



FEAST AND FESTIVALS; TIME TO THINK AND LEARN:

To serve as a Church Related Community Work Minister is an honor and a privilege. Being allowed to work with people in our wider community and our church communities, to travel with them, to watch them grow and share the passion for where they live can be very humbling, but also emotionally exhausting.



We are expected to continue to learn and develop, to grow in our ministry, but this can be hard when supporting those many would say are on the edge of society. Those today's society have labelled as worthless, the undeserving poor, the 'other'. One way the URC shows its support of those in Ministry, taking seriously the need to grow and continue to learn is through allowing us to have a sabbatical for 3 months after 10 years of service. I have just returned from my sabbatical and would like to share some of my gratitude and experience of this valuable gift given by the church.

I agreed with our Synod Training Officer, Elders and others that the aims for this time were:

- to reflect on my approach and work in this initial phase of my ministry here in Tonge Moor
- to consider the differences in approach during this initial phase both here and in my ministry with the Bridging Communities project in Poole
- To have some time and space to reflect and renew my own spirituality whilst considering how it has changed over the last 10 years



With a further supplementary aim of utilising some of the time to continue the embroidery I have begun as memorial piece for the Building Bridges Project.

To achieve this I have read a lot, tried new techniques, which have included exploring my own creativity, spent time in special places and with my family. This has been a time to work differently, to take stock, to learn, to be challenged and to refresh my own spirituality.





Initially my husband and I travelled to Lindisfarne, or Holy Island. This island lives up to its name, it is a very special place to walk, read and think. This was a time to empty myself, to prepare the ground to learn, to think differently.

After Christmas we had a family holiday at Dent Station, the highest main line station in England. The station has been converted into self catering holiday accommodation. We went there so we could celebrate my husbands 60th birthday and walk the Yorkshire Dales. However whilst here I continued to journal, to read and to think, as I did when we returned.

Finally I went to Sheldon the home of the society of Martha and Mary, and situated about 15miles outside of Exeter. This is a place of spiritual support and challenge for those in ministry.

Here there were workshops, spiritual direction, and worship, time to walk, read, think and rest. This experience was amazing and quite transforming for me, a real gift!

Alison Dalton,
Church Related Community Work Minister

