

A summer's trek towards spiritual refreshment Rector's Letter: February 2022

I have some news to share with you this month: the Diocese has granted me a three-month sabbatical this year. The Parochial Church Council has been aware of this for some time, and fully supports the idea; and the church family were told about it at the turn of the New Year. I wanted to share this news with the parish and let you know what it is all about.

Just what is a sabbatical? One dictionary definition is, 'Of or appropriate to the Sabbath'; and the Sabbath, of course, is a gift to us and is meant to be a time of rest and a time of worship of God. ("Then he [Jesus] said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath'." Mark 2:27-28). A sabbatical is a time of being able to step off the treadmill of parish ministry long enough to be renewed in vision and hope, and to reconnect the root of one's soul with God. That last bit sounds theological and academic, but, for me, it is simply a time of renewal, and a time of reconnecting with God. It's stepping completely out of the current ministry situation and being freed to embark on a holy trek.

So what have I got planned? Literally, a holy trek, combining a love of the outdoors, walking, and Celtic spirituality. This renewal will involve retreat times in the Christian communities on Iona and at Lindisfarne. It will involve walking the Great Glen Way, the St Cuthbert's Way and the North Berwickshire Coastal Path. In addition, it will include some time out in spiritual spaces in the Orkneys and the Outer Hebrides.

In my preparation for the sabbatical, I have been doing some reading. One piece that I read said: "The very nature of being an effective pastor (priest) involves continual spiritual growth." I have been aware that has not been happening. I then came across this Latin phrase, *Solvitur ambulando*: 'It is solved as we walk'. That sums up for me what I hope this time will be about; as I walk, I will have time and space to reconnect with God, to grow spiritually, and be refreshed and guided by God for my future ministry. The prospect is very exciting and I am so grateful for the forthcoming opportunity.

When is this going to happen? Through July, August and September this year. During that period, the parish will be well supported by the members of the ministry leadership team and the churchwardens; and I am very grateful for their support. I am trusting that this will be a time of renewal and encouragement for all of us. If you would like to know more of the sabbatical, please just ask. In the meantime, there is Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, the Queen's Jubilee, Trinity, the church/village fete, and many, many weddings to keep me busy!

Revd David Commander, Rector