



Eastwords: news from the Eastern Synod July 2008

# E-eastwords

Issue Number 1

## Meet the new Moderator: The Revd Paul Whittle

Church is, or ought to be, something exciting. It should be a place of possibility. We are people of hope. However, I am aware that, if we are honest, we have to admit that it does not always appear so. Too often we find ourselves struggling, unsure, making excuses. I understand much of why that happens - but I want to encourage you rather to grab the opportunities that God puts your way, and not to worry about those that don't arise. Recently I was reading some material from the USA about valuing church and was struck by one particular comment: *I love my church because it's sort of like the Wizard of Oz - it's about having a heart and a brain. And courage!* That may not be the most obvious way of expressing what we need in order to be an effective church, but I think it sums it up.

As I come to be Moderator of the Eastern Synod I expect to spend a lot of time, initially, learning from and listening to you. However, I do want to suggest four aspects of church life that I want to keep among my priorities:-

### **First is the importance of ecumenism.**

I am convinced that we must retain the United Reformed commitment to that agenda and look to work together with partners of other denominations in ways that are appropriate and relevant.

**Secondly, I want to engage with the question of how local congregations can most effectively be resourced.** Mission takes place at grassroots level and we ought to be enabling that.

**Thirdly, I want to stress the ways in which we can support each other by working together in partnership.**



**Fourthly, I hope we can explore new and different ways of being church in a range of what are sometimes called 'fresh expressions'.** I believe that traditional ways of church are immensely important, but we also need to find new ways of doing things and put the two alongside each other.

Mary, my wife, and my two daughters, Stephanie (13) and Rachel (11), like me, are looking forward to the move to Eastern Synod. Stephanie and Rachel will be students at Sawston Village College. Mary is a Primary Schoolteacher, but initially will concentrate on settling the rest of us in.

I have just started reading Steve Stockman's "Walk On" (Relevant Books, 2005), sub-titled 'The Spiritual Journey of U2'. Stockman is exploring the way in which the Christian faith of three of the four members of U2 impacted their life and witness. He explores how they have sometimes found themselves bridging the gap between what might be regarded as traditional rock and roll values and what might be regarded as traditional Christian values. This has not always been easy and sometimes they have been criticised for their refusal to simply fall in line with expectation. But Stockman makes the point that: *Jesus always seemed happier with followers who would chop people's ears off with swords than he was with people who kept all the commandments.* I look forward to interesting, challenging and exciting times as the Eastern Synod discovers, as the URC's current and important programme would put it, a Vision4Life.

**Ibrahim Jaber**, a Palestinian Christian from Beit Sahour, part of Bethlehem will be speaking about the current situation in the Holy Land at Billericay URC Wednesday 9 July at 7.30pm. Further information from Margaret & Robin Derbyshire, 01277 651689 e-mail [rmderbyshire@btinternet.com](mailto:rmderbyshire@btinternet.com)

### Sue Liddell writes: *Sharing the Load*

Although there is a variety of sizes of Area Partnerships, they do provide us with a chance to think again about the way we are used as lay preachers. The Ipswich and East Suffolk Area Partnership lay preachers met recently and decided to draw up a list of lay preachers plus those willing to help with worship groups, giving contact details and other availability information to circulate to all pulpit supply secretaries; then within a week I had a copy of such a list already compiled by the Norwich Area Partnership. Great minds....

*'The United Reformed Church is always in need of lay Preachers'..* so said Keith Cakebread in an article he wrote for the St Ives Free Church magazine. Keith and three other members of St Ives Free Church undertook the TLSLite Course. This comprised five modules each of which involved a number of evenings of study and at least one Study Day. The four have now completed the course having juggled the study days, homework and evening sessions with their day job and other commitments but stressed that *'it has been enjoyable and fulfilling'*.

If you are interested do contact me, a local commissioner/advocate or speak to someone who has already done the course – there are



quite a number around the Synod now. You will find, that you receive encouragement, help with books, local church support, good tutoring and as Keith put it 'there is also the Internet, which is crammed with Biblical commentaries, discussions and dissertations from all round the world.'

News from round the Synod; the new Area Partnerships are up and running with the following people now in place as local lay preacher advocates – *Norwich*: Ron Wade. *Central Suffolk*: Milly Dalglish. *West Suffolk*: Gwyneth Tilley. *Ipswich & East Suffolk*: Sue Liddell. *Colchester & Tendring*: Ken Forbes. *Chelmsford*: Arthur Mitchell. *Southend East and South West Essex*: Beryl Hunt. *Cambridge*: Maureen Kendall. *HAEBEA*: Gillian Amphlett. We welcome and thank them for acting as our contact networkers. Thanks also to John Proctor, Convenor of the Synod Pastoral Committee, who continues to be a tower of strength and support with a variety of lay preacher matters.

The Synod Lay Preaching Guidelines are on the Synod website; do take a look and let me know if there is any information that you feel needs to be added or amended.

*Sue Liddell*  
Synod Pastoral Advocate



Ipswich Christ Church was a hive of activity on Saturday 19 April when an Ipswich Monopoly Sponsored Walk was organised. This was to raise money for Christian Aid for their projects to improve the lives of those who live in some of the poorest areas of our planet. Visitors included the local MP Chris Mole and the Mayor of Ipswich, Inga Lockington. Over £400 was raised through sponsorship.

Meanwhile, a Coffee Morning was held in the church hall to raise money for Action Aid while the Boys' Brigade ran a car wash in the car park.  
*Moira Kleissner*

As promised this is the first issue of ***E-astwords*** and coincides with the arrival of our new Moderator. Future issues will typically be three monthly or more regularly if we receive sufficient material. We are interested in feedback so please let me know what you think of this new 'single page' format. Mick Barnes: [eastern.clerk@urc.org.uk](mailto:eastern.clerk@urc.org.uk)