

Friends

Last Sunday I returned to Sunbury Methodist Church where I had been asked to lead worship for their Church Anniversary. This is a bittersweet Sunday to be invited to. On the one hand, I was their minister for seven years and love them very much; on the other hand, I knew that when I walked back into that church after four years there would be people who have moved away and those who have died. There are things that I started that have not continued and new and exciting things that I have not been a part of. This is the nature of the beast for those of us in Circuit ministry.

Sunbury was the largest of the churches that I had responsibility for in my first appointment. You may know (in fact, you should know!) that the 1st of September is the start of the Connexional year and as such, it is the start date of someone's ministry when they are new to the circuit. When the newness is also that one is a probationer it's doubly exciting and nerve-wracking. However, the year that I started, the 1st of September fell on a Sunday. This is always a good thing, because there is an element of having to work out what ministry actually is when we start, and at least on a Sunday, the job is self-explanatory!

I sat in the pulpit on that first Sunday as the steward introduced me to a packed church – all turned out to see what the new minister would be like – and there in front of me on a little metal plaque were the words from John 12:21 where people come to Philip and say, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” I was momentarily overwhelmed with the enormity of the job. Yet this little verse was once on all our pulpits across Methodism: a reminder to local preachers and ordained ministers alike that this is our role – to enable people to worship and in so-doing to catch sight of the Son of God. “Sir, we would see Jesus.”

It is inevitable that this moment which struck me with such awe and determination that I should indeed be up to the task, should come to mind when I reflect on returning to Sunbury. It is not unique to that church, and yet it was there that it first spoke to me in an unforgettable way. I wonder where you were when you first knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that God was speaking to you? It is a question worth reflecting on in this tiny period of time between the ending of the Covenant season and the beginning of Lent. What did God say to you? Did you answer? Or is he still saying it?

God bless, Vicci