

## **New Year, New Challenges?**

As you will have noticed, over the past 9 months, I have been getting more involved in service leading and preaching. This is part of my exploration of what I feel that God might be calling me to do for Him in the life of the church. Another part of this involves a course called Foundations in Christian Ministry which I am undertaking over the current academic year. It's based in Exeter and takes place on various Saturdays throughout the year so I am able to fit this in around my "day job".

The course itself is very varied, and there are a wide variety of people with different levels of experience in church leadership on it. The teaching covers topics from Bible study & critical reading of the Bible, theology, spirituality, pastoral care, ministry skills & vocation. There are just over 30 of us on the course and we also meet in smaller tutor groups of 5 or 6 via Zoom to discuss our progress with the course.

One of the tasks set by the course is to write a short piece for the church family to update them on how the course is going and what we as individuals are learning from it.

Initially, I have to admit, I was a bit frustrated as the first day was very much "an introduction" to various elements of the course however as the sessions have progressed I am starting to learn more and am keeping a journal about how I feel that God is speaking to me through the course.

I have found using some of the different ways of praying we have been exploring in the spirituality sessions very helpful and has enabled me to spend time with God in different ways.

It is a gift to be part of this learning community and to develop alongside others to become more fully the person God created me to be.

We all have a specific calling on our lives from God. A Vocation. As Christians our primary calling is to follow Jesus but we also have a personal calling that is the unique way we live out our faith through who we are. This calling can change over time due to various experiences and the circumstances God puts us in.

We are all a unique part of God's body, His Church. All of us are called, no one is left behind. It can seem scary but God knows each of us intimately. He calls us to walk in our own shoes, not anyone else's. He won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you – His burden is easy & His yoke is light.

This New Year be encouraged to explore what He might be calling you to do. How He might be inviting you to put your gifts, abilities, personality & experience at the service of others and of Him.

***Sharon Hiley January 2022***