



My Testimony (as at 17th May 2026 – given at my Testimony Service, Dursley Methodist Church)

To God be the Glory great things God has done

I'm one of those who came from the womb into a Methodist pew. Both my parents were Methodist Local Preachers and stewards, although my dad died when I was about 14 months old, my mum remarried and we moved to another part of Yorkshire.... Pontefract

Church was very much part of my life, I became a member of the Methodist church when I was 14, and gave my life to God when I was 18. At the same time home life wasn't good. A lot of my childhood and teenage years was trauma filled. And when I was 19, life had got too much for me that I planned to take my own life. What stopped me, was the morning of what I had planned to do, I heard a voice say "if you take your life, you can't serve Jesus".

At that point I had given up on my life, but God hadn't. God didn't take me out of the situation, but got in alongside me, and became very real to me, showing me what Love really is, and the Holy Spirit helping me to let go of the hurt and pain. For the next thirty years I lived with PTSD and other mental health problems. Four things have helped to heal me..... the love of my wife Susan, the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, some very good counselling and special people, who I now realise God brought and still brings alongside me.

My call to ministry began when I was 18, after I became a Christian. I asked my superintendent what do you need to become a minister – "Go and live life" was the answer. So I did. Agricultural College which brought me to South Wales, 26 years with Dun & Bradstreet as a leader, data analyst, project manager and IT guru, school invigilator and finally a project manager for Welsh Ambulance during Covid. Alongside this, I became a Youth club leader, Local Preacher, a Street Pastor, I went on mission with the Walk of 1000 men to Cornwall and Peterbrough, and bus ministry to skateboarders in Cwmbran. The same year my mum died, I left the Methodist Church and went first to a charismatic Baptist church and then a home group. Rev Cathy Gale, who is here today, kept in touch with me and Susan through this time, and when the home group folded encouraged me to come back to the Methodist Church to preach in 2017. I became a member again in 2018.

Along the way, the Holy Spirit kept nudging me to ministry, and I kept saying "go away" – or words to that effect. It wasn't until around Covid that several things happened.

Firstly in 2019 I went to the Isle of Wight and went to a Methodist church meeting about training churches to lead Local Arrangements – I was about to co-lead a similar course in my home circuit. As I walked in, the local minister said – “Are you a minister?” – and I said “No!”, and her response was “you should be!”.

Then my friend Gwilym, a retired Welsh Baptist minister, said to be me in the allotment – “Jimmy, why aren’t you a minister?” And this time I said – why not. Something had changed – the person who had caused the trauma from my earlier life had died that year, and it felt as though a key had turned inside and I was now released from a jail.

And so I candidated.... Expecting the answer to be “no” at every stage. Initially I candidated to be ordained as a Deacon – as I was at ease talking to people about Jesus wherever I met them. I did my placement with Deacon Corrinne Brown in the centre of Bristol, but had a divine disquiet within me. And so I candidated as a presbyter – unsure why, but quickly the Holy Spirit showed me. On placement in the Cardiff circuit, something significant happened as I helped the minister giving Holy Communion. And then in one of the books I was reading for candidating.... “What do clergy do, especially when it looks like nothing” by Emma Percy. On page 157 it reads.... “if the continuing life of a church is not functioning well, attempts to draw people into the Christian faith will founder. If what is proclaimed and preached is not lived out in the life of the church community, then any attempt at mission is undermined.”.... Spiritual formation leads to mission. [Click fingers] – presbyteral.

Candidating and probation has been challenging. The impact on family life is immense and often overlooked. We have continued through this time together.

I thank those who have been part of this journey. To our friends who have been there in the background. To Abergavenny Bible Study Fellowship – who have supported me all the way from me first voicing it to now, for my home circuit of Gwent Hills and Vales for the ongoing prayers and support, for Cardiff circuit ministers and Cathays Methodist Church who welcomed me as a student minister, and some are here today. To my cohort of students and accompanist – Revd Trevor Pratt – who both gave me the stickability to get through the Queens Bible college.

To the Bristol District and probation committee who have supported and tested me. To the Gloucestershire Circuit – all staff – clergy and lay, to ecumenical partners and to the four churches I have the privilege to serve, of Cam, Dursley, Stonehouse and Wotton United.

At Queens I was reminded of the Johari window... Four quadrants of knowledge – used about myself and God..... There is the quadrant that I know and everyone arounds me knows. Then there is the quadrant which only I know and no one else. Then the 3rd quadrant of what people know and I don’t, and I’m indebted to people like

- John Daniels – my first Bible teacher who became a very good friend, who taught me the Omnis of God – Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent
- Neil – one of my best friends who brings meaning to “iron sharpens iron”, with whom we keep each other’s faith sharp on a weekly basis.
- Mark – who taught me to pray with abandonment
- Martin – who reawakened the depth of theology in Charles Wesley hymns, at Cathays Methodist church on a Friday night.
- Chris Thorpe – who taught me churches needed low walls
- Al Barrett and Ruth Harley – who made me aware of Local heroes and bumping places – and to APT in Stonehouse who personify this.
- Catherine – that whatever the outcome of praying for car parking spaces, reminded me that when we pray, we let God into our situation
- Judith Holliman– teaching me to preach from the scars where God has healed me, rather than the open wounds of pain
- Andy Eyre – who taught me about the posture of our hearts to God
- Jayne Webb – who reminded me that we are carriers and bearers of Christ
- Andrew – reminding that home communions meant he was still part of the congregation
- David – who taught me that everything we do should lead people to Jesus
- To Cam, Dursley, Stonehouse and Wotton teaching me what it is to lead a community of believers discerning together where the Holy Spirit is leading
- And to Susan and Matt – who know me better than anyone, who love me and keep encouraging me to be who I am, and rejoiced when the essays were done.

And finally, there is the quadrant which no-one knows – but what I have realised over the years – this is what God knows and reveals through the Holy Spirit’s guidance. In 1985 I went on a MAYC Youth Exchange to Burma and Indonesia. I now realise that God took me to the other side of the world to show me a Bible reading. On the noticeboard of Rangoon’s YMCA, full of Burmese writing, there were the words “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me”. (Philippians 4:13)

It is this verse that has carried me in ministry. For the times when I have been unsure of what to do or what to say – I have confidence in the words “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.”

For the times when I have no energy left and physically spent, and someone is in need – I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.

In my bravado at candidating, I thought my testimony justified my calling. Judith chastised me and said – it is what is in your hands now that matters, what do you offer God today.... Your past brought you to this place, but no further. As Paul said in the

Corinthians reading (2 Corinthians 5: 16-20) – we are new creations, the old is gone.... What do we give to God now? And do you hold onto it with clenched hands or open to God, fully yielding?

Throughout my whole life, God has been and is ever present, both in and out of church. It was at school, when some evangelists came in and talked about God in a school assembly that God finally got my attention about His love for me. It was in a barn that the Holy Spirit spoke to me at my lowest point. It was in churches, Bible fellowships in homes where my faith took shape. It was on the streets in St Austell and Camelford that I first spoke to people about Jesus in their context. It was in an unfamiliar church, an allotment and a book that God called me to ministry. God is as relevant today as ever, and we have been called, as Paul ends with – to be “ambassadors for Christ” in whatever vocation God calls us.

I finish with words from a hymn:

This,

This

Is the God we adore,
our faithful, unchangeable friend,
whose love is as great as his power,
and neither knows measure nor end.

Tis Jesus,
the first and the last
whose Holy Spirit
shall guide us safe home.
we'll praise God for all that is past,
and trust God for all that's to come.

Amen