

## Guidance

*Anne-Claar Rosingh-Thomasson*

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September we had a service at All Saints in which people could give in questions, one of the questions was: *“What does God want me to be doing with my life? / How will I discern his real intentions, advice, guidance for me? / How will I have the courage and strength to make the changes necessary? / How can I find peace and stop rushing around and stop stressing?”*

It is an interesting question both for us as individuals and for us as a church. This afternoon I was in a team meeting at work. As the Adviser of Licensed Lay Ministry in the diocese I am a member of the Ministry Development team with Bishop Lee as our team leader. One of the discussions we had was about changes in ministerial patterns (more and more ‘unpaid’ people both lay and ordained get involved in ministry as the church is running out of money) and whether we thought those changes were good (we did!) and whether we would have worked for them even if we had not been strapped for cash. In this discussion somebody remarked that maybe God had taken away the money so that we would work towards the inclusion of more and different people in ministry.

Just as I do not have a direct answer to the question about guidance, I do not know whether you could say of God that he (or she) would do things like ‘taking money away’. Even so I do trust that our lives (and our churches) are in God’s hands and that God is powerful to use any situation for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

Around last June I heard for the first time that my job was at risk of redundancy and a few weeks ago I got the definite notice that I am “dismissed from service on grounds of redundancy”. I will work for the diocese until the end of November. Fortunately, I have been very blessed in finding new work. In January I shall start as full-time ‘core academic staff’ at STETS (Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme – housed at Sarum College in Salisbury) responsible for teaching biblical studies. STETS provides courses for people who are preparing for ordained ministry in part-time from different denominations (from the East Bristol Partnership Chris Evans is currently studying at STETS). My job will be mainly teaching ordinands (with all the administration that involves), and partly research in biblical studies. This means that my voluntary ministerial involvement with the East Bristol Partnership (especially at All Saints and St Mary’s) will come to an end, as my free time will have to be devoted fully to my family.

With this experience very fresh in my memory, I think my tentative (and indirect) answer to the question about guidance would be: Do not worry, God is quite capable of leading us even if we hardly notice it ourselves. All we need is openness, courage and a willingness to follow Christ. I trust that, if we ask, God will give us all those things and more. I believe that we (as a community and as individuals) will see our complaints transformed into praise, because God is doing wonderful things in our midst.

Anne Claar