

VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS

March 2023

Greetings,

This month, I will travel to London for the funeral of a nursing school friend. Kate was one six of us who became fast friends from the beginning of our training at the Royal Free Hospital.

We are motley crew: varied in backgrounds, interests, politics, and career paths. But we are all women of faith; and we are all women who were formed spiritually, and trained professionally, to help others. These commonalities created bonds that are enduring - eternal, even!

The Royal Free Hospital was founded in 1828 to provide free healthcare to those who could not afford treatment. Queen Victoria granted the "Free Hospital" its Royal title in 1837, in recognition of its work with cholera patients.

It was said of the founder, William Marsden, that he *"did not ever give up the object he had set his heart upon because he was opposed by great and authoritative personages."*

These are facts that create a lasting impact on impressionable 18-year-olds! We've never given up on "our" hospital ideals; we've never given up on our faith; and we've never given up on one another.

So, it will be with great sadness that I fly home. But I will also journey with a great sense of gratitude. For Kate, for my other Royal Free friends, and for the blessing of being able to lead Kate's funeral service. Friendships – old & new - are a gift from God. Thankfulness to the Giver of All Good Gifts, and faithfulness to those gifted to us are our right responses.

My trip home will also be an exciting "first". I will get to preach in an English Baptist church! While most Baptist churches in the UK admit women to ministry, not all do.ⁱⁱ Kate's female pastor eagerly welcomed me to share her pulpit for the service.

Her church, Potter Street Baptist Church (Harlow, Essex),ⁱⁱⁱ was founded in 1662 and its first minister was Oliver Cromwell's chaplain! This is Baptist at its most fundamental: striving for God's realm of justice and freedom for all. I hope I can transport some of that legacy back with me.

There will be no church on Sunday, March 5th but I invite you to worship in the sanctuary of your own hearts. Reflect on the blessing of good friends. (Thank one! Be one!) Recommit to the high ideals of your earlier years. Let the Spirit revive your passion for God, and renew your zeal for God's work.

May you be deeply blessed,
Brenda

ⁱ BMJ, 1867, p. 97

ⁱⁱ 1918: first woman pastor of a [UK] Baptist church. 1919: first woman trained at a [UK] Baptist seminary. Not all congregations have caught up!

ⁱⁱⁱ Check out the church @ www.psbcc.co.uk