

### Opening Reflection by David Greatorex

East Midlands Synod Treasurer



Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day will have been commemorated in very different ways this year by the time you read this edition of the e-letter.

It is a time for remembering and sharing and of thanks - particularly for the sacrifices of so many. 'At the going down of the sun and in the morning - we WILL remember them!'

Let's think a little about **SHARING**.

Resource Sharing (Inter Synod Resource Sharing - ISRS) has been around for a number of years and is a process whereby the Synods with significant assets seek to help those without such a wealth of assets. Indeed, we as East Midlands Synod have benefitted from such generosity over time.

This generosity has meant a financial support to allow us to keep our 'services operating' and limit the need to draw on reserves.

The wide diversity of the Synods of the United Reformed Church means the equity in our buildings, and especially when realised by sale, shows great differences according to location.

Many people have been sharing in lots of very different ways in recent months, providing help and resources to family, friends and neighbours - all cheerfully and freely given no doubt.

There have been many acts of self-sacrifice and much effort put to fund raising by a lot of very different people and particularly in support of the NHS and all the dedicated people working there in tremendously difficult and arduous conditions. These still go on and are increasing at the time of writing. Our churches have played a significant part in supporting those in particular need, both locally and nationally, and that is very likely being continued with renewed effort at a time of 'lockdown 2'.

So, what can we do as we move through this lockdown period and hopefully emerge into Advent with freedom to return to being able to meet again in our churches for worship?

Synod has agreed to adopt Resource Churches and Areas - and indeed these are now being created and probably would have been established in more locations but for the effects of the pandemic.

Churches working together in ways possibly not experienced before will be developed, for the benefit of the group of churches working and especially sharing together. We need to develop appropriate ways of communication, build on what we know works and take opportunities to explore and share things that suit us best.

We've discovered one or two ways of doing that in lockdown – "Zooming", for example. It may not be the 'best' way of communicating and keeping in touch but it has 'kept many together' and who would have thought that 'Zoom' would be in as much use as it is now – if we had even heard of it before 6 months ago! (Other video conferencing options are available!)

If you have not yet used it maybe it is time to try it out and creatively share this resource in the new Resource Areas - particularly where long-distance travel is not an option?

*David*

## A second lockdown

As a second period of lockdown began in England last week, our Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** wrote a [Pastoral Letter](#) to all churches in the East Midlands Synod. Acknowledging the challenges with which it presents us, Geoffrey begins:

**The return to lockdown has come as a stark and painful reminder of the reality of the Covid-19 virus and the immense risk it poses. Even if we recognise the reasoning behind the call for lockdown we may be feeling a range of emotions –disappointment, frustration and fear –and all the more so because, having endured one lockdown and emerging from it, there is perhaps a deeper sense of anguish that life has become so restricted again. The Psalmist's cry, "How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?" (Psalm 13:2), may well speak for how many of us are feeling.**

The full Pastoral letter is available on our website:

<https://www.urch5.org.uk/sites/default/files/attached/1%2020201106%20November%202020%20lockdown.pdf>

The Moderators of the URC's General Assembly, the **Revd Clare Downing** and **Mr Peter Pay**, issued a statement urging us to consider the protection of the most vulnerable as an act of love through which we serve God:

**We will sustain our worship of God and our service to the community whilst upholding restrictions which seek the good of all.**

Their statement can be found in full on the national URC website:

<https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3640-urc-general-secretary-comments-on-new-four-week-lockdown.html>

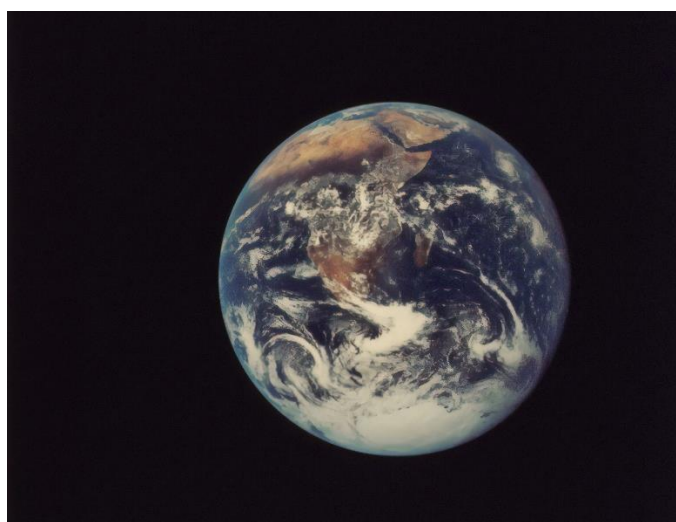
In their guidance on **Using places of worship and community halls** during the lockdown, the **Synod Moderators** ask churches to consider, “what is the best path to follow, not necessarily the one that we can ‘get away with’”:

<https://www.urch5.org.uk/content/pastoral-letter-statement-urch-general-assembly-moderators-and-latest-advice-synod-moderators>

Their full guidelines are available [via a link](#) on the same web page.

## Church and the Environment – a special meeting hosted by JPIC

**Tuesday 17 November 7.30 – 8.30pm**



### **What on Earth is JPIC?**

**JPIC** is a group from across the Synod that supports churches in working out our faith in the areas of **Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation**. To transform unjust structures of society, pursue peace and reconciliation, sustain and renew the life of the earth – these are crucial aspects of Christian mission and that’s what **JPIC** is there to promote.

We meet regularly on Zoom and have supported, among other things, the Synod's new **Environmental Policy** and congregations wanting to become an **Eco Church**.

You are warmly invited to this special evening **Zoom meeting** where you can raise your concerns about **church and the environment** and hear from churches who are exploring new and effective ways to fulfil this part of their mission.

- What is the new Environmental Policy and how can it help to refresh your approach to mission?
- How does the Eco Church programme make a difference?
- What support is available to churches along the way?
- What issues matter to you?

The meeting takes place on Zoom at 7:30 pm on **Tuesday 17 November** for an hour. Please email [tomveitch20@gmail.com](mailto:tomveitch20@gmail.com) to find out more and to book a place.

## Around the East Midlands

We send our congratulations to **West Derbyshire URC**, Wirksworth, who have been awarded an **Eco Church Bronze Award**.



Learn more about **Eco Church** at <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

- or [sign up](#) for **JPIC**'s open Zoom meeting about church and the environment next Tuesday, 17 November! (See above.)



## Pilgrim Churches: Where It All Began

This year marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Mayflower Pilgrims** – closely connected to our region – sailing for the New World. Those interested in exploring their background will enjoy a [series of videos](#) produced by Pilgrim Churches and available on **YouTube**, entitled '**Pilgrim Churches: Where It All Began.**' The churches featured include [Gainsborough URC](#), built as a memorial church to **John Robinson**, 'pastor of the Pilgrims', as well as other churches in the North Nottinghamshire area which have links with the Mayflower Pilgrims.





The full set of films can be viewed at:

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Pilgrim+Churches%3A+Where+It+All+Began](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Pilgrim+Churches%3A+Where+It+All+Began)

## Children and Youth

### Marrissa and Poppy win the Lundie Award



The **Lundie Memorial Award** is designed to highlight and celebrate young people in the Church who are using their God-given skills, time and talent to good effect. Each month for 100 months the Children's and Youth Work Committee are awarding a medal and certificate to one of the nominated children and young people.

We were thrilled recently to learn that the latest recipients of the **Lundie Memorial Award** belong to the East Midlands Synod. **Marrissa and Poppy Thorpe** worship at **St Andrew's URC**, Chesterfield whose Church Secretary **Liz Sharples** kindly shares this account:

Marrissa (16) and Poppy (9) are sisters and are active and valuable members of our church community. They have been attending our church and Junior church since they were young, with their Mum and Grandma, and they both light up our services with their positive attitude each week. Over the last few years they have been willing helpers at church in many ways – helping with the offertory, serving refreshments after our morning worship, reading the Bible and taking part in services.



During the Covid crisis the girls have really demonstrated their commitment to our church in a number of ways.

Just after the lockdown started in March, the girls and I discussed the idea of delivering small posies of flowers to as many members as possible on Mothering Sunday. There has been a tradition in our church of handing out flowers at this time each year, and the girls wanted to ensure that this tradition still took place.

The girls prepared over 30 beautiful posies and then helped me and their Mum deliver them on Mothering Sunday morning - carefully observing social distancing and hygiene guidelines. We received great feedback from many of our members who were delighted by this gesture. The delivery was made more special as our members were greeted by Marrissa and Poppy when they opened the door!

During lockdown the girls continued their support by helping their Mum deliver shopping and run errands for members who were isolating or couldn't get out of the house easily. Sometimes the girls cheered up some of the elderly members by taking



them for a short walk close to their house to get a bit of exercise. A welcome gesture!

As Marrassa and Poppy were not at school they had a bit of spare time on their hands when their schoolwork was completed. They decided to use this time to cheer up some of our members by making crafts which could be posted or hand delivered to them. They made cross stitched bookmarks, butterflies and other crafts which delighted the many recipients. A brilliant idea, girls!

Marrassa and Poppy have really made a difference to the life of our church over the last year and they deserve the recognition for all they have done.

### **Liz Sharples**

Secretary, St Andrew's URC, Chesterfield

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## **Seedlings and Groundbreakers and Busy Bees in Tideswell**

In the Derbyshire village of **Tideswell**, situated high in the Peak District, the work with children of **Fountain Square Church** (United Reformed and Methodist) has been able to thrive throughout 2020. A grant from the **Synod Mission Fund** and support from the **Methodist Circuit** paid their Children and Families Lay Worker, **Karen Perry**. Karen provides skilled resource and leadership to **Seedlings and Groundbreakers** (S&G) and also plays a vital role at the parent and toddler group, **Busy Bees**.



**Ben Twelves** explains what happened when Covid hit:

Pre-Covid-19, **Seedlings** (preschoolers) and **Groundbreakers** (school-aged children in infants and juniors) met twice a month on Sunday mornings and the leaders were just beginning to discuss the way forward, and thinking about how they could serve those adults at S&G who were wanting to get more involved with the other forms of worship at Fountain Square.

The world changed in 2020 and Karen has been at the forefront of ensuring our S&G family doesn't just fall apart and fizzle out. When lockdown first happened, Karen produced physical resources which she posted out to our families so that we could have S&G in our own households. Within a couple of weeks, Karen set up **Zoom church**. Each week Karen lets us know the theme a few days before the meeting and everyone gets busy making works of art, videos and performances which they share during Zoom church. Karen has asked all the different families to lead prayers and various parts of the service, which has been wonderful as we have seen people/children leading that have never done it before.

One great thing about this is that, at FSC we only have Karen for two weeks per month, and she is employed at **Bamford** for the other half of the month. Zoom enabled us all to meet together, which meant that we now have a weekly Zoom meeting. A side-effect of this is that we have started to build relationships with families at Bamford who we didn't know before. I hope that these relationships carry on and we will be able work together as churches in the future. Interestingly, during the school holidays, we usually end up cancelling a few S&Gs because everyone is away, but we have managed to carry on every Sunday this year. Numbers have been reduced, but it's been lovely to have people joining from their holidays all over the country.

Sadly, there have been families that we haven't seen whilst church buildings have been closed and we now need to start thinking about how to re-engage with those families, without losing the new relationships that we have built through our weekly Zoom.

Without a family and children's worker at FSC, we simply would not be able to run S&G as it takes so much thought and time. As leaders, we decided that whatever it takes, we must continue to employ Karen. S&G is such an important part of our outreach, mission and service to our community that the thought of simply stopping it, because the funding is no longer available, is not an option. Although the Synod's Mission Fund grant has come to an end, we are looking for funding from our own resources and the Peak Methodist Circuit are committed to supporting Karen's ongoing work for a further 3 years within the circuit, of which FSC is a member. We are looking forward to seeing how the work can develop at this critical time as we explore what children's family work could look like while living with Covid-19.

## Ben Twelves

on behalf of the Fountain Square Church Leadership Team

## Share your stories



### Enter the 2021 Community Project Awards

If your church is doing something amazing for the community, why not enter into the **2021 Community Project Awards**? The URC, in collaboration with **Congregational Insurance**, is looking for innovative projects that have a positive effect on their local communities. Winners can receive up to £2,000! Projects must have some involvement from the church and take place in a URC or a church in partnership with the denomination. Entries must be submitted by 26



February 2021. Full information and entry guidelines can be found at: <https://urc.org.uk/community-project-awards-2020>

### Share your experience of digital worship

The **URC Worship Reference Group**, formed by Mission Council, would like to learn about your experience of worship since much of it moved online. Please help the team by submitting a short video or email about your experience of your digital



worship, especially if you have been involved in crafting it.

For more information, and to email your submissions, please visit: <https://urc.org.uk/general/3633-worship-reference-group-invitation.html>

## So strangely together

As England's second lockdown got under way on 5 November, the **Revd Dr John Campbell** shared the following song for virtual worship in lockdown. It may be sung to the hymn tune *St Denio*, Rejoice & Sing 67 ("Immortal, Invisible") or R&S 146 ("Away in a Manger"):

**So strangely together,  
though each is alone,  
our voices sing singly  
yet blend round your throne.  
Your Spirit engulfs us  
wherever we are;  
you gather and bless us,  
those close and those far.**

**For now, in our worship,  
we'll meet and we'll share;  
all bask in your presence,  
all sharing in pray'r.  
We'll glimpse one another,  
hear voices we know,  
come close as one people  
let fellowship grow.**

**So, speak to us gathered  
and speak to each one,  
send comfort, send challenge,  
let fresh blessings run;  
unstopper our bottles  
of hope, faith and joy,  
replenish, renew us,  
each dark fear destroy.**

**Though phones and computers  
fall silent again  
your presence will linger  
to bless and defend,  
keep lively the mem'ry  
of time spend as one,  
to strengthen each household  
'til lock down is done.**

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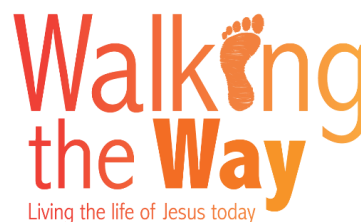
## Advent resources

The **Walking the Way** steering group has released new materials for [Advent 2020](#), focusing on the Psalms in the lectionary for the season and offering reflections and activities which people can explore in their own households and bubbles, in what is likely to be a very different Advent than we are used to.

Download the Advent resources at:

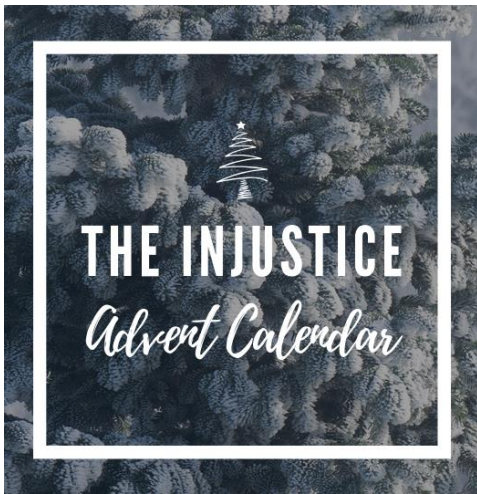
<https://urc.org.uk/images/WalkingtheWay/documents/WtWAdvent20.pdf>

The Advent materials and many others may also be found on the Walking the Way [webpage](#) and, in particular, the [resources](#) page. (Please note that you may need to clear your browser's cache memory to view the latest versions of materials.)





Traidcraft Exchange has launched [The Injustice Advent Calendar](#) – billed as “24 days to change the world”.



They call it the Advent Calendar that matters. Take part, and every day until Christmas **Traidcraft Exchange** will send you an opportunity to stand up for justice in a simple way.

The rules are equally simple: it will always be free, and it will always take less than five minutes to complete.

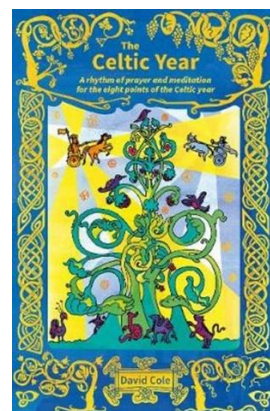
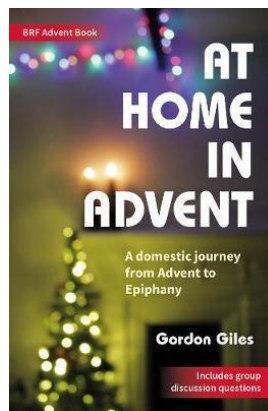
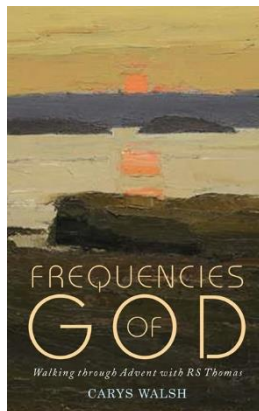
So you may be signing petitions, sending short emails, perhaps texting a friend... but you won't be giving any money and you won't be losing hours of your day either.

Find out more and sign up to take part at:

[www.traidcraftexchange.org/injustice-advent-calendar](http://www.traidcraftexchange.org/injustice-advent-calendar)

Church House Bookshop shares news of two online events this month in preparation for Advent:

### Advent Books: Discussion and Reading Wednesday 18 November 6.00 – 7.00pm



Author and broadcaster **Lavinia Byrne** interviews **Carys Walsh**, **Gordon Giles** and **David Cole** about their Advent books at this free event. Register on the Church House Bookshop Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/348464126216589>

### An Advent Retreat with Poetry and Music Saturday 28 November 10.00am – 1.00pm

This online retreat will start with an act of worship with music from the **St Martin's Singers**, followed by readings from **Richard Carter**, **Malcolm Guite**, **Rachel Mann**, **Mark Oakley** and **Carys Walsh**.

Tickets priced £10 (£5 for Church Times and magnet subscribers) are available at: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/advent-retreat>

If you have any:

- recommended sources of Advent and Christmas material available online or commercially
- materials generated and used within your church in recent years, which the authors would be willing to share within the Synod
- materials you'd be willing to share that you have prepared for Advent and Christmas this year

please email them to **Derek Graham** (Training and Development Officer) on [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk) by **Monday 16 November**. If there is a body of material, it will be gathered together and shared digitally in time for the start of Advent.

## Practical advice for churches

### Statement from Ansvar Insurance



#### ***Ansvar have issued a fresh statement about insurance cover during lockdown, as follows:***

As people and employers go into lockdown once more, you may be concerned that the policy will regard your buildings as unoccupied, untenanted, empty or disused and your cover will be restricted.

But, as before, for the period up to and including the 2nd December 2020, we will withhold the:

- restrictive policy cover for unoccupancy, and
- policy General Condition that requires you to inform us of the buildings being, or expected to be, unoccupied

should your employees be forced to work from home as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

However, if your building is no longer occupied this represents a greater risk of significant damage which could delay your organisation getting back up and running, once the current COVID-19 outbreak has passed.

With this in mind we would advise, **where you are able to do so safely and within the current government guidelines**, you try to ensure that:

1. **the buildings** are inspected internally and externally by an authorised person once a week to check the security and general condition of the premises;
2. **all waste**, refuse and other disused combustible materials is cleared from the buildings and any grounds adjacent to it;
3. **all external doors** are securely locked and all opening windows closed and locked (where fitted with locking devices);
4. **all tanks and pipes** are drained down where and when you are able to do this, and all taps, stopcocks and mains supply valves turned off. If this is not possible, because you need to maintain a central heating system, a minimum temperature of 7°C should be maintained.

5. a) **gas supplies** should be switched off unless to maintain a central heating system, b) **electricity supplies** should be switched off unless to maintain a central heating system or existing intruder alarm systems, fire protection systems, CCTV, security lighting or sprinkler systems.
6. **all existing physical devices** for securing, or preventing access to the buildings must be kept in full and effective operation at all times and to have all keys removed from the locks and kept in a secure place away from the premises;

We recognise that you may not be able to complete all of the items listed above, either partially or in their entirety but we would encourage you to consider anything you can do, to reduce the risk of damage or loss, particularly through escaping water from heating systems and security of the premises generally. Your cooperation during this difficult time is very much appreciated.

All other policy terms, conditions and exceptions are unchanged.

We will review these changes towards the end of November. We hope that this provides the reassurance you need. If this is not enough to meet the current crisis, or if you are unsure in any way, then please speak to your insurance advisor.

## Ansvar Insurance

# Action for Children



The charity [Action for Children](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk) works with families and decision-makers to help children across the UK grow up safe and happy. It sends the following thank-you:

Even though it's been a really challenging year and many churches were shut, so many churches have still supported our work locally. We can't thank you enough but at every opportunity, we will. Our Chief Executive, Trustee and the children we support recorded this video message for you:

<https://youtu.be/6DxI9OLhdLo>

### Starry Night – a virtual carol concert

On **Tuesday 8 December**, Action for Children invites you to enjoy an evening of Christmas carols, fun and festive cheer hosted by Channel 4 News' **Jon Snow**. Tickets are **£10 per household** and will give you online access to entertainment, readings and performances from celebrities including **Angellica Bell** and Call the Midwife's **Jenny Agutter**. For tickets see: [www.starry-night.co.uk](http://www.starry-night.co.uk)

Action for Children's  
**Starry Night**  
**Tuesday 8 December 2020**  
A virtual carol concert bringing the magic of Christmas into your home.  
To buy your ticket now (£10 per household), visit:  
[starry-night.co.uk](http://starry-night.co.uk)

The poster features a dark blue background with white stars and a small illustration of a girl with long red hair in the bottom left corner. The Action for Children logo is in the top right.

**Be a Secret Santa**  
for a vulnerable child  
Thousands of children and young people face Christmas without a hot meal, a present or a safe place to sleep.  
With your help, we could change this.  
Donate at:  
[iamsanta.org.uk/urc](https://iamsanta.org.uk/urc)

Registered charity nos. 1097940/SC038092.  
Company no. 4764232. © Action for Children 2020. 1534.

The poster features a dark blue background with white stars and a small illustration of a girl with long red hair in the bottom right corner. The Action for Children logo is in the top right.

**Action for Children** is also looking to recruit **Secret Santas** to support its Christmas campaign, reaching out to children who face the festive season without food, warmth or love. For details, or to donate, visit: [iamsanta.org.uk/urc](http://iamsanta.org.uk/urc)

## Personal news

It is with sadness that we report the death on 28 October of the **Revd Graham Spicer**, retired Minister in West Midlands Synod, following his diagnosis three years ago with primary liver cancer.

Graham served at: Hardware Street, West Bromwich 1976-84; Solihull & Knowle 1984 – 98; St Peter's, Bishopton 1998 - 2003; and Stratford-upon-Avon 1998 - 2016. We pray for his wife Rita and friends.

## Situations Vacant

### Synod Safeguarding Officer East Midlands Synod



17.5 hours per week (home based)  
Salary: £15,150 - £15,750pa  
(FT £30,300 - £31,500 pro rata)

The Synod is looking for a well-qualified and experienced Safeguarding Officer able to deliver the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Strategy in the Synod. Experience of managing safeguarding and providing training essential.

An application pack can be accessed via the Synod website [www.urc5.org.uk](http://www.urc5.org.uk) or by emailing Mrs Chris Willis on [admin@urc5.org.uk](mailto:admin@urc5.org.uk)

Closing date for applications:  
Midday on Thursday 26 November 2020.

The Role Description, Person Specification and Application Form are available at: <https://www.urc5.org.uk/content/advert-synod-safeguarding-officer-east-midlands-synod>



## 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 as the health crisis continues. 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/>



These have recently been joined by a dedicated [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g), where the Synod will share special events, training videos, worship and more. Evening Prayers are also uploaded here. Please subscribe:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzXFUrjKn8XOGeZU5SgN95g>

## Contacting East Midlands Synod

Owing to the current government recommendation to avoid office working where possible, the **East Midlands Synod Office** is presently closed. All members of staff continue to work from home: please email them in the usual way. The office number **0115 960 9241** is answered from Monday to Thursday, 9.00am-3.00pm and calls will be forwarded as necessary. Please continue to monitor our website for updates:  
[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

Free-to-use images sourced on Unsplash.com: Poppy field by Carl Jorgensen, seedlings by Francesco Gallarotti; coffee and tech by Elena Kloppenburg.  
CCL1067405

***Next edition: Thursday 26 November 2020***

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 date for next edition: 12 noon on Tuesday 24 November 2020