

Friends

Once more the Christmas decorations have returned to the attic, the Christmas cards have been noted and recycled, the midnight bells have sounded and a new year has dawned. The wise men have journeyed to Bethlehem and met with the child and his mother, gifts have been given and we are once more in Ordinary Time – that time that is known in Godly Play as “Great, Green, Growing Time.”

My mother once told me that she loved raspberries best when she was eating raspberries and strawberries best when she was eating strawberries, and I understand that because I love the Great, Green, Growing time of the Ordinary Seasons best when I am in them, and the wonderful excitements of the Holy Days when I am in those.

We have a very short period of Ordinary Time this winter because Easter is early, falling as it does on the 31st of March and Ash Wednesday clashing with Valentine’s Day on the 14th of February.

But before then, in these next few weeks of Ordinary Time, disciples will be called, unclean spirits will be cast out, sickness will be healed, and a preaching tour begun, as we hear the old, familiar stories of the early ministry of Jesus. The speed of the story will be at odds with the news in our own times, when newspapers report that there were fewer people in church over Christmas, and we share our frustration at the impossibility of getting a G.P.’s appointment or the wait for a hospital visit. While ministers and preachers speak of their busyness, the idea that someone might have the time to go on a preaching tour seems laughable. Yet in these five weeks of story, we hear our own history reiterated, not just as Christians, but as Methodists. We too have been called to be disciples and with that calling came the in-dwelling Holy Spirit that leaves no space for spirits of other sorts. John Wesley, one of our most significant founders, wrote a book of homeopathic medicine because he wanted to give access to healthcare to those who could not afford to pay for doctors, and our system of local preachers and itinerant ministry is rooted in the idea of a preaching tour round the circuit for local preachers and round the Connexion for ministers. As we journey through Ordinary Time, we journey through our own history as “the People Called Methodists” and we hear again the great call to go into all the world and share the Gospel story.

God bless, Vicci