

My Christian Faith Journey

I was sent to Sunday school as a child but by the age of eleven years it didn't seem to be important so I left, and that, I thought was the end of my church connections.

Our neighbour, whom I called Auntie Doris, was always inviting me back and eventually she asked me to go and help with her JMA (Junior Missionary Association) group to draw maps - I was quite interested in drawing and it was to become a major part of my future career as a Carpenter and Joiner and later as a Design and Technology teacher.

Jesus had not featured much in my life except to hear Bible stories and sing about him in church.

I really enjoyed the work with JMA (Junior Missionary Association) and was drawn back into Sunday school, youth club and church, where I gradually began to understand that Jesus and his teaching was quite relevant to life - not least in establishing moral values.

I responded seriously to the call of Jesus on my life and became a Christian at the age of eighteen in 1956, (I still have the letter written to me by the preacher who invited me to follow Jesus) the experience changed the direction of my life and I am so grateful to God for all that he has done for me.

I helped in the church with the young people and eventually Maureen and I became the Youth club leaders.

By this time I was an apprentice Carpenter and Joiner which, I thoroughly enjoyed, and eventually qualified in 1957 by which time I was called to National Service,

Maureen and I married in 1959 just before I was released from National Service and shortly after that I felt a renewed call (My first call came at about the age of 16 when I used to wake up in the middle of the night with sermon outlines in my head) to become a Local Preacher but found the course too difficult and gave up very quickly. In those days I was quite reserved and had little confidence in my academic ability!!!!!!

After National Service I returned to my old firm as a Carpenter and Joiner, but did not settle too well and began to think I needed a new career direction - I could not see myself working on building sites into my old age!!!!

Maureen and I talked about this over several months and also shared it with Christian friends, one of whom (Barbara Hardy) saw the potential of a craft teacher in me!!

After much prayer I applied for Teacher Training, using my City and Guild trade qualifications, and was accepted as a mature student. At the end of the course we moved to Hornchurch to take up my first teaching post, and by this time we had our first child Adele. Philip was born soon afterwards.

We became fully involved in the life of the church at 'Grenfell Methodist' (Romford Essex) of which we hold very special memories.

We moved up to the Kettering area for me to teach at Irthingborough and Finedon Secondary School (Now Huxlow Comprehensive School) and quickly settled into 'Burton Latimer Methodist Church' helping in a variety of ways over the years and becoming firm friends with Nita and David Kearley.

But there was a gradual drying up of faith, particularly in my life and relationship with Jesus.

I came to the stage where I was seriously considering giving up church altogether. Church seemed such hard work and there seemed to be few results!!! I remember saying to Maureen, "It just doesn't work".

In fact looking back over the years I can see now that I had often ignored God's attempts to shape and fashion my life, largely I suspect because I was afraid of what he might want me to do.

To put it bluntly 'there was something missing'.

Maureen was very concerned and prayed 'Lord do something'.

Not long after that in 1975 we noticed something different in David Kearley's preaching, and talking to him, found that he and Nita had been baptised with the Holy Spirit.

We asked a lot of questions and read widely about the activity of the Holy Spirit.

On June 5th 1975, at home by our bedside, I prayed very quietly asking God to fill me with his Holy Spirit, and he did. It is difficult to describe the love and joy that he placed in my heart and which overwhelmed my spirit. That sense of God's presence with me has grown and matured over the years into a deep knowledge of his love and faithfulness to me.

Shortly afterwards Maureen had a similar experience.

I often wonder, why couldn't I have found this experience much earlier in my life? But, you can't spend too much time regretting the past. I am so thankful that the Holy Spirit led me back to a restored and deeper relationship with Jesus.

I know now that the Holy Spirit was the 'something missing' from our experience, 'the hole in the heart', and we have found that his continuing presence has given us so much more joy; so much more strength; so much more purpose; so much more understanding of God..... So much more..... So much more.....

Since those days we became involved in a Home Group led by Jack and Edna Young and through that to a renewal meeting, 'Power and Praise', where we grew to understand more fully the work of the Holy Spirit through welcoming and using His Spiritual gifts in the leadership team of Power and Praise.

Bible reading and prayer became alive to me and I found that God spoke into my heart through his word, in prayer and meditation, and in meeting with others to discuss and share experiences and to wait on the Holy Spirit's presence.

God showed me that my spiritual life was much deeper than just attending worship on Sundays and encompassed the whole of life.

It was through sharing in, and leading worship and speaking at Power and Praise that the call came back to train as a Local preacher.

This time, the study and discipline was still hard, but I knew that I was not alone and through the encouragement of Maureen, Christian friends, and the call of Jesus and the urgency of the Holy Spirit within, I was able to complete the course and became a Local Preacher in 1981.

Looking back, I believe God has led me, through teacher training and a change of career, to gain confidence, to be in the place He called me to as a young man.

Isn't it wonderful as we submit to God how he works out His plan for us through the circumstances of life even though those circumstances are, at times, difficult to fully understand.

The call to preach came back to Maureen also and she qualified in 1985. I am so thankful to God that we are able to support and encourage each other in our preaching.

The Holy Spirit has prompted us to lead our Home Group and also our Church Bible Conversations Group where we are pleased to be able to serve Jesus in this way and be an encouragement to those who attend.

God continues to work in me in the small and ordinary ways as well as in leadership roles.

The journey is not always easy but I now know how important it is to have a living relationship with Jesus and to allow the Holy Spirit to work the character of Jesus into my life.

During the last moments of my mother's life she said, "I know where I am going and I believe it is a wonderful place".

What a journey, what an adventure.

May God prompt and help you to find God, in Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Lucas".