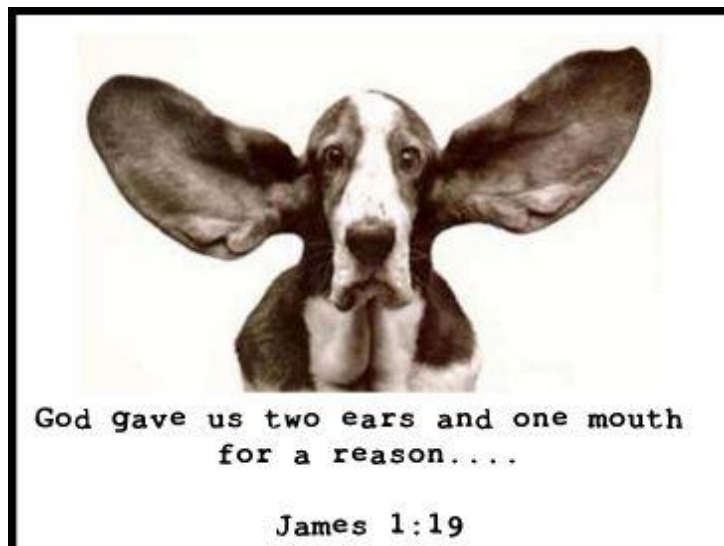


Opening Reflection by Richard Knott Children and Youth Development Officer

Listen Up

Have you ever heard the saying, “God gave you two ears and one mouth, so you should do twice as much listening as speaking?”



Have you ever said this to those talkative children or young people, or at least thought it? Or perhaps it came to mind as you endured another long Elders’ or Church Meeting.

But I wonder, did you notice that this saying has the word “You” in it rather than “Me” and “I”? Perhaps read it again now and insert these replacement words. Isn’t it true that so often we use such phrases like this about others rather than ourselves?

During the pandemic I took to walking between 3-5km most days as part of a plan to lose weight and get a little fitter. During these walks I often listen to music or podcasts. One podcast I follow is [5 Minutes with Marko](#). These are short podcasts where **Mark Oestreicher** of the **Youth Cartel** offers thoughts and insights about aspects of church mission and ministry with teenagers and they are well worth checking out if you like that sort of thing. In a recent episode Marko shared his belief that 50% of good engagement with parents and carers is listening. You can listen to it on Spotify at <https://open.spotify.com/show/4yoSx7orKojEbrYoegR6J0> or on [other platforms](#).

I wonder how easy you find it to really listen? It can take a real effort to listen without being quick to respond with our own thoughts and ideas. I attended a webinar last week which explored some recent

research into the area of churches partnering with families and faith (You can view the recording at <https://youtu.be/tyStunZ35Hk>). One of the key aspects highlighted was the need for congregations to listen to households in order to know what is best in their own contexts. And that sometimes the best way to really listen is perhaps not by interview or survey but rather to come alongside and have a conversation with someone while doing something else and to really hear what is going on in their lives, before forming a view on how you might be able to offer support.

I also attended an online **Take Time Meditation** session last week. This is an approach I have found to be really refreshing and involves a lot of listening. It works like this. Once relaxed into the meditation you are encouraged to imagine being with Jesus in one of the Gospel narratives as it is read aloud. Then Jesus sends everyone else away and it is just the two of you left together and you are invited to say to Jesus whatever is on your heart and mind. After a few moments you are then invited to spend a few moments to listen to what Jesus might want to say to you, before being helped slowly out of the meditation.

This time of visually imagining Jesus coming alongside you and listening to each other proves to be quite powerful. I have experienced this approach several times and it is amazing the encounters that people have with Jesus. I'd say 99 times out of 100, it is the listening to Jesus aspect that speaks most to participants, even in an online environment. The creator of this approach has told me that it is noticeable that more time needs to be given in these sessions to the talking to Jesus aspect, whereas when the opportunity to listen is offered participants often 'hear' quite quickly and less time is actually needed. This approach is used in many different contexts including Prisons where there are testimonies of people coming to faith in Jesus. You can find out more or try it yourself at <https://taketime.org.uk/>.

Taking time to stop, to listen – to really listen – to others and to listen to God can be a challenge for those of us who like to be active, who measure ourselves against results and achievements. How might you increase your listening? I wonder who are you currently listening to? How can you spend time coming alongside and listening to others, those currently connected with your congregation and those in your community that are not yet connected? What about children and young people: what might you learn if you really listened to them?



The [launch of URC Children](#) sees an exciting opportunity for us as a church to listen to children. At General Assembly it was my privilege to support a group of children to have their say at this meeting and to help them to help shape the future direction of the denomination. One of the clear aims of **URC Children** is to be child led and to give a voice to children within the Church. So it is perhaps timely to be reminded of these words:

“Don’t ever forget that it is best to listen much, speak little.”

James 1:19 (Living Bible Translation)

Around the East Midlands

Induction of the Revd Chris Parker



L-R: Revd Geoffrey Clarke, Revd Malcolm Fife, Mrs Ruth Parker, Revd Chris Parker and Revd Derek Hopkins (Interim Moderator)

The Induction of the **Revd Chris Parker** as Minister of the **Wellingborough and East Area** was celebrated on Saturday 16 July at Wellingborough United Reformed Church. Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** officiated, with the **Revd Malcolm Fife** preaching the sermon.



Mrs Claire Ette, Elder of Wellingborough URC, gives the Narrative of the Call

Words of welcome were shared from each of the churches in the new Resource Area: by **Richard Hartnell** on behalf of Wellingborough URC, **Bob Blackie** for Cowper Memorial Church, Olney, **Janette Hopkins** for Yardley Hastings URC, **Margaret Christopher** for Harrold LEP and **Rosemary Hallworth** for Upper Dean URC. Greetings were also extended by **Father Ben Lewis** of St Mark's Anglican Church, Wellingborough and by the Mayor, **Cllr Jonathan Ekins**.



Synod Clerk the Revd Camilla Veitch conveys the greetings of East Midlands Synod

We warmly welcome Chris to the East Midlands Synod and pray that his ministry amongst us will be both fruitful and fulfilling.

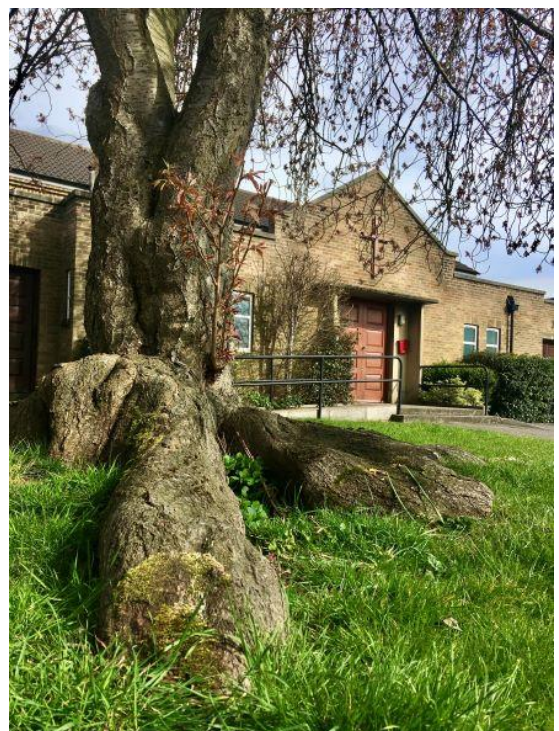
Invitation: Service of Celebration for A2C CRCW Project

Mackworth URC
Saturday 30 July 2.00pm

Friends from the churches of East Midlands Synod are warmly invited to a **Service of Celebration** to mark the commencement of the second five-year term for **A2C Church Related Community Work**, with **Ashbourne Road** and **Mackworth** as the Churches-in-Community and **Vicky Longbone** as the CRCW.

The service takes place on **Saturday 30 July** at **2.00pm** at **Mackworth United Reformed Church** (Enfield Road, Mackworth, Derby DE22 4DG) and will be conducted by Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke**, with **Miss Ali Stacey-Chapman** as preacher.

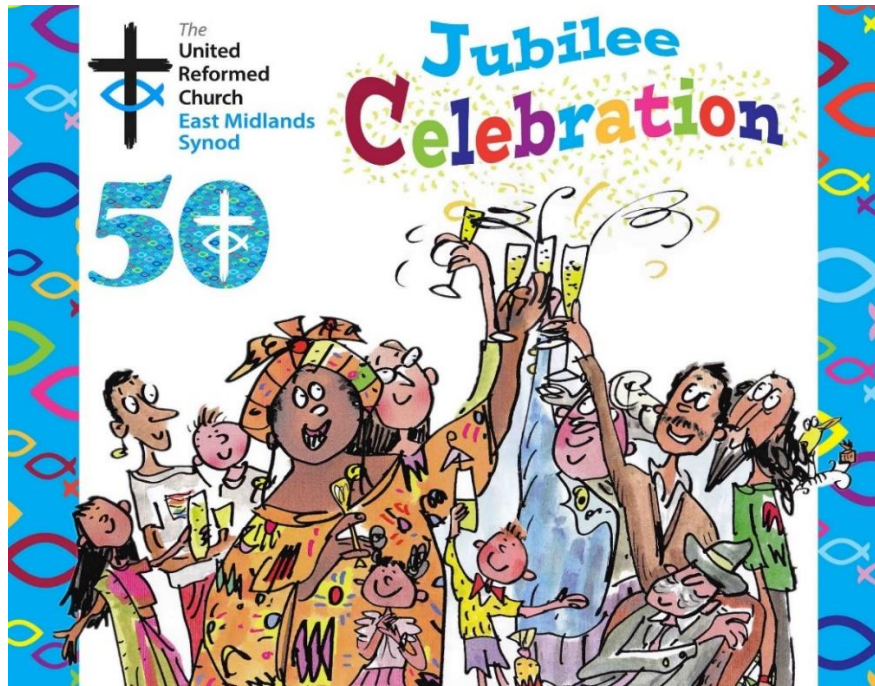
As the host church, **Mackworth URC** would appreciate advance notice of those planning to attend, together with notice of anyone requiring disabled parking provision as limited parking is available. Please notify **Hannah Holmes** at the Synod Office (email: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk) by **Saturday 23 July** so that numbers can be passed on to Mackworth.



Synod Jubilee Celebration

FREE OF CHARGE – BOOK NOW!

Saturday 10 September 10.00am-3.30pm
De Vere Jubilee Conference Centre, Nottingham



It's time to join the fun at our one-off **Jubilee Celebration** on Saturday 10 November! It's East Midlands Synod's very own birthday party – and you're invited.

We'll be **commemorating** the last 50 years, **celebrating** the present and starting to **create** the future in a fun-filled day with something for everyone, however young or old or in-between you might be.

Come along and you could:

- Enjoy music and creativity in a range of interactive **workshops and worship**
- learn about faith and food with **Tom Wilson** of the **St Philip's Centre**, Leicester, with tasters of various belief perspectives and free finger food from different cultures
- do a little crafting to help put the finishing touches to our **Jubilee Banner**
- take positive steps for a greener church with **Jane Woolmer** from A Rocha
- throw yourself into praise in an activity-packed service featuring **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** (Synod Moderator) and special guest **Revd Fiona Bennett** (Moderator of General Assembly)
- follow a **prayer trail** round the lake
- share **lively discussion** with Fiona and Geoffrey about the URC's past, present and future
- enjoy special **games and activities** for children, hang out in our **chill-out zone** and more!

It's all happening at the smart **DeVere Conference Centre**, overlooking the water on Nottingham University's lovely Jubilee Campus, which is easy to get to by car or public transport – and the whole event is now **free of charge** to make sure that everyone can join in.

Why not come as a group of church members, or offer an enjoyable day out to your young folk? Places are limited, however, so don't wait about to book yours. Simply send us the form on the Synod website: <https://urc5.org.uk/content/join-our-jubilee-celebration-saturday-10th-september-2022> or email jubilee@urc5.org.uk for more information.

Competition: Design the Moderator's Christmas Card



Have you been suffering the effects of the recent heatwave? Then you might find it helpful to get into a wintry frame of mind by taking part in our competition to design a Christmas card for our Synod Moderator, the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke**.

Geoffrey would love his seasonal greetings to come accompanied authentic East Midlands piece of artwork. So we have launched a competition for all budding artists, young and old, to create this year's Synod Christmas card – and everyone is invited to have a go.

You can use whatever style you like – drawing, painting, collage, photography, craftwork – but please try to choose a subject that is connected with the Nativity or the spiritual dimensions of Christmas. The winning design will be turned into a greetings card and shared far and wide, bearing the Moderator's tidings of Christmas joy.

Young people are particularly invited to take part and the best design by an under-18 will win a small prize as well as featuring in this e-letter.

To enter, simply send your artwork in **A4 format** to the Synod Office (URC East Midlands Synod, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AA) by the closing date of **Wednesday 31 August**. If your design is textured (eg a stitched scene) please print out a good-quality scan or photograph and supply it on flat A4 paper or card. Alternatively, you can email a high-resolution image of your artwork to training@urc5.org.uk. Either way, please make sure to **include your name, age (if under 18) and contact details**.

Please note, only the picture for the front is required: we will turn it into a finished greetings card ready for Geoffrey's signature.

The competition is open to everyone who lives or worships in East Midlands Synod and we will announce who has won at our **Jubilee Celebration** on Saturday 10 September. So spare a little while this summer to think forward to the festive season and turn your creativity to Christmassy ends!

Train as a Lay Pioneer

At this month's **General Assembly**, the URC passed a resolution to use the [Newbigin Pioneering Hub](#) to train lay pioneers in church and community contexts.

Do you see:

- New possibilities?
- A way where there is no way?
- Ideas for mission in your community that just might work?
- A new community of disciples where there is none?
- How your local community can flourish in God's love and shalom, but know this can't happen alone?



If you can see even a glimpse of any of these, then become part of the **Newbigin Pioneering Hub** and see if your hopes can be realised together with like-minded people.

The **Newbigin Pioneering Hub** is a collaboration between the **United Reformed Church**, the **Congregational Federation**, **Church Mission Society** and the **Seedbeds** organisation, named in honour of the inspirational URC Minister and mission theologian **Lesslie Newbigin**.

Open to all, the Hub is the space for training lay pioneers and also for supporting those already engaged in pioneering work. It aims to bring people together to support one another – sharing experience and expertise in the Hub as well as offering support to those engaged in training. Please contact info@seedbeds.org for more information.

CMS Certificate in Pioneering Mission



Newbigin Pioneering Hub

September 2022 - July 2023

seedbeds.org/newbigin-pioneering-hub/

APPLY
NOW

SEEDBEDS.ORG

Could God be calling you to step out in faith to see your God-given dreams in your local community flourish in faith, hope and love?

The **CMS Certificate in Pioneering Mission** is the foundational course designed and led by experienced pioneering practitioners, for practitioners. The **Church Mission Society** has offered this course around the UK but will now make it available to all through the **Newbigin Hub**, rooted in the URC in partnership with the Congregational Federation, and planted in a live pioneering context in inner city Birmingham.

The course will start in September 2022 and will include six units run over three weekend residential (at the Greenhouse at Barnes Close), hybrid sessions (online and in Lodge Road Community Church, Birmingham) on

three full Saturdays and three Wednesday evenings, alongside personal coaching. For more information, please contact info@seedbeds.org or apply online at <https://seedbeds.org/newbigin-pioneering-hub/>

The full programme costs £600, or £300 for an approved URC or Congregational Federation Participant. Funding support is available, for example by applying for a Discipleship Development Fund grant: please email training@urc5.org.uk.

Personal News

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

West Midlands Synod share with us the sad news of the death of **Revd David Brown**, who died on **Friday 8 July 2022**. David was a retired minister living in the Forest of Dean. David served in the Alkrington and Trinity United, Manchester from 1985 -2000. We hold David's family and friends in our prayers.

It is with deep regret that we report the death of **Jim Brown**, long-serving Church Secretary at St Andrew's with Castle Gate URC, Nottingham and frequent member of Synod and General Assembly. Jim served the national church as a member of the National Executive of the Fellowship of Youth (Presbyterian Church of England) and as an adviser to the Finance Committee. A Service of Thanksgiving for Jim's life will be held at 1:15pm on **Monday 1 August** at St Andrew's with Castle Gate URC, following a short service at Wilford Hill Crematorium at 12noon. We hold Jim's family and friends in our prayers.

Funerals Workshop Day

Saturday 5 November 10.00am-3.30pm
at Hinckley United Reformed Church

Do you receive requests to take funerals in your church but don't always have an experienced celebrant available? Would you like to learn how to lead memorial services or discuss your practice with others?

We have joined forces with Northern College and the West Midlands Synod to offer a **Funerals Workshop Day**. Facilitated by a senior member of staff from **Northern College**, the URC's Resource Centre for Learning in the north of England, this training opportunity takes place on **Saturday 5 November**. The Workshop Day will be hosted at **Hinckley URC**, which is well situated to reach by road or rail from both East and West Midlands.

The topics to be covered include all the basics, such as arranging an appropriate service, liaising with funeral directors and the different options available to families. Most importantly, it will also explore the grieving process, equipping you to provide sensitive pastoral care to the bereaved, to be prepared for any hard situations and not least, to take good care of yourself throughout.

The day is perfect for Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders who are sometimes called upon to lead a funeral, but all ministers, elders and church members who want to learn more about this important ministry are equally welcome to attend.

To register for the Funerals Workshop Day, simply email **Hannah Holmes**: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk .



Exploring Eldership: a New URC Training Resource



The United Reformed Church has launched a new online resource called Exploring Eldership, written for URC Elders by Elders. The course contains six sections which can be worked through by individuals or groups at their convenience, each dealing with a topic critical to the role of an Elder. It may also serve as a refresher for Elders who wish to review their ministry and responsibilities, working either alone or together.



The course is available through the URC Learning Hub. To access the course, simply email Anne Hewling at anne.hewling@urc.org.uk to be registered on the Hub.

Holy Land? A Webinar about Israel & Palestine

Monday 25 July 5.30-9.00pm
(with dinner break) via Zoom

Working together with [Solutions Not Sides](#), the URC's Mission Team is offering an introductory webinar for anyone who wishes to be better informed or to deepen their understanding of the issues in the Holy Land.

The webinar, running on the evening of Monday 25 July, is designed as an introduction to the situation in Israel and Palestine.

It will also appeal to all those interested in a wider perspective, with the emphasis on solutions to the ongoing conflict. The evening (which incorporates a dinner break) also includes a Q&A session.

To receive the Zoom line, please email: urcinterfaith@urc.org.uk

50 United Reformed Church

A URC ZOOM EVENT

'HOLY LAND?'

LEARNING ABOUT
ISRAEL & PALESTINE

If you want a good introduction to why there is an ongoing conflict in the "Holy Land", come hear both sides with a focus on solutions, including a Q&A with members of the wonderful 'The Parents Circle'

25 JULY
5.30PM - 9.00PM
INCLUDING DISCUSSION TIME & DINNER BREAK

WITH SOLUTIONS NOT SIDES

Email today for the ZOOM link
urcinterfaith@urc.org.uk

Exploring Prison Ministry

Friday 22 July 8.00-9.00pm
via Zoom



EXPLORING PRISON MINISTRY

FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT PEOPLE IN PRISON AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH THE WORK OF PRISON FELLOWSHIP.

Friday 22nd July
8pm - 9pm
Online via Zoom

Prison
FELLOWSHIP

WWW.PRISONFELLOWSHIP.ORG.UK/JOINUS

Visit: www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/joinus to book your place!

Come to Church at Greenbelt

Sunday 28 August



The URC turns 50 this year and a special service will be held at [Greenbelt](#) to celebrate! Come to church at Greenbelt on **Sunday 28 August**, which will begin with one of the largest and most memorable communion services you've ever been part of, listen to superb music from **Guvna B** and **Martyn Joseph**, and enjoy a special 50th birthday party that reflects the rich diversity of the URC.

With food for every taste, activities for all ages and space to enjoy being with each other, why not bring along your whole congregation for the day? Throughout the bank holiday weekend, a full programme will run in the URC's new café to challenge and inspire, equip and entertain.


Worship, discussion, music, bedtime stories and superb crafts on the theme of '**Revoluting Christians**' combine with great coffee and tea, delicious treats and affordable meals. All this plus the adventurous and epic **Greenbelt** programme means that this will be an unforgettable time for everyone who comes.

For more information, visit the **URC@Greenbelt** page: <https://urc.org.uk/greenbelt/>.

Youthscape Essentials: Course for Youth Leaders

Monday 12 September - Monday 14 November
7.00pm to 9.00pm via Zoom

Youthscape Essentials is an innovative new course for volunteer youth leaders that increases your skills and confidence about work alongside young people – whether that's running a community project, church youth group, or helping out from time to time on a Sunday morning.



All-round training for every volunteer youth leader.

Upcoming Course:
Monday 12 September to Monday 14 November
7pm to 9pm

Contact cydo@urcmerseysynod.org.uk for the zoom code

The course will run from **Monday 12 September to Monday 14 November** from 7.00pm to 9.00pm on Zoom.

Offered by **Mersey Synod**, the course comprises ten sessions covering 30 topics, divided into: Insights into Young People, Skills for Youth Work and Developing Character. You'll listen to young people, learn from professionals, participate in practical exercises and take time to deepen your own faith. It makes no assumptions about your experience, age or background. It's accessible to those starting out as volunteers, but deep enough to stretch those who have been working alongside young people for longer. More information about the topics covered can be found at: <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/yse>

There is no cost to attending the course, but the participants' handbook can be purchased at: <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/store/product/yse-handbook> To book a place, please contact Steven Mitchell: cydo@urcmerseysynod.org.uk

Christians on Ageing Conference

Wednesday 21 September



Christians on Ageing has announced details of its annual Conference, entitled: "Older people need the best: supporting faith and care"

Training for our ministry and work
Later life spiritual learning
Being a blessing to residents in care homes
Rights and quality of life in care homes

The Conference will include presentations by these well-known practitioners:

- **Dr Keith Albans: Preparing faith leaders to work with older people**
Keith has had long experience in the field including ministry as the Pastoral Director at Methodist Homes (MHA Group)
- **Dr Joanna Walker: Older Christians and their later life spiritual learning**
Joanna is an Educational Gerontologist and co-author Spiritual Dimensions of Ageing
- **Tina English: Being a blessing to care home residents**
Tina is Director of the charity Embracing Age, and author of A Great Place to Grow Old: Reimagining Ministry Among Older People
- **Marion Shoard: Rights for care home residents**
Marion is the author of How to Handle Later life. She will argue that the lives of older and disabled people living in care homes would be much enriched by greater attention to their existing human rights and the introduction of new ones.

The Conference is being held at: **Central URC**, 60 Norfolk St, Sheffield S1 2JB
Attendees will be given a welcome at 10.00 am with refreshments and the day will conclude at 4.00 pm.
The Conference fee is £30 (£25 for members) which will include preparatory papers and the conference report plus refreshments and a buffet lunch.

Booking is through Eventbrite. Click [here](#) to register and make payment:
You can ask for more information or enquire about other methods of payment by e-mailing:
info@ccoa.org.uk

Christian Aid Resources



Christian Aid has recently launched some new resources, designed to be easy to run and very powerful.



The first is a resource called **Talking Climate Justice Tour**. It's about encouraging churches to create spaces to talk about climate change and its impacts and how can we respond. There are some great resources, including a couple of short videos and a script to help frame questions and discussions. You really don't need to be an expert at all to host an event. It doesn't matter if there's a handful of people or lots. You can find the resources here: [link for resources](#) – the DIY Toolkit includes videos and PowerPoints to help host a discussion.

The second resource is called **Letters for Creation** and is an art project that enables people of all ages to learn about climate justice and respond creatively with art that captures their hopes for the future. This art can be used in exhibitions in local communities: in school, in church, in a village hall, or cathedral. It is quite simple and doesn't need any expertise or great expense. Simply ask people to respond creatively (draw, paint, make) to what they think about the future of the earth – either bleak and desperate, or images of hope – then collect them together into an exhibition.

There are tailored resources for small groups, and all-age talks at a church service as well as a youth resource. Visit: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/letters-creation>.

Find Us Online



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



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

<https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/>

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



YouTube

On our dedicated [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUjKn8XOGGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUjKn8XOGGeZU5SgN95g>

Contacting East Midlands Synod

The **Synod Office** is now open from **Monday to Thursday** each week. 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.

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

Opening Picture – Pinterest

Children talking and listening: photo by [saeed karimi](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Christmas cards: photo by [Annie Spratt](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Funeral flowers: photo by [Mayron Oliveira](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next edition: Thursday 8 September 2022

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: trainingpa@urch5.org.uk and training@urch5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 5 September 2022**

Please note that this edition of the e letter is the last until after the summer break.