

EMURCE No: 312 – 19th March 2020
Edited this week by: Revd Geoff Townsend

Among the many roles of the Ordained Ministry and Churches Group is that of helping churches resolve any problems. If ever I feel the need to return to some sense of normality and get things back into their right perspective I turn to a book I was given some time ago. “The Field Guide to the English Clergy” written by an Anglican vicar the Revd Fergus Butler-Gallie. It tells of the ministry of several Anglican clergy for whom the term “eccentric” takes on a new level of meaning.

I looked to see if any had ministered in the East Midlands, among them was The Most Revd Lancelot Blackburne who was Archbishop of York from 1724 to 1743. In his earlier life he had been a pirate in the Caribbean before becoming a priest. Whilst a Canon at Exeter Cathedral he was briefly suspended for getting builders to construct a tunnel so he could visit a neighbour’s wife. He gained advancement by being prepared to conduct a bigamous marriage for George I. While he was Archbishop of York he got bored while leading a confirmation service in Nottingham Parish Church and sent his servant out to fetch his pipe, some tobacco and a pint of ale. At his death someone commented that his behaviour was never that expected of a cleric, and indeed rarely that expected of a pirate.

Perhaps his exploits pale into insignificance with the Rev Dr Drax Free who became Rector of Sutton in Bedfordshire in 1808. He kept the Church locked for most of the time, rarely conducting any services. On one occasion he sold most of the church roof including the lead to pay off his gambling debts. When the Bishop’s representatives called to attempt to reclaim church property, he locked himself in his rectory with a brace of pistols, his favourite maid and a stack of French pornography. After a two week siege he gave up when he had drunk all his claret.

All this of course was before Good Practice 5 and Section O.

Geoff Townsend

**ALL SCHEDULED EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE IN LIGHT OF THE
CURRENT SITUATION. Please check the East Midlands Synod website
www.urcs.org.uk for the latest updates.**

SYNOD MEETING SATURDAY 21 MARCH 2020

In light of the coronavirus, we want to ensure that we are doing all that we can to prevent its spread and keep people safe. **The Synod Officers have therefore decided, after careful thought, to cancel the East Midlands Synod Meeting on Saturday 21st March 2020.** At the moment, it is not possible to let you know about an alternative future date.

Any travel expenses already paid will, of course, be reimbursed. Please send them to the Synod Office marked for the attention of Chris Willis. For some of you, it may be possible to get a refund on your tickets. For others it may not be. Let’s all just do what we can in that regard.

We apologise for any inconvenience and disappointment that this decision may cause, especially to those of you who have worked diligently to produce papers for discussion on this occasion.

In the meantime, we pray that you will all remain in good health.

March 17: Updated advice to churches about coronavirus

The United Reformed Church advises churches that have not already suspended all acts of worship, physical meetings, and other church activities, to consider doing so as a proper response to the Government's guidance.

Revd John Proctor, URC General Secretary, has written a pastoral letter to all ministers and CRCW's which will be helpful to all churches and is now available on the URC website. The URC have also issued guidance about weddings and funerals. Both the letter and guidelines are attached to this E-Letter.

Synod will keep all meetings and training events under review. Some will be cancelled, others it may be possible to hold virtually, through telephone or video conferencing. Check the website and E-letter for updates. The members of Synod Groups will be contacted by the Convenors and Secretaries with details of arrangements before each planned meeting. Derek or Hannah will contact people who have signed up for training events.

The office will be open for the usual hours 9.30am - 3.00pm on Mondays to Thursdays, but only one member of staff will be present each day. Others will be working from home and messages can be passed to them.

The URC website offers advice and resources from a variety of sources about the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic which can help you keep up to date with advice and guidance.

Please continue to pray for our churches, ministers and elders, and for the Synod and Assembly staff and officers.

John Proctor's letter concludes with the following prayer which we commend to you:

*Lord Jesus,
In the midst of a storm,
You said, 'Peace be still.'
Bid our anxious fears subside,
Sustain your church in faith, hope and love,
Bring our nation through this tumult,
Grant wisdom to those with heavy responsibilities,
And healing and hope to those who are infected.
Amen*

<https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3385-coronavirus-worshipping-digitally>

MODERATORS INDUCTION SERVICE

Dear Friends

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus (Covid-19), it is with deep sadness that we have decided to cancel the Induction Service planned for 16th May to induct Revd Geoffrey Clarke as Moderator of the United Reformed Church East Midlands Synod.

Geoffrey's appointment will be confirmed by the Officers of General Assembly shortly. Revd Nigel Uden, Moderator of General Assembly, has agreed to conduct a short, local service for Geoffrey during April which will, in his words "create a liturgical moment that enables commitment, that commissions and that prays blessing". Geoffrey will therefore be able to take up office on 1st May as planned, knowing that he does so at this critical time with the blessing and support of the whole church.

We plan to hold a service to celebrate and affirm Geoffrey's new ministry later, but clearly we are unable to give a date for that at the moment.

In the meantime, please remember Geoffrey and his family in your prayers as he leaves his present charge and prepares for his new ministry.

Stay safe.

Helen Lidgett, Synod Clerk

UPDATE - Ministers' Overnight Retreat

We regret to say that in line with fresh guidance, the Ministers' Overnight Retreat scheduled for Monday 30 & Tuesday 31 March is now **postponed** until further notice. We will make decisions about future training events as the situation develops: please check the East Midlands Synod website for the latest information or contact Derek Graham, Training & Development Officer on training@urc.org.uk (telephone 07772 911449).

Many thanks,

Derek Graham, Training and Development Officer

A MESSAGE TO YOUTH AND CHILDRENS LEADERS FROM JANE HENDERSON, CYDO

Hi everyone.

If you are a youth or children's leader or minister in your church please join our Facebook group, we are using it to share ideas and support each other during the next few months. It is a private group so please say where you are a leader when you request to join. If you can't find the group send a message to the URC East Midlands Youth Facebook page and the moderators will send you the link.

Many thanks, Jane Henderson CYDO.

Light a Candle of Hope: A National Call to Prayer

This Mothering Sunday, **22nd March**, we are calling all churches to a National Day of Prayer and Action. At such a time as this, when so many are fearful and there is great uncertainty, we are reminded of our dependence on our loving Heavenly Father and the future that he holds.

At 7:00 pm this Sunday, light a candle in the windows of your homes as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.

"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you" 1 Peter 5:7

The Presidents of Churches Together in England <http://www.cte.org.uk/calltoprayer>



THE BOOTS ORCHESTRA – POSTPONED

The Concert planned for Saturday 21st March at Beeston Methodist Church has had to be postponed.

The plan is to re-schedule later in the year and we will keep you posted.

Thanks

Tony Richmond, Community Fundraiser

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC: Marlpool URC Theatre Company Present - Cancelled

On Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd April 2020 at 7.30pm

POSTPONED - MAYFLOWER 400 CELEBRATION SERVICE

Sadly, we decided that in view of the projected coronavirus development, we should postpone the Mayflower Celebration Service planned for Saturday 13th June 2020. We haven't proposed any alternative dates because of the present uncertainty.

PROPERTY AND TRUST MATTERS WITH EFFECT FROM 1ST APRIL 2020

With effect from 1st April 2020 all Trust matters will be dealt with by Donna Varley. Email: trust@urc5.org.uk

All Property matters will be dealt with by Geoff Milnes. Email: property@urc5.org.uk

Plan for Climate Sunday

As you have probably heard, the United Kingdom is hosting COP26, the crucial climate negotiations, in November this year. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this event if the world is to take the necessary action to keep global warming within 1.5 degC temperature rise. The opportunity and challenge to the churches, with their mission to care for God's Creation, is self-evident.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (ctbi) is planning an important initiative on Climate Sunday to help us all to focus on what we can do, as disciples of Jesus Christ, to be part of the solution. Please include this initiative when planning your programme, despite all the current uncertainties of the corona virus pandemic.

The call is to all local churches to mark 6th September with a climate-focused service. This is a National response in prayer. Tearfund, Christian Aid, CAFOD and many other Christian organisations are backing the initiative. 6th September is the first Sunday in Creation Time, but if that particular Sunday proves impracticable then please plan for one of the other Sundays in Creation Time (which runs from 1st September to 4th October).

Service outlines and other resources and a lot more information will be made available over the coming months.

Charles Jolly, Green Apostle

Find Out More About Eco Church

How do we start? What's involved? How might it help our church?

The Diocese of Derby as part of the Derby / Derbyshire Ecumenical Environmental Group has arranged two sessions designed to give an over-view of Eco Church and for people to hear something of what local churches have done so far – including stories from local churches. This event is at Buxton URC on Wednesday 20th May from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm. The events are FREE but advance booking is ESSENTIAL. Please telephone 01332 388687 to book or visit Eventbrite on-line: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/eco-church-tickets-94427235403 If you have questions please contact Charles Jolly 0129822557.

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@urc5.org.uk

Copy Date for Next E-Letter: 30.03.2020

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