



City Events

JOHN REYNOLDS AND INGRID SLAUGHTER

The City churches are in lockdown due to the serious onslaught of coronavirus. Thus no services, lectures, concerts or recitals can take place in them, and consequently *City Events* has ceased publication for the foreseeable future.

Rather than just leaving you with that rather chilling statement, we thought we might muse a little regarding the consequences of the City churches' closing. It is interesting to see how the City churches are responding to the complete closure of their buildings. It must be remembered that complete closure occurred before for some of the churches, when many were burnt out during the Great Fire of London in 1666 and again when many suffered destruction in the Blitz of 1940-41, and subsequent flying bomb attacks in 1944-45 during WW2. In some cases the churches continued to hold services in the shell of what remained of them. Happily, much rebuilding took place after the war so that eventually most of the churches resumed their important role in the life of the City. But what of today, with the churches in complete physical lockdown, how can their ministry continue?

Well, of course, we now have that electronic marvel of communication

– the internet. A number of the City churches have taken full advantage of it and have posted recordings of services, a selection of their regular ones and the special ones (eg for Mothering Sunday) on their websites. Some have set up a regular weekly email carrying sources for prayer and reflection and they include a weekly sermon. The Rector of one City church puts it rather well when he writes on the website of his church, 'The wise counsel to work from home leaves me administering a closed and locked church.' He continues most aptly by recalling what T S Eliot wrote in *Little Gidding* in 1942, when he described such a church as 'A husk of meaning' but with much more to it than just the building, inspirational as it doubtless is.

Turning to concerts and recitals, all these are now cancelled. The April edition of *City Events*, which was in preparation when the closure was announced, promised again to be a bumper collection of interesting and, in some cases, challenging musical performances. We must hope that these now 'lost' performances will take place at some point in the not-too-distant future. Indeed, one organiser has already re-scheduled for Friday 23 October.

Friends will have noticed that

not one of the City churches has been named, in contradiction of our customary practice. This decision to omit the name of any church has been quite deliberate. First, in the view of the *City Events* editorial team it would be invidious to quote the name of any one of the several that are offering a comprehensive programme of liturgy and music. Then we feel that readers really should trawl the websites of the City churches to see what is being offered. We have found that to be most rewarding and, in some cases, quite surprising. Rest assured, the surfing of the websites will prove to be a most worthwhile activity in this strange period.

It only remains for us to express our wish that regular publication will be resumed as soon as possible. We close by quoting the words on two of the church websites since they really are most apt. First, 'In social distancing and isolation we are turned upon our own resources and the means of support which carry lasting weight. The comforts of religion and philosophy are surely not to be minimised at a time like this; our lives are not on hold'. Then as another puts it, 'Please join us online as we continue to be a community of hope, serving London in love and faith'.

And we might add, the City churches are still there for us.

Adapted from the *City Events* website

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