

Friends.

Life doesn't seem to stand still. As the leaves of the trees begin to change to their Autumnal hue, change is afoot. For some, there is a new academic year with changes of new classes, schools, colleges and universities, and for the Methodist Church a new year begins. At the same time in the farmland around us, crops have been harvested, of which we will reflect on in our church services over the coming weeks. A time for us to pause, before the next new cycle begins.

For myself, there has been a substantial transition in the last few months, from being a probationer minister to one who is now fully ordained. In the week, leading up to the ordination on the 28th June, I went on an ordinand's retreat at Cliff College, in the Peak District. Here, alongside my cohort of fellow ministers and deacons, I reflected on the last five years of candidating, Bible college and serving you as your minister for these last two years.

I went seeking confirmation, expecting to hear God audibly, telling me everything would be ok. Instead, I was given a picture, which I believe may speak into all our lives. On the Wednesday we were encouraged to rest in six hours of silence. And so, I chose to go for a walk. Following a riverwalk into the nearby village of Baswell, I stood to the side, looking at a map and trying to work out where my route would take me.

And then the picture: I was overtaken by a gentleman who was walking with great confidence down the middle of the track. It was clear that he was partially sighted as he used a white stick, "swishing" it from side to side, to "feel" his way. I followed him, as he seemed to be going in the direction I was taking, which was no mean feat, as he walked at a steady pace. He turned and went over a humpback bridge and slowed a little as his "stick" suggested the gradient.

As our pathways diverged, the Holy Spirit nudged me. Here was a man, who couldn't see the full path ahead, but walked with confidence, clearly trusting in his stick. "Isn't this what God is calling you to do, Jimmy? To walk in confidence, even though you can't see the full path, and trust God for where your next step will be."

The psalms and proverbs are full of sayings for fellow travellers like ourselves.

Psalm 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." – Enough light for the next step.

Psalm 37:23 – "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in Him, though they may stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord upholds them with His hand"

Proverbs 3:5-6 – "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Words of encouragement and truth, that God whom we believe in will direct our paths and can be trusted.

And so it was that on Sunday 28th June, 2026, I was first received into the Connexion of the Methodist Church at the Methodist Conference at Telford, and then later in the afternoon, I was ordained at All Saints Parish Church, in Wellington.

It was a truly emotional day for myself and my family, and we thank you for your overwhelming support. It meant so much to us, as we were surrounded, supported and upheld by people,

present at these services, from the four churches I have the privilege to serve, and equally from the people from our area, who watched online and supported us through their prayers.

And so, as we begin September, into the newness of all that this can bring. Even though the path ahead may be unclear, let us walk boldly and in confidence, trusting in God to direct our paths.

Every blessing for this coming year.

Jimmy