

Speaking Personally (part one)

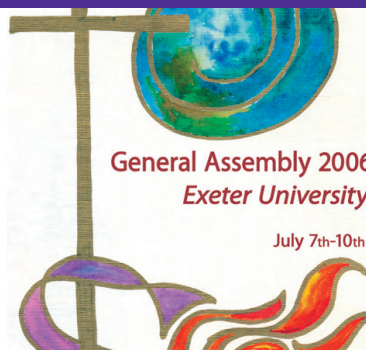
Many of you will be aware that the Governors and colleagues have generously allowed me some study leave before Jenny and I make our move to Bristol and our new chapter of service in the URC there. That means I will not be around much from April until end of year events and packing up in June and July.

I want to use my last four *Imagines* to share some personal reflections upon the journey we have travelled together. To begin, let's go back to where the recent Westminster story begins: URC General Assembly, July 2006. I was Chaplain to the Moderator of the Assembly that year, having been at Westminster all of 11 months as Director of Pastoral Studies.

Assembly revolutionised Westminster there and then by adopting a review of training which has shaped

our life ever since. We were renamed. No longer a theological college, we became a Resource Centre for Learning. The review declared: "The proposal involves more than a change of description for Northern and Westminster Colleges. The pace of change already taking place there will increase as initial training for ministry becomes only part of their core business and as they contribute more significantly to the life-long learning of the whole people of God. The Training Committee has confidence in the capacity of the resource centres for learning to develop further their resourcing of lay training and their expertise in distance and dispersed learning."

URC ministers would no longer train in Oxford, Birmingham or with 8 regional courses (including what is now the Eastern



Region Ministry Course based on our campus).

I think it was a bold review and got things right. We are still trying to work more closely with partners across the URC to fulfil its vision. It set us on a course to make Westminster more flexible and adventurous in our teaching for everyone. It set in motion what would become the most radical renewal of our building since it opened in 1899. It gave us permission to have a bigger vision of ourselves. It urged us to enable Westminster to thrive in new ways. Nothing has been the same since. I thank God that I was there, and have been here ever since to be part of it.

“The body of Christ is that unique community of practice whose members own up to the fact that we don't always love what we say we do - that the 'devices and desires' of our hearts outstrip our best intentions.”

James K.A. Smith

Your Are What You Love

2016
p. 30

Kind



Sometimes a song just gets stuck in your mind, looping on an almost endless repeat. It's happened to me ever since Greenbelt back in August when I first encountered the volume and energy of

Frank Turner and the Sleeping Souls. His song, **Be More Kind**, continues to linger for me in every good way possible. It begins:

*History's been leaning on me lately
I can feel the future breathing down my neck*

*And all the things I thought were true
When I was young, and you were too
Turned out to be broken
And I don't know what comes next
In a world that has decided
That it's going to lose its mind
Be more kind, my friends, try to be more kind.*

Kindness counts. As that great philosopher, Winnie the Pooh, puts it: "Sometimes the smallest things take up the most room in your heart." We need to be a community of kindness in which small things matter.

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