

A Time Of Reflection

At the time of writing, Christmas and New year are now behind us, the seasonal decorations are all consigned back to the corner of the loft, the house looks bare, and the weather is gloomy.

Its typical at New year to look back and remember and reflect on the highs and lows of the previous year. We think about those we have lost and start to make plans for the year ahead.

Looking back has made me realise that it's just short of a year ago that I became an Elder of Christ Church, something that was never on my to-do list for the year and something that I never thought I would do. I was asked around this time last year if I would consider being an Elder by various members of the congregation and responded with a resounding 'No thank you.'

What changed? I am not sure, but on one occasion, after some discussion I was asked to reconsider. I said I would but also added the caveat that it would be highly unlikely. I must be honest and say that I didn't 'Feel a calling' to become an elder and for some reason that I still can't pinpoint, I changed my mind and made the decision to give it a go and accept, with a bit of reluctance rather than excitement. That sounds somewhat negative, but it was the truth at the time.

Then the journey of being an elder started for me. It was a bit of a roller coaster start, a bit like that slow climb to the first drop and then the fear and exhilaration of the momentum carrying you along at gravity drives you forward rather than holding you back.

It took a few weeks to coordinate diaries and make the formal appointment within a service, but the role had already started, what was I in for? I had no idea. And if I am honest, I am still a little out of my depth on certain elements but, so far, it has been very interesting.

In my ignorance, I had little idea how Christ Church worked, beyond the coffee rota. I decided at my first elders' meeting to sit and listen and take it slowly as it was all new. That lasted about 5 minutes as I was made to feel so welcome and felt like I could add valid contributions to the discussion.

A couple of weeks later there was an Elders' Day arranged for all the churches in the partnership to get together and discuss matters, all organised by Marion Tugwood and Jonnie Hill. I discovered at that meeting that I wasn't the only person to be on the rollercoaster ride of eldership. It was a fascinating and interesting day and one where I felt that I wasn't alone in this new role, and that there was extensive experience to tap into within Christ Church and the wider Partnership.

As it turns out, I joined at the very interesting time, as Christ Church and Didsbury URC had started discussions about joining together. These are ongoing and progressing and I feel honoured to be able to be part of the eldership discussion between both churches to find a route through the maze of process and change, something I am personally very enthusiastic and excited about, but also understand the impact that the change will have on members of both congregations.

The monthly Elders' meetings are now regular entries on the calendar, and I look forward to them each month. If I have learned one thing from being an Elder is that the church is like a complex watch mechanism, with each and every one of the congregation doing their bit to make the machine work. There are so many facets of the day-to-day workings that I was unaware or ignorant of. There are far too many to list but, just as an example, on a Sunday

morning, just think; Who opened the Church? Who laid out the chairs? Who negotiated the electricity contract so that there are lights and power? Who is preaching? Who arranged that? Who arranged the communion elements? Who is looking after the young people? Who is on refreshments? Who brought the milk? Who washes up? Who puts the chairs out and away? Who locks up?

This is just a small snapshot and doesn't capture everything and is repeated weekly across buildings with many more processes than I listed as an example, multiple times over for all the various activities in the Church.

Being a member of this church and an Elder is an honour and I want to thank you for having trust in me to do my best. I also want to thank all the current Elders for their support as I learn more each day and all current non-serving elders for their contribution over the years and advice along my journey so far. I look forward to sharing the rollercoaster again in the future.

Elders are only the custodians of the process of the Church, the real workings of the church are the people that make it work, the teeth on a cog, a spindle or a spring in the mechanics of the church, every element is vital to making it work and, without everyone of them, the process can breakdown quickly.

I am proud to be an Elder but prouder to be a member of Christ Church's congregation as we look ahead to what God has instore for us as we all try to serve him and our community better in the coming year!

Simon Watts