

Hannah Holmes

From: East Midlands Synod <trainingpa@urc5.org.uk>
Sent: 07 March 2024 03:56
To: Derek Graham
Subject: [Test] News from the East Midlands Synod

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7 March 2024 - No. 407

In this edition:

- As Easter approaches, [Nigel Adkinson](#) bids us tell our stories of journeying with Jesus
- [Trinity Lincoln](#) becomes our latest Eco Church and [Bulwell](#) welcomes our newest AALP
- Act now to explore where God is leading you with [Faith-Filled Life](#)
- Volunteer for the URC's cafe or Youth Engagement team at [Greenbelt](#)

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URC East Midlands Synod Facebook Page

Opening Reflection by the Revd Nigel Adkinson

Deputy Convenor of OMCG
(Ordained Ministries & Churches Group)

*God who sets us on a journey
to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people
in the desert long ago;
journey inward, journey outward,
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,*

***love for God and self and neighbour
marks the way that Christ defined.***

Words: Joy Dine (1937 – 2001)

We are in the season of **Lent** with its desert wanderings, as we search for that deeper connection with God.



I love the imagery of **journeying**, navigating life with its twists and turns, its motorways, A roads, B roads, hill climbing, valley walking - paths that seem to lead nowhere and end up leading somewhere exciting. The roads that seem easy to navigate, the paths that lead us to unexpected places of joy and delight, as well as at times, sadness and despair.

There are the people who journey with us: those who make the journey exciting and adventurous because of their ability to take risks. Those who walk at a steadier pace. Those supporting us in the difficult times. The reflectors on life, the marathon runners, and the sprinters.

Life can also be like a bus or train ride; you begin your journey with one group of people but often end it with a completely different group. Some have joined our journey and others have left it at different stops along the way. It is through these experiences that we see a rich tapestry of life developing, through the

people we meet who join our journey for a while, or who leave after just a brief encounter.

I feel privileged that my journey with you in the **East Midlands Synod** has come at a time when we face considerable challenges for the future, where connecting church and community is urgent as we seek God's guidance to be relevant in an age where being followers of Jesus can seem unfashionable, outdated and unnecessary.



During my relatively short time in the Synod and the conversations I have shared, I have come to recognise the very deep and personal journeys of faith made by many people over the years in our local churches. Those personal journeys will and have, I'm sure, touched the lives of people beyond the walls of the church, transforming and enriching the lives of others and in turn those people have enriched our lives. The great tapestry journey of life, woven into our communities over many years.

We used to be a nation of storytellers: I can remember regular bedtime stories read to me by my parents and grandparents, entering the exciting world of *Peter Rabbit* and his adventures in Mr McGregor's garden to *The Wind in the Willows*, *Winnie the Pooh* and the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

These stories opened new worlds for me, through the storytelling. We need to rediscover that art in the

telling of our personal stories of faith, the way in which our lives have been transformed and lived out through our relationship with Jesus. When did Jesus “get on our bus” or begin the hill walk or valley journey with us – how have our lives changed? Our stories can change lives by creating freedom and setting ourselves and others on a path of discovery, just like my bedtime stories of the past.

Let us tell our stories with humility and confidence, sharing our journeys so that we and others may be enriched by our encounters and so weave a great tapestry that honours God and brings fresh hope to our communities, building secure foundations and gaining strength from one another. Working with those of faith and none, sharing the journey - when it is exciting and joyful, but also when it is burdensome and weary.

May we look forward with great hope and prayerful anticipation to new life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as we look towards Easter once again with all its hope, promise and new opportunities.

To my fellow travellers in Christ – ***Nigel***

Synod Team on Tour



Church members from all around Derbyshire took the opportunity to talk with the Synod staff at our first **Synod Team on Tour** event, hosted with warmth and generosity by **Derby Central URC** on Thursday 29 February. This initiative offers a chance for the team to hear first hand what is going on in local churches - and for people from those churches to explore what support the Synod might be able to offer. We were delighted with the turnout and the quality of conversation throughout the day. Derby Central's Elders kept the tea and coffee coming all day long and both morning and afternoon sessions wound up with a short time of prayer and worship in the stylish new sanctuary, led by Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke**.



Next Stop: **Abington Avenue URC, Northampton**

Tuesday 30 April 2.00-5.00pm and 6.30-8.00pm

The next chance to pop along and chat with members of the team over a decent cuppa is on **Tuesday 30 April**, when we visit the town of Northampton as guests of **Abington Avenue URC**. This time, we'll be trying out afternoon and early evening sessions. If you're anywhere near Northampton, please do come and say hello.



Then touring to [Lincolnshire](#), [Leicestershire](#) and more in the months ahead...

Around the East Midlands

[Trinity URC, Lincoln Gains Eco Church Award](#)

We send our congratulations to the members of **Trinity URC, Lincoln**, who have achieved [Eco Church](#) status with a Bronze Award.



As a mark of the church's pledge to witness to its neighbourhood, Trinity members spent time planting bulbs on a sunny afternoon last October in the public gardens opposite the church. This was done in consultation with the Ward Councillor and then with the council officer responsible. Trinity hopes that this encourages other churches to do similar. The City Council was most co-operative and welcomed the initiative!

The church is also taking part in the [Toilet Twinning](#) scheme, using legacy monies have been used to twin eight toilets at Trinity URC, Lincoln and support the provision of toilets in communities overseas. It is hoped that this acts as a witness to all users of the premises.



A team of three members led the church in a thorough-going analysis of its worship, life, witness, premises, etc. over a three-month period.

Trinity commends the scheme to other churches, as it acts as a clear sign of how the church takes matters of climate change and stewardship of the planet seriously.



Flushing poverty down the pan!

'1 in 3 people worldwide don't have somewhere safe, private or hygienic

to go to the toilet.'

*How far is your congregation on its **Eco Church** journey? Find out more at www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk*

North Nottinghamshire Celebrates a New Lay Preacher

Bulwell United Reformed Church hosted a very special celebration on Sunday 3 March, when **Dave Dennis** was officially commissioned as an Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher. Having originally followed the TLS (Training for Learning and Serving) programme, Dave undertook a further year of mentoring and assessed services in order to achieve his well-deserved accreditation.



*L-R: Mark Hodgson, the Revd Colin Bones, the Revd Solomon Aryee-Brown,
Dave Dennis (AALP), the Revd David Featonby, the Revd John Filsak*

Morning worship was led by the **Revd Solomon Aryee-Brown** and attenders were drawn from across the North Nottinghamshire Area Partnership, of which Bulwell is the Resource Church. Dave's commissioning was conducted by the **Revd David Featonby**, Convenor of the Synod's Lay Ministries Group, and **Mark Hodgson**, Lay Preaching Commissioner. Equally delighted to lend him their support were his TLS tutor the **Revd Colin Bones** and AALP mentor the **Revd John Filsak**.

Dave becomes the fourth new Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher to be commissioned in the East Midlands Synod this academic year, following **Sam Goodman** in Derby, **Ray Morrall** in Daventry and **Claire Ette** in Wellingborough. We wish Dave every blessing in his ministry as Lay Preacher.

Enquirers' Event

Saturday 27 April 10.00am-12.00 noon via Zoom

Could you be our next Lay Preacher? Elder? Pioneer? Find out about all these vocations and more, with no obligation, as **East Midlands Synod** holds this year's **Enquirers' Event** online on **Saturday 27 April**.



The
United
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Synod



Synod Enquirers' Event

Is God Calling You?

**Do you feel God is calling you to serve in some way, but
you are not sure what? Or how?**

**Then here is an opportunity to hear people share stories
and answer questions about a whole range of vocations in
the United Reformed Church.**

CRCW

**Join us
on
Zoom**

Pioneer

Saturday 27 April

10 am - 12 Noon

Email: trainiingpa@urc5.org.uk to book your place

Elder

Lay
Preacher

Children & Youth
Leader

Minister

Chaplain

Explore Your Discipleship with **Stepwise**

Faith-Filled Life

begins Tuesday 2 April via Zoom

The East Midlands Synod is starting a new **Stepwise** group next month, exploring the introductory stream **Faith-Filled Life**. With fortnightly meetings held over Zoom, facilitated by the **Revd Martin Ferris** with **Derek Graham** (Training & Development Officer), anyone can join in. And Stepwise really is built for anyone - whether they're old or young, academic or not, new disciples or seasoned churchgoers...

Stepwise



Faith-Filled Life

Begins **Tuesday 2 April** on **Zoom**

Take the next step in your discipleship journey

Eight fortnightly Zoom sessions 7.30-9.00pm

facilitated by the **Revd Martin Ferris** and **Derek Graham**

Faith-Filled Life takes around three months, beginning on the evening of **Tuesday 2 April** - but register quickly so that you can be given access to the online Stepwise materials before the first meeting. It's a supportive and enjoyable programme, designed to help you look back at your journey so far and think where God might be calling you next. If you enjoy the first stream, you can choose to go on and delve deeper into worship, community outreach, leadership and more.

To sign up, or to ask more about it, just email Derek on training@urc5.org.uk .



For full information about **Stepwise** on the URC website, [click here](#).

Stepwise is better still in person - and a great way for your local church or Eldership to grow together in discipleship. If you'd like to form a group in your own church or Resource Area, we'd be delighted to help. Please email our Synod Stepwise Coordinator the **Revd Samuel Silungwe** (s.silungwe@yahoo.com) and **Derek Graham**, Training & Development Officer (training@urc5.org.uk).

Synod Quiet Days

Northamptonshire: Tuesday 14 May, 10.00am - 3.30pm

Derbyshire: Saturday 29 June, 10.00am - 12.30pm

Lincolnshire: Friday 13 September. 10.30am - 3.30pm

Free of charge: to book email: trainingpa@urc5.org.uk

Quiet Days



The
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Quiet Days give you an opportunity to pause, to contemplate your faith and to be refreshed.

In a tranquil setting, a leader offers a simple scriptural starter, then gives you the gift of time to meditate, wander, listen and pray as you choose. The day finishes with a short time of sharing. A Quiet Day offers a respite from pressure and a space to rest in God.

**JOIN US, TO BE
REFRESHED AND
RENEWED**

**Tuesday 14 May, 10.00am - 3.30pm
Yelvertoft Independent Chapel
Northampton
Led by the Revd Jay Phelps**

**Saturday 29 June, 10.00am - 12.30pm
Dale Abbey, Derbyshire
Led by the Revd Ruth Allen**



**Friday 13 September, 10.30am - 3.30pm
Heckington Fen, Lincolnshire
Led by the Revd Jane Weedon**



Mileage Claim for Carrying Passengers

It is now possible to claim for carrying passengers when travelling on Synod business, at an additional 5p per passenger . If you require a form for more than one traveller, please contact **Donna Varley** at finance@urc5.org.uk for assistance.



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 **Yorkshire Synod** brings us the news of the death of retired minister the **Revd John Walter Belderson**, on 29 February 2024.

John served at: Shepherd's Bush 1962-65; Twickenham 1965-71; West Park, Leeds 1971-86; and Dacre 1986-98'

Our thoughts and prayers are with all who hold John dear.

The **Yorkshire Synod** also shares news of the death on 6 March 2024 of retired minister the **Revd Paul Robert Smith**, whose service included churches here in the East Midlands.

Paul served at: Nailsea 1963-64; Albion & Parkdale Road, Nottingham 1965-68; Sleaford 1968-71; Brigg 1976-78; Spenborough Group 1980-85; and Wigton Moor, Leeds 1985-88.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all who hold Paul dear.

The **Southern Synod** brings us news of the death of retired minister the **Revd Brian Pavitt**, also on 6 March 2024.

Brian served at: Trinity Ifield Crawley, 1957- 64; Marple Bridge, 1964 – 69; Upper Norwood, 1969-72; Crossways Central Mission 1970 -71; and St Andrew's Upper Norwood 1972-75.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all who hold Brian dear.

Synod Picnic in the Park

Saturday 1 June 2024 11.00am-3.00pm

Everard Meadows, Leicester

Synod Picnic in the Park



The
United
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Church
East Midlands
Synod

SATURDAY 1 JUNE, 11AM - 3PM

EVERARD MEADOWS, LEICESTER

CRAFT

**PRAYER
TRAIL**

Join us to meet with folk from churches
across the Synod, for fellowship and fun!

A meeting for all ages; bring the whole family,
pack a picnic basket and enjoy a day of
outdoor adventure!

MUSIC

ACTIVITIES

FOR MORE INFO AND TO BOOK
VISIT:

[HTTPS://BIT.LY/SYNODPICNIC](https://bit.ly/synodpicnic)

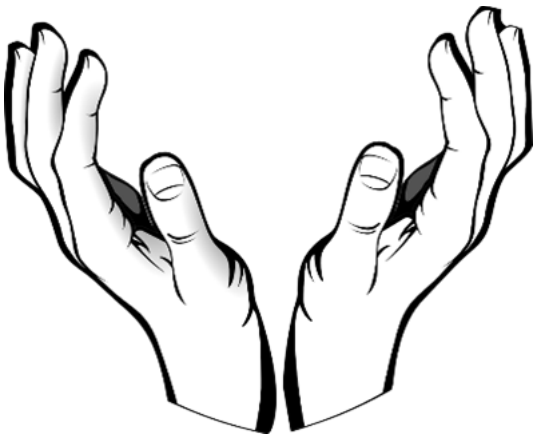


News from URC Spirituality



Spirituality in the Reformed tradition covers a wide range: it includes people who are enriched by deep explorations of scripture, or sitting in silence, encountering God in the world, or exploring things in quiet days and retreats.

URC Spirituality tries to bring together some of these strands as a way of encouraging people to broaden and deepen their spirituality. There are ways of interacting with others, taking part in events that we arrange – mostly on-line but we are hoping to book in-person events later this year – and sharing something of the spirituality that takes place in private and in public.



If you are looking for something different; something that involves going back to scripture and sometimes re-imagining it in a prayerful and spiritual way using different media either through music or the lyrics of hymns – then perhaps we can explore together and find that time to listen for God.

If you are interested, please email the committee secretary –

ann.barton@hotmail.com to indicate your interest in attending something online, in-person or whether you

might be willing to join the core group to help plan for the future.

Book Group - 'Being an Intergenerational Church'

Monday 8 April, Monday 29 April, Monday 13 May, Monday 3 June at 7.00pm

Join the Synod's **Children and Youth Development Group** as they explore this new book and look at its practical implementation in our Churches.

Book Group

Being an Intergenerational Church

BE
INSPIRED!



LET'S GET
Practical!

Practices to Bring the
Generations Back Together

SUZI FARRANT & DARREN PHILIP

Mondays on Zoom at 7pm on:

8 APRIL
29 APRIL
13 MAY
3 JUNE

Join us for lively discussions and insights on bridging the generation gap within our church. Whether you're a seasoned reader or just starting out, this group is open to all who are interested in building connections across different age groups. Let's learn, grow, and connect together as one church family!

Volunteering with the URC at Greenbelt

**Volunteer with the United Reformed Church
at the **Greenbelt** Festival 2024**

22 – 25 August 2024 at Boughton House, near Kettering



Join the yoURCafe venue team

As well as an exciting opportunity to be part of the URC team in the **yoURCafe** venue, now in its third year, offering food saved from landfill, crafts, talks, music and more, you will also get to enjoy the myriad activities the festival has to offer.

You will receive a complimentary weekend pass, food vouchers and a car or caravan pass as a thank you.

For more information on how to become a volunteer, what is involved, and how to apply, visit <https://urc.org.uk/greenbelt/> . Closing date for applications: **20 April 2024**.

Youth Engagement team

Are you aged 18+?

Do you enjoy supporting 12–17 year-olds?

Have experience, gifts, skills to share?

Then volunteer on the **URC Youth Engagement** team.

The opportunity comes with festival benefits, training and support.

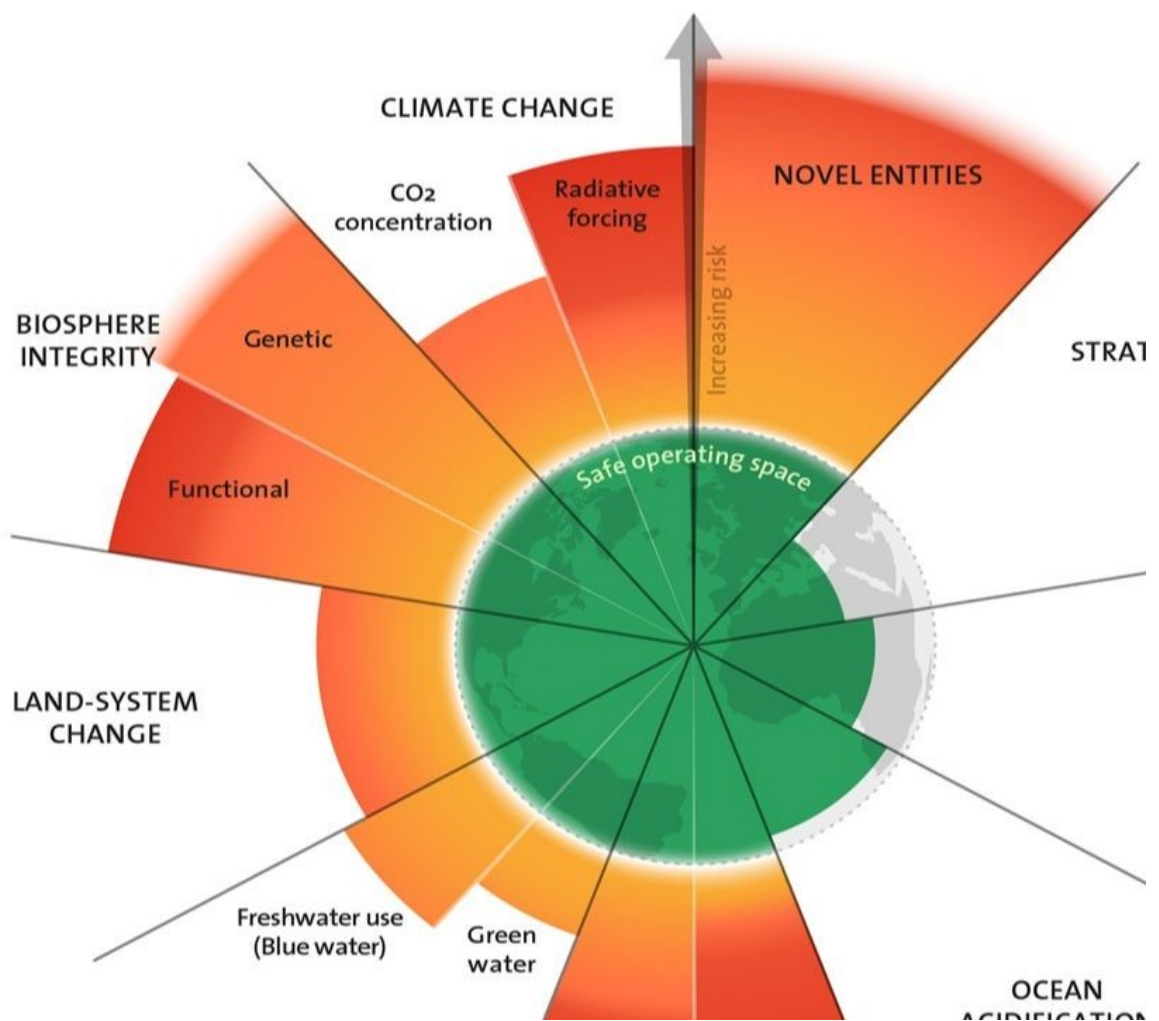
Email children.youth@urc.org.uk for more information.

ECO News

*On behalf of the **JPIC** (Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creation) Group, **Charles Jolly** shares this update:*

The Path to Net Zero by 2030 or 2040

Scientists (who we could regard as today's equivalent of the Old Testament prophets) have identified eight safe and just 'global boundaries', beyond which there will be significant harm to people and to many of the other creatures who share this wonderful planet with us. Only three boundaries have not yet been passed, and ocean acidification is close [see 'Nature', May 2023 and 'Scientific American', March 2024]. To ensure that everyone has, and continues to have, adequate clean water, food, energy, housing, transportation (not to mention decent toilets) would require even tighter boundaries.



(Adapted for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Richardson et al 2023)

Of course, we must keep a sense of proportion: war, oppression, an unfair global economic system and lack of clean water, adequate toilets and basic medical care are responsible for much disease, hunger, suffering and untimely death, as well as many refugees, displaced persons and economic migrants. Unless dealt with quickly, however, climate chaos and the consequences of exceeding the other boundaries will tend to make matters much worse, as well as introducing dangerous new problems.

Numerous IPCC reports have established that a temperature rise less than 1.5 degC above pre-industrial levels will probably avert the most severe and frightening climate change impacts but, if we hope to avoid significant harm to people and planet, a 1.0 degC limit is needed. In other words, we must as quickly as possible to stop emitting and then massively reduce atmospheric CO₂, which will require (for example)

restoring forests and wetlands and planting a huge number of new trees. (N.B. Using trees etc to 'offset' our continuing emissions is squandering a vital way of reducing high CO₂ concentrations after 2050.)

Climate scientists have calculated that for a 50:50 chance of keeping global warming within 1.5 degC this century, global CO₂ emissions must be cut by 45% of 2010 values by 2030 and to net zero by 2050 (alongside other measures: see <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/net-zero-coalition>). The UK can relatively easily reduce emissions (e.g. we rely on developing countries to make many of our goods and then we leave them to deal with the considerable CO₂ emitted during manufacture!), so the United Nations calls on countries like us to reach net zero by 2040. It is, however, even easier for churches to reach net zero than for the Country as a whole because the UK also has to eliminate emissions from manufacture, construction, agriculture, transport infrastructure & defence, which are even more challenging sectors than electricity and heat. For churches to aim for net zero by 2030 or soon after is no more than a fair contribution to the efforts that the UK should be making to reach net zero by 2040.

The good news is that the URC's General Assembly has set up the **Net Zero Task Group** to advise on how churches can achieve net zero. For details of implementing the new **Environmental Policy** that came into effect on 1 January 2023, see: <https://urc.org.uk/environmental-policy/> and click 'Implementation'.

Help available to reduce your heating costs and carbon footprint:

<https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency> for detailed Government information and advice.

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-great-british-insulation-scheme> for EPC: D to G & Council tax: A to D.

<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/> for advice and possible financial support.

Also: Age UK: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/> & The Energy Saving Trust: <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/>

If you have any thoughts or questions about Net Zero please contact: charles.jolly13@btinternet.com

Starting and Sustaining A Missional New Monastic Community

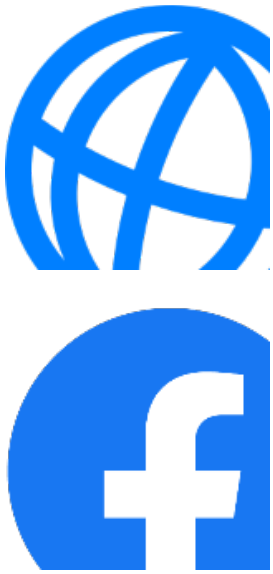


For those looking to develop skills in developing a more contemplative form of missional community, then **Missional New Monastic Communities** might be what you are looking for.

In this four-week course, two practitioners of new monastic community coming from different perspectives offer detailed guidance on setting up and running a missional new monastic community. The sessions include interviews with leaders of new monastic communities, explorations of practical issues relating to new monastic communities, and the whole issue of starting and forming.

For more information or to book visit: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/starting-sustaining-a-missional-new-monastic-community-tickets-845376813807>(<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/starting-sustaining-a-missional-new-monastic-community-tickets-845376813807>)

Find us Online



The [East Midlands Synod website](https://www.urc5.org.uk/) is the one-stop shop for all essential information:

<https://www.urc5.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 friends every day at 9.30pm. If you are a Facebook user, please consider **Liking** this Page and **Sharing** 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/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>

To subscribe to our **Synod Children and Youth Newsletter**, for ideas, resources and news of further events please click here:

<https://bit.ly/CandYNews>

This E-letter is produced on behalf of:
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CCL1067405

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Promotional graphics by Hannah Holmes and Derek Graham

Next edition: Thursday 21 March 2024

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both:
trainingpa@urc5.org.uk and training@urc5.org.uk

Copy deadline for next edition: 12 noon on **Monday 18 March 2024**

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