

### E-LETTER NO: 245 – 25th MAY 2017

### EDITED THIS WEEK BY: REVD SAMUEL SILUNGWE

2017 is a special year not only for the URC but all denominations whose traditions are linked to the Reformation. For us it is truly a year of celebration, and we have called it *Feasts &Festivals*. We have five things to be passionate about and thank God for: 500 years since Martin Luther nailed up his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church, Wittenburg; the centenary of the ordination of Constance Coltman, the first woman ordained into a mainstream British church; more than 80 years since Pilots started; 45 years since the formation of the United Reformed Church (URC); and 25 years since Commitment for Life began. It's extraordinary to have five different items in a single package. What is more is that, this is not just a single, double, triple or quadruple blessing, but a *pentadruple blessing*. We are truly blessed, and so we have a cause to celebrate as a church. But such a mouthful of celebrations can't be without a challenge, and the question is: What do these five events afford us? Two things come to mind: *Re-affirming our identity* (about who we are) and *a renewed opportunity to proclaim the truth of God's love in Jesus* (what we are about). 'Who are we?' is an introduction to the URC's identity. The Basis of Union contains a statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC, setting out its belief in a condensed form. How have we kept that alive? 'Who are we?' describes the factors that contributes to the URC's identity and how it's maintained. The URC has a fascinating history, four congregations coming together, reformed and still reforming and passionately working together. 'Who are we?' also describes the changes that have occurred in the URC in the last four and a half decades. Over these years the URC's strength has been in its diversity, and particularly in building an inclusive church. We have declared ourselves as a multicultural/intercultural church, rejoicing in the gifts of members from across the world. ‘Who are we?’ identifies some of the factors that have affected the URC's identity in our contemporary society (factors such as *cultural influences, religious pluralism, secularism, social injustices etc*). There is clearly a historical change in the cultural context in which the URC is now attempting to carry out its mission. This raises two fundamental questions: What does this new cultural context mean for the URC and its mission? And, what exactly is the church's mission?

'What we are about?' implies being a church that *reflects* the fullness of God. In the words of the URC's Statement of Nature, Faith and Order (1990), together we are firmly committed to "God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The living God, ever to be praised." 'What we are about?' means being a church that *exists* for God's mission. The URC believes that mission is the reason why the church exists. What matters is how the congregations /local churches have translated this statement. Critical though is for local churches to have a deeper understanding on what is mission. Jesus said to his disciples, "... As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21 NIV). Mission is God's work, but it is work in which God is calling us to participate. Like the apostles, the Lord Jesus is calling us to be witnesses and to live out the good news of God’s love for the sake of the world. 'What we are about?' entails being a church that is *intentional* about building meaningful, lasting relationships within the church and wider community. The Scripture in 1 Peter 2:9 reads, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (NIV). 'What we are about? Also means being a church that is *committed* to life-long learning in mission and discipleship, so that we can become better disciples who can make other disciples. So then, what opportunity do the *Feasts &Festivals* present to us? I can't find a better answer than quoting the statement from the URC's *Feasts and Festivals* online post which aptly says: "So, let's celebrate! And in doing so, let's think **about who we are,** **what we’re about** and **how we can** support one another as we all, in our own ways and contexts, seek to be better disciples of Jesus."

*Samuel Silungwe (Ministries Convenor)*

**STATEMENT FROM CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLANDS'S PRESIDENTS FOLLOWING THE MANCHESTER ATTACK:**

‘Our thoughts and prayers are with all those bereaved and injured by the cruel, senseless terrorist attack in Manchester. May God grant them strength and courage. Our faith teaches us that even the worst of evils can never defeat love, so we pray that the people of Manchester, of all faiths and none, will discover a renewed unity as they respond to this atrocity with compassion, dignity and hope.’

**PEOPLE**

* It is with great sadness that we bring you the news that the **Revd Conrad Thomas Husk** died on the morning of 17th May 2017.  During the last few months of Conrad's life he coped with his illness bravely and his faith in Christ shone through.  His passing was very peaceful and without any pain.  Please keep the whole family in your prayers. Conrad served at Bourne ( 1960-65), Middlewich and Minshull (1967-73) and the pastorate of Long Buckby, Crick and Kilsby (1973-95). The funeral will take place at Castle Hill URC on 9th June 2017 at 12noon. All Welcome. This will be followed by a private cremation.
* We regretfully inform you of the death of the **Revd James Dey**. James died peacefully last week and his funeral will be on Monday 29th May at 2pm at Mortonhall Crem, Edinburgh. Revd Dey served at Woodside Aberdeen (1951-55), East Kilbride (1955-62), Religious Broadcasting Department BBC Scotland (1962-73), Head of BBC Religious Programmes (1973-75) and Palmers Green (1973-75). Please remember his children and their families at this time.
* We are sorry to inform you of the death of the **Revd Micah Hopley** who died on 15th May 2017.  Micah served at Stockton-on-Tees 1962-68; Ilkley 1968-75; Broxbourne 1975-85; Whitehaven & Bootle 1985-96; Clayton & Silverdale, Newcastle-under-Lyme 1996-2002.
* We are pleased to inform you that the **Revd Chris Ford** has accepted a call to St. Andrew's with Castle Gate URC.  Chris' scoping will be 80% St. Andrew's with Castle Gate and 20% ministry in Nottinghamshire.  Chris will be inducted on Sunday 3rd September, 3pm at the church.

**MILTON KEYNES**

**NEWPORT PAGNELL CHURCH -** Early in 2015 our Church Meeting voted in favour of demolishing our existing Church Hall and replacing it with a new purpose built, multi-use, eco-friendly building. This vote was the culmination of several years of consultation both within the church and in the wider community of Newport Pagnell. The plan was also an integral part of our Church Mission which is expressed very simply as **‘In** **the Centre of the Town – at the Heart of the Community’.** At a projected cost of £660,000 we set about our fundraising with much hope and prayer and if we are honest – a degree of fear! All has gone well and we have already raised over half of the amount. However, we want to start building work before the current planning permission expires in May 2018. To achieve this we are launching a new fundraising initiative on Saturday 10th June between 10am and 1pm. The new building is to be known as the Mead Centre in memory of two loyal members of our fellowship who left a legacy which has been given to the project. This new phase of our fundraising is to be known as the **‘Mead Centre** **500’.** Itsaim is to seek 500 pledges of £500 each from individuals, organisations, businesses and retail outlets in the town and surrounding areas. If we are able to raise all or part of the £250,000 this plan could generate then our target date is achievable.If you would like to know more about the project or would like to make a pledge to become a member of the ‘Mead Centre 500’ please let me know. Your pledge could be for any amount, large or small – every gift is of enormous value to us and to the work of God’s Kingdom in Newport Pagnell. My full contact details are in the Synod Year book but please phone me on 01908 661251 if that is easier.Thank you. Geoff Shaw – Project Manager – The Mead Centre.

**OTHER**

**SYNOD BIBLE STUDY FOR LAY PREACHERS**

**Led by Revd Dr Deborah Baird on** Saturday 1st July 2017 **from** 10.30am - 3pm at Kilby URC, Leicester **(**please bring your own lunch). Booking is essential, to book contact Hannah Holmes at the Synod Office: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk Tel: 0115 9609241

**FEASTS AND FESTIVALS**

* **SYNOD STUDY DAY –** All are invited to our Study Day, led by Revd Dr David Cornick on the theme of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. On Saturday 15th July 2017 from 10am – 4pm (please bring a packed lunch) at Sherwood URC, Nottingham. Booking is essential, to book please contact Hannah Holmes at the Synod Office: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk Tel: 0115 9609241
* **YOU ARE INVITED TO CELEBRATE FREEDOM –** On Sunday 11th June, East Midlands Synod are asking churches to dedicate the day to celebrating the Reformation. There are many ways you can do this, through services, tea parties, special events, shared lunches …. Be as creative as you like! Resource packs with ideas, games, service ideas and bible study have been sent out to all Churches. We would love to know your plans, so please do send details of what you are planning to: cydo@urc5.org.uk so that we can keep everyone posted on our website.
* **CONSTANCE COLTMAN CENTENARY SERVICE** - on Sunday 17 September, 3pm at the American International Church in London. All are invited. Please let Francis Brienen know of women to invite especially who have played a pioneering role in our churches: francis.brienen@urc.org.uk

**YOUTH AND CHILDREN**

**YOUTH CAMP**

Youth Camp is being organised by East Midlands, West Midlands and Wales Synod’s. It is being held at Beaudesert Activity Centre, Cannock Wood, Rugeley, Staffordshire, from 5th August to 12th August 2017

Is the camp for you?

If you are aged between 11 and 17 then we hope that you will join us. The event is run inclusively, that means everybody is welcome and involved in every part of the week. Fun, adventure and positive experiences are at the heart of the planning. There will be a whole range of activities and events that will be stimulating, interesting and entertaining for everybody.

East Midlands have 10 spaces available and there is help available with funding Cost £100. Contact Jane Henderson for more information.  If you are interested in being part of the team please also speak to Jane.  Email: cydo@urc5.org.uk  Tel: 07572 291007

**SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

The dates of our upcoming safeguarding training events are:

* Tuesday 27th June 2017 – Melbourne URC – 7.30pm – 9.30pm
* Tuesday 4th July 2017 – Ermine URC - 1pm - 4pm

All are welcome. To book please contact Hannah Holmes at the Synod Office: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk Tel: 0115 9609241

**JOB OPPORTUNITY**

**HEAD OF CHILDREN’S AND YOUTH WORK – LONDON**

Permanent Contract - 35 hours per week - Salary: £49,891 or Minister’s Stipend

Are you a dynamic and effective practitioner able to empower children and young people? Do you have a good understanding of current theological thinking of the ministry of children’s and youth work?

Are you able to develop and maintain positive relationships with partners to ensure the voices of children and youth of the Church are heard?

Can you guide, manage and support work in a changing context that will lead to confidence and growth?

As a self- motivated leader in the field, you will be a strategic thinker, able to link theology with the necessary strategies needed for children’s and youth ministry, with a proven track record in developing and delivering programmes at national level. You will also have the ability to determine priorities within available resources, operating at pace to deliver effectively through others. This experience will have ensured you are a skilled communicator, highly organised, with excellent people management skills. If you are interested in working for us and can meet all of the above requirements, please contact us/see our website for an application form (noting that we do not accept CVs): Human Resources Office, the United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT T: 0207 691 9871 E: recruitment@urc.org.uk W: www.urc.org.uk/vacancies Previous applicants need not apply. Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Monday 19 June 2017 Interview date: Wednesday 19 July 2017

**MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP MENTOR (LANCASHIRE)**

**Salary £34,000**

**Are you passionate about the gospel and do you have the skills and experience to enthuse, enable and equip God’s people in their local setting to participate more effectively in God’s mission today?**

We are seeking to appoint a new member to our team delivering the Synod’s Missional Discipleship Strategy. The appointee will work across the Synod but will mainly focus on working with congregations in Lancashire.

There is an occupational requirement for the job holder to be a practising Christian in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 Part 1, Schedule 9.

Lay or ordained persons are welcome to apply but these are salaried appointments including our synod lay staff pension scheme. *Previous applicants should not reapply.* Further information and application forms are available from our synod office on 0161 789 5583 or on admin@nwsynod.org.uk. Deadline for application is Wednesday 21 June 2017. Interviews will be held in 4 July 2017

**GENERAL MANAGER -- RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING**

London - 35 Hours per week - Permanent Contract - Salary: £40,770

Are you a professional and effective manager with significant management experience in the property or housing association sectors?

The Retired Ministers Housing Society provides housing throughout the UK for those who have served the United Reformed Church as ministers. As General Manager, you will motivate and inspire your small team of committed staff who provide an outstanding repairs, maintenance and housing management service to our tenants. You will have the strategic vision to develop policy and procedure to drive improvement and to ensure good governance within the organisation. You will also have the ability to manage the purchase and sale of the properties programme and to process new applicants as they plan for and reach retirement.

If you are interested in working for us and can meet all of the above requirements, please contact us/see our website for an application form (noting that we do not accept CVs): ,Human Resources Office, the United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT T: 0207 691 9874 E: recruitment@urc.org.uk W: [www.urc.org.uk/vacancies](http://www.urc.org.uk/vacancies)

**YEAR BOOK CHANGES**

* Please note that **Mrs Anne Fox** has recently moved house. Her new address is: 5 Lombardy Lodge, Portland Road, Toton, Nottingham, NG9 6EE
* Please note that accredited Lay Preacher, **Ron Macey** and his wife Susan have moved house. Their new address is: 14 Westbourne Park, Bourne, PE10 9QS  Tel: 01778 422181
* Please note that the **Revd Brian Norris**, Minister at Carlton Road, Repton and Alvaston, and his wife Louisa have moved house, their new address is: 3 Cherry Plum Close, Littleover, Derby, Derbyshire, DE23 8DW.  Tel: 01332 795783.  Email remains unchanged.
* Please note that Long Bucky have a new Secretary, **Lucy Faulkner**: 44 Parkfield Road, Long Buckby, Northampton, NN6 7QJ, Tel 01327 843747, E-mail lucyfaulkner@yahoo.com

**AND FINALLY:** - Please send any comments or feedback on this e-letter to: admin@urc5.org.uk
The URC East Midlands Synod, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AA.
Email address for E-Letter Editor: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk Copy Date for Next E-Letter: 05.06.2017