

Dave (my husband) and I have had a lovely time settling into the Derwent Ings area this year and are now looking forward to exploring the Escrick, Naburn & Stillingfleet group of parishes and villages. These new developments have reminded me of when I first became Vicar of St Luke's. A member of my congregation asked me how I was feeling about my licensing, to which I replied on one hand I'm really excited and the other hand I'm just a little bit scared and anxious after all it was a big step! This lady offered me some very wise words, quoting an old Chinese proverb – that the first step is everything and the distance is nothing. Which is not only wise but very true it is the first step that is the important step.....but then when I was thinking about it later I thought WOW I've taken an awful lot of first steps some of them huge to get to St Luke's and now here I am having taken a few more very big steps!

I first felt an inkling of a calling to ministry way back in 2004 – but I didn't quite hear that it was God, I thought it was something else and it was only around 2006 that I could look back and see the stirrings of a calling. There is a story in the bible of a young man called Samuel who totally gets it wrong and doesn't realise that God is calling him to give his life to the service of God – until someone points it out to him, I was a bit like Samuel and to be honest it was easier to ignore than admit. Then at Easter 2007 I took my first step on this journey and went to see my local priest – this time like Samuel - I did hear God calling me and I was ready to respond with I am listening Lord!

At that point I was listening but I had no idea where that first step was going to take me – but as the Psalmist said I knew that God would instruct and teach me the way I should go and I trusted that he would watch over me. More steps actually took me to

Mirfield and the Yorkshire Ministry Course for ordination training and to study for an MA in theology and ministry.

I still didn't know where my steps would take me but one thing I did know was that I was being called to be a Priest to speak and be the Gospel in thought and word and deed. And for me the Gospel is the love of God and it is **that** Gospel message that I want to spread... and I want to do that because I believe in the transforming love of Jesus Christ, I want to tell people it doesn't matter who you are or what you are or what you've done or not done – God Loves you just as you are – unconditionally.

The lady I met was right – the first step is everything and the distance is nothing. It has been a long journey to get to here but the distance really is nothing because every step of the way God has been with me guiding me and supporting me along the path. I am very much looking forward to walking with you as we live Christ's story together.

With Blessings

Rev Jackie x