

## GREENBELT: a thank-you

My programme for Greenbelt (always over the August bank holiday weekend) announces: "In a tough and competitive festival environment, we're more than holding our own, re-building ourselves as the best festival combination of artistry, activism and belief anywhere on the planet." I can't recall exactly how many times I've been. The festival is now a tent community created annually under the trees and around the lakes at Boughton House near Kettering. The organisation's small core staff are now based at URC Church House in London, and the URC is an Associate Partner (along with the likes of the YMCA and Trussell Trust). Thousands gather.

But Greenbelt is far more to me than simple facts. When I imagine heaven, I imagine something a bit like Greenbelt. It's a

gloriously eclectic mix of the expected and the surprising, a bundle of people and organisations within which you find the most incredible opportunities to learn, talk and wonder. At its heart is deep and hospitable Christian faith. A highlight each year is Sunday morning's Holy Communion shared by everyone sitting on the grass, this year in blazing sunshine and with three live camels as we celebrated the Christmas story just because we could. It embraced everyone from backpack-mounted-babies to mobility-scooter-riding pensioners, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to Extinction Rebellion, from an Australian philosopher cartoonist to an American Muslim hip-hop dancer, from two-time Grammy award winner and Glastonbury hit Fantastic Negrito to Lucy Spraggan infecting us with



joy and on to Frank Turner and the Sleeping Souls serving up a blistering punk-folk set and surfing the crowd, from Russell Brand to Christian Aid, from vegan Asian street food to a Nepali kitchen. It's where I see the Church to be big, bold, beautiful and beguiling. It feeds my mind, my body and my soul. It makes me sing. And, in the world as it currently is, those are blessings I say thank you for.

Thanks, Greenbelt, for: over 120 talks and panel discussions; over 70 musical performances; over 25 performance arts events; over 60 arts, crafts and music events for children. All this in just over three days!

**"We're somewhere artistry meets activism, where the political meets the practical. We're somewhere to come together once a year, where we're as likely to dream up a better world as we are to dance and debate, to pray and to party... We're somewhere the sacred meets the secular. We think there's a spark that kindles the time we spend together at Greenbelt, and we call it God (but you might call it the gin talking, and that's fine too). We're somewhere it's OK to ask questions, because we think that's where all the interesting stuff happens..."**

*Greenbelt 2019  
Wit and Wisdom  
Festival Guide*

## Welcome Jonathan and family!



It is a delight to have welcomed Revd Dr Jonathan Soyars as he joins us to teach New Testament. With his wife, Johanna, and their two sons they will shortly settle into their permanent home in one of the Bounds House flats on the college site. It is a big thing to come from the US to settle amongst us and to take up this post for the URC. I know that many people have already gone out of their

way to make the family welcome and I'm truly grateful for the care and hospitality that has been readied for them. It is a wonderful sign of Westminster's flourishing part within the global family of the Church that we have made this appointment and that Jonathan has responded with such excitement to this new call and chapter in his own life and ministry. We can look forward greatly to all that we'll be sharing together in the months and years to come. I'm reminded that people come and go amongst our staff team across the college and I'm thankful for all our colleagueship.

