

## E-LETTER 321 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020

### Opening Reflection by Pippa Hodgson

Convenor of Training & Development



The recent publication from Church House, "[Ready for the new 'normal'](#)", offers questions we should ask ourselves about what it is to be Church during and after Covid-19. Some of us will look forward to getting back to 'normal' whilst others may see the opportunities to do things differently. The first page of the report encourages us to look forward in hope and to 'be gentle with one another – those rushing ahead and those who need longer to move forwards'.

We all have our 'bit' to do, following the recommended guidelines, staying at home and/or being safe when we leave home by observing all the recommended practices, but as the time stretches on we must look inside ourselves. How are we responding to now and the thought of the weeks and months to come? In reality, it is how we manage ourselves and respond to what is happening that will give us the strength and peace to face the future.

The report encourages us to find time for reflection and prayer:

"thanking God for His close presence,  
and asking for courage to face the uncertainties,  
and wisdom to understand the direction ahead  
and the speed at which we should travel."

As we all seek strength to face the decisions we need to make about our churches and fellowship, let us remember those that have been, and are being, affected by Coronavirus. Let us give attention to all those who are hurting.

In the wonderful book "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse", Charlie Mackesy highlights how we are each in control of 'how we react to things'. The world has changed and is changing. All our lives have, and will, change. Let us take time to consider our own reactions and see the nuggets of gold in troubled times.



## East Midlands Synod contacts

### NEW SYNOD PERSONNEL OFFICER

We are delighted to announce that, following his recent retirement as Property Officer, **Mr Robert White** has agreed to take on the role of Synod Personnel Officer. If you need to contact Robert regarding Terms of Settlement, please email [robertbwhite80@gmail.com](mailto:robertbwhite80@gmail.com)

#### CONTACT DETAILS FOR OUR MODERATOR

The new email address and mobile phone number for **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** are:

Email: [mailto:mod@urc5.org.uk](mailto:mailto:mod@urc5.org.uk)

Mobile: 07544 959976

Synod Office: 0115 960 9241

#### CONTACT DETAILS FOR TRAINING

**Hannah Holmes**, PA to the TDO and CYDO, is now on maternity leave.

Therefore, for all training enquiries and bookings please contact **Derek Graham**, TDO in the first instance on:

Email: [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk)

## Personal news

**We are very sad to inform you of the deaths of two of our retired Ministers:**

**The Revd June Davis** died on Tuesday 19 May. She served at Wirksworth Group, Thorpe Edge, Keyworth, Burton-on-Trent, Repton, Sleaford and Uttoxeter prior to her retirement in 1992. A private funeral was to be held at Markeaton Crematorium, Derby, on 28 May 2020 at 11.30am. A service of Thanksgiving will be held at a time and date to be arranged.

**The Revd Jim Garrow** died peacefully in his sleep on Saturday 23 May. He served first at Bulwell and then as Province Administrator and Minister at Chaddesden, before continuing his ministry with Churches of Christ and West Midlands Synod. Funeral arrangements were not known at time of publication.

Our prayers and thoughts are with the family and friends of both Revd Davis and Revd Garrow.

## Cancellation of General Assembly

**For the first time since its foundation in 1972, the URC has made the difficult decision to cancel its General Assembly scheduled for July 2020, owing to the ongoing threat of coronavirus.**

However, some parts of the General Assembly will go ahead digitally:

- a full **Book of Reports** will be published on the URC's website in early June
- **Mission Council** will be convened online on Friday 10 July
- An online **Act of Worship** will be live streamed on the morning of Saturday 11 July, at which the **Roll of Assembly** will be renewed, the **Revd Clare Downing** and **Mr Peter Pay** inducted as the new Moderators of the General Assembly, and the **Revd Dr John Bradbury** inducted as the new General Secretary.

The full statement of current URC General Secretary the **Revd John Proctor** is available on the East Midlands Synod website: <https://www.urc5.org.uk/content/cancellation-general-assembly-2020>

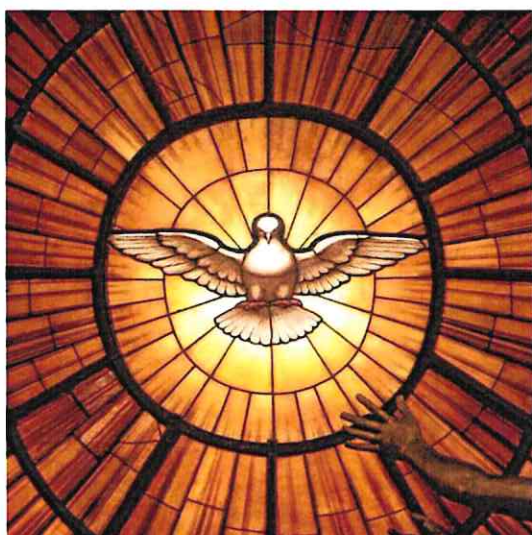


## Executive actions following cancellation of Synod

Following the cancellation of the Synod meeting scheduled for 21 March 2020, the **Synod Council** took executive action to agree urgent resolutions and make arrangements for the continuation of Synod business. A report of their decisions was agreed at Synod Council on 28 April and subsequently posted on the Synod website: <https://www.urch5.org.uk/content/executive-actions-following-cancelled-synod-21st-march-2020>. There you will find:

- The **Report of Executive Actions**
- The **Book of Reports to Synod**
- A **Budget statement**

## Devotional material for Pentecost and beyond



The Worship team at **Loughborough URC** - **Daphne Beale, Michael Forster, Mike Playdon and Margaret Taylor** - have prepared a wonderful set of meditations for members to use during the week beginning with **Pentecost** and ending with **Trinity Sunday**, or spread out if they wish.

They kindly offer these meditations for other churches in the Synod to use if they wish. The meditations are available **on the Synod website:**

<https://www.urch5.org.uk/content/pentecost-meditations>

and will also be shared day by day via the Synod **Facebook Page**.

*Image: detail of Bernini's Holy Spirit window at St Peter's Basilica, Rome; photo from Wikimedia Commons.*

Further inspiration is available from **Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today**, which offers newly revised resources for both **Pentecost** and **Summer 2020**.

**Walking  
the Way**  
Living the life of Jesus today

## Around the East Midlands

### STATEMENT FROM CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ALL LINCOLNSHIRE

The **Presidents of Churches Together in All Lincolnshire** have issued a letter of thanks and encouragement to churches across the county, recognising their creative efforts and commitment in responding to the Covid-19 crisis. Our Synod Moderator, the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke**, is one of the signatories.

You can read the letter at [www.ctal.org.uk](http://www.ctal.org.uk)



## "MADE AND GIVEN WITH GOD'S LOVE"



That's the message which accompanies the **free face coverings** being made and given away by Methodist Churches in Lincolnshire - just one example of the outreach taking place in the county. Once made by members, the masks are left outside the buildings for people to take - with a card from the church enclosed - as a blessing to the community.

The **Revd Bruce Thompson**, Chair of Lincolnshire Methodist District, (pictured modelling one of the masks) has kindly given permission for the templates and instruction to be shared **on our website** should any Churches in our Synod take inspiration from this excellent idea:

<https://www.urch5.org.uk/content/face-coverings-made-gods-love>

## Practical Guidance for Churches

### FRAUD ALERT - TREASURERS PLEASE NOTE

**John Samson**, the URC's Chief Finance Officer, sends the following warning:

"We have had a report from one of our churches that they received a letter purporting to be from us in London. The email had the subject line '**M & M Assessment letter from URC London**'. Please can you let your churches know that this email did **not** come from us and should be deleted if anyone receives it. They should not click on any links or open any attachments in the email."

### MORE INFORMATION FOR TREASURERS AND FINANCE TEAMS



Recent news from ACAT includes:

- a **new partnership with fundraising website easyfundraising** to allow your Church to receive a donation every time one of your members makes an online purchase from over 4000 retailers
- guidance on **getting to grips with your charity reporting obligations** in view of Covid-19
- clarification from HMRC about the **Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme** during the pandemic

### PREPARING FOR THE NEW NORMAL

Arising from discussions at the Moderators' Meeting, *Preparing for the New Normal* sets practical and property-related matters in the context of wider thoughts about mission and vision.

As mentioned in our last edition, this warmly recommended document can be found on the Synod website: [URC - Preparing for the New Normal document](#)



## LEGIONELLA

A number of Churches have seen the comment in [Preparing for the New 'Normal'](#), as well as making enquiries to the Synod Office, about how to combat Legionella Disease in closed, or little used, Church buildings.

Legionella bacteria congregate in stagnant or stale water, such as cold water storage tanks in lofts, WC cisterns, instantaneous hot water heaters, shower heads and the like. The bacteria can cause a serious illness which is sometimes fatal particularly amongst the elderly. It is therefore vital that Church water supplies are kept bacteria - free as far as is possible.

For Churches which still have their water supply switched on but are not in general weekly use, the water taps should be run for **at least 5 minutes on a weekly basis**. Toilets should be flushed at the same time, and hot water taps and water heaters also run. This also includes any hot water devices such as coffee makers and tea urns.

For Churches which have switched off the water supply, no action is needed now **BUT**, when they re-open, all taps, including hot water taps, should be run for **AT LEAST 20 minutes**, and WC cisterns flushed several times. This action should be enough to flush out water storage tanks and therefore get rid of any bacteria lurking in them.

For Churches which have other buildings which are rented out on a long term basis and have facilities such as shower rooms, changing facilities, kitchens etc., it is advisable to engage a Legionella Surveyor to carry out a full inspection and who can then provide a certificate of safety which will show that the Church has taken appropriate action and can satisfy any tenant enquiries.

**Geoff Milnes**  
Synod Property Officer

## PLAYGROUPS AND NURSERY – Considerations Before Opening

The Government is encouraging pre-school facilities to open possibly as early as Monday 1 June and this will affect some churches which are used for playgroups and nurseries. Guidance is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

<https://www.evalliance.org.uk/coronavirus-info-for-nurseries>

Where playgroups or nurseries are run by the church or under Licence (i.e. the playgroup is an outside organisation or person which shares the church buildings with other hirers) the Elders will need to consider carefully how all users or hirers can use the buildings safely, taking into account:

1. Elders need to understand that they share a duty of care with the playgroup or nursery leaders/management.
2. social distancing needs to be maintained.
3. a risk assessment needs to be undertaken.
4. advice should be sought from the church insurers.
5. decisions need to be local and contextual.
6. an appropriate cleaning regime needs to be in place.
7. soft toys/fabrics need to be excluded.

Where a playgroup or nursery has a Lease (or statutory tenancy) of church property and occupy 'exclusive space', they have a right to open and use that space without consulting the Elders provided they do so according to the terms of their lease, and comply with Government and HSE regulations.

*We are grateful to the South West Synod for sharing this guidance with us. Many of these provisions will of course apply equally in respect of other groups using church premises.*

## Creativity in a time of coronavirus



This beautiful wall hanging has been created by a member of the quilt group at Yardley Hastings Church.

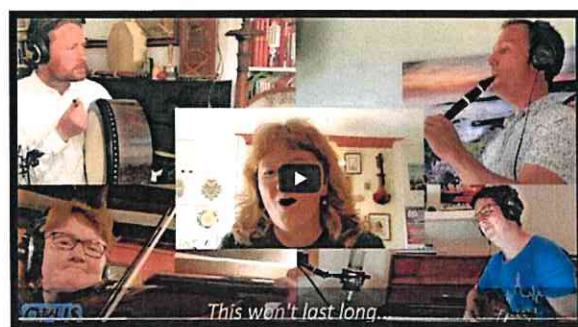


### "Lean on Me" says God...

URC Minister and poet **Lucy Berry** has composed the words to [this beautiful new hymn](#), set to music and sung by her friend Simon and offered as a song of comfort in times of trouble.

### This won't last long

**Opus Music** practice as Musicians in Healthcare. While isolating at home, they have recorded a moving new charity single '[This won't last long](#)' as a song of hope and strength for their friends and colleagues in the NHS. Donations can be made via their [JustGiving page](#) in aid of the **Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Sherwood Forest (King's Mill) Hospitals Charities**.





## Join a webinar



*Enabling churches to house the homeless*

[Hope into Action UK](#) offers a **free webinar** on Wednesday 3 June at 3 or 6pm, designed for all churches keen to engage with the homeless in response to the Covid-19 situation.

Speakers include the **Rt Revd Graham Tomlin**, Bishop of Kensington and **Ed Walker**, founder of Hope into Action UK. For full details and to register, [visit their website](#).

### Telling a better story – why Faith and Science belong together Faraday Institute Summer Course June 2020

Faith and science are often seen as uncomfortable bed-fellows - but it needn't always be so. The **Faraday Institute** is offering a free series of webinars exploring the theological and ethical issues raised by their interaction. There are two or three webinars each day from **Monday 29 June - Friday 3 July** and anyone, anywhere is invited to join for as many or as few as they wish, free of charge.

For more information, see [faraday.institute/TellingABetterStory](https://faraday.institute/TellingABetterStory)



## Job Opportunity in Wessex Synod

Our friends in Wessex Synod have asked us to share news of the following part-time post:

### Wessex Synod Clerk (18 hours per week)

Applications from elders, members, retired ministers and non-stipendiary ministers are all welcome.

The Job description, person specification and details of salary are available from the Synod Office, and anyone wishing to talk informally about what is involved should contact the current clerk. Please contact the Synod Office by emailing [office@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:office@urcwessex.org.uk) or phoning **023 8067 8570**. Applications must be received by noon on **22 June** and interviews will be held on **8 July 2020**.

## Find us on Facebook

Our [East Midlands Synod Facebook Page](#) is a place of sharing and celebration, which hosts the Evening Prayers led by our Moderator the **Revd Geoffrey Clarke** during this period of lockdown. If you are a Facebook user, please do Like and Share both the Page and its posts.

We also invite you to follow the [Synod Youth and Children's Facebook Page](#), which shares news and ideas related to our work with young people.

## Office closure: please note

The **Synod Office** remains closed until further notice as we follow Government guidelines relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. All members of staff are working from home: please e-mail them in the usual way. Contact details can be found at: <https://www.urc5.org.uk/synodstaff>. Telephone calls are forwarded, so to speak to a member of staff you may call the usual office number of **0115 960 9241** between Monday-Thursday, 9am-3pm.

We regret we are unable to send out group emails or to mail newsletters during the office closure: please keep checking our website for the most recent information.

***This E-Letter has now returned to fortnightly editions:  
the next is due on Thursday 11 June 2020.***

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**AND FINALLY:** - This E-letter is produced on behalf of:

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

Telephone: 0115 960 9241

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: [modpa@urc5.org.uk](mailto:modpa@urc5.org.uk) and [training@urc5.org.uk](mailto:training@urc5.org.uk)

Copy Date for next edition: 12 noon on Tuesday 9 June 2020