

# Cheshunt Foundation Botswana Visit

**For many years, the Cheshunt Foundation has sponsored ministers and lay people in ministry wanting to spend a sabbatical term at Westminster College.**

As well as space and time for individuals to recuperate, reflect on pastoral practice through guided reading or auditing a course in the Cambridge Theological Federation, or reading and writing for academic purposes, the presence of sabbatical scholars and pastoral practitioners also enriches the community here. It is an opportunity for URC students who are training as Ministers of Word and Sacraments to

study and socialise alongside those serving in the UK or further afield, from churches with a congregational heritage or that are in partnership with the Council for World Mission (CWM).

The Cheshunt Foundation recently promoted its work further in the wider Church. In 2018 the first sabbatical visitor stayed from the Church of South India. Conversations were held with delegates attending CWM's Executive Board gathering at the College during the autumn. I took up an invitation to meet colleagues serving the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa (UCCSA). I met with officers and ministers in the Synod of Botswana

(pictured) and attended the Women of the Well (UCCSA women ministers' network) in Namibia. The Cheshunt Governors had asked me to promote the sabbatical programme and actively listen to church leaders regarding their aspirations for study and much-needed refreshment and find out what challenges there might be to taking up sabbatical opportunities. Because of this series of conversations we are delighted that the first lay minister (aka Evangelist) from the Synod of Botswana will be taking her sabbatical at Westminster during the Easter term.

Revd Samantha White: Director of the Cheshunt Foundation, April 2019



UCCSA Botswana Synod visit

## Recent URC guests say...

**“A lovely, welcoming atmosphere as always”**

**“Excellent as ever - welcoming, comfortable and caring”**

**“The food was excellent - tasty and nutritious. Very good accommodation”**

**“Lovely - the treasures in this place continue to fascinate me”**



# Teaching Made More Accessible!

A continuing gift we offer the URC is residential theological education and ministerial formation. It was a vital part of our transformation into a Resource Centre for Learning (RCL), shaped by the 2006 Training Review and 2010 Westminster Appeal at the General Assemblies, that we sustain and develop this inheritance. Westminster's roots are in this, and we rejoice in them.

But much more is now possible and much more is now needed! Alongside our residential community, we've collaborated with colleagues across the Cambridge Theological Federation to launch block teaching for core academic programmes including the Durham University BA and brand new MAs with Anglia Ruskin University.



Prayer Labyrinth

Block teaching unites online studies with staying here a couple of days or up to a week at a time for classroom elements. Attending 6 block weeks, deliberately spread across the year, offers the Durham BA in 3 years. This allows URC ministerial candidates to remain at home, where they undertake their placements throughout their studies, and to join us at Westminster for block weeks.

Even better, URC members can join block week courses as not-for-credit participants. You gain all the online and class teaching but do no assessments offering a real possibility for continuing education, refreshment and lay training. Take a look at our website or contact the Tutorial Office to discover more.

## Understanding Dementia

**and dementia friendly worship** (with the Faraday Institute of Science and Religion)

**2nd November, 2019**

Dementia is something that affects many people, be it within family, among friends or as part of church communities. It is important for us to have an understanding of dementia that allows us to be able to support those who are dealing with it on a day to day basis and to offer appropriate support.

For churches, not only is this important for pastoral and practical support but also to enable us to consider how we might be offering worship that allows

those suffering from dementia to feel included in and benefit from worship services. This day will aim to help provide information and resources to aid our understanding of both.

Visit our website for more information.

[www.westminster.cam.ac.uk](http://www.westminster.cam.ac.uk)



## Coming up

**Supporting Elders 2019**  
Fri 5th – Sun 7th Jul

**Lens, Pen and Paintbrush**  
Sat 17th – Sun 18th Aug

**Supporting Lay preachers and  
Worship Leaders**

Mon 12th – Wed 14th Aug or  
Fri 13th – Sun 15th Sept

**Blue Planet – Blue God (with  
Faraday Institute & Wesley House)**  
Wed 11th – Fri 13th Sept

**What is it to be Human? (with  
Faraday Institute)**

Sat 2nd Nov – Understanding  
Dementia and Dementia friendly  
worship



**Westminster College  
Cambridge**

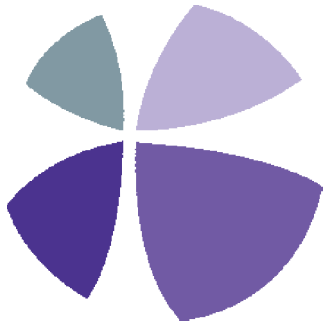
A resource centre for learning  
Serving the United Reformed Church

[www.westminster.cam.ac.uk](http://www.westminster.cam.ac.uk)



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# Westminster College Newsletter

Issue 1 – April 2019

## Welcome to this first Newsletter

On Friday mornings during term, we continue one of our most beautiful traditions; praying for all of our alumni by name. It is a reminder that distance and time cannot break the bonds faith and friendship forge. We have wanted to build upon this global community, hence the creation of our new Association of Alumni and Friends of Westminster and Cheshunt Colleges.

Further to the material you've already received, we offer this first newsletter. We will be producing two of these newsletters a year from now on. We are excited by the ways in which Westminster continues to evolve as a community of prayer, faith and learning and hope to share that with you. Our campus welcomes and hosts all sorts of people and institutions; we will be letting their stories get told. The URC requires much of us and rightly so. We want to share what that means today and tomorrow.

And, yes, my hope and prayer is that you'll want to share in this with us. Claudia Rees has taken up a new role administering the Association. Do please continue to pass on to Claudia any news and prayer requests that you have so that we can offer these in chapel. It may be you can support us financially in the adventures we can see ahead. We'll tell you more about how and why you might do so. But, above all, please hold us in your prayers as we hold you.

Neil Thorogood, Principal



*The Teaching Team*

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## Blue Plaque

Westminster is unveiling a Blue Plaque this summer in honour of Agnes Smith Lewis (1843-1926) and Margaret Dunlop Gibson (1843-1920).

As Biblical scholars, the 'Sisters of Sinai' visited Egypt and the Holy Land eight times, translated and published manuscripts they studied in St Catherine's monastery, discovered the forgotten Cairo Genizah with Solomon Schechter - and generously gave the land for the building of Westminster College.



# Alumni Launch Day

As many of you will be aware, Saturday 1st June, 2019, marks an historic and important further chapter for the College. From 2.00pm that afternoon we will gather here for several key events. All of these, together, will mark the creation and launch of the new Alumni and Friends Association.

We will gather in the Dining Hall. Welcomes will be offered by Neil Thorogood (Principal) and Revd Nigel Uden (Convener of the Westminster Board Governors, one of the Moderators of the URC General Assembly and one of the ministers of Downing Place URC in Cambridge). Then Prof. Janet Soskice, theologian and author of *Sisters of Sinai*, which recounts their great exploits and contributions, will unveil a Cambridge Blue Plaque in honour of Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson who played such a central role in the creation of our present building. After that, we'll hold our Service of Commemoration in which we'll honour all of those who contributed to the creation of Westminster and Cheshunt. That commemoration also includes thankfulness for the individuals, congregations, synods and URC General Assembly for the magnificent response to our 2010 appeal. Finally, we'll enjoy afternoon tea served across the campus. It promises to be a glorious celebration of all of our life and work and we hope



you can share in it with us.

It will give us an opportunity to catch up with good friends and to share news. Perhaps you've not yet seen the transformation Westminster has enjoyed since 2010. Come and enjoy our welcome and see for yourself what has been happening. Discover how Westminster might continue to serve you.

Please RSVP including dietary requirements by  
1st May to:  
Tutorial Office  
See page 6 for contact details

## Come and stay with us

We have 38 en-suite bedrooms which are available to book for bed and breakfast. You can come along and stay with us for a night, a week or longer if it suits. You will be able to join the community in morning prayer, take in the tranquility of the College and use us as a base to visit Cambridge and the wider region. You can also join us for lunch if booked in advance.

To book a stay please contact the reception team on 01223 330633 or email us on

[accommodation@westminster.cam.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@westminster.cam.ac.uk).

Remember to let us know your membership number when you book!



## Launch Day running order

**1st June 2019**

**2pm** Launch of the Association  
**2.15pm** Unveiling of the blue plaque by Prof. Janet Soskice  
**3pm** Worship  
**4pm** Afternoon tea

Please remember to RSVP by 1st May via the Tutorial Office.  
Contact details on page 6.



# Wellbeing at Westminster!

Wellbeing was elected as one of the top priorities for 2019 after reflecting on the challenges that our community faced at work and at home; some more serious than others. Since 2015, in addition to the spiritual and pastoral support available to everyone at Westminster, we have offered to all our work colleagues an Employees' Assistance Programme (EAP) from Health Assured, part of the Peninsula Group.

This gives a range of online, over the phone and in-person services to help with life's problems. It could be troubles at home, financial strife or mental health issues, etc. The programme is confidential and its compassionate support network is ready to help 24/7, 365 days a year. Services include counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, telephone, email and live chat counselling, finance management, debt and legal advice and occupational and medical health assessments.

Westminster's staff team is extremely hard-working and committed to the College but it is proven that Presenteeism is as

counter-productive as Absenteeism; and that is exactly the challenge we have here. We wanted to sensitise everyone to the importance of work-life balance. As a result, Wellbeing Wednesdays were created to raise awareness or for people to take time for themselves. We are seeing growing interest in our weekly social media posts touching on mental or physical issues and a shift in behaviour with colleagues leaving work on time more frequently, allowing more spare capacity in one's timetable through working from home, taking non-contact days, undertaking further training days, etc.

We also wanted to help those managing these issues on behalf of the College to grow in confidence to do so. In March, most of the managers completed a Mental Health Awareness course to help to handle issues more effectively and safely for all concerned parties.

In addition, we will be taking part in the Cambridge University Festival of Wellbeing (24th June - 5th July). The festival offers staff from Cambridge University, colleges and faculties a schedule of events. Here, they will be able to undertake a college tour or art workshop for 2 hours on a (hopefully!)



sunny summer afternoon so they can take time out of work for personal refreshment.

We have begun to scratch the surface but know that there is always more we might do to help colleagues cope better with the challenges life can bring.

If you have ideas about ways in which this work might be developed, please contact me on [mg609@cam.ac.uk](mailto:mg609@cam.ac.uk) or by phone on 01223 330637.

Magalie Cooper

Bursar and HR Officer

## Art Studio: creating space

Our new Art Studio is available for short-term visitors and long-term residents. It's fully equipped to allow creativity and fun to flourish. It complements all our other spaces, setting faith and imagination free. As Tolu, wife of one of our students and a regular user says, "The art studio for me has been such a

*refuge. It has been a space to comfortably explore creativity and inspiration. It has been a space to glorify and praise God through art; giving back in praise the gift He has blessed me with."*



## Blue Planet, Blue God

11th - 13th September, 2019

A conference for anybody concerned with the well being of our planet and our oceans.

After the acclaimed *Blue Planet 2* series on television, we are fortunate to have Prof. Meric Srokosz and Dr Rebecca Watson with us whose *Blue Planet, Blue God* book offers a fresh new lens through which to look at the Bible. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about one of the most pressing issues of our age. This conference is run in collaboration with the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, and Wesley House Cambridge. Visit our website for more information.

[www.westminster.cam.ac.uk](http://www.westminster.cam.ac.uk)



## Praying the URC Year Book

Our new patterns of teaching (page 6) run far beyond academic terms. Morning prayers is now at 8:30am every weekday across the calendar year (except between Christmas and New Year when the College is shut). Taking advantage of this, we've divided the Year Book's pages across every Monday and Wednesday for a prayer rota in chapel. In addition to continuing prayers for alumni on Fridays, this means we are now praying for the whole URC annually. Westminster, even more, is a URC cell of prayer.



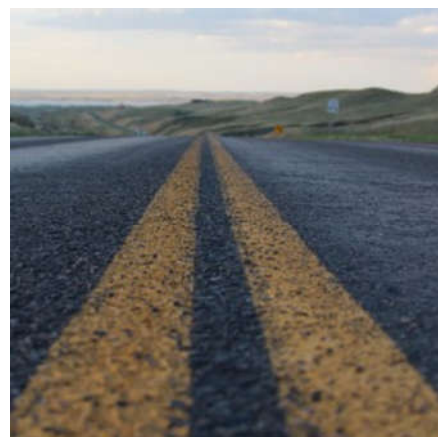
# A Vocational Gap?

An exciting initiative that we are hoping will attract enough financial support to launch for autumn 2020 is a Vocational Gap Year Scheme.

The aim is to give between four and six young adults, aged between 18 and 25 the opportunity to explore faith and their future whilst coming to live in, and be fully part of, the Westminster Community for ten months. This scheme is taking a fair bit of energy to develop but we are committed to the idea of creating a safe though challenging environment to offer young adults in the URC the space to deepen faith and explore God's call on their lives.

The time with us would include actively sharing in the prayer and social life of Westminster College, placements to fit the context of participants' areas of interest, local church interaction and space for reflection and mentoring.

It might be that some who join us in this adventure might go on to explore vocation to a ministry within the URC, but that is not the primary goal. We want to



enhance all we do at College through the presence and participation of this new community with all of the insights and perspectives they will bring. We want to open the resources of the College, the Cambridge Theological Federation and our links into the local community to create opportunities for learning, self-discovery and encounter. We would greatly appreciate your prayers as we take this idea to the wider church and funding bodies who may help us make this dream a reality .

## Ministers' Refresher Week

In March 2019, Westminster reintroduced Ministers' Refresher Weeks (for the next three years at least). It was great to share College life with ministers for a week of study, relaxation, worship, good food, exploring Cambridge and time in each other's company. Revd Dr David Cornick provided the keynote talks on new insights into John's Gospel. Next year's dates are March 16th - 20th and Dr Ed Kessler (founding Director of the Woolf Institute for Abrahamic Faiths - now

housed on the Westminster Campus) will be the keynote speaker on inter-faith dialogue. As this year's event was full, it is good to express interest early by contacting Claudia in the Tutorial



## Lens, Pen and Paintbrush

17th-18th August, 2019

Many of us find that writing, painting, photography or drawing can provide a route into deeper contemplation of the Bible and individual prayer life. This retreat offers an opportunity to explore our faith using these creative arts. Step aside from the bustle of everyday life, for time immersed in the tranquil surroundings of Westminster College, with renowned hospitality, excellent food, and art studio facilities available for retreatants.

Visit our website or contact the Tutorial Office for more information.

