

I was born in Harrogate Yorkshire the elder of two daughters, and on leaving school worked as a civil servant in the Post Office Savings Bank as had both my parents. Being the civil service the post war prefabs were single bricks and freezing, which necessitated coats and sometimes gloves being worn for most of the summer until the heating came back on 1st October we never thought of hot water bottles like at St Bede. I taught in the Methodist Sunday school until I was not sure what I believed. It was not God I was not interested in, it was stuffy organised religion. After a failed marriage, I trained as a nurse at Leeds General Infirmary. I met Malcolm in May 1973 at a late-night party and we married in October 1973. He was employed as a parish social worker the first in the Ripon diocese and was paid in 2/0 pieces the old florins out of the weekly collection. We had part of a church house which was also housed two single men. To complete the picture it had a red door bell, a source of amusement to the district midwife I worked with. On one ward I met a lady a Christian who had gone back to nurse one shift a week and asked God to show her people to tell about Jesus and His love. Muriel and her husband Robert a local G.P. organised a weekly house group where we learned of Gods provision, worship with lively music and the Charismatic movement. A far cry from my previous image of a vengeful being. We learnt that the whole house group had been praying for our marriage and another piece of Gods jigsaw fell into place when we honeymooned at Scargill house. During the months that followed I learned the joy of the Lord and to trust Him at all times and in all situations. No sudden flash of light but a gradual progression of understanding that it was a personal choice that each one of us has to make. To accept or not accept the need to say sorry to God and have His forgiveness.

After being married a year Malcolm came to Manchester to Nazarene college to train in theology. He brought our three-wheeler car, our cat, and the furniture. We rented a flat in Levenshulme with water running down an inside wall, for which the rent was reduced by £1. I stayed in Leeds until the midwifery course was completed. I then trained at the Christie hospital Manchester and learned of such places as Burnley, Clitheroe, and Bolton. We later rented a house in Didsbury and worshipped at Emmanuel and St James churches which were becoming a joint benefice. We were on PCCs, ran a house group and a parish weekend and started two book stalls. Eventually I trained as a health visitor and also an Anglican Reader. As I told Bishop Chris years later I have never felt the call to be ordained, but did and still do believe my calling has been to be a Reader. When Malcolm graduated from college we were able to buy a small house in Heaton Mersey definitely Didsbury prices were outside our price range. We were blessed by the birth of Matthew having been told by the medical profession we would never have children. Twenty months later after we had moved to the greenery of Daisy Hill we had Jonathan. We worshipped at St James Daisy Hill and when Matthew was 4 we moved to Ladybridge so that sir could be nearer the motorway links to Manchester.

In each church, we attended St Peters Hunslet, St. James and Emmanuel, St James Daisy Hill, Deane parish church and St Bede, we could encourage people to train as Readers. Also in each church we were involved in the removal of pews. Definitely a pattern had formed. What was relevant was that it was Gods pattern not mine but also that it was an exciting journey to be lived one day at a time. It was Gods guidance and His provision for my life. Sometimes I did not want or did not recognise it but God was shaping my life in ways that I had never imagined.

As most of you know in three years we collected 8 grandchildren and they are a constant source of amazement, love and joy.

In 2012 after 40 years Malcolm was ordained 4 weeks later we had Matthew and Nicky's wedding and then 3 weeks later Malcolm's father Bill died. That year was a rich tapestry of emotions, praise and thanksgiving and sometimes tears. Life did not get any quieter in 2014 Vicky Jonathans fiancée was diagnosed with a life threatening bowel cancer in the middle of her second pregnancy. Many of you shared our concern and prayers. Today she is back at work part time and the miracle baby Jessica Joy is a delightful red haired whirlwind aged 2 years. They and us support Mummy's Star a charity for women who develop cancer in pregnancy or the first year after giving birth.

As we have not lived close to family for 43 years and yes my mum was 100 years old on 21st May this year, it is our church families who have cared for us and supported us at all times. I am so grateful for them and their faithfulness to God in joy and sadness. It has been wonderful privilege to be part of the family here at St Bede for the past 29 years. Looking back on a life which is already past three score years and ten I can see Gods wonderful provision, His guiding hand and His ways which are perfect.

To look to the future to quote a hymn

Because He lives I can face tomorrow,

Because He lives all fear is gone,

Because I know He holds the future

And life is worth the living just because He lives.

Pat Bristow