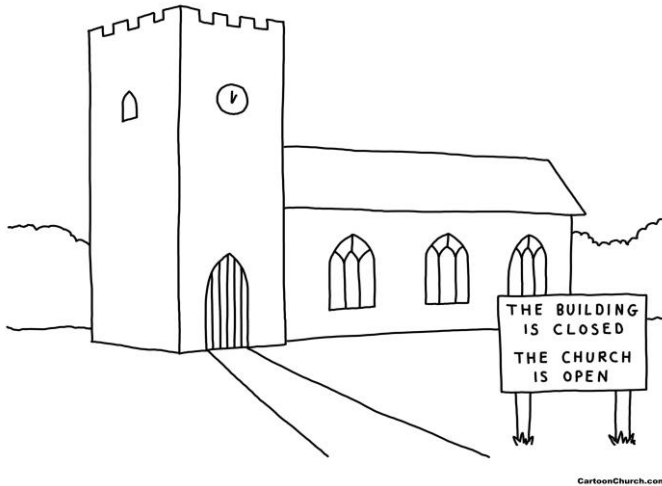


EMURCE No: 315 – 9th April 2020
WEEKLY EDITION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
EDITED THIS WEEK BY: DEREK GRAHAM



Drawing by Dave Walker of <http://cartoonchurch.com/> : used by permission.

THE END IS IN SIGHT

The end of Lent, that is. If this e-letter could confidently predict the end of the coronavirus crisis... well, I suspect it would gain a few more subscribers for a start.

When it comes to Lent, there are two schools of thought: do you give something up? Or rather, take something up? For me, 2020 has been the start of a new adventure in discipleship. So I've plumped for "taking up", namely a conscious act of devotion every day. It's something I've tried many times before but somewhere in the second week or so I tend to realise 24 hours have gone by with very little conscious anything.

My daughter and son, though, have stuck doggedly to the "giving up" approach: the time-honoured challenge of shunning sweets and chocolate, the better to enjoy one's Easter eggs.

Yes, that old chestnut. I can't be too smug about it because they're doing far better than ever I managed in my teens. There was the one year I survived forty days and forty nights without recourse to a Wispa bar but somehow it doesn't seem so impressive three decades on.

Still, I know who is enjoying this year's Lenten journey more: the one monopolising the confectionery. Where they have eschewed, I have chewed.

The point is, we approach the end of Lent in a place few of us could have anticipated back in the good old days of Ash Wednesday – two days before the first documented transmission of Covid-19 within UK borders. Aptly, it was my son who best captured the conundrum: "I thought I was giving up chocolate for Lent," he said: "I didn't think I was giving up church!"

The pillars of our habitual existence have fallen away with dizzying rapidity. We are captives, many of us, within our own four walls. For the foreseeable future, we are denied the joy of joining our voices together in worship in the house of God.

Carried off in a different sort of captivity, the Psalmist laments: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" For us likewise, this is uncharted territory.

But we haven't given up church for Lent, not at all. We have taken it up in a dazzling variety of forms, old and new. Bible readings and candlelit vigils. Podcasts and YouTube videos. Social media and web pages. Telephone conferences and video chatrooms. We are all discovering new ways of being church: on the phone, on the internet, or with arms reaching out to our neighbours in need. Singing the Lord's song to a hundred strange new tunes. It has made my own Lenten goal an easy one. No danger at present of ignoring the fundamental matters of life and death: rarely have I turned to God so constantly, or sought intercessions with such urgency. Meanwhile my meagre devotions are elevated by a magnificent outpouring of prayer and reflection, freely offered on every side.

"The building is closed. The church is open." In some sense we have become less a church with locked doors – more a church without walls.

Do not misunderstand me: these are silver linings to a very dark cloud. This year we arrive at the foot of the cross all too aware of the sin and suffering of our world. The burden we lay upon our Lord is a heavy one.

Yet ours is a God who cannot be held captive, not even by death: who forever rolls away the stone and springs up to new life.

Our Easter gatherings are cancelled. Easter is not. If we are truly a Resurrection people, we rejoice with all our hearts in the risen Christ of Easter Sunday and carry the flame of his hope toward a liberation yet to come.

This may be an Easter like none we have known. Even so, I pray it may bring you renewed faith and deepest joy.

Derek Graham (TDO)

THE FRONT LINE OF NHS CHAPLAINCY

An article by Revd Peter Stevenson

I had the pleasure of chatting with Revd Dr Kay Cattell last week and finding out what life is like on the front line of NHS Chaplaincy.

Kay has served the United Reformed Church since Ordination in 2005 and Joined NUH in March 2017, being appointed Deputy Head of Service for Spiritual and Pastoral Care in June 2019, following her service at Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust between June 2013 to March 2017.

She explained that the task of looking after the spiritual wellbeing of the staff remains a high priority. She agreed that this is a “challenging and difficult time for patients, relatives and staff”, but she is coping by relying on God, her experience and having a sense of humour. I spoke after she had finished a long shift and Kay had just got home to her family.

Kay is not alone in this task and is joined by another United Reformed Church Minister from the Synod who is appointed from the *bank*, Revd Sally Martin serves the churches of Ermine, St Columba’s & Trinity in Lincoln and offers herself for this vital task of hospital chaplaincy having a wealth of experienced gained during her time in Medical Chaplaincy between 1998 – 2013.

We are grateful to our colleagues for their dedication to this task and want to assure them of our prayers as they look after staff and patients alike. As we are unable to visit our own folk in hospital at this time, please make use of the Spiritual and Pastoral Care teams at your local hospitals and if that involves the Nottingham University hospitals Kay would be happy to help. Hold both Kay and Sally in your prayers asking our Lord to bless them with protection, courage and faith.



left: Revd Kay Cattell



Right: Revd Sally Martin

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 today (Thursday 9 April) onward, 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.

2020 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Covid-19 crisis has had an inevitable impact on training events planned for this spring and summer. Further to earlier announcements, we regret to confirm the cancellation of all events up to and including the Ministers' Summer School (planned for 15-18 June).

We have also decided to postpone the Book Day scheduled for Saturday 27 June and the Study Day for Worship Leaders which was to be held on 18 July. We hope to be able to reschedule these two events later in the year but will only do so once government advice deems public gatherings safe once again. Hannah Holmes will be contacting those who had already booked to attend any of the above events in due course.

TRAINING PLANS

Under current circumstances we do not expect churches to be able to return Training Plans with their requests for 2021 by the end of this month, as we originally asked. We are therefore suspending that process for this year but will of course welcome requests and suggestions at any point: please email training@urc5.org.uk <mailto:training@urc5.org.uk>
Further announcements will follow when confident planning once more becomes possible. Thank you for your understanding.

HOLY WEEK IN HOUSEHOLD IMPLEMENTS AND HAIKU

With the Easter weekend fast at hand, people all around East Midlands Synod continue to explore fascinating new ways to explore the events of Christ's Passion in these peculiar times.

The Revd Derek Hopkins has turned to Haiku to express his response and has granted us permission to share a sample on the Synod website: <https://www.urc5.org.uk/content/coronavirus-17-syllables>

Meanwhile Revd Jenny Mills has raided her cupboards to recount the events of Holy Week day by day with the aid of everyday household objects. Viewers young and old will enjoy her videos on URC Newport Pagnell's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJgyPTQUXZ_OFtFI7KfPfxQ

Our friends in Eastern Synod have shared a wonderful resource, full of activities and praise to help families mark the Easter Weekend together. Please click on the link to download: <https://www.urc5.org.uk/content/easter-resources-young-and-old>

We'd be glad to continue sharing the creativity provoked by coronavirus: please let us know by emailing training@urc5.org.uk

NEWS FROM FROM LOUGHBOROUGH UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

We are being led through this Holy week with readings, meditations and prayers prepared by our Worship Team { we are currently without a Minister} and sent out to every Church member. Our weekly bible studies continue via email. A newsletter and prayer calendar, via email and post, instead of our Church magazine goes to every Church member. Many of our members {including one in Turkey} enjoy 'linking in' to the streamed Sunday morning service from St. Andrew's with Castle Gate, Nottingham and are grateful to the technicians for their expertise who make it all possible.

Hilary Roythorne - Church Secretary

THE URC WEBSITE - ADVICE TO CHURCHES ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

<https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3365-urc-issues-coronavirus-advice-to-its-churches>

The URC website is updated daily with advice and resources from a variety of sources. Many of the questions and concerns of local churches are addressed, along with some uplifting and encouraging articles and prayers. Please do keep checking for updates.

LATEST NEWS FROM ACAT

ACAT are still planning ahead for their annual conference and AGM. The reason for this is simple; it's an essential part of ACAT's annual calendar which is an invaluable opportunity to meet and share knowledge about church treasurers' essential roles. This year's event will take place on Saturday, October 17, at Central Hall, in Westminster, London. The theme will be "**The Challenge of Change - Securing your Church's Financial Future**". More information to follow!

ACAT CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Click below to read ACAT's succinct guide to help church treasurers through the COVID-19 pandemic at this point in time....

READ MORE <<https://ilink.to/u/1f>

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.urch5.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://urch5.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@urch5.org.uk

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@urch5.org.uk

Copy Date for Next E-Letter: 14.04.2020

If you would like to stop receiving this E letter at any time please contact the Privacy Officer at the above address or telephone number.

Before sending this E letter on electronically, please ensure that you have the consent of the recipient(s) to do so.