

E-LETTER 323 – 25 June 2020

Opening Reflection by Ron Kenyon

Chair of the East Midlands Synod Trust

In this strange world of ours we have all learned to live with 'Voicemail' as a necessary part of modern life. But have you wondered, "what if God decided to install voicemail?"

Imagine praying and hearing this:

Thank you for calling My Father's House

Please select one of the following options:

- Press 1 for: **Requests**
- Press 2 for: **Thanksgiving**
- Press 3 for: **Complaints**
- Press 4 for: **All Other Inquiries**



I'm sorry, all of our angels are busy helping other sinners right now. However, your prayer is important to us and will be answered in the order it was received, so please stay on the line.

- Press 1 if **You would like to speak to God**
- Press 2 if **You would like to speak to Jesus**
- Press 3 if **You would like to speak to the Holy Spirit**
- Press 4 if **You would like to hear King David sing a Psalm whilst you are holding**
- Press 5 for **Reservations at 'My Father's House' followed by J-O-H-N 3-1-6**

Our computers show that you have already prayed once today. Please hang up and try again tomorrow.

Let us hope that as the restrictions to our daily lives are slowly but surely lifted we are able to celebrate again your presence within us; the way you have come into our lives to offer your guidance, strength, peace and joy. We thank You.

URC Youth Quiz Night



The East Midlands and West Midlands Synods have joined forces to offer young people a special **Quiz Night**, designed for anyone aged 11-26.

This will take place – online of course – at 7.30pm on **Friday 26 June**, the day following publication of this e-letter.

To take part, please contact **Richard Knott** on cydo@urcwestmidlands.org.uk.

Personal news

We would like to congratulate **Hannah Holmes** and her husband Danny as they welcomed their little boy **Xander** into the world on Saturday 13 June, weighing 7lb 15oz.



The last edition of this E-letter announced the sad news of the death of **Mark Wade**, husband of the **Revd Jane Wade**. Mark was an active and committed member of our Abington Avenue congregation, as a teacher at Wollaston School and within the community, particularly the local Food Bank. Mark's funeral service takes place today (Thursday 25 June) and we commend Jane, the family and the members of Abington Avenue and Paulerspury in prayer.

Jane has asked us to convey the following message:

“Our thanks to everyone for your cards and flowers, prayers and best wishes. They have meant so much to us as a family at this time. Thanks.”

Practical Guidance for Churches

Easing of lockdown restrictions

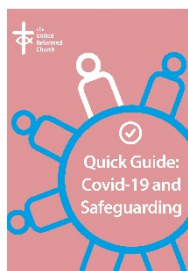
Earlier this week the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced that several lockdown restrictions will be eased from Saturday 4 July, with the restoration of church worship (without singing) amongst them.

In response, URC General Secretary the **Revd John Proctor** has issued an interim statement to say that Synod Moderators are working on detailed guidance for URC churches in England, to be published shortly on the [URC website](#). He concludes:

“With care, with distance, with gladness, we shall one day be able to worship together. For some of us that day may not be far ahead. But let’s do it responsibly.”

The full statement may be read at: <https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3509-coronavirus-array-of-lockdown-restrictions-eased>.

Safeguarding and Covid-19



The URC’s national Safeguarding Advisor, Ioannis Athanasiou, draws our attention to a quick guide to safeguarding and Covid-19 now available on the URC website. This can be downloaded as a PDF booklet (8 pages designed) or a Word leaflet (2 sides of A4 with minimal design for ease of printing):

<https://urc.org.uk/church-information-guides/3500-quick-guide-covid-19-and-safeguarding.html>.

Churches online: a research project



The **University of Zurich** is currently carrying out a piece of ecumenical, international research into the ways churches around the globe have used online technology in response to the current Covid-19 crisis.


Anyone involved with the URC is welcome to fill in the research form, although it is designed primarily for ministers, elders, community workers and local church leaders. If you are interested in taking part, it should take around 30 minutes and the deadline for submissions is Sunday 12 July.

For full details and the survey form please visit: <https://www.contoc.org/contoc/contoc-int/>

Webinar: communion in the light of Covid-19

The Society for Ecumenical Studies, in conjunction with The Tablet and Reform, is hosting a webinar on [Communion in the light of Covid-19](#) on **Thursday 16 July** from 6.00–7.30pm.

This is the first in a series of three webinars on themes around the response of the Churches to the situation created by the current pandemic. The webinar will be chaired by URC minister the **Revd Dr Elizabeth Welch**, who serves as Chair of the Society for Ecumenical Studies, and the panellists include the **Revd Dr John Bradbury**, our incoming General Secretary. Bookings, for a suggested donation of £5, should be made via www.thetablet.co.uk/events.




FIRST OF A SERIES OF THREE ONLINE EVENTS

Communion in the light of Covid

An evening of ecumenical exploration of how the lockdown period has influenced our understanding of Communion.


Confirmed speakers:



Revd Dr John Bradbury Dr Sara Parvis Revd Dr Elizabeth Welch

THURSDAY 16 JULY 2020 | 6-7.30PM BST

To book your tickets visit: www.thetablet.co.uk/events



Reform
NEWS COMMENT INSPIRATION DEBATE

SEVENTH CHURCH OF THE PARISH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
FARM STREET

CHURCHES TOGETHER
IN ENGLAND

Oikoumene
Society of Ecumenical Studies

churches together
IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

THE TABLET
SINCE 1840

Annexation of the West Bank



The URC's **Mission Committee** has urged Christians to oppose plans to annexe Palestinian territories in the West Bank – and called on churches to lobby the UK government.

Members are encouraged to lobby local MPs to sign the **parliamentary petition** calling on the UK government to oppose annexation and to introduce sanctions if it should go ahead next month, if they have not already done so.

Full details are available on the URC website: <https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3489-urc-urges-christians-to-oppose-west-bank-annexation.html>

One of our East Midlands Synod ministers, the **Revd Jenny Mills**, took part in the URC's 2019 educational visit to the Holy Land, witnessing living conditions for indigenous Christians and Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories at first hand. Her **video report** can be viewed at:

<https://www.urch5.org.uk/content/report-urc-visit-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories-2019>

Scouting during lockdown

The **Revd Helen Wakefield-Carr** sends us this report about keeping continuity under coronavirus:



2nd Desborough Scout group have always had close connections with **Desborough United Reformed Church** as a sponsored group. Lockdown began in March and the Scouting movement, along with many other organisations, were quick to stop any face-to-face activities in line with government guidance.

As a parent of two children who attended Cubs, I wondered how the children would maintain the sense of feeling part of a group when they were experiencing isolation in the home. Our Cub leader took the initiative to keep to the usual time on a Tuesday evening to engage as many young people who wished in the Cubs activities and badge work.

On Tuesday evening at 7pm, we wait in anticipation for our weekly activity to be emailed over. These activities have varied hugely, but all have counted towards badge work. Some badges have been created by the Scouting movement as a result of lockdown (such as Camp at Home and Hike to the Moon) whereas other badges are from their usual programme.

We have created eggs to join the 1st Egg Pack and who then have to go rafting; outfits made from recycling materials; Union Flags from clothing and items in the home. We've built tall giraffes from rubbish, and tackled science experiments on the kitchen floor. These are just a few of the things we have been challenged to do. The young people enjoy looking to the group Facebook page to see who else has taken the challenge and what they have created and done.

Scouting has been a valuable and inspiring element, not just for my children, but many across the country during this lockdown period. For this there are many parents, I'm sure, who are as grateful as myself.

Inductions and appeal for photographs

In light of the cancellation of this year's General Assembly, a live-streamed **Act of Worship** is to be held on Saturday 11 July. This will include the Inductions of the **Revd Clare Downing** and **Mr Peter Pay** as the new Moderators of the General Assembly, and of the **Revd Dr John Bradbury** as the new General Secretary of the United Reformed Church. It will also enable the URC to renew its Roll of Assembly for the year ahead. We look forward to sharing a link to the live stream.

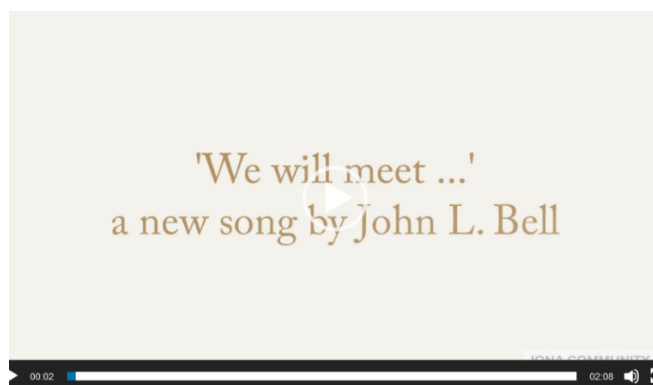
To recognise and encourage the work of local churches, it has been suggested that the prayers of Thanksgiving should be enriched by a photo montage showing the ways in which churches have responded to the challenges of Covid-19.

All churches are invited to submit a picture for possible inclusion. Please ensure that you have secured the full permission of any persons shown in the photographs. The Communications team ask that you include a short explanatory caption (eg "Smalltown URC posted encouraging messages on its railings at Easter") and title your email Thanksgiving Photo. The deadline for submissions is **Friday 3 July**.

Photos with captions should be emailed directly to **Andy Jackson** on andy.jackson@urc.org.uk but you may also send them to training@urc5.org.uk to be forwarded. We would also be happy to share them, subject to permission, in a future e-letter or on the Synod's [Facebook Page](#) if copied in.

"We will meet when the danger is over"

John Bell of the Iona Community has published a new hymn addressing our feelings during the Covid-19 crisis, which he currently [offers for use](#) in worship free of charge. [Click here](#) to hear it sung:



**"We will meet when the danger is over,
We will meet when the sad days are done;
We will meet sitting closely together
And be glad our tomorrows have come."**

Instructions for use of this hymn can be found at: <https://iona.org.uk/2020/06/15/we-will-meet-a-new-song-by-john-l-bell/>

Vacancy: Moderator, Thames North Synod

General Assembly wishes to appoint a United Reformed Church minister to serve as **Thames North Synod Moderator** following the retirement of the **Revd Dr Andrew Prasad**. The new Moderator is expected to begin in office between March and June 2021.

Full details, including an information pack and application form, can be found on the jobs page of the URC website: www.urc.org.uk/vacancies. Please direct any enquiries, nominations and applications to **Deepti Upadhyaya** at recruitment@urc.org.uk.

East Midlands Synod contacts

Please remember these recent updates to contact details at East Midlands Synod:

CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE NEW SYNOD PERSONNEL OFFICER

Robert White has now assumed this role: please email robertbwhite80@gmail.com

CONTACT DETAILS FOR OUR MODERATOR

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

Email: 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 currently on maternity leave.

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

Email: training@urc5.org.uk

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. **We are reviewing this situation on a month-by-month basis as official guidelines change.**

All members of staff are working from home: please e-mail them in the usual way. Contact details can be found at: <https://www.unc5.org.uk/synodstaff>. Telephone calls are forwarded, so to speak to a member of staff simply 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 is produced on behalf of:

The URC East Midlands Synod, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AA.
Telephone: 0115 960 9241

Next edition: Thursday 09 July 2020

Please send all material for this E-Letter to both: modpa@unc5.org.uk and training@unc5.org.uk

Copy Date for next edition: 12 noon on Tuesday 07 July 2020

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