

EMURCE No: 318 – 30th April 2020
WEEKLY EDITION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
EDITED THIS WEEK BY: REVD GEOFFREY CLARKE

The practice of our religion teaches humility as well as holiness and justice,
and may God help us if we believe that practice makes perfect.

(Paul Bayes, The Table)

Practising but not perfect!

There is a sense in which this current setting – that of ‘lockdown’ – is one in which many if not all of us are facing hitherto unknown challenges to our faith. It is certainly the case that none of us have experienced a challenge of this nature. And it is not one for which we could have rehearsed or practised. We are likely, therefore, to be drawing on the reserves of faith and hope to embrace – or at least survive – the challenge of prolonged exile from much of what is familiar and ordinarily taken for granted. We will need, I suggest, to keep up the practice – continually practising – but never expecting to become “perfect”. As I begin my term as Moderator I am all too aware that any claim of being “perfect” is a non-starter. And the context within which all of us – as individuals, churches and Synod – is far from perfect. Rather, we are those who continue to practise.

I have found comfort and challenge, during this period of ‘lockdown’, in a renewed commitment to the practice of nightly prayer and to reading. (I also enjoy preparing and sharing meals, but that is a topic for another time!) I continue to live stream Evening Prayer at 9.30 p.m. each night via our new URC East Midlands Synod Facebook page. And I chose three reading partners, one per book, with whom I committed to a virtual meeting once a week to discuss the designated section of the book. These two practices are sustaining me. I commend some words from one of the books I am reading. They are attributed to the early Quaker James Nyler and express his confidence in what Paul Bayes describes as “a quiet and indomitable love”. Nyler had his tongue burned through with a hot iron for saying the wrong things and his forehead branded with the letter “B” for blasphemer. Yet he practised a religion that affirmed a way that overcomes all hatred:

There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end.

Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself.

It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thought to any other.

It if be betrayed, it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned; it takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind.

In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can take its own life. It is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it; nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression.

It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world’s joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them that lived in dens and desolate places of the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal holy life.

(In William Sewell, *The History of the Rise, Increase and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers* (New York, 1844)
cited by Paul Bayes, *The Table* © 2019 Paul Bayes.)

May faith and hope be sustained among us – not that practice will ever make perfect but that even when we might be feeling “forsaken” we may know God-with-us.

Thank you!

I want to convey my thanks and appreciation to all who have ensured that the life of our Synod has continued in this period of 'vacancy'. A team of people has worked with commitment and have done so on top of their normal duties and roles. Particular thanks to Helen Lidgett, as clerk, and to Peter Stevenson and George Mwaura who between them have provided cover in the absence of a Moderator; thanks, too, to Kevin Watson and Steve Faber for their willingness to assist as and when needed and to Synod Office staff, for whom this has been a particularly challenging time.



INDUCTION OF REVD GEOFFREY CLARKE AS MODERATOR OF EAST MIDLANDS SYNOD

Revd Geoffrey Clarke will be inducted as Moderator of East Midlands Synod in a video-link service led by Revd Nigel Uden, Moderator of General Assembly, on Friday 1st May. The service starts at 11.00am and will be live-streamed. To access the service log on to:

<https://stream.lifetimesizecloud.com/extension/2422297/7c2181f2-df7e-4e2c-ad01-29866dca5c73>

The service will also be recorded and we are arranging for this to be posted on the Synod website. Please pray for Geoffrey and his wife Judith and their family as he takes up this new calling and ministry.

PEOPLE

- We regret to inform you of the death of Revd Denis Simons, from Eastern Synod, on 23rd April, 2020 of a heart attack. He leaves a widow, Pat. Denis served with the Anglican Church of South Africa until 2002 and then Malvern Link & Holly Mount Malvern 2002-08; Bush Hill Park 2008-10; Halesworth & Bramfield 2010-15; Shipdham 2016-2019. There are no funeral details at present.

URC VISIT TO ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Revd Jenny Mills took part in the URC visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories last year. She was invited to speak about this at the March Synod Meeting which was cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic. She has now prepared a video presentation with the talk she planned to give accompanied by photographs of the visit. This has been posted on the Synod Facebook page so everyone has an opportunity to learn about this important URC initiative.

https://www.facebook.com/URC-East-Midlands-Synod-102279281444717/?modal=admin_todo_tour

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

To help stay in contact during the health crisis and beyond, we are pleased to introduce a new Synod Facebook Page. We hope this will develop into a place of sharing and of celebration. If you are a Facebook user, please feel free to Like and Share both the Page and its Posts.

You will find it by searching "URC East Midlands Synod" or following this link:

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

From Thursday 9 April, this Page will host the **Evening Prayers** which our Moderator-Elect, the Revd Geoffrey Clarke, has been leading daily at 9.30pm since the beginning of the lockdown. Geoffrey draws on a variety of resources from several denominations to offer a time of peaceful prayer and meditation toward the end of the day.

MR IT - aka REVD DAVID LEGGE

Many of you will know David retires from his stipendiary ministry this week - today in fact! What some might not know about is David's other 'passion' for all things IT - and computer stuff generally - especially what is known as 'freeware'. For the non techie people freeware is as it implies - computer system software (copyrighted) that is available at no cost for unlimited usage. [I believe he might dabble in Shareware as well where users are encouraged to share limited software to promote sales.]

I first met David when I joined the Synod team in 2010 - he was the one who kept popping into the office to sort out computer problems for people there - and also the one who, in the main, sat somewhere near the front at meetings of the Synod organising the projection of the agenda, and other items, on screen for us all to see.

That in itself might appear to be a straightforward task - but believe me the work on the day is only a relatively small part of the presentation. Days before David will have received numerous items, often in a variety of formats, and would have to carefully and as seamlessly as possible thread these together so all attending could get the best presentation possible!

Then there is all the kit needed to do this - transport and set up, not to forget taking it all down and returning it. Sometimes linking things to church systems presents 'concerns' but this never seems to phase him, fortunately!

Also, another 'hidden role' David undertakes is the management of the Synod web site - not the content that we all see when logging on to urc5 but the operating system behind the 'front page'.

Then how about a database that has significant use by the staff - David manages this as well and has a level of expertise for the type not matched by many others.

So, we give a most sincere thanks for all of his work on this for over a decade and wish him well for his newly acquired 'leisure time'!

I'm sure his love for the techie stuff will continue - indeed he has promised to write some manuals and keep the background systems management running smoothly!

Thank you David, and all good wishes on behalf of all of who use the office IT at whatever level - and those who have seen what you without knowing you do it!

David J Greatorex, Treasurer.

EAST MIDLANDS SYNOD OFFICE CLOSURE

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Synod Office closed on 24th March and will remain closed until further notice as we follow Government guidelines. Whilst we are closed all members of staff will be working from home. If you wish to contact them please e-mail in the usual way. For the list of emails click on the link below: <https://www.unc5.org.uk/synodstaff>

Telephone calls will now be forwarded to mobiles so please call the office in the usual way on 0115 9609241 between the hours of 9am - 3pm, Monday - Thursday, if you wish to speak to a member of staff.

Due to the office closure, at this time we have no access to the database for sending out group emails.

Therefore all information will be put on to our website. Please keep checking for updates. All other information will be sent out using our E-Letter provider so if you have not already signed up, please click on this link: <https://unc5.us18.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=7b9491ce2216f1835e4829f87&...>

Our E-Letter will be sent out weekly for the time being, to help keep you updated and keep in touch, so if you have any information, news, good news stories, etc please send to training@unc5.org.uk

NEWS FROM WALKING THE WAY - NEW RESOURCE MAP, RESOURCES AND STORIES

The Walking the Way resource map has been relaunched as a PDF, which is much easier to access and use across a range of devices. It gives users the chance to browse resources thematically, as well as using the Venn diagram. It also gives a brief explanation of each resource, with room for reviews and comments, so please encourage people to let us know what they think of resources so we can share their experiences, good or bad. The new map can still be accessed at www.urchurch.org.uk/wtw-resource-map.

The steering group has released resources in preparation for Summer

<https://urchurch.org.uk/images/WalkingtheWay/documents/WtW_Pilgrimage_resource_2020.pdf>, looking at pilgrimage and our journey of faith in simple and accessible, yet relevant and meaningful ways, regardless of whether we are able to physically move around our communities, or not. There are also resources for ministers, lay preachers, elders, and other worship leaders as they prepare to lead congregations through Pentecost <https://urchurch.org.uk/images/WalkingtheWay/documents/WtW_ideas_for_Pentecost.pdf>

Our friends at the Bible Reading Fellowship, who are responsible for publishing Holy Habits and associated resources, have a 'Holy Habits House Group' <<https://www.holyhabits.org.uk/online-home-group>> which meets virtually every week to enable people to share in worship, fellowship and learning together, especially in lockdown, when we cannot meet physically or perhaps live out the Holy Habits in the ways we are used to. The current sessions are looking at the Holy Habit of Sharing Resources, which is particularly important at this time.

Stories about how congregations are responding to the current crisis are being gathered and will be shared over the coming weeks on the Walking the Way news page

<<http://urchurch.org.uk/wtw-news>> and social media (Facebook <<https://www.facebook.com/wtwurch/>>, Twitter <https://twitter.com/wtw_urch> and Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/wtw_urch/>), so keep checking these regularly.

AND FINALLY: - This E letter is sent on behalf of The URC East Midlands Synod, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AA. Telephone: 0115 9609241

Email address for E-Letter Editor: trainingpa@urchurch.org.uk

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