

## Welcome Back!

We continue to see change and development as the college moves into the next chapters of our life and work. One of the most significant is a shift from being a teaching and learning community drawn along by the ebb and flow of term and vacation to a community shaped by 51 weeks of every year (we only now close between Christmas and New Year). This shift is exciting because it reflects the transformed ways in which we are able to deliver teaching. We are increasingly offering courses validated through the universities of either Durham or Anglia Ruskin in block weeks as well as the traditional terms. In a block week (normally a Monday-Friday) we can provide all of the classroom time for a module of either an undergraduate or a postgraduate taught course, backed up by online resources and materials accessible any time. This means a student can gain a degree by being at Westminster only around 6 weeks/year. It opens up many new possibilities for us to deliver training for the URC in ways that mean candidates for ministry with us can stay in their family homes with their rich diet of placements all taking place near to where they live. But it also means our residential students at the college can combine term courses and block weeks for a far more flexible learning experience. Huge possibilities are opening through this. As exciting is the fact that anyone who wants to access some of our teaching but who don't want to do the academic assessments can audit these block weeks. You might be a church elder, local church leader, church secretary or lay preacher who wants to delve deeper into the Bible or theology. You can come to stay at Westminster, enjoy our praying community and hospitality and sit in on all of the teaching. You'll get access to the online materials as well. If this is of interest simply get in touch.

A consequence of these shifts and changes is the new status and style of the college's prayer life. We used to hold morning chapel primarily in term time. We now have morning prayers every weekday throughout the year. We delight in welcoming to this time at the start of the day whoever is around at the time: teachers; students; staff; visitors; conference guests; etc. In addition, we are developing resources to enhance our morning prayers as a time when we will systematically pray for every congregation across the URC every year, and all who minister amongst us. Westminster is thus increasingly a house of prayer for the URC as much as a Cambridge home for the URC.



On top of these changes are the ongoing evolution of our B and B and conferencing work. Do please remember that anyone in the URC can use Westminster at specially reduced rates. We can provide you with a superb B and B location in the heart of Cambridge if you just want a holiday. We can cater to your church for things like retreats for elders or residential away day style meetings. We are here to try to provide what will most help and enhance your discipleship and mission. Just get in touch.

We are delighted to have just welcomed Dr Jane McLarty who comes to teach half time as our New Testament tutor for the 2018-19 academic year. Jane has tremendous experience through her teaching in the Divinity Faculty of the University of Cambridge and elsewhere. We are currently advertising for the full time person we hope to appoint later this year to take up the role from summer, 2019. This is because Revd Dr Tan Yak-hwee has returned to Singapore after her time with us.

We have seen the Woolf Institute building opened and the arrival of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion into part of that space on our campus. Already plans are well in hand for Westminster to collaborate with both of these partners in shaping events to offer to the whole of the URC. We will be running a couple of Saturdays in 2019 exploring what it means to be human in an age of artificial intelligence and as we care with and for people with dementia. We are going to explore a theology of the oceans and wider creation with the Faraday's experts through our joint Blue Planet, Blue God conference that will take place at Westminster on 11-13 September 2019. Another piece of the new Westminster is our relaunching of annual URC Ministers' Refresher Courses. We will be holding the first of these 18-22 March 2019 and already are putting plans together for 2020 and 2021. Ministers have been told about these already, we hope, but do check our website for updates, programmes etc. Such gathering for refreshment and time out feels increasingly vital as pressures abound and as we seek to support one another fully. In all of these ways, and many more, Westminster is building new possibilities upon our existing rich resources and traditions.

**Neil Thorogood**

**Principal**