

From Phil.....

People have begun to ask, 'Are you excited about your upcoming move?'. Some ask, 'How are you feeling'. After over 30 years of moving in ministry I'm not sure what the answers are. I'm ready – but it's not really excitement. My feelings are complex – a whole mix of letting go, looking forward and preparing to prepare. There is a certain cloudiness about it all. It's too early to be packing or saying goodbye but I'm also aware that there is a certain amount of disengagement going on. But I know I am loved and held by God in Jesus.

For those of you who don't know what I'm talking about, after ten years of serving the people called Methodist in Gloucestershire (as well as a good number of folk in the Reformed tradition), I'm preparing to move to Hereford in August this year. I asked the church for special permission to go there so that my family, which is only small, could be together. The odd thing was, I was fully prepared to step away from pastoral ministry to enable that to happen. In some ways, if not a leap, it was a step out in faith. I was eyeing up support jobs in arts colleges or seeing what charity roles were available. But through it all I felt God's call. In very many ways it was like when I candidated to be a minister in the first place. The willingness to give up all I knew to do what I needed to, trusting that God was at the centre and in him all would be well.

What has transpired is a part time ministry post in Shropshire, a 12 month agreement to use an empty manse in Hereford, and the possibility of some explorative work in Builth Wells. It's not there yet. There are a few pieces of the jigsaw still to be put in place but I hold on to the quite simplistic truth that God has got this, and, so far, that is appearing to be the case.

Our faith should be like that. A life of trusting in God even if the outcomes are not clearly defined. In John 3:8 Jesus says, 'The wind blows where it wills... so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit'. Sometimes that's about our individual lives. When we are born of the Spirit who knows where we may end up. But it can also be true of our churches, our church traditions, our worship, our social engagement. We are not called to keep on doing what we do, over and over, thinking it will always work, always satisfy. Being Spirit led means we are ready for what's next, even if we don't know what that is. Let us blow God's love into this world like the wind. In new ways, in discomfoting ways, we don't know where we will be blown to, but let us offer ourselves to difference, to change, to being born of the Spirit.

Bless you in your journeying.

Love,

Phil.