughters of Davis**, **OTC** from the Message Trust, comedian **Tony Vino** and more.

As well as excellent worship and teaching, there will be activities for all ages across the site. Cliff College invites you to come with your family and friends and spend the weekend praising God and enjoying the beautiful college site in all its summer glory. You could even bring your whole youth group along.

The **Big Cliff Weekend** accommodation options include camping, caravanning and single and double en-suite bedrooms. Those looking for a longer break may buy an extended Big Cliff Weekend ticket and stay on the site for an extra two or four nights. Cliff College is a perfect base from which to visit Chatsworth House and Bakewell and explore the Peak District.



For more information or to book tickets please visit: <https://cliffcollege.ac.uk/venue/big-cliff-weekend>

Situations Vacant



Finance and Governance Officer East Midlands Synod

Full time – 37.5 hours per week

Annual Salary £35,000 - £40,000

The East Midlands Synod and Trust are seeking a qualified and experienced person for this important role.

Experience in financial management, banking and investments along with the governance needs of the charity are essential.

An application pack can be accessed by emailing **Mrs Chris Willis** on admin@urc5.org.uk or via the Synod website:

<https://urc5.org.uk/content/advert-synodtrust-finance-and-governance-officer>

Closing date for applications: midday on Monday 26 July 2021

Interviews: Wednesday 1 September 2021

Bookkeeper (part-time) Derby Central URC

Derby Central United Reformed Church seeks a part-time bookkeeper to assist in recording and monitoring the church's financial transactions.

Apart from church activities and donations, the church also has commercial lettings and one-off hires of different parts of the premises. There are five part-time members of staff and the payroll function is outsourced to a bureau.

Estimated time requirement is 4-6 hours per week.

Rate of pay by discussion, based on qualification and/or experience.

Desirable, but not essential experience:

- Knowledge of charity accounting and treatment of funds
- Use of accounting software
- Producing financial reports via Excel
- Monitoring finances and advising management of approaching deadlines
- Communicating financial information to non-accountants

The church offers a **pension scheme** for all eligible employees, based on gross salary, which complies with the government's automatic enrolment scheme has been set up with the People's Pension.

Please send a CV to **Cathy Gould** in the first instance at cathy@cathyjim.uk

Closing date for applications: Friday 9 July



Personal Assistant London

Permanent contract from 1 September 2021
21 hours per week
Salary: £19,159

Are you passionate about communication and organisation, working within the faith-based charity sector?

The role supports the Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship, responsible for a team of staff, co-ordinating their work with that of the Church's main councils and with the needs of its congregations and people.

You will have a vital role in seeing that the Deputy General Secretary is properly supported in this busy schedule, acting as an administrative anchor, balancing a range of responsibilities confidentially and carefully. You will be part of a diverse team and your reliability as a team player will be key in enabling the Deputy General Secretary to manage this work.

You will be a highly organised, experienced PA with excellent communication and interpersonal skills. You will have the ability to multi-task and work to tight deadlines whilst maintaining a high level of accuracy and attention to detail. Being proactive and the ability to work without constant supervision is essential. Experience of using IT to manage projects and events would be a distinct advantage.

We can offer you a flexible and friendly work environment with a generous final salary pension scheme.

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, Thursday 8 July 2021 Interview date: Tuesday 27 July 2021

Reminders of Other Forthcoming Events



Congregational lament and growth: emerging from lockdown

A free online conference on Zoom from Northern College

Friday 25 June (2.00-5.00pm) & Saturday 26 June (9.30am-12.30pm)
OR **Mondays 4, 11 & 18 October 7.00-9.00pm**

Northern College's free annual conference for Lay Preachers, Worship Leaders and those in church leadership will be offered twice: on the afternoon of Friday 25 and morning of Saturday 26 June, and again on three successive Monday evenings on 4, 11 and 18 October. The sessions are:

Telling the Stories: Old Testament as resilience playbook, led by **Dr Meg Warner**

Sharing the Tears: The Gospels join our weeping, led by the **Revd Dr Rosalind Selby**

Touching the Wounds: Post-traumatic growth and worship, led by the **Revd Dr Adam Scott**

To register, please email: paul.barrett@lutherking.ac.uk

URC Buildings Forum Conference

Wednesday 21 July 11.30am to 1.00pm

The next conference from the **URC Buildings Forum** is scheduled for **Wednesday 21 July** from 11.30am to 1.00pm. With input from speaker **Martin Haywood** (Southern Synod Mission Officer) and two contrasting places of worship, it will explore the vision and mission context for URC buildings and assets, including whether we need a building to be 'church' in the 21st Century. Please email mission@urc.org.uk to sign up for this event.

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 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](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

In compliance with current government guidelines, the **East Midlands Synod Office** building remains closed. All members of staff continue to work from home: please email them in the usual way. You may continue to use the Office address for any postal business and mail is collected at least once a week. 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

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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Next edition: Thursday 8 July 2021

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: modpa@urch5.org.uk and training@urch5.org.uk
Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Tuesday 6 July 2021**