

### Opening Reflection by Donna Gordon

Synod Safeguarding Officer

To reflect is to take a look at what has been experienced, to review and contemplate or at least, to think about. And, as I reflect on the last year, I release a deep and heavy sigh. Let's face it, it has been an extraordinarily strange set of circumstances for the whole world to comprehend. Then I pause to ponder my circumstances. I have to take time to compose myself while I select what I should share, in these few paragraphs that I feel privileged to have been invited to write. Maybe I should focus on safeguarding principles and raise awareness that safeguarding is an integral part of Christian fellowship and how it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard one another. I should definitely invite readers to get in touch with me with any safeguarding queries they might have... Hmm... Pondering over, I dig deeper and start here...

Hello, I'm Donna. I'm the (relatively new) **Synod Safeguarding Officer** for the East Midlands Synod. In the last six months I have experienced profound sadness at the loss of two of my beloved sisters, Fay & Gail, who both passed away suddenly within three months of each other. I have endured the stress of moving house and starting a new job! I have juggled time and energy as I helped nurse my father back to health after covid struck him down, and, with great joy and happiness, I have welcomed my first grandchild into my arms. A veritable rollercoaster of emotions, don't you think?



So now as I reflect, I ask myself, *'how on earth have you managed, yet alone survived?'* The answer to my question is, *'I'm not sure I managed, but I know how I survived.'*

You see, I survived because I have a foundation of faith in God. I survived because I have people around me who share that faith and prayed for me and my family (including my employers). I survived because I have people who love me and express that love towards me daily. I survived because of love.

So, whilst sometimes, I do not 'manage' daily life as well as I'd like, I somehow survive to see another day, to smile in spite of sadness, to love others as I turn to God for strength and comfort. And perhaps most importantly, to count my abundant blessings; especially the arrival of my granddaughter – Jayla Fay who, even as I write, brings a huge smile to my proud Nanna face.

In closing, I encourage us all to count our blessings, rely on our faith, feel the love of those around us and give love to those you can reach in these unprecedented times. Don't worry if everything isn't as managed as we would like it to be, love is way more important. Yes, it is, as it is written...

**Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God...and God is Love. (1 John 4:7-8)**

## News from Botswana

*As part of the **Belonging to the World Church** programme, the East Midlands Synod is partnered with the **Botswana Synod of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa**.*



### **How have our friends in Botswana coped with the Covid-19 pandemic?**

In March 2020 when we had just realised the significance of the pandemic that was spreading worldwide, our friends in Botswana were experiencing the same.

As a precautionary measure, the government banned gatherings of more than 50 people and the entry of people from countries deemed high-risk, which obviously affected the churches. On 24 March, the government announced that borders would be closed. Citizens of Botswana were permitted to return but needed to be quarantined for 14 days. There was concern, however, that people were still entering Botswana illegally from Zimbabwe by avoiding official border crossings.

As in the UK, all schools were closed from 20 March.

The UCCSA Botswana Synod made the decision to close all the churches, as we did. Ministers managed to preach from their churches via Facebook to the congregations.

People in Botswana too had to wear face masks: this was compulsory when leaving one's home and social distancing was enforced. Later, they too had zone areas that were locked down.

When the churches were able to reopen, they were limited to 50 people attending: this was very difficult especially in the churches where the congregation is 300-500. Members have had to book in to attend. Fortunately, they are able to hold two services each week, so they can have 100 people attending services in total.

One of the Synod's worries is that they may see a decline in church membership when the restrictions are lifted as many of the elderly have been unable to attend or to use social media.

Botswana too has experienced a second wave which they have found very challenging and from 24 December to 31 January a nationwide curfew was in place nightly from 7.00pm to 4.00am.

Statistics have been issued on a regular basis and they include those that have recovered from the virus, which is very positive. As of 19 April they have had 44,702 confirmed cases: 39,733 have recovered, 684 have died. Botswana has a population of 2,024,787. Its vaccine programme started on 18 March and 100,800 doses have been given, starting with the over-65s.

Please keep our friends in your prayers.

**Judith North**

Advocate for **Belonging to the World Church**

## Around the East Midlands

### Maundy Money Honour for Kathleen Pass

**Kathleen Pass** of Boulevard URC, Nottingham was one of this year's nominees to receive **The Queen's Maundy money**.



The **Royal Maundy Service** has taken place in England since at least the 6th century. In its modern form, it sees the Monarch mark **Maundy Thursday** by presenting symbolic alms to one man and one woman for every year of her (or his) life. As The Queen turned 95 this year, Kathleen was one of just 190 people nationwide nominated for their longstanding Christian service to the church and community.

Owing to the pandemic, the service could not go ahead at Westminster Abbey as planned this year: instead the Maundy money was delivered by Royal Mail, franked "Buckingham Palace" and accompanied by a letter from The Queen. A white leather purse contains 95 pence in newly minted sterling silver pennies, twopences, threepences and fourpences, while the accompanying red purse contains a £5 coin marking The Queen's 95 years, with the motto "My heart and my devotion", and a commemorative 50 pence piece, this year marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of decimalisation.



The Queen is known to take great personal interest in the Maundy Recipients and their exemplary Christian service. Kathleen is a worthy nominee: in addition to her 32 years as a secondary teacher, she has served

65 years as **Treasurer** at Boulevard URC, over 50 years as a **Lay Preacher** throughout Nottinghamshire and South Derbyshire and 9 years as a **Pastoral Consultant** in the East Midlands Synod. She has also long worked as a volunteer at the Bridge Community Centre and served 29 years as a Magistrate on the Nottingham Bench. The East Midlands Synod congratulates Kathleen on this richly deserved honour.

### New banners at Abington Avenue URC



**Abington Avenue URC** in Northampton has unveiled these two magnificent new banners, conceived by **Sue Griffiths** of the church's banner group. Minister the **Revd Jane Wade** describes what they represent:

"The first shows life during lockdown looking out of the window - Lord of all Hopefulness. The second - Lord of all Joy - is as restrictions are lifted and folk reengage with the 'outside' world. The banner group put them together, but they encouraged others within the church to be involved - even if it was like me, sewing a button on the middle of a flower."

## News from Community of Grace



**Community of Grace** in Leicester was the first Mission Project recognised within the United Reformed Church. It attempts to create and sustain something like home and family (or household and community) with and for men who have long since lost their own home, or even never really had one.

This extract from its latest newsletter describes the Community's response to Covid-19:

### Working through the pandemic

When the pandemic started, one of our Fellows living at **Hunters Lodge** caught Covid-19. This made us realise we needed to create a separate support hub, away from our accommodation.

In March 2020 Community of Grace set up a dedicated hub at **Wycliffe United Reformed Church**. Since then we have been helping over 50 people across the city who are vulnerable, isolating or in poverty. We make sure that we visit every week to deliver healthy, fresh veg, fruit and meat alongside staples like pasta, rice and tinned food. The weekly visits mean we can check in with people and support them with their housing, benefits or health needs and be a friendly face.



To date, over 200kg of produce grown at **GraceWorks Community Garden**, run by Community of Grace, has been delivered, which has supplemented over 6 tons of food from FareShare and other donations. The service is going to continue through until the summer of 2021 because the team are aware that the financial and emotional effects of the pandemic will continue for some time after restrictions start to ease.

**Ben Brown**, who leads the work and is a Trustee of Community of Grace alongside **Deborah Baird** and **David Howlett** said,

*"It has been a privilege to coordinate this work and it has been amazing to see our community coming together, with support from individuals, faith groups and other charities to get support to everyone who needed it. We have dealt with people who have been sleeping rough in Leicester who are now housed, people who have had no access to money, providing food for people who are shielding and most importantly being there to have a chat with individuals who haven't spoken to another person for weeks. I can't thank everyone enough, whether they have grown food, delivered parcels, befriended someone or donated to our project. Without their love and generosity this would not have been possible."*



Community of Grace also wishes to thank the **Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation**, which has supported it throughout the pandemic.

Last week Community of Grace received thanks and recognition from Her Majesty the Queen's representative, **Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire Mike Kapur** OBE for Community of Grace's strength, resilience and wonderful contribution during the pandemic.

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## Join the 100 Club

Community of Grace needs help to continue with the support it is providing throughout the pandemic and to reach its vision for the future. It is seeking 100 people to give regularly, to make sure it has a solid base of regular donors who can keep it going through the good times and the bad in 2021 and beyond.

To sign up please go to: <https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/appeal/100club>

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View the full newsletter from **Community of Grace** at: <http://news.communityofgrace.co.uk/>

## Practical Information for Churches

### Quinquennial Inspections

It is that time of year again when instructions to surveyors to carry out these 5-yearly inspections of Churches and Manses have been issued.

If you get a call or an email from a firm of surveyors asking for access to your Church or Manse then it is a legitimate request, and your co-operation in allowing them access would be appreciated.

If you have any concerns, please let me know.

**Geoff Milnes** BSc FRICS  
Synod Property Officer

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## Important Changes to Marriage Registration from 4 May

All "**Authorised Persons**" who currently undertake the registration of marriages in their churches should take note of the far-reaching changes due to come into force very shortly, on **Tuesday 4 May 2021**, resulting from an Act of Parliament in 2019.

From that date, the existing arrangements to register marriages will be replaced by a new **Marriage Schedule System**. Authorised Persons will no longer issue marriage certificates, maintain a duplicate register, or submit quarterly returns. Instead, a new Marriage Schedule (a single A4 sheet) will be issued in advance by the local Register Office, who will then issue a certificate on its return.

These new marriage schedules will already contain the personal details of the couple (replacing "father" with space for up to four entries per person for "mother/father/parent") and will be used by the Register Office to issue the marriage certificate afterward.



## What will remain the same:

- The **form of the marriage ceremony**, including all religious rites, is unchanged.
- You must still ensure couples **meet the requirements to marry** in your church and that they attend the local Register Office in good time to give notice of their intention to marry.
- You will still be required to **obtain the marriage schedule** prior to the wedding date (usually the register office will first issue it to the couple).
- As an Authorised Person, you will still **attend marriages** at your registered building.
- You are still required to conduct questioning prior to the ceremony and **confirm that the details on the marriage schedule are correct** before the marriage proceeds.
- Following the marriage, you will **ensure that the marriage schedule is signed** by the couple, their witnesses and the officiant.
- You will still **use registration ink** to complete the marriage schedule.

## What will change:

- **You will no longer register the marriage or issue a certificate.** Instead, as Authorised Person you must return the signed marriage schedule within 21 days to the Local Registration Service. It will now be their responsibility to enter the marriage in a new electronic register and subsequently, on payment of a fee, to provide the couple with a marriage certificate.
- You will no longer need to submit **quarterly returns** or undertake **corrections** to the register.
- You will no longer **maintain a register** and duplicate register. The registry office will in due course issue instructions for the **closure** of registers and the **return** of hard copy registers and certificate stock (although churches will normally retain the duplicate register for their records).

**HM Passport Office** has issued detailed instructions and training materials to support these changes, which Authorised Persons may access online via the **Local Registration Service Association (LRSA)** website [www.lrsa.org.uk](http://www.lrsa.org.uk). (If you are in a URC Church, please disregard the separate guidelines for Clergy; slightly different provision is made for the Church of England.) You should have been issued with a password for this purpose; if not, your local registry office should be able to help.

If you require any further detail about these changes, and are struggling to find it through your local registry office or the LRSA, please email **Derek Graham** (Synod Training & Development Officer) at [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk).

## Children's and Youth Work

### Final Fridays – Friday 30 April 7.30-9.30pm

The next in the **Final Fridays** series for young people aged 11-25 to connect and have fun together is tomorrow, **Friday 30 April**, co-hosted by URC Youth in both the East Midlands and West Midlands Synods.

For more information and to arrange to join, please contact **Richard Knott** via [cydo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:cydo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk).



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### National (England) Youth Sector Census



The **National Youth Agency** (NYA) is undertaking a Census of Youth Sector Activities to help inform the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review and help shape strategies for workforce development, training and support. Over 16,000 organisations that deliver youth services or related activities in England have already been identified through being registered with the Charity Commission, but there are still many thousands of others who provide services and activities to young people. The NYA are conscious that a large proportion of those will come from within the Christian faith community – **that's us!**

The NYA intend to use the survey data for planning future development strategies, co-ordinating funding and communications, and enabling young people to find out what's available, and more. We and they are concerned that all parts of the sector are able to have a voice, including those operating through the church and Christian faith agencies, so please do take part to show the huge contribution that Christian youth work is making to the wider youth work sector.

**The UK CYWC** has been in touch with the NYA in order to raise the profile of Christian youth work and ministry through the census and are keen to encourage every aspect of our vital work to be recorded and recognised through this survey.

To ensure we are well represented, please take 2 minutes to either check that your organisation is registered or to register and make our individual, denominational and Christian agency responses count. Further details can be found at: <https://nya.org.uk/national-youth-sector-census/>



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## Activities with under-18s: Roadmap Step 2

The National Youth Agency has also updated its advice to help you understand step 2 in the Government roadmap in relation to UK Government regulations for activities with under-18s:

- [Read the information highlighted for step 2 of the roadmap](#)
  - [Watch a new webinar from the NYA to help understand the guidance for step 2.](#)
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## Wilderness 2021 - Saturday 22 May

**Wilderness 2021** is a virtual retreat day for young people aged 12+. Taking place on **Saturday 22nd May**, this event will feature a day of digital content to help explore faith by looking at the account of Jesus in the wilderness. Content will be delivered online including guided prayer, meditation, craft and worship. Watch the trailer at: <https://youtu.be/2WiCAldB7t0>



**Book online before 12 May** to receive your box of resources (£3.95 P&P). Find out more and book online at the **Crossfire** website: [www.crossfire.org.uk](http://www.crossfire.org.uk)

**Crossfire** is a Christian Youth Camp for young people aged 12+ (School Year 7 and up) brought to you by **GEAR** and as part of the **United Reformed Church**.

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## Environment Sunday Worship from URC Children's and Youth Work

A poster for 'God's World - Hands Off!' Environment Sunday Worship. The title is in a large, black, sans-serif font. Below it, 'Environment Sunday Worship' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The date 'Sunday 6th June 2021' is centered below the title. To the left of the date is a logo with the letters 'J', 'P', 'I', and 'T' in a grid. To the right is a circular logo for the United Reformed Church. Below the date, there is a paragraph of text: 'An act of intergenerational worship Released on 28th May on URC Children's and Youth Work - YouTube (available in the full format or separate parts for use)'. Below this is another paragraph: 'A bank of resources are available to use to help you worship and pray www.urc.org.uk/resources-children-and-youth'. At the bottom of the poster is a colorful illustration of a diverse group of children and young people holding hands and singing or playing instruments.

The URC **Children's and Youth Work** team from across the country have collaborated to put together an online **Intergenerational worship entitled God's World – Hands Off!** which will be premiered on **YouTube** on 28 May, in time for **Environment Sunday** on 6 June 2021.

You are warmly invited to join in on Sunday 6 June as people of all ages from across the URC lead us in worshipping together. Alternatively, you may want to use part of the material in forming your own **Climate Sunday** worship. For this reason, the resources will be offered as a YouTube playlist with each of the segments as individual videos which you may use as you see fit. They will include:

- Opening statement of faith from 8-year-old Alex
- Opening prayer by Roo Stewart of JPIT
- Reflective telling of the creation story
- An interactive reading of Psalm 8
- Creative prayer on the theme of healing the world
- Craft activity
- Music from the Youth Disassembled band
- Videos of families using wondering questions to discuss the world, climate and what we can do about it
- A poem/prayer from 7-year-old Alice

Available to download from the URC Children's and Youth Work resource page will be downloadable pages for Bible journaling and doodling on the theme: [www.urch.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth](http://www.urch.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth)

This is the Children's and Youth Work team's response to the call by **Climate Sunday** for all local churches across Great Britain & Ireland to hold a climate-focused service before the **COP26** conference in Glasgow this November. Other resources for planning your own Climate Sunday service are available from the Climate Sunday website: <https://www.climatesunday.org/>

## Church at the Edge

Thursday 6 May 2.00-3.00pm

The second monthly **Church at the Edge** session will be held on Zoom on Thursday 6 May from 2.00-3.00pm. Co-hosted by **Church Action on Poverty** and the URC's "**New Reality, Same Mission**" team, the session will reflect on the topic "Wisdom Cries Out: Public Theology from the Margins".

The title is taken from a recent booklet by the session's leader

**Andrew Grinnell**, who is part of Urban Life, a small team of theological companions who journey alongside individuals, groups, collectives, teams and churches to stimulate reflection on mission practice. The Zoom link is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87816588776> .



## News from Christian Aid

### Christian Aid 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service Sunday 9 May at 6.30pm



Christian Aid is marking its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with an online service of celebration, reflection and recommitment to the cause. There is more information and a sign-up form on the website: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/join/75-anniversary-service-sign>

In addition to its other activities, Christian Aid is currently working closely with its partners in India to help tackle the escalation of the pandemic in that country, as part of its **Covid Response**. The aid agency is also amongst the global faith leaders calling for drug firms to vaccinate the world against Covid:

[www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/27/global-faith-leaders-call-for-drug-firms-to-vaccinate-world-against-covid](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/27/global-faith-leaders-call-for-drug-firms-to-vaccinate-world-against-covid)

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### Christian Aid Week – 10-16 May 2021

This year's **Christian Aid Week** is dedicated to addressing the injustice of the climate emergency, bringing practical help to people living in poverty to help them mitigate effects of climate change from droughts to flooding. Details are available online at:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

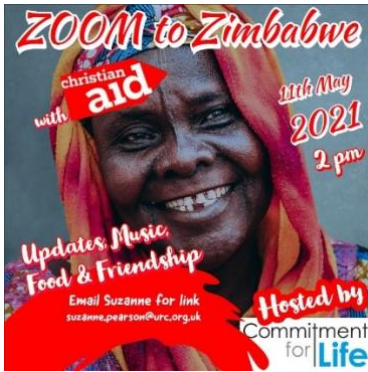
**Jeremy Gowers-Cromie**, the East Midlands Church Engagement and Fundraising Officer for Christian Aid, has pre-recorded a 12-minute talk for Christian Aid week. This is provided for churches to share freely in services, newsletters and social media, as it is difficult to supply speakers for individual services this year.

View the video at: <https://youtu.be/cMu180CKqWA>

So that it may be more safely used in services, the video can also be downloaded onto a laptop at

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/EmmDQk57Z5BNXyH57>

Is your church taking part in **Christian Aid Week**? We would love to share some of your fundraising stories and pictures in this e-letter. Please email: [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk)



## Zoom to Zimbabwe for Christian Aid Week

Tuesday 11 May 2.00pm

To mark Christian Aid Week, **Commitment for Life** is holding a “Zoom to Zimbabwe” on Tuesday 11 May at 2.00pm.

Organised in partnership with Christian Aid, this offers an afternoon of updates, music, fellowship and more. To obtain the Zoom link, please email Suzanne Pearson: [suzanne.pearson@urc.org.uk](mailto:suzanne.pearson@urc.org.uk).

## Women Without Walls – Book Event

Saturday 8 May 10.00am

Revd Dr Mary Cotes has published a new book, **Women Without Walls: How God Shapes Ordinary Women for Extraordinary Kingdom Work**. A discussion of its themes will be held on Zoom on Saturday 9 May at 10.00am, with an open invitation to women and men from across the world.

If you would like to register for the event, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/womenwithoutwalls>



For further information about the book, visit: <https://www.bookdepository.com/Women-Without-Walls/9789811471568>. **Women Without Walls** book will also be available as an e-book shortly.

## Events from the Sheffield Methodist District

Our friends in the Sheffield Methodist District share an open invitation to two forthcoming events online.



### **Positively Rural – Festivals as Outreach** **Friday 18 May 7:30pm**

The **Revd Elizabeth Clark** and the **Revd Caroline Pinchbeck** are the speakers at this discussion to be held by **Positively Rural**, an online community hosted by the Yorkshire Plus Learning Network but open to anyone of any denomination with an interest in rural ministry, including volunteers, lay workers and ministers.

More information can be found at: <https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/news/events-courses/communities-of-practice/positively-rural.html>

### **Ministry with older people: Whole Person Healthcare** **Wednesday 26 May 1.00-2.30pm**

The next **Ministry with Older People** webinar will be held on **Wednesday 26 May** from 1.00-2.30pm. This webinar is for anyone of any denomination involved in ministry with older people, including volunteers, lay workers and ministers. It will be an opportunity to share experiences, ask questions, and explore new resources and approaches to support you in your ministry in your context.

The guest speaker is the **Revd Jonathan Edwards**, Vice Chair and Advocate for Parish Nursing Ministries UK, and formerly the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Jonathan will outline the **Parish Nursing** approach to caring for people's overall wellbeing, incorporating body, mind and spirit.

Find out more at: <https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/news/events-courses/communities-of-practice/ministry-with-older-people.html>

## From the URC's Resource Centres for Learning

### Ministry in a Time of Trauma: a virtual one-day course for those in church ministry

from Westminster College  
Saturday 8 May 10.00-4.00pm

Covid-19 is being experienced by many as a complex trauma, in a world in which trauma is experienced by individuals, congregations and communities in diverse ways. This online one-day course, which is also open to those in lay ministry, will enable you to be better equipped to self-care and to minister to their congregations and communities in this time of trauma.

Arising from the work of the **Tragedy and Congregations** team, the course will be led by theologian, pastoral supervisor, spiritual director and former GP the **Rev Dr Rhona Knight**. It costs £15 per person (£10 for students). To apply, please email: [wmoffice@hermes.cam.ac.uk](mailto:wmoffice@hermes.cam.ac.uk)

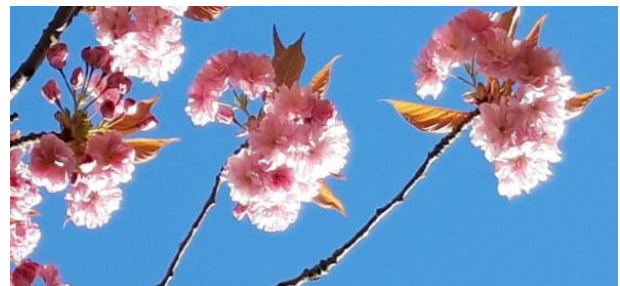


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### Congregational lament and growth: emerging from lockdown A free online conference on Zoom

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** 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 three 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](mailto:paul.barrett@lutherking.ac.uk)

# URC Holiday Forum 2021

Saturday 21 – Friday 27 August

The **Holiday Forum** is planning to return to The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick this August, with parts of the programme to be streamed online.

As ever it promises a packed week of faith, fun and fellowship. This year's theme is **Living with and loving difference: the challenge of being human in a fractured world.**



Theme: Living With & Loving Difference



Speaker: Prof Anthony Reddie



Worship Leader: Revd Jane Rowell

Bookings are now being taken, whether you'd like to join in virtually or in person, via the website:

<http://www.urcholidayforum.org.uk/wpsite/booking-form/>

## HOLIDAY FORUM 2021 (21-27 AUGUST)

### LIVING WITH & LOVING DIFFERENCE

Sadly, we live in a world where the impact of globalisation and social media means that we now know far more about each other than used to be the case, but also conversely, we seem as a human family to be far more divided than ever. Whether on the grounds of 'race', ethnicity, culture, political ideology, class, gender, sexuality, biological determinism etc. humanity seems to have become ever more tribal. We will explore our own identity and that of others.

### COME & JOIN US!

We meet at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick. Come for the week, or join our virtual programme on Zoom.

Want to know why it's so good? Listen to what people are saying (<https://vimeo.com/390744130>)

For details, pricing and booking, go to [www.urcholidayforum.org.uk](http://www.urcholidayforum.org.uk).

SEE YOU THERE!

## Rewilding the Church: Virtual Book Group

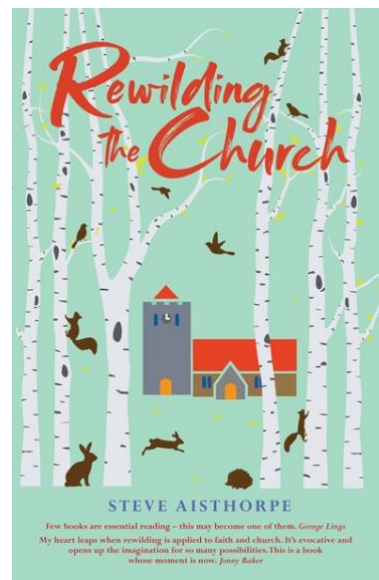
Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm until 26 May

Our virtual book group is now under way, studying **Steve Aisthorpe's** book **Rewilding the Church** which offers a fine stimulus to discuss questions which have been thrown into even sharper relief by the Covid-19 pandemic: what is the future for our churches? How can we connect with the communities around us? How is God renewing the church, and how can we join in?

Readers can join the group for as many or few sessions as they are able, so it is not too late to get involved. Each Wednesday, Mission Development Officer the **Revd Robert Bushby** leads discussion of two chapters of the book (with the next meeting, on Wednesday 5 May, considering chapters 3 and 4) and on Wednesday 12 April it will be joined by author **Steve Aisthorpe** himself.

Act quickly if you would like to take advantage of the **£2 discount** kindly offered to people in the East Midlands Synod by publisher St Andrew's Press: the offer ends this Friday, 30 April. To claim it, purchase the book at <https://bit.ly/Rewilding21> and enter the voucher code **URCREWILD21**.

Everyone with an interest in the church's future is invited to take part. For the Zoom link, or to find out more, please **email Derek Graham** (Training and Development Officer) on [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk).



## Reminders of other forthcoming events

### Communications skills: free workshop series

This series of free workshops, jointly offered by **URC Children's & Youth Work** and **Education & Learning** to help improve communication skills, continues with



**Social media for beginners: Thursday 29 April 7.30pm**  
**Improve your social media: Thursday 13 May 7.30pm**  
Both led by **Oli Deeks**

**Inclusive worship using signs and symbols - session 1: Thursday 20 May 7.30pm**  
**Inclusive worship using signs and symbols - follow up session: Thursday 17 June 7.30pm**  
Both led by **Lorraine Webb**

**Sharing stories more effectively - session 1: Thursday 27 May 7.30pm**  
**Sharing stories more effectively - follow up session: Thursday 1 July 7.30pm**  
Both led by **Ann-Marie Nye**

Find out more and book to attend a single workshop, or each pair:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/series-of-workshops-building-skills-confidence-and-capacity-in-comms-registration-144181152709>

The sessions are recorded, and attenders connected with URC churches will have the opportunity to apply for small **grants** (up to £200) to enable the training to be put into practice by purchasing equipment, software or further training.



## Constance Coltman: Book Launch

Tuesday 18 May 7.00-8.00pm

To attend the launch of *Constance: Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher*, please email [mission@urc.org.uk](mailto:mission@urc.org.uk) with your name, email address and if appropriate, the church to which you belong or are representing.

The legacy of her courage is a perpetual challenge to the many churches who are yet to embrace the ordination of women. Lydia Neshangwe, Moderator of the Council for World Mission, the first African woman elected into this role

Join us online for the launch of  
**Constance**  
Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher  
Edited by Janet Wootton

My prayer is that as you read this book, you too will be influenced, challenged and inspired by the stories of faith and courage to live out your calling and be true to yourself.  
Yvonne Campbell, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation, the first woman to serve in this role

When a door long barred finally begins to open ... the first one to slip through it quietly is easy to overlook. *Constance: Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher* is to be commended for shining a timely light on the life and ministry of Constance Coltman.  
Kathy Galloway, writer and activist, the first woman Leader of the Iona Community

This book is an encouragement for women who are still struggling with women's ordination and leadership.  
The Revd Najla Kassab, President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the first woman in this role

**18 May, 2021**  
**7pm-8pm**  
**BST (UTC/GMT +1)**

- Videos
- Speakers
- Poetry
- Worship

**Constance Coltman – a pioneer of women's ordination**

Please email [mission@urc.org.uk](mailto:mission@urc.org.uk) for the link

**All are welcome**

To mark the launch of the new book *Constance – Pioneer, Pastor, Preacher*, join contributors to the book, participants from the centenary conference, members of the Congregational Federation, the United Reformed Church and the Council for World Mission and pioneers from around the world.

## URC/Pfalz Communion Service for Pentecost (via Zoom)

Sunday 23 May 6.30 pm

Our East Midlands URC Youth representative **Ella Lemon** is amongst those leading worship in a joint service between the URC and its German partner the **Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz**, to be held online on **Friday 23 May** at 6.30pm. In the context of Coronavirus, climate change and changing European relationships are changing, the service asks where the Holy Spirit, who descended on the church at Pentecost, is leading us now?

**Pfarrer Martin Henninger** and the **Revd Philip Brooks** will preside at the Pentecost communion, while Ella joins Dan Morrell, Katherine Buckland and their German counterparts in leading reflections and prayers, bringing the voice of youth to a service expressing hopes for the future.

The service will be conducted in both English and German, so there is no requirement to be bilingual to attend. To receive the Zoom link, please email [carole.sired@urc.org.uk](mailto:carole.sired@urc.org.uk)

## Find us online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.urb5.org.uk/) remains the one-stop shop for all essential information: <https://www.urb5.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

In view of government guidelines regarding the current pandemic, the **East Midlands Synod Office** building is presently closed. However, 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.urb5.org.uk](http://www.urb5.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

Free-to-use photography:

Church wedding: Photo by [David Vilches](#) on [Unsplash](#)  
Okavanga River, Botswana: photo by [Wynand Uys](#) on [Unsplash](#)

***Next edition: Thursday 13 May 2021***

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: [modpa@urb5.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urb5.org.uk) and [training@urb5.org.uk](mailto:training@urb5.org.uk)

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Tuesday 11 May 2021**