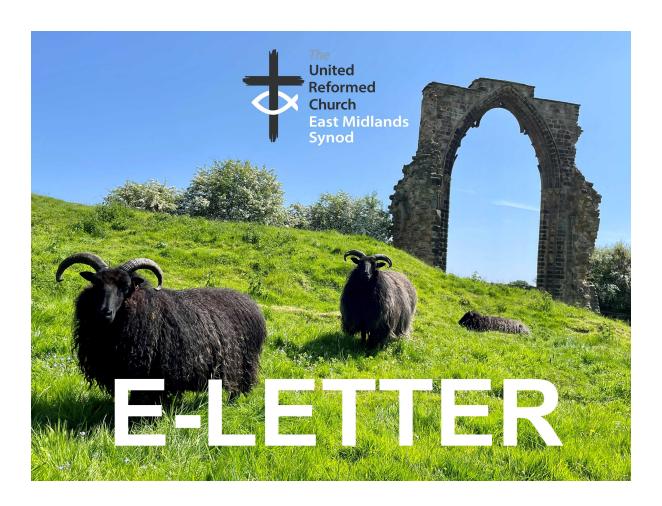
Hannah Holmes

From: East Midlands Synod <trainingpa@urc5.org.uk>

Sent: 25 July 2024 10:38
To: Hannah Holmes

Subject: [Test] News from the East Midlands Synod

View this email in your browser



25 July 2024 - No.417

In this edition:

- Geoffrey Clarke glories in encounters that offer glimpses of grace
- An abundance of events to celebrate <u>around the East Midlands</u>
- A fully funded chance to learn about <u>Leading Your Church into Growth</u>
- Fresh opportunities from <u>Children and Youth Work</u> and much more

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Visit our website



URC East Midlands Synod Facebook Page

Opening Reflection by the Revd Geoffrey Clarke Moderator of the East Midlands Synod

Strangely Warmed This Summer

Dear Friends,

I serve as The United Reformed Church's representative to the **Methodist Conference**. This year's meeting – in Leeds – was a particular delight personally as the **Revd Helen Cameron** commenced her year of office as President of Conference.



Northampton Methodist District, and as such she and I have worked together closely, particularly in Milton Keynes. I was delighted to be invited to lead one of the Conference early morning Communion services and took as my focus the gospel episode that framed my recent sabbatical:

Mary's visitation to Elizabeth (Luke 1: 39-45, 56).

I took the risk of offending my Methodist friends by suggesting that Wesley was not the first person to have his heart "strangely warmed". (Wesley's personal religious experience on 24 May 1738 – at a meeting in a Moravian meeting house on Aldersgate Street in London, while someone was reading from Martin Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans - was so transformative that in his Journal he wrote that he felt that his heart was "strangely warmed".) When Mary enters her house and greets her Elizabeth's child leapt in her womb and she is filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1: 41, 44). Her heart is strangely warmed. Mary's presence – as Theotokos (God-bearer) – is such that in their encounter Elizabeth catches a glimpse of grace. She addresses Mary and says, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb". (Luke 1: 42). Elizabeth's words have been immortalised in the ancient prayer, 'Hail Mary' – prayed daily across the ages and continents. The 'Hail Mary' acclaims that she is full of grace – words lifted from Gabriel's greeting to her (Luke 1: 28). It is in their encounter that grace is glimpsed. Well before she preaches (in her Magnificat – Luke 1: 46-55), it is her presence that enables Elizabeth to glimpse grace.

Much of the grace I have glimpsed has been through encounters – presence as much as if not more than preaching. And Mary embodies the clue for us. She is full of grace – rather than full of herself. For grace to be glimpsed, we need to be willing to make space to be full of grace rather than full of ourselves and our self-interest. In his challenging book, *Black, Gay, British, Christian, Queer**, **Fr**

Jarel Robinson-Brown laments what he calls the famine of grace in the Church. He cites Barbara Glasson's challenge that how we worship, the language we use, and the way we conduct ourselves as Church impacts real life:

If liturgy is the spoken language of the Church, then there is also the need to consider its body language. By this, I mean the way in which church communities present themselves in unspoken ways. It is said that 96 per cent of all communication is non-verbal, and this is true of institutions as well as individuals. It is these unspoken messages that often say more about mission than the words that come out of our mouths. (Robinson-Brown, p. 108)

Sadly it is not rare for us, as followers of Jesus, to obscure grace rather than embody it. For any of us who enter the arena of social media it does not take long for us to spot the famine of grace. Emails, text messages and more – all of these can be used as weapons rather than for grace. And our meetings and dialogue – all too often hearts can be hurt rather than strangely warmed. In *how we act and speak* as much as – if not more than – *what* we think we are conveying.

May we be known as those who are full of grace so that others may catch glimpses of grace through how we act and speak... even if sometimes grace has to make its nest on our shoulders (as this bird made its nest on St Hugo's shoulders at St Mary Magdalene's, Oxford).



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



* Black, Gay, British, Christian, Queer, by Jarel Robinson-Brown, is published by SCM Press (ISBN 978-0-334-06048-2).

Please note: this is the last edition of our e-letter before its summer break.

Look out for our next edition on Thursday 5 September - and let us know about the great things happening in your church over the summer months.

Around the East Midlands

Catriona Wheeler Elected as Moderator of General Assembly

We are delighted that **Ms Catriona Wheeler**, Elder and Church Secretary of **Trinity United Reformed Church**, Lincoln, has been elected as **Moderator of General Assembly** 2025-26.

Nominated by Trinity, Lincoln, and the East Midlands Synod, Catriona was duly elected on Saturday 13 July 2024 as Assembly met at Swanwick, Derbyshire. She will serve for a year as Moderator-elect before her Moderatorial year commences at the end of next year's Assembly.



Catriona with General Secretary the Revd Dr John Bradbury (L) and Synod Moderator the Revd Geoffrey Clarke

Catriona is well-known to many across the Synod and the wider church, having held membership in churches across three synods: Northern, Yorkshire and East Midlands. She currently serves the wider church as Legal Adviser to the East Midlands Synod, as a director of East Midlands Synod Trust and Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust. Locally, in addition to her roles as Elder and Church Secretary, Catriona conducts worship, is authorised to preside at the Sacraments and is a Stepwise student. Beyond church life, Catriona is a lawyer, practising as a solicitor and Notary Public, and is trustee to two local charities which benefit people in Lincoln.

We are confident that Catriona will be a great asset to the URC in the role of Moderator of General Assembly. We also appreciate the significant commitment that this represents for Catriona and

invite you to join us in praying for her particularly in her time as Moderator-elect (2024-25) and Moderator (2025-26) of General Assembly.



For a round-up of all the key
developments from this month's
General Assembly, download the
Business Digest at
www.urc.org.uk or by clicking here.

Matt Forsyth Elected as Vice President of Methodist Conference

At the same time as a member of an East Midlands church has been elected to lead our own General Assembly, we are also delighted to share the news that **Matt Forsyth** has been elected as **Vice President of Methodist Conference** at its recent meeting in Leeds.



Matt (R) pictured with Synod Moderator the Revd Geoffrey Clarke at this year's Methodist Conference

Matt is a member of our **Whittlesey church**, a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church - which he already serves as Northampton District Mission Team Leader. At 29, Matt is believed to be the youngest Vice President yet elected and will be inducted at next year's Conference. We hold our Methodist partners in prayer and particularly Matt as he prepares for this significant role.

New Members at Arnold URC

Arnold URC is delighted to share the news of four people newly admitted to membership. The **Revd Paul Burton** writes:

On 14 July at our morning worship, **Jean Hudson**, **June Masters** and **Helen and Charlie Bailey** entered into membership through reaffirmation. A most joyous occasion in celebrating the joining of new friends whose initial contact was through our deliveries of Christmas cards from the church outreach in action.



Northamptonship Area Celebrates Anniversary



Members of the **Northamptonshire Area Churches Partnership** (NACP) gathered at **Weedon URC** on Sunday 7 July to mark its first anniversary. Following a special Songs of Praise service, attenders were treated to a lovely cream tea with home-made scones provided by Weedon's members.

Adventure for Abington Avenue URC

The **Revd Jane Wade**, Minsiter at **Abington Avenue URC**, shares with us news of their day out at the Frontiers Centre:

"On Saturday a group of our young people and some of their leaders went to the Frontiers Centre

(Rock UK) in Northamptonshire. The day included orienteering, paddle boarding or kayaking, Bible study and creative prayer/reflection, basketball, the night line challenge (blindfolded course through the woods) a reflection on that experience, more basketball! (whilst some undertook the obstacle course), worship with our CYDO **Richard Knott**, and ended with a delicious BBQ.

One young person said: 'I was worried, like, oh no 9 hours!! But the time has just flown passed. It's been an awesome day!'

Another: When can we do it again!





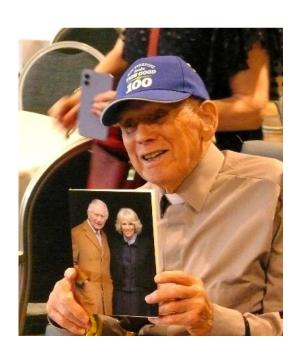




Centenary Celebrations for Bernard

We send our warmest congratulations to the **Revd Dr Bernard Holt**, who celebrated his 100th birthday with a family gathering at Lark Rise Retirement Village in Clifton, Nottingham on Saturday 20 July.





Pictured above with Bernard is the **Revd Louise Gee**, who attended along with the Revd Chris Ford and Derek Graham (TDO) to convey the Synod's greetings on this remarkable milestone. Bernard (sporting a cap which reads "Not everyone looks this good at 100") was also delighted to receive birthday congratulations from the King.

Forty years of ministry for Chris Ford

Meanwhile, the **Revd Chris Ford** has himself celebrated a notable round number: Sunday 14 July was the **40th anniversary** of his Induction as a Minister of Word and Sacraments. Chris marked the occasion with cake following morning worship at St Andrew's with Castle Gate URC, Nottingham

and was especially thrilled with the Junior Church's congratulatory poster, featuring drawings from his beloved *Star Wars*.





Leading Your Church Into Growth

Leading your Church into Growth is a Christian organisation which provides a model and framework to help churches enable growth in three key areas: spiritual, missional and numerical. Derek Graham and Tom Donoghue recently attended one of LYCIG's conferences in June, which serve to inspire and encourage sharing with the wider local church membership to think about how as a church you can be intentional about growth.



From Monday 25 to Wednesday 27 November 2024, a conference is taking place at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire for the United Reformed Church Northerly Synods, who are already engaging in LYCIG. We are delighted that up to seven spaces have been made available to East Midlands Synod - a wonderful opportunity to discover what this popular programme might offer you and your

church.

If you are interested in attending, please speak with **Tom** at mission@urc5.org.uk or **Derek** at training@urc5.org.uk to find our more and express your interest. We have arranged to fund these places in full, whether for ministers or lay people - so please do contact us to find out more.

You can find our more information about the conference and the content on the LYSIG website: www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk . We look forward to hearing from you.

Tom Donoghue

Mission Development Officer

Eco News

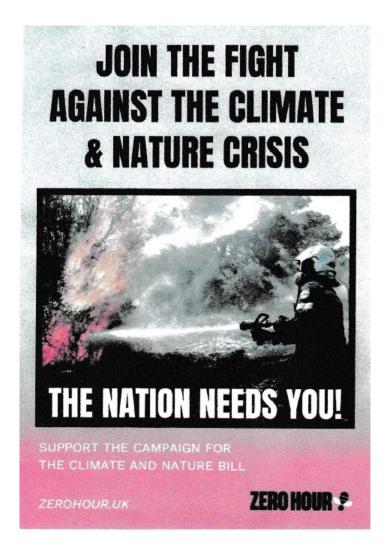
Charles Jolly shares the following update on behalf of our **JPIC** group (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation):

With the General Election, Wimbledon and the Euros over, and in the hopeful spirit of the Olympics, we must once again roll up our sleeves and move heaven and earth to help save the Earth from catastrophic climate change. As Ignatius (or Augustine?) reportedly said: 'Pray as though everything depended on God; act as though everything depended on you.'

The world has only six years left (little more than the life of our new Parliament) to halve greenhouse gas emissions if we hope to keep global warming within (or close to) 1.5°C this century. Yet in the 2424 General Election, climate change and the climate emergency got much less attention than in 2019 (source: AKAS UK General Election Media Tracker).

The reality is that, however much we do personally, only government and industry can achieve the systemic change needed. There are indeed many promising initiatives, afthough not enough and not quickly enough. Maybe only societal pressure from the 'grass roots'will impel our new government to

act with sufficient urgency.



In the film 'Amazing Grace', **William Wilberforce** dramatically rolls out on the floor of the Commons thousands of signatures supporting the abolition of the Slave Trade. It was a long, hard fight to outlaw the Slave Trade and the struggle to end slavery still goes on. The churches had a chequered record but **John Wesley**'s book 'Thoughts upon Slavery' (1774) was especially influential, inspiring Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers to join the abolitionists.

The <u>Eco Church survey</u> encourages us to engage with local leaders and M.P.s on environmental issues and to participate in campaigns on national and global issues (see the section on Community and Local Engagement, nos 1, 2, 15 and 16). The current campaign for a **Climate and Nature Bill** promoted by **Zero Hour** (<u>www.zerohour.uk</u>) is a timely example. Maybe we can take inspiration

from our forebears? Perhaps you remember the campaign that led to the 2008 **Climate Change Act**: the UK was the first country to set legally binding emissions budgets and others have followed the UK's lead.

Alex Sobel, who is now Labour MP for the new constituency, Leeds Central and Headingley, originally introduced the Bill on 21 March. The measures include supporting UK farmers to cut emissions, restore nature and grow healthy, sustainable and affordable food.

Many organisations and individuals have already signed up to the campaign, including: The CofE Environment Programme, A Rocha, Christian Climate Action, Green Christian, Operation Noah, Tearfund and individual churches, including United Reformed Churches. Could you join them?



Click <u>here</u> or on the image for a short video explainer

Please let us know if you and/or your church decide to support this campaign: email charles.jollyl3@btinternet.com.

Synod Quiet Day

Friday 13 September, 10.30am - 3.30pm

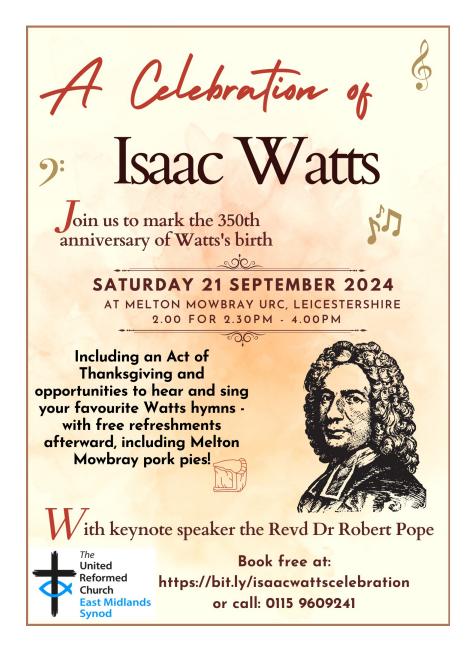
Heckington Fen, Lincolnshire



A Celebration of Isaac Watts

2.00 for 2.30pm until 4.00pm

Melton Mowbray URC



The year 2024 is the 350th anniversary of the birth of **Isaac Watts**, known worldwide as the "father of English hymnody". To mark his connections to this region, the East Midlands Synod is holding **A Celebration of Isaac Watts**, on Saturday 21 September from 2.30-4.00pm, with **gathering praise** from 2.00pm.

Melton Mowbray URC will host the event, commemorating his links with the Melton district. From 1696-99, Watts served the **Hartopp** family of Stoke Newington and Freeby. Alongside tutoring Mistress Mary Hartopp, his duties included preaching: he gave his first sermon on 17 July 1698, his

24th birthday. When accompanying the Hartopps to their Leicestershire seat, he led worship in Freeby's Congregational Chapel and two stained glass windows were later installed there to mark the connection. The chapel became a United Reformed Church in the 1970s and its congregation ultimately merged with that of Melton Mowbray.

Keynote speaker the **Revd Dr Robert Pope** of Westminster College will give short talks on the God of Isaac Watts and the continuing legacy of his hymnody. The event will also include an **Act of Thanksgiving** for his enduring gift to Christian life and of course, the opportunity to hear and sing several of Watts' best-known hymns. After singing lustily, attenders will be able to recharge with free refreshments including Melton Mowbray pork pies.

The event is free of charge but we ask you to register by visiting www.bit.ly/isaacwattscelebration (alternatively, call the Synod Office: 0115 960 9241). If possible, please book your place before 7 September so that we may judge numbers for catering.

Have you a favourite hymn by Isaac Watts? Would your top choice be "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"? "Joy to the World", "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past" - or one of his many others? Help us compile the most popular by nominating your most cherished Watts titles - either when you register for the event, or by emailing IsaacWattsHymns@gmail.com.

Synod Children's Day

Wednesday 23 October 2024



More from the Children & Youth Work Team

Order your Advent Packs now - and save 50%



This year's Advent Packs from the URC Children's and Youth Work team invite people to 'step into the story', focusing on Christmas as everyone's story with traditions, crafts and recipes from around the world to enrich the celebration.

The packs, designed for local URC churches to give to families they have connection with, come in A5 envelopes which are left unsealed for churches to add their own material and invitations. Packs contain an original story book, a book full of inspiring activities and an A3 sticker Advent calendar to engage with the Christmas story. There will also be a separate A2 poster for churches to display and ideas for linking church activities to the packs.

Pre-order from the <u>URC bookshop</u> **before 30 August** to ensure you are not disappointed. The price is £3 (plus P&P) for a single pack, £28 (plus P&P) for 10 packs or £65 (plus P&P) for 25 packs - **but the East Midlands Synod is offering to meet 50% of the costs of packs for our churches!**

If you would like to receive the discount code for your church's order please email Hannah Holmes at trainingpa@urc5.org.uk.

Who could you nominate for a Lundie Award?



The **Lundie Memorial Award** celebrates the good work an individual child or young person is doing for their church and community. Each month, a medal and certificate is awarded to one of the nominees, along with a gift of £100 for the award winner to choose how to spend to benefit children and/or young people in the church, synod or local community.

We'd be thrilled to see some nominations from the East Midlands: for full details, visit www.urc.org.uk/your-church/family-friendly-church/lundie-memorial-awards/.

For lots more news and opportunites for Children and Youth in the East Midlands, see our dedicated newsletter at:

www.urc5.org.uk/content/children-and-youth-newsletter-july-2024-edition

Personal News

It is with great sadness that we bring news of the deaths of the following people. We give thanks to God for all that has been achieved through their lives and ministries. The **Northern Synod** brings us the news of the death of retired minister the **Revd Norma Johnson**, on 17 July.

Norma served in the East Cleveland Group 1994-2005 and the Clitheroe Group 2005-2009 and has latterly been part of the worshipping family of Redcar URC. Her funeral will be held on Thursday 1 August at 2.00 pm, at Redcar URC, Station Road, Redcar TS10 1RQ.

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

The **South Western Synod** brings us the news of the death of retired minister the **Revd Anthony Coates**, on Friday 12 July.

Tony served: at City Temple 1964-68; as Free Church Chaplain, Keele University 1968-73; Emmanuel, Cambridge 1974-82; WCC 1982-85; Redland Park, Bristol 1985-89; as Secretary of World Church & Mission 1989-96; and at Hutton & Shenfield Union 1997-2002. He was recently presented with his Certificate on the 60th Anniversary of Ordination.

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

The **South Western Synod** also brings us the news of the death of retried minister the **Revd Tim Richards**, on Monday 15 July.

Tim served at the Mid Somerset Group of Churches since his ordination in 2005 and latterly also as Companion Minister at Taunton URC. A Service of Commendation and Committal will take place at Mendip Crematorium, Old Wells Rd, Croscombe, Wells, BA5 3RR on Friday 2 August 2024 at 10.30am (please call 04158 272297 for details of the webcast), followed by a Thanksgiving Service at Street URC, Street, Somerset, BA16 0ER at 1.00pm.

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

Synod Team on Tour

Come and meet staff and officers at our next stop:

Christ Church URC, Leicester Monday 28 October 2.00-8.00pm



Opportunities



Member of Pensions Committee

We are seeking immediate nominations and applications for a member of Pensions Committee.

Have you a financial background? If so, the URC needs you!

The URC Pensions Committee is looking for volunteers to help the URC continue supporting its pension arrangements. Previous experience in some aspect of pension provision or regulation would be of assistance to the current group of volunteers.

If you have an interest in helping the Church manage the retirement arrangements for our ministerial team and our staff members, we'd love to hear from you.

Interested?

The role description is available here: <u>Jobs - United Reformed Church</u> but if you want more information about the role please contact <u>John Samson</u>, Chief Finance Officer.

To apply please send a CV by email to jacqueline.watson@urc.org.uk

Nominations can also be sent to jacqueline.watson@urc.org.uk

There is no deadline for applications, the advert will close as soon as a suitable candidate has been found.

Applications will be screened by the Committee Convenor in conjunction with another member of the Pensions Committee. Shortlisted applicants will be asked to attend a short meeting with them. References for all volunteers will be sought prior to positions being confirmed.



Repairs and Maintenance Coordinator London

Fixed term contract for 12 months, 35 hours per week Salary: £36,102

Are you eager to support a team to deliver an efficient customer focussed service?

The Retired Ministers Housing Society (RMHS) exists to assist retired and retiring ministers to meet their housing needs during retirement, aiming to provide appropriate housing suitable for long-term occupation. We maintain around 300 properties tenanted by retired ministers, arranging inspections and repairs.

In this role you will be responsible for the daily coordination of repairs and maintenance activities. You will be the central point of contact for our elderly residents, liaising with surveyors to ensure our programme of works and cyclical compliance checks are followed through and carried out promptly.

You are educated to A level standard, or equivalent experience, have excellent administration and ITC skills and are highly organised. You also possess good communication skills and can problem solve, dealing with issues in a calm and sensitive manner. Experience of repairs and maintenance in a housing environment would be a distinct advantage.

We can offer you a flexible and friendly work environment in a small team; hybrid working from Church House in London and from home is possible.

If you are interested in working for us and can meet the above requirements, please contact us/see our website for an application form (noting that we do not accept CVs):

Human Resources, the United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT 020 7691 9871 recruitment@urc.org.uk www.urc.org.uk/vacancies

Closing date for applications: 12 noon, Friday 2 August 2024 Interview dates: Friday 16 August 2024



The West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church is seeking to appoint a Children and Youth Development Officer (Ref CYDO)

This is a full-time post for 35 hours per week including evening and weekends on an open-ended contract.

This post is subject to an Enhanced DBS Disclosure.

Salary: £40,000 depending on experience and qualifications

This post offers a challenging opportunity for an experienced and professionally qualified Children's and Youth Worker with training (or development) skills. We are looking for an enterprising Christian to serve the churches of the Synod in offering advice and support to those working with children and young people and to build up a Synod Youth Executive.

The Officer appointed will be a member of a professional Assembly team and a large lay Synod team; good team working skills are essential.

If you share our passion for children and young people playing their part in the mission of God, please download the job description, person specification and application form.

Click to download the Job Description

Click to download the Person Specification

Click to download the Application Form

Closing date for applications: noon on Thursday 15 August 2024
Shortlisting: Monday 19 August 2024
Interview date: Monday 2 September 2024

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.

Find us Online



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

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Our East Midlands Synod Facebook Page 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 consder Liking this Page and Sharing its posts:

https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/

Similarly, the <u>Synod Youth and Children's Facebook Page</u> shares news and ideas related to our work with young people: https://www.facebook.com/URCEastmidlandsYouth/



On our dedicated **YouTube channel**, 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

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:

The URC East Midlands Synod, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AA.

Telephone: 0115 960 9241

The inclusion of items in this newsletter does not constitute endorsement by the East Midlands Synod. Any views expressed do not represent the views of the East Midlands Synod or any of its officers or staff except where explicitly stated.

CCL1067405

Promotional graphics by Derek Graham and Hannah Holmes

Our e-letter now takes a summer break. Next edition: 5 September 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 2 September 2024

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