

Opening Reflection by the Revd Geoffrey Clake East Midlands Synod Moderator

Voting Matters!

New voting regulations for voting in General Elections and Local Government elections are among the issues highlighted by the denominational **Church & Society Team** in their Spring Synod Meetings mailing*. They encourage us to note the changes and to help ensure wider awareness:

The rules around voting in general elections in Britain and for local elections in England and Wales are changing. In addition to being registered on the electoral roll, from 4 May 2023 you must also produce an approved form of identity card at the polling station to be able to vote.



Could you display our poster in your church or community space to let people know about the change? And could you consider offering help to someone in your neighbourhood who might not currently have appropriate ID? Find out more here: jpit.uk/voterid

This challenge set me thinking...

Voting is both duty and privilege – and is about ‘us’ not me’. I can still recall the sense of excitement I felt the first time I entered a polling booth and used the pencil-on-a-string to place my ‘X’ against the candidate of my choice. Over the years it hasn’t always been easy to hold on to that feeling. We can conclude that our vote makes no difference; that all candidates or options fall short of what we hold as principles and ideals. We do well to remember that we cannot lament the outcome of any election if we have not voted. We have a duty as citizens living in a democracy. The privilege of having a vote is one which many of our forebears did not have – nor is it universally enjoyed across every part of the world.

And as followers of Jesus, the voting booth is one of the places in which we bring our perspective that we ought to be willing to support what benefits those most needing it even if it doesn’t advantage us personally. **John Wesley**, writing in 1774, offered this counsel:

- 1. To vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy**
- 2. To speak no evil of the person they voted against, and**
- 3. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.**

John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*

Every voter matters and our identity is in Christ. Church & Society's challenge highlights the fact that the introduction of a requirement for ID may disenfranchise some. **St Paul's** imagery of all parts of the body being equal and necessary (1 Corinthians 12:12-31) serves to challenge us to ensure maximal inclusion. The new government legislation may be a tougher requirement for some of us than others. Church & Society urges us to do what we can in helping others in meeting this requirement.

We might also like to cling to the affirmation that as individuals, whatever our ID documents may look like, our true identity is as those beloved of God. With God – and in the exercise of our discipleship – we need no ID documents. God knows everything about us; each of us matters to God, regardless of our bank balance, CV or achievements. (Take a moment to reflect on **Psalm 139** on this.)

And when it comes to our own church governance, we believe that **voting in the councils of the church is for the purpose of discerning the mind of Christ** and not about winning or losing the support needed for a resolution. In every council of the church – in Church Meeting, Elders' Meeting, Synod Meeting or General Assembly – we embody our belief that we are a theocracy rather than democracy. Our councils are for discerning together – even against our own preferences – how to move together faithfully under God; they are not places for us to lobby or seek to get our own way. Consensus voting is but one tool for checking out that all voices and views are heard and subjected to discernment. Some of the most wonderful meetings I have been in have been those in which my views and predictions of where we might be heading are turned upside down by hearing the voices of others.



So, as well as doing what we can to ensure as many people as possible have the ID they need to vote, let us play our part in valuing our own councils and the call to discern the mind of Christ within them.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John H. H. H.' with a horizontal line underneath.

** The Church & Society update will be included within the mailing for our March Synod Meeting.*

Papers for Synod Meeting

To All Synod Representatives and Ministers

A quick reminder that our next Synod meeting is on **Saturday 18 March** at **St Andrew's with Castle Gate URC** in Nottingham. All papers have now been issued by email/post. If you have not received yours, please contact **Chris Willis** at the Synod Office on admin@urc5.org.uk or by telephone 0115 960 9241. Remember that if your church representative is unable to attend the meeting another person can attend.

An Opportunity to Join the Synod Team



The East Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church is looking to appoint a

Synod Clerk

The Synod Council is looking to recruit a new Synod Clerk for 20 hrs per week. The role holder is required to spend time in the Synod office in Nottingham but will be mainly home based with travel across the geography of the EM Synod.

Salary: £30,000 to £35,000 per annum FTE for a lay URC member. A URC minister will receive a scoping of 0.45 of a current ministerial stipend, a manse and related benefits in accordance with the Plan for Partnership. This post is subject to an Enhanced DBS Disclosure.

The role of the Synod Clerk in the East Midlands Synod has four principal elements:

- To serve as Clerk to the Synod and Synod Council
- To be responsible for enabling Synod engagement with General Assembly
- To provide advice, guidance and support on the structure, governance and procedures of the United Reformed Church
- To serve as one of the Synod Officers alongside the Moderator and Treasurer.

For an application pack (no CVs) please contact:

East Midlands Synod Office
1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood
Nottingham, NG5 3AA
Tel: 0115 9609241
Email: admin@urc5.org.uk

- **Closing date for applications: Wednesday 22 March 2023**
 - **Interviews to be held: Tuesday 4 April 2023**

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EQUALITY ACT 2010: PART 1, SCHEDULE 9, THERE IS AN OCCUPATIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR THE POST HOLDER TO BE A PRACTISING CHRISTIAN

We are committed to diversity and equality of opportunity. We especially welcome applications from women and Black and Minority Ethnic Groups who are currently under-represented in this area of work in the Church.

Spring into Stepwise

Have you thought about dipping your toe into **Stepwise**, the URC's programme to help you develop your discipleship? This spring might be the ideal time to embark on [Faith-Filled Life](#), the introductory stream, in a small group. Whatever your size or shape, age or stage, **Stepwise** is designed to help you explore your identity as a follower of Jesus Christ and help you take your next steps in faith. For details, visit: <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/developing-your-faith/stepwise/>



Look out for details soon of **Faith-Filled Life** sampler sessions. If you would like to know more about how East Midlands Synod can support you in setting up a Stepwise group in your area, or if you would be interested in joining a Synod-wide group online, please email:

Derek Graham (Training & Development Officer) on training@urc5.org.uk
Revd Samuel Silungwe (Synod Stepwise Coordinator) on s.silungwe@yahoo.com

Stepwise Facilitator Training

Tuesday 21 March 10.00am – 12.30pm via Zoom
Wednesday 19 April 11.00am-3.00pm at Church House

Could you be the person to help steer a group through one of the Stepwise streams? Ministers and lay people alike are invited to become **Facilitators**, not to teach or tutor a group but to organise its meetings and guide them through the materials.

This spring, the national Stepwise team offers two opportunities to come and learn more about Stepwise and be enthused and equipped to facilitate Stepwise in your church, community or wider context.

An **online session** will take place on **Tuesday 21 March** from **10.00am – 12.30pm**. Alternatively, you can take part in an in-person session at **Church House**, London on **Wednesday 19 April, 11.00am - 3.00pm** with lunch provided.

If you are interested in finding out what Stepwise has to offer, what's involved in facilitating Stepwise and how you might go about setting up a group as a Facilitator, then please come along to either session.

For further details and to register for either session please contact the **Revd David Salisbury** david.salsbury@urc.org.uk or **Marion Brown** marion.brown@urc.org.uk .

Free Age UK Event: Don't Fall for Scams!

Wednesday 26 April 7.00pm
Hosted by The Dales URC



This free event led by **Age UK** takes place on **Wednesday 26 April 2023** from **7.00pm** at **The Dales United Reformed Church**, 63 Parkdale Road, Nottingham, NG3 7GL. There is plenty of parking available.

Greening your Church

The URC's **Environmental Policy** has set a target of the Church being **net-zero** in our carbon emissions by 2030, as part of our commitment to caring for God's creation.

There are lots of ways that your church can move towards this goal. A new video is available to help you on your eco journey: you can watch or download it at linktr.ee/ecovideo



Across Great Britain, 30% of URC congregations have already registered with **Eco Church** (or Eco-Congregation in Scotland). This is excellent progress but the **Church & Society** team are aiming for 100% participation, and for all congregations to be working towards their 'Bronze' award or beyond. Fifty churches have reached Silver and four have received their Gold award. Synods too are working towards Eco Synod status.

Full information about **Eco Church** is available at: www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/ . Churches in the East Midlands Synod can receive advice or help from the **JPIC** Group (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation): email training@urc5.org.uk .

Online Youth Mental Health First Aid

Two new courses of **Online Youth Mental Health First Aid Training** will each be held online over 4 separate sessions this spring. Spaces are available at the subsidised rate of **£27.75** per person.

Online Youth Mental Health First Aid
Learn to support young people

- Gain an in-depth understanding of mental health and factors that can affect wellbeing in the youth sector
- Develop practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- Feel confident to step in, reassure and support a young person in distress
- Enhance your interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening and learn to champion self-care

For more info and to book, contact:

MHFA England
INSTRUCTOR MEMBER

Children's & Youth Development Officers
Mersey Synod - Steven Mitchell cydo@urcmerseysynod.org.uk
Southern Synod - Tom Hackett cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk

Visit the MHFA England website at mhfaengland.org
Find us on social media @MHFAEngland

www.bit.ly/march-mhfa
March 2023 - Morning Course
9:30-12:30
4 online sessions
Mon 20, Weds 22,
Mon 27, Weds 29

www.bit.ly/may-mhfa
May 2023 - Evening Course
18:30-21:30
4 online sessions
Tues 16, Thurs 18
Tues 23, Thurs 25

March Morning Course – 09:30-12:30

Session 1 – Monday 20th March
Session 2 – Wednesday 22nd March
Session 3 – Monday 27th March
Session 4 – Wednesday 29th March
Book online at www.bit.ly/march-mhfa

May Evening Course – 18:30-21:30

Session 1 – Tuesday 16th May
Session 2 – Thursday 18th May
Session 3 – Tuesday 23rd May
Session 4 – Thursday 25th May
Book online at www.bit.ly/may-mhfa

Personal News

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

The **Eastern Synod** brings us the news of the death of the **Revd Donald Woffenden**, on Thursday 23 February. Donald was ordained in 1956 and served with the London Missionary Society; Riverside United, Looe; Stanford in the Vale; South Somerset Group; the Newmarket Group and Soham, retiring in 1994 to Newmarket. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who held Donald dear.

The **West Midlands Synod** brings us the news of the death of the **Revd Marion Thomas**, on Sunday 5 March. Marion served: Worcester & Hereford District 1998; Hampton Park & Eignbrook 1998-99; Silverdale 2003-04; Clayton 2003-2013; Burslem 2003-16; & Longton, Tomkin, Uttoxeter, Chesterton & Wolstanton 2011-16. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who held Marion dear.

News from Christians on Ageing

Sit back... Relax... Join a Conference Call

Christians on Ageing offers a new series of **Conference Calls**. These are described as opportunities to gather people together to share knowledge and experience on things that matter. They are open to all and are free via a Zoom link which is provided nearer the date of the Call. Each Conference Call starts at 10.30am and ends around noon. The discussion is introduced by an expert in the field.



Tuesday 21 March 10.30am-12.00noon

Light of Faith – Reflections on Growing Old by Bishop George Appleton

Dr David Jolley

Tuesday 16 May 10.30am-12.00noon

Dying and Death: a Christian approach in a secular society

Gerry Burke

Tuesday 20 June 10.30am-12.00noon

Preparing professionals to help people with issues of spirituality and belief as they are approaching the end of life

Dr Karen Grove

Tuesday 18 July 10.30am-12.00noon

Spirituality of Ageing by Metropolitan Antony of Sourzh

Professor Emeritus Peter Coleman

To register your interest for any of these events, simply email: discussion@coa.org.uk

Faiths and Dementia '23

Wednesday 17 May 2023

A major conference exploring how all faiths can support people affected by dementia.

What is dementia? How does living with dementia relate to faith? How can places of worship be dementia-friendly? How can faith communities best support their members who are affected by dementia? How can family carers be supported within their faith communities? What can we learn from each other's experiences?

If you are involved in leading or managing within a faith community - or you are working in health, social care or housing services - then **Faiths and Dementia '23** will be valuable to you to expand your knowledge and skills. Featuring multi-faith speakers and dementia experts providing helpful lessons for all involved in leading faith communities and managing places of worship and devotion, this one-day conference is organised by **Liverpool Dementia Action Alliance** in conjunction with **Christians On Ageing**, with the assistance of **Alzheimer's Society** and **House of Memories** and generous support from Medicash. The event is being held at the **St Margaret Clitherow Centre**, Croxteth Drive, Liverpool L17 1AA.

For more information visit the [Conference website](#)

Holiday Forum 2023 & holiday Forum in a Day

Holiday Forum 2023

Saturday 19 – Friday 25 August at The Hayes, Swanwick

Holiday Forum is an annual event, described as a heady holiday mix of faith, fun and fellowship. This year's Forum takes place at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire from **Saturday 19 – Friday 25 August**, with opportunities to book to attend in person, or to share in parts of the programme virtually.

Inclusion Through Invitation is this year's theme, led by **Michael Harvey**, the founder of Back to Church Sunday, the National Week of Invitation, and schools-based organisation God & the Big Bang. Michael will help Holiday Forum in its continuing explorations of how church can become a genuinely welcoming, diverse and anti-racist community.



For full details of **Holiday Forum 2023**, visit: <http://www.urholidayforum.org.uk/wpsite/>

Holiday Forum in a Day

Saturday 18 March via Zoom

If you'd like to sample what Holiday Forum is all about, you are warmly invited to join **Holiday Forum in a Day**. Theme leader **Michael Harvey** and worship leader the **Revd Ruth Watson** will both be taking part in this one-day fiesta of faith, fun and fellowship, opening up the theme of **Inclusion Through Invitation**.

A sample of what the full summer conference in August will offer, **Holiday Forum in a Day** takes place via Zoom on **Saturday 18 March**, with one session in the morning from 9.00am to 1.00pm and another in the evening from 6.00-9.00pm, leaving the afternoon free.



There is no need to sign up – simply use the Zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84079559696> .

Situations Vacant



Clerk of General Assembly

Voluntary role

Are you a member of the United Reformed Church who has a thorough knowledge of the structures of the church and experience of its councils?

Decisions about policy and the central work of the URC are made at the annual council called General Assembly. There are about 280 representatives, including lay persons, elders, and ministers. Committees are appointed to carry out the decisions of General Assembly.

General Assembly is looking for a Clerk to provide an efficient and impartial source of constitutional advice to the General Assembly, in particular to its Moderators; also, so far as reasonably possible, to others in the URC.

You will be an excellent communicator, with strong interpersonal skills and the ability to work collaboratively. Accuracy and attention to detail is essential in addition to working confidentially. Experience of working with legal documents would be an advantage. A willingness to travel within the UK and be flexible in attending meetings, residential events and weekends is essential.

For more information and details of how to apply please visit:
<https://urc.org.uk/jobs/clerk-of-general-assembly/>

Children, Youth & Family Worker – Bulwell URC (Nottingham)

Full Time position with salary £22,050 - £24,310 (dependent on qualifications and experience)

One Year Maternity Cover Contract (Part-time working will be considered) starting June 2023.

We are a vibrant, exciting, lively and growing church on the northern outskirts of the city of Nottingham.

We are seeking to appoint a gifted and committed Christian to serve as part of the ministry team to oversee and continue and develop our vision to bless and grow the church in its ministry with children, youth and families.

For an application pack and full details please email: ask@bulwellurc.org.uk
or download forms and documents from www.bulwellurc.org.uk/vacancy

We're up for it, are you?

Closing date for applications: 24th March 2023

Missional House 'No. 84', Redcar, Cleveland

Is New Monasticism catching your attention? Does being part of a small innovative residential missional community appeal? Does taking time out to think and pray through new possibilities, or taking a gap year feel timely?

Are you excited by new ways of being and doing Church?

From Spring 2023 onwards for those aged 18 and over, Redcar has a rare opportunity in the Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church to become part of a household of three living within a simple Rule of praying, eating, studying and serving together while accompanying Redcar United Reformed Church & Redcar Baptist Church in missional presence in Redcar.

If needed, a modest maintenance allowance is available. You are invited to register your interest by 31 March 2023.

Information Packs available from:

Lisa McAvoy, Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church, 4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8JJ. Tel 0191 232 1168 lisa.mcavoy@urc-northernsynod.org

Loughborough Baptist Church : CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

Loughborough Baptist Church is looking for a part-time administrator to work with the Minister and other church officers. There will be opportunities to play a vital role in developing new directions in mission as part of a dynamic team. The church is seeking a person who is able to support and encourage existing office volunteers, who has good organisational and computer skills (including website management and social media), an eye for detail, and the ability to relate well to a wide range of people.

The administrator will be expected to be proactive and creative in developing administrative systems and ensuring effective communication using a range of media. It is essential that the person appointed be sympathetic to the church's Christian ethos. The post will be for 16 hours, some of which will need to be allocated to regular hours in the building each week as well as occasional evening activities.

Duration: Open-ended, although subject to a six-month probationary period. Salary: £12.50 per hour

A Job Description and Person Specification can be obtained from: **Mrs Margaret Thirlwell** (Church Secretary), Loughborough Baptist Church, Baxter Gate, Loughborough LE11 1TG. Email: j.m.thirlwell@talktalk.net. If you would like to discuss the post, please call Margaret Thirlwell: 01509 232840.

To apply, please send a CV and covering letter (including the full contact details of two referees) to Margaret Thirlwell at the above address.

Closing date for applications: midday on Monday 13 March. **Interview date:** Wednesday 22 March.

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/) hosts **Evening Prayers** every day at 9.30pm, led by our Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** and our prayer team, along with other posts. 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/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g), the Synod shares special events, training videos, worship resources and more. **Evening Prayers** are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

Contacting East Midlands Synod

The **Synod Office** is 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

“Vote” sleeve on tree: photo by [Manny Becerra](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next edition: Thursday 23 March 2023

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 20 March 2023**