



FINAL WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

Anne Middleton

THE MINISTER'S WIFE, THE PADRE'S WIFE, DARREN MIDDLETON'S WIFE AND I – REFLECTIONS ON FOLLOWING GOD'S CALL AS I FOLLOW MY HUSBAND...

I write this as my husband and I await the arrival of the stationing list! The theme of my final edition of MET Connexion, alongside this time of ending and being in 'limbo' again, has given me an amazing opportunity to reflect on my own vocation and what that means!

When I first got married, I had a sense of 'giving up' my career, my theatre work, my ministry, my friends, my life in London - where I had built up my self-employed work over the years. Of course, I was excited about marrying Darren and all that God had in store for us! But there was also a sense of a loss of identity. I had to move up north while Darren completed his training to be a Methodist Minister - he wasn't fully a Minister at that point, but I felt straight away the impact of being a Minister's Wife! I want to be very honest with you - I have struggled with being a Minister's Wife. Darren made it very clear to churches from the start, that I don't bake or do flower arranging! But, on a deeper level, I found that it wasn't just about what it meant to be a Minister's Wife that I had to get used to, but the realisation that this was now how people saw me - whether I was ready or not...

I know that I am married to a pretty special man - he cannot help but shine in every situation - so I understand why everyone wanted to tell me how amazing he was! However, what I found hard was when I had done something and at the end was told how amazing Darren was! It was as if people couldn't 'see me' - they genuinely couldn't see that I had done something or that Darren and I had worked together on something. For example, when I was given the go ahead to set up a theatre café and invited fellow professional Christian performers to share their message of hope, people told me how amazing Darren was - because they knew that he had a theatre background and presumed that it was all his idea and contacts. Someone actually said that they thought I was just his secretary!! Darren, jokingly, used to call me 'the invisible woman' - I also felt like I was the woman without a past - even though I didn't meet Darren until I was thirty-five!

Darren is now preparing to go back to circuit ministry, having been an Army Padre for the last six years. We are coming up to our fifth move in eleven years of marriage. Looking back, I can see how God has enabled me to use all my qualifications and experience in the different roles that I have had in that time, but I have not found it easy to have a sense of career around moving regularly, being the sole child-care provider for our daughter for the large part and trying to do creative work that makes me feel fulfilled, as I follow my

husband around the country with his vocation... So, I have struggled a little with the notion of vocation - as the wife of someone with the 'main vocation.'

When I first met Darren, I actually told friends that I had a strong feeling that we would work together in the future! Darren and I work well together - we complement each other - we have similar but different creative gifts that, brought together, can be powerful and exciting. I think that it has taken me eleven years of marriage to understand fully that I am called to be married to Darren - that we are better together - that God has placed us together for a reason. That when he calls Darren on to a new place, he is calling me too. Not as a lesser role, but as a partner. I have come to realise that my vocation is not about my 'career' or 'ministry,' but about embracing fully who I am and being



available to use every gift that God has given me wherever he leads me - alongside my husband.

I have loved my role as editor of MET Connexion - it has given me a sense of purpose over the last three years. As I stop this role, along with winding down my other free-lance work, I can truly say that I am standing in the dark - not

knowing what is around the bend in this labyrinth of life - but that God has promised to shine his light on my path to show me the next step at the right time. To close, I just wanted to share a small 'incident' that had a profound impact on me and has helped to prepare me for this process...

A few months back, I was coming out of church after an evening meeting - it was dark, and stupidly I'd decided to take my usual route down the little alleyway at the side of the church. There are gates at each end and as the gate closed behind me I suddenly realised that a) it might not be a good idea to walk down a dark alley on my own at night and b) it was pitch black and I have a problem with my night vision so I couldn't see anything! I took a couple of steps forwards, wondering whether I should turn back, then a bright light came on! So, I walked on, then that light went off and I was in

the dark again. I took another two steps forward and another light came on. This happened one more time - and I was at the other end. It sounds very mundane now - but at the time it felt so profound! It was like God was saying that I am walking in the dark now! I literally cannot see what's ahead! It is very stressful going through the stationing process - waiting to be told where you will be placed - the not knowing is terrible! But God has promised that he will shine a light on the path to show me the way as I need it. I just have to trust to keep on moving forwards!!

In the meantime, I know that I am in God's will - and that is the best place to be...

God bless you all as you follow God's call on your lives - and remember, no one is invisible in God's eyes...

Methodist
Evangelicals
Together
met

MET SOUTH WEST CONFERENCE 2019 MENTORED BY JESUS

Speaker: The Revd Dr David Coffey
25 - 27 January 2019
Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay Seafront

A weekend of Bible exposition, encouraging worship and prayer, great fellowship and wonderful hospitality. Come for the weekend or for a day.

The booking form is available on: methodistevangelicals.org.uk
or from Tony Wragg: wraggster1@hotmail.com / 01392 466129

Methodist
Evangelicals
Together
met

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY WEEKEND 2019 HOW TO SERVE WELL AND STAY REFRESHED IN MINISTRY

Led by: The Revd Derek Balsdon, MET Development Worker
1 - 3 March 2019 (Friday 7pm - Sunday 2 pm)
Swan Bank Methodist Church, Burslem, ST6 2AA

A weekend of teaching, rest, and mutual support for those in ministry for less than 5 years, and student ministers. A limited amount of free accommodation is provided by members of Swan Bank (up to 'small family' size) - must be requested by 31 January 2019.

The booking form is available at methodistevangelicals.org.uk/efm