

## New Beginnings

Five eventful years in Newham had come to an end and the time had come to move on. 'Where?', I thought. 'Go north' seemed to be the call. And so I found myself travelling the Virgin West Coast line (other train companies are available) from East London over the border all the way to Glasgow. A bit further 'north' than I had originally anticipated! I am working with a couple of churches – Shawlands URC and Priesthill URC which are on the southside of the city, both of which are set in quite contrasting communities. Shawlands URC is a former Churches of Christ, has a traditional style building with pews, a mainly gathered congregation and is in an area full of cafes and bars. Priesthill, on the other hand, has a tiny congregation drawn from the local scheme (estate), which meet in what used to be the local Roman Catholic social hall.

It was in this hall that the official induction took place a couple of weeks ago. A colourful affair due to the locals decorating it with bunting, balloons and fairy lights – after all fairy lights are for life and not just for Christmas! The service was followed by a feast of homemade soup, a mountain of big Mary's scones, traditional fly cemetery cakes (don't ask!) and Tunnocks teacakes which are famous Glaswegian biscuits.

Much of the time is to be spent in Priesthill and I have I have been launched into a flurry of community breakfasts, community cafes, community gardens, community forums and even a community environment walk.

I have consumed vast quantities of bacon butties, scones, sausage squares, sausage links as every activity seems to be accompanied by food. But as Revd Peter Brain, a former Synod Moderator and Church and Society secretary once observed 'a church and community that eats together, also grows together'.

I am still trying (and in some cases failing!) to understand and learn the lingo. It's a roll and bacon not a bacon buttie, it's a 'scheme' not an estate, 'weans' are young children, rivers are called 'burns'. Wish me luck!

As for the next 5 years .....? There is talk of community asset transfers, foodbanks and more provision for over 12s. But it's early days and let's not forget Shawlands. Watch this space.....