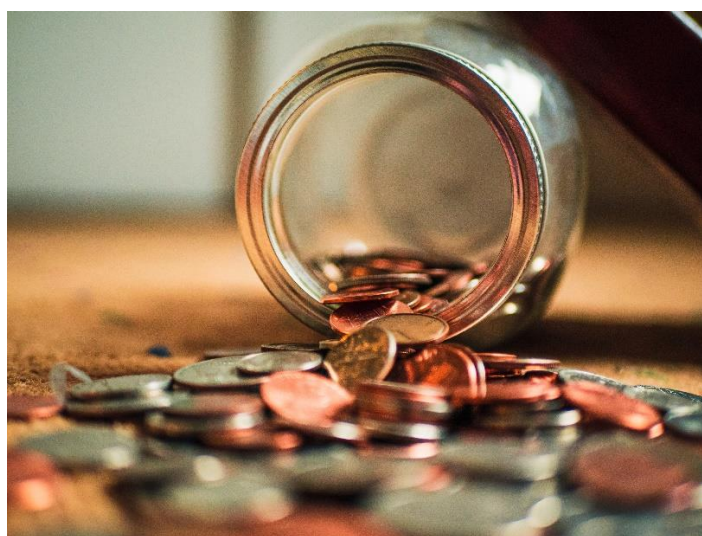


4 March 2021

Opening Reflection by David Greatorex

Treasurer, East Midlands Synod



The Synod Treasurer (me) sits with furrowed brow. It is early January and I have to report to several meetings over the next few weeks within the Synod governance system - the Synod Trust, Finance Group and Synod Council, leading up to the Synod meeting.

I'm wondering in these difficult times what positive things I can write and present for consideration and maybe discussion.

Hold on! I can hear Church Treasurers and others who deal with finance in the churches saying, "What are you complaining about? We have the same sort of considerations to make to our Elders and Church Meetings" (or similar groups in our LEPs).

So, the furrows in my brow ease a little and I look to taking a more positive approach. How about a few 'thank-yous'.

A big **thank you** to all for the positive way endeavours have been made to keep payments to the M&M Fund going (the first call on churches' giving after all). These payments, in brief, go to the stipends of Ministers and CRCWs, training for and in ministry and the operation of the United Reformed Church.

The Directors of the Synod Trust made a support contribution meaning that our Synod's pledges for 2020 were covered. We have received a letter of thanks for this from the Convenor of the URC Finance Committee.

What else? Income has been somewhat reduced and whilst it has been necessary to spend additionally to support home working for the staff team and virtual meetings, the budget holders have kept spending to a minimum. Thanks to our budget holders for managing their resources.

As I'm sure we all know, budgeting is not a simple process and with setting figures several months in advance we find that we need to keep them under greater scrutiny than usual.

How can we help? We have **Finance Networkers** throughout Synod, county based, and they are willing to offer advice, so please contact them: their names are listed below.

Resource Areas are now being established: have you been able to get support across these new groupings? That to me sounds a positive way of sharing (expertise) and a good way of using 'resources'.

Elsewhere in this e-letter there is information about **ACAT** [the Association of Church Accountants & Treasurers]. There is lots of helpful information and advice in those pages. All of our churches are 'members' - and it's free to use - so make the best use you can. Chargeable courses are regularly made available on a wide range of related topics.

I mentioned earlier about the introduction of facilities for virtual meetings. You will all (well, many of you) have the opportunity to see one in action when we put YOUR Synod meeting this month online. Full details will be circulated to churches.

So, thanks for reading and for doing what you all do to support the churches and especially the finances both locally and nationally - share and help as appropriate.

Any suggestions you have to help us help you will be welcomed and fully considered.

David J Greateorex

Treasurer

Finance Networkers

The **Finance Networkers** for each county within East Midlands Synod are as follows:

Derbyshire - Leslie Allwood

Leicestershire - Peter Rippon

Lincolnshire - Chris Morgan

Northamptonshire - Vaughan Griffiths

Nottinghamshire - Jean Hudson

Milton Keynes - Viv Wilson.

Please contact the Synod Office for advice if you need to get in touch with anyone and you do not have their details.

Training Opportunities for Treasurers



ACAT, the charity for treasurers of Christian churches, is offering an increasing number of courses online, via Zoom. Many of these affordable [virtual courses](#) sell out quickly so early booking is advised, although some places remain for courses this month.

These include a three-part course in **Risk and Health and Safety Management**. This has great relevance for all those involved in a church's duty of care to staff, volunteers, congregation and the wider public.

Another course offered over three sessions is **Being a Treasurer: The Basics**, an excellent opportunity for both new and more experienced treasurers to discover best practice surrounding such areas as charity law and the role of trustees alongside the bookkeeping and finance processes in a church.

A two part-course in **Gift Aid: Maximizing the benefits and reducing the pitfalls** is also proving extremely popular.

Full details of all these courses and more are available at: <https://www.acat.uk.com/>

Responding to the Climate Emergency

The next **United Nations Climate Conference** (COP26) will be held in Glasgow in November. This gives us all a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity to influence our M.P.s and press our government and other world leaders to take really urgent and far-reaching steps to cut greenhouse gas emissions drastically enough to halt global warming.



Whether or not you have already registered as an **Eco Church**, we hope that you are planning a **Climate Sunday Service**, maybe to mark the start of a build-up of prayer and action to COP26. **Tearfund** and **Christian Aid** are calling on us also to make our position clear by declaring that we recognise a climate emergency. Tearfund, in cooperation with Christian Aid, Eco Church and others, has produced a very helpful 'route map' or 'climate emergency toolkit': <https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/>

Charles Jolly
Green Apostle

Faith and the Environment – an invitation

[Faith and the Environment Lincolnshire](#) is running a series of monthly online conversations on the theme of **Building Back Better** after the current pandemic. These are **free** Zoom sessions for all church leaders, and while the group can only offer ongoing support to churches within Lincolnshire, anyone in our region is invited to attend the sessions.

How big is our footprint?



UK?



Africa?

India?

With Caroline Pomeroy of Climate Stewards

The next event, on **Friday 19 March** from 1.00-2.15pm, explores how to understand our carbon footprints – national, household and church – and how to reduce them in order to have the greatest impact, with sustainability expert **Caroline Pomeroy** of Christian charity [Climate Stewards](#). Places may be booked on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-back-better3-how-big-is-our-footprint-tickets-141550199457?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Helping Christians to engage constructively with MPs & Councils



The following session, on **Friday 16 April** from 1.00-2.15pm, features **Rachel Mander** of [Hope for the Future](#), which works to equip communities to communicate the urgency of climate change with MPs and local politicians. To book a place, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-back-better4-helping-christians-engage-constructively-with-mps-etc-tickets-141898519291>

Demand for places is high, so the group requests that if you register to attend, you do make use of your free place on the day. You can view recordings of the keynote addresses from the first two **Building Back Better** events at: <https://www.faithenvlincs.org/events-1>

Building for the Future – an online event

'Building for the Future'

A Zoom conference, for all interested parties, to consider strategies for churches and church buildings

19th April 3pm-4.30pm



A conference to help consider strategies for URC churches and church buildings will take place via Zoom on **Monday 19 April** from 3.00-4.30pm under the auspices of the [URC Buildings Forum](#). The conference is intended to be the first in a series that will focus on different aspects of exploring the use of URC buildings and capital assets. The **Revd Dr John Bradbury**, URC General Secretary, will give the keynote address and a representative from the **HeartEdge** movement, begun by St-Martin-in-the-Fields, will explain ways it can offer support.

The event is open to all. Please email mission@urc.org.uk by 16 April to register your interest advise which church you belong to or are representing.

Genocide and Trade

Our Synod Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** is among the signatories to a new joint statement from the presidents and trustees of **Churches Together in All Lincolnshire (CTAL)**. Anticipating the trade bill to be debated in Parliament shortly, the statement urges MPs to enshrine in law a pledge not to trade with nations that are engaged in acts of genocide. Individual church members throughout our region are encouraged to contact their own MPs.



The CTAL statement reads:

On 27 January, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland commemorated the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. We echoed the call of those who witnessed at first hand those catastrophic events and pledged 'never again.'

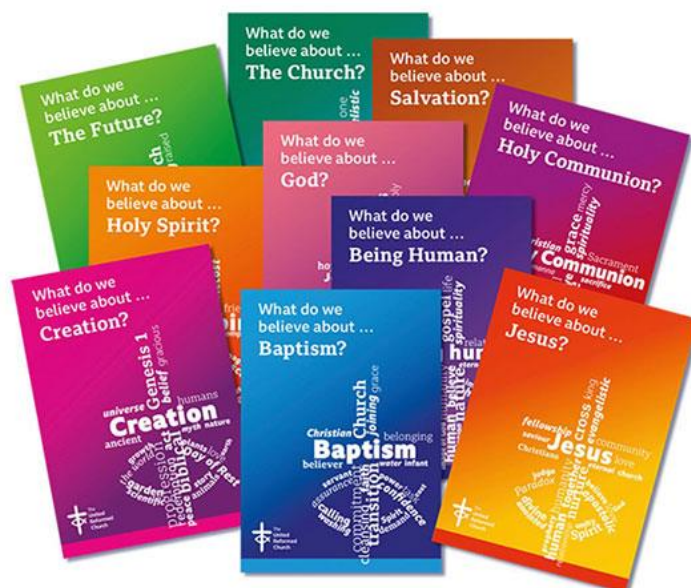
As senior Church leaders, who uphold the Biblical message of God's love for all peoples, we pray for a world free of ethnic cleansing and genocide. We therefore recognise the importance of doing all we can to challenge the discrimination that can lead to oppression.

We believe that Her Majesty's Government (HMG) wants to continue seeking to deter genocidal acts by foreign powers. We also believe that the most appropriate body to advise HMG on whether a genocide is taking place is the Parliamentary Judicial Committee (PJC). The PJC comprises the five most senior Law Lords; the Judicial Peers are the highest law officers in a legal system amongst the world's finest, which is already empowered to determine genocide, crimes against humanity and torture.

In the coming days, Parliament is to vote on a new trade bill. We urge those Members of Parliament that represent constituencies in the area we serve, to reflect carefully, and vote accordingly, on how best to enshrine in law the pledge to desist from engaging in trade with nations that are committing genocide. We invite each MP to consider the following statement: *"Genocide determination is a matter for judicial decision rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies."* The Prime Minister, 20 January 2021.

Around the URC

What does the URC believe?



The **Faith & Order Committee** of the URC accepted a challenge to explain what the denomination believes. Several years in the making, the outcome is a [new series of downloadable pamphlets](#) on the subjects of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Baptism, Creation, Being Human, Holy Communion, Salvation, the Church and the Future.

The series has been edited by the **Revd Dr Robert Pope**, Convenor of the Committee, who offers the documents in all humility as a resource to the church. They can be viewed and downloaded for free at: <https://urc.org.uk/believe>

Mission Council

The spring meeting of **Mission Council** takes place via Zoom from **Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 March**. Topics on the agenda include new ways to access funding for lay discipleship development, new pathways for people to become worship leaders and lay preachers, and the pension fund deficit. Each day's business will be reported on the URC's [news page](#). Mission Council papers can be found at: <https://urc.org.uk/march-2021>

New Moderator nominated in Mersey Synod

The Mersey Synod is delighted to announce the nomination of the **Revd Geoffrey Felton** as its new Moderator.



Born and raised on the Wirral, Geoff was ordained in 2000 following a career as a geologist and inducted into the Canterbury pastorate in the URC's Southern Synod. He then moved to Plume Avenue URC, his current pastorate, in 2010.

Geoff is excited about returning home to the north west and serving the people of Mersey Synod with compassion and vigour. He said, 'We live in difficult days, but we have a God who through Jesus Christ is victorious. I'm looking forward to leading the Synod through these post pandemic years – years that will help shape the Church of the future and its witness to a world in need of hope and love.'

The nomination will be presented to Mission Council this month.

New ways to receive the Daily Devotions

The URC's **Daily Devotions** have long been available as an audio podcast via <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/> But did you know that you can now play them easily with an **Alexa** device or other **Smart Speaker**? Simply say something like, "Alexa, play the podcast of the URC Daily Devotions" (making sure to include the word "podcast").

You can also subscribe to the Daily Devotions podcast on Spotify, Apple podcasts, Google podcasts, Amazon Music, Blubrry, Podcast Index and Deezer.

Join the Uprising of Christ: Easter Online Festival

The URC's **Commitment for Life** and **Walking the Way** teams are supporting an international Easter online festival. Taking place on **Sunday 21 - Monday 22 March**, this free event features prominent speakers from both sides of the Atlantic exploring how to recognise and resist empire in the Bible, the Church and beyond.



CHINE McDONALD

WES HOWARD-BROOK

WILLIAM YOUNG

"YOURS IN THE UPRISING OF JESUS"

SUN 21 6-8PM

MON 22 10AM-12: 6-8PM

EASTER ONLINE FESTIVAL

RECOGNISING & RESISTING EMPIRE IN THE BIBLE, THE CHURCH & BEYOND

SUN 21 - MON 22 MARCH 2021

PROGRAMME

Sunday 21 March, 6.30-8pm
Recognising & resisting Empire in the Bible and the Early Church
Wes Howard-Brook

Monday 22 March, 10-11am
Recognising & resisting White privilege
Chine McDonald

11am-12pm
Resistance Music in Washington, Brazil and Palestine
William Young

6.30-8pm
Recognising & resisting Empire in the church today
Wes Howard-Brook

To add the daily meeting to your calendar:
<http://bit.ly/UprisingCalendar>

To join the Zoom Meeting
<http://bit.ly/UprisingLaunch>

Meeting ID: 952 8324 4787 Passcode: 784428

New from URC Youth

To provide a way to learn, contribute, as well as equip young people and adults involved with the URC in as many ways as possible, URC Youth has launched **Youth re-ASSEMBLED**. Each month throughout the year, URC Youth will focus on a different theme or topic, along with free Zoom events, Dialogues and more.



The theme for March is Israel and Palestine: the conflict in the Holy Land. Find out more at: <https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3733-urc-youth-re-assembled.html>



URC Youth also offers a series of eight daily recordings to listen and engage with throughout **Holy Week 2021**. Aimed at 11 to 14-year-olds, each recording includes a Bible reading, reflection, prayer, and response activity.

Podcasts will be released daily from Palm Sunday (28th March) until Easter Sunday (4th April). For further details see: <http://bit.ly/holy-week-2021>

Personal News

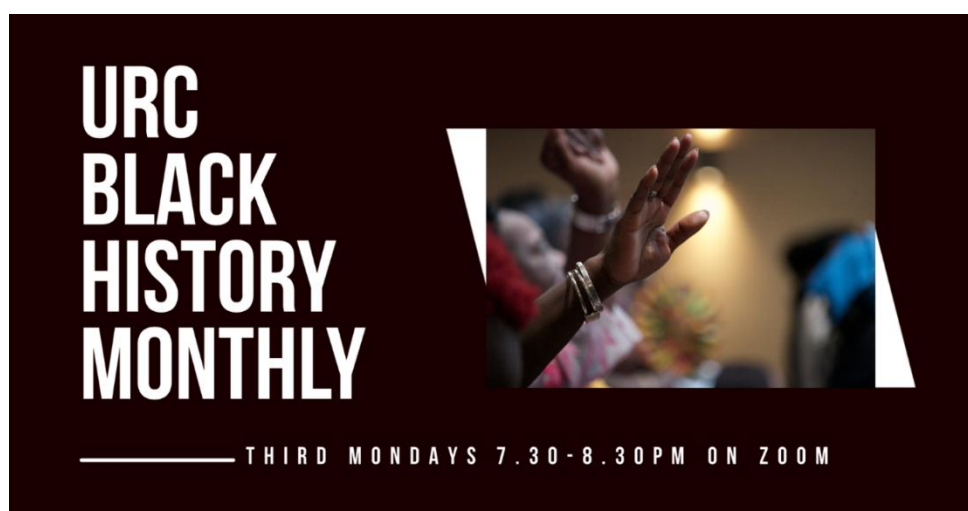
It is with great sadness that we report the death of the following retired URC ministers. We remember their families and friends in our prayers.

The **Revd Jeff Armistead** (Yorkshire Synod) died on Saturday 13 February. Jeff served at: Bridgwater & Cannington (1985-96); Central, Torquay and Kingkerswell (1996-2001); Sedburgh (2002-03); and Primley, Sidmouth and Aylesbeare (2003-07).

The **Revd Derrick Parkinson** (Yorkshire Synod) died on Sunday 21 February. Derrick served at: Hillsboro', Sheffield (1962-68); Ossett and Gawthorpe (1968-74); Bolton Villas and Frizinghall (1975-81); the Sheffield West Group (1981-84); and the Haltemprice Group (1984-94).

The **Revd Brian Stops** (Wessex Synod) died on Saturday 27 February. Brian served at St Columba's, Coventry & Keresley (1988-96); and Marsh Gibbon & Twyford (2002-05).

Black History Monthly – Monday 15 March



The second session of the URC's new **Black History Monthly** takes place on **Monday 15 March** at 7.30pm, and focuses on the **Kairos Document**, a key declaration published in 1885/6 at the heart of the freedom struggle in South Africa and with a lasting influence on other freedom struggles since. Does it have helpful resonances with the UK in 2021, as we try to respond to the Black Lives Matter movement?

So that it can be read before the session, the text of the Kairos Document is available at: <https://urc.org.uk/legacies-of-slavery.html> where you will also find how to register to attend.

The Turning – Mission England 2021



[The Turning](#), which works to empower ordinary Christians to proclaim the gospel, is planning its **Mission England** from 18 – 25 September this year.

The project is now recruiting local churches to act as “**prophetic hubs**” for this Mission and intends to hold free information sessions online. Full details are available via: <http://theturning.eu/england-2/>

“Taste and see” Stepwise - Free Webinar Series



The **new series of webinars** to help you find out more about **Stepwise**, what it is, who it’s for, and how each of the complementary “streams” might help you develop **your** discipleship and faith continues with:

Tuesday 9 March	Faith-filled Worship
Tuesday 23 March	Faith-filled Community
Tuesday 13 April	Faith-fuelled Leadership
Tuesday 27 April	Faith-filled Confidence

All webinars in the series begin at 7.00pm and last one hour or under. To register, please email stepwise@urc.org.uk and you will be sent the Zoom joining details.

If you are interested in forming or joining a Stepwise group in the East Midlands Synod, please email the **Revd Samuel Silungwe**, Stepwise Coordinator on s.silungwe@yahoo.com or **Derek Graham**, Training and Development Officer on training@urc5.org.uk. We hope to begin a new online group soon, studying the introductory stream **Faith-filled Life**.

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 continued restrictions mandated by the UK government, the building of the **East Midlands Synod Office** remains closed at present. However, 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: 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

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 on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com): coin jar by Josh Appel

Next edition: Thursday 18 March 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 16 March 2021**