



Dear friends,

Watching the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations on TV with our boys a few weeks ago, my very favourite quote of the weekend came early in the proceedings, during Trooping the Colour. It went something like this from the BBC presenter, talking about the troops on parade:

“They joined the army to be musicians, or to drive a tank – they never expected to find themselves riding a horse...”

It was news to me that many of those we saw on parade were not life-long horsemen or horsewomen. It struck me on so many levels. First, just amazement at their skill. But the comment quickly got me thinking about our experiences as Christian people, and as members of local churches or as ministers. What did we expect as we made our commitment to God, as we ‘signed up’ to life as part of a kingdom community, as citizens of the commonwealth of heaven? Just pause for a moment and notice what you remember of what you did expect at that time in your life...and how things are working out right now.

And now to the unexpected. For most of us, I am guessing the ‘I never expected to find myself...’ things fall into two distinct categories.

There will be the things we might never have had the opportunity or courage to have a go at in other circumstances. For me, those things include standing in front of people and communicating, and working with words to create something expressive and not simply factual. They are things which I delight in... but which no one, least of all me, would have expected to encounter in me before I said yes to God’s call into a leadership role in the church. They will be different for each of us, and it is sometimes good to take time to notice and give thanks to God for the parts of our personality or skillset which are flourishing in our current situation, or which God is prompting us to develop.

I am also talking to people at the moment, though, whose ‘I never expected to find myself...’ experiences are proving difficult to manage. People who feel stretched to (or beyond) the limit. A significant portion of our upcoming review work as a Circuit will be to look at what we can and should do differently where this is the case. If this is you, please don’t hesitate to chat with your minister or with me, before a crisis point is reached.

Holy God, you call us as we are.
Holy God, you call us on, in ways we might never have imagined.
May we be filled with courage, as we learn new ways of being.
Where we are challenged beyond what seems possible,
help us to discern right next steps.
May we listen and learn together,
as members of your community of grace.

Peace, Jo