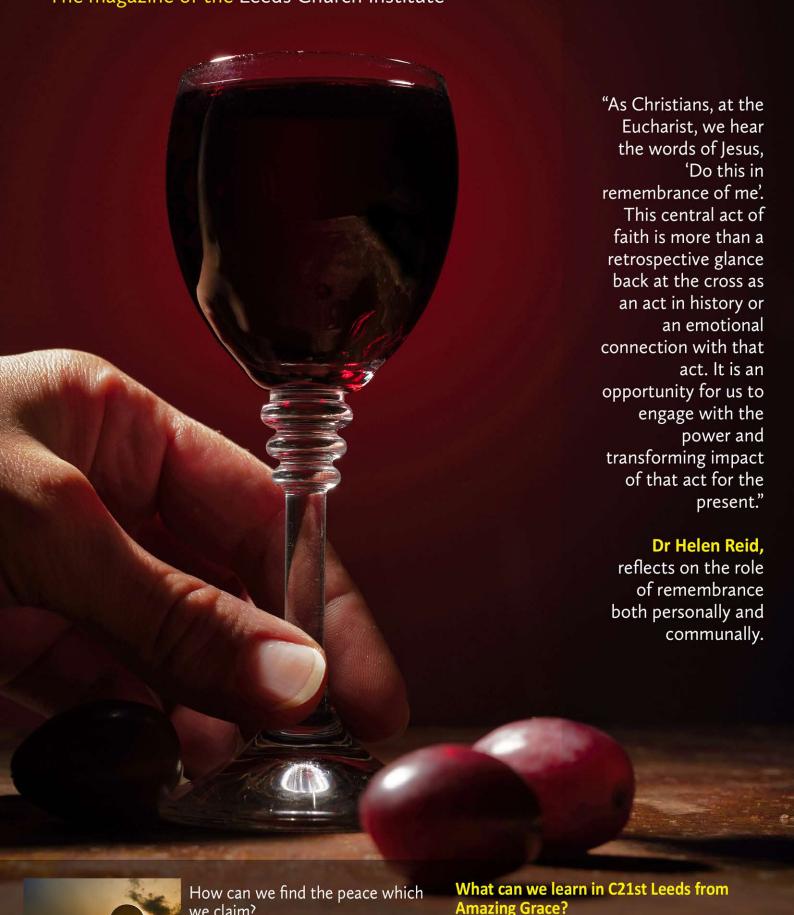
CITYtheology The magazine of the Leeds Church Institute

we claim?

Reverend Dr Roger L Walton unpacks Ionathan Sacks' book Not in God's Name



How would you like to be remembered?

reflection

Leeds Industrial History – a starting point for



Amazing Grace is a well known hymn, many of us will be able to hum the tune, sing the first verse. Many know the story of storms at sea behind the hymn – so what in landlocked Leeds can we relate to in a hymn of C18th words and lives in danger at sea?

The whole story in the hymn is based in personal experience of grace in the context of social injustice. The personal and political are intertwined. It draws on many different Biblical references, but the most prominent image, that all the other references point towards, is that of the prodigal son. The one who is lost, and found, the one who makes blind choices only to come to his senses and return home to be welcomed into the Father's house.

This story was clearly important to the writer of the song, John Newton. In many ways it echoes his own story.

John followed his father into the British Navy and eventually found himself working on a slave ship. It was terrible, brutal dehumanising industry, where not only the slaves themselves, but also the crew were treated with contempt.

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And then, in 1748 Newton woke to find his ship in the centre of a terrible storm. After four weeks of stormy weather the ship, with Newton on board, arrived in Ireland.

This was his prodigal journey, he had left home only to discover great misery in his new context. And at that point he has decided to throw himself on the Father's mercy, and found himself embraced as a son. Later, Newton went on to renounce the slave trade and his life of sin, and began training for ministry instead.

Sin can be seen as quite an individualistic thing. Something that is between an individual and God. Newton's story is his recognition that he had done evil as an individual by fully participating in the social evil of slavery. And so like the parable's lost son, he sees himself as a wretch. But by putting those words into song, he turns his confession outwards. Slavery didn't just make me wretched, he is saying, it has made us all wretches.

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The abolitionists of the time, some of whom became close friends of Newton, and many of whom were Christian non-conformists, pointed to slavery as a specific evil in society that didn't just corrupt those involved but also left a stain on the whole of society, and they called for every individual in that society to acknowledge their own collaboration, and call them to resist this evil, and in doing so to repent. Leeds was still quite small at this time, so there wasn't a big abolitionist movement in Leeds until much later. But we do know of individuals like Quaker Benjamin Kay who travelled from Leeds to London to become a founding member of the Anti-slavery society.

It was about this time that some churches began having altar calls when people were converted and would immediately sign the petition for the abolition of the slave trade.

Newton, William Wilberforce and other abolitionists, had a long hard fight ahead of them. The British economy and industry abroad relied on slaver in the same way that the industrial revolution relied on coal or we rely on oil, electricity or computers. Even for those that supported abolition, trying to pick apart society's reliance on the trade was a difficult task. Add to that those who genuinely believed that Africans were inherently inferior to Europeans, those who believed slavery was morally beneficial, and the world must have seemed like a hostile place to the reformed Newton and his friends. It would take decades for the British government to make the slave trade illegal, and decades more for America to follow suit.

"Through many dangers, tools and snares I have already come, tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

In the words of Amazing Grace Newton recognises that he isn't home yet. He's still on the journey. As are those around him. It's interesting to note in the story of the prodigal, the father doesn't meet his son at home, at the son's destination, he meets him on the road. Abolition wasn't the destination, but rather a journey that they were taking, with God walking alongside.

And Newton's ultimate hope isn't in the world he is living in at all. He places his hope on the New Heaven and the New Earth.

"The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, The sun forbear to shine"

It is worthy of note that as Newton points to eschatological hope, he is still empowered by his experience of grace. He is not using the future as a vague hope fuelling social inertia.

In Leeds today, what would be our altar call? What indispensable struggle for justice would be set alongside a commitment to Christ in response to Amazing Grace?

On 21st November Leeds Citizens will be hosting a book launch at LCI for Matthew Bolton's guide to the principles behind his Living Wage campaign titled 'How To Resist'. Hopefully, for those of us who approach activism from a Christian perspective, John Newton's words can provide some comfort and guidance as we prodigals try to find our way home.

How Can We Find The Peace Which We Claim?

Exploring ways to nurture belief and belonging without suspicion.



By Reverend Dr Roger L Walton, Chair of the Yorkshire West Methodist District and former President of the Methodist Conference

Over the summer I have been reading Jonathan Sacks Not in God's Name (Hodder 2015). The book is concerned with the relationship between religion and violence. The backdrop is the seemingly relentless acts of terror committed by individuals and groups claiming they are enacting God's will, while at the same time there is an increase in anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and genocidal acts on particular religiously identified groups. As I write, Rohingya Muslims are fleeing such acts and the Christians still remaining in Iraq and Syria wait to see whether their plight is better or worse now that ISIS appears to be losing the war.

Sacks does not see the relationship between religion and violence as simple. He does not excuse religions for the part they have played in war and other forms of violence, but he does not believe that religions are primarily a source or cause of violence. Indeed most religions claim to be about peace, (that is certainly the claim of all three Abrahamic faiths). Rather he offers us an evolutionary analysis of the role of religion. In the Darwinian framework of natural selection, individuals seek to survive in order to pass on their genes, but humans, like many other animals, find that there is more chance of survival in groups. Indeed, altruism and sacrifice can readily occur in these communities, for the sake of the group, where individual survival would not find these virtues helpful. In a community, however, they may enhance cohesion, trust and loyalty and thus give the community greater chance of survival.

Tribes and clans seemingly have a role in the ecology of evolution but they face two problems. First, for a group to gain this corporate identity, it needs to define itself over against other groups or

tribes. There is thus an 'Us and Them'. Tribes may often need to compete for scarce resources and this may lead to friction and even war between them.

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The other problem for the tribe, is that there are physical limitation to community. It can never be fully open to strangers, and cannot be extended over large numbers of people or different localities because trust cannot be maintained in such a large enterprise. Religions, according to Sacks, meet this need. Religions provide a cultural and ideological framework in which one can relate to those beyond one's tribe and location. Thus the major world religions provide an identity across millions of people and even across different cultures and languages.

The problem of competition, of us and them, of the friend and the enemy is simply moved to another place. Now religions carry the power to nurture love, trust and altruism internally but intentionally or unintentionally nurture caution and suspicion of those outside the faith. This is not the same as promoting or advocating violence but it is not difficult to see how, under some conditions, religions could be drawn in to justify or promote violence. Once a religious group believes it is the victim of injustice at the hands of another faith; once a group starts to dehumanise or demonise the other; once dualism enters the story, wherein the world is divided into the children of light and the

children of darkness; then violence quickly follows.

It is important to stress that Sacks is not discussing here the truth claims of one religion over another, nor is he saying that there is no truth in religion. Rather he is recognising that religions have a role in evolution for good and for ill. Moreover, he is not saying that religions are the only large scale organisation to exhibit these features; political ideologies can function in the same way. Look for example at Nazism, Stalinist Communism, or the Khmer Rouge for example of non-religious ideologies which have resulted in violence.

If his analysis is correct, what might it say to us in our multi-faith and violent world? What does it say to our current situation in the cities and towns of West Yorkshire? How can we avoid the negative tendencies of being members of a religion (whichever one we belong to) and find the peace which we claim?

Let me tentatively suggest some possibilities.

Be alert to the implicit dangers of religion.

Because our faith is so central to our identity and so precious to our lives, we should not be fooled into thinking that there are no dangers associated with being part of a religion, particularly the tendency to see those outside the faith or of other faiths in a less favourable light or as rivals. We need to be alert to the subtle way this works. Jesus told a parable about how religion can make us think less of others. (Luke 18.10-14). A religious man looks down on a tax collector and thanks God he is not like him. Apparently, a Christian coming out of church having listened this parable, was heard to say 'I am glad I am not like that religious man' missing both the point and the irony!

Take steps to resist the forces that exacerbate and exploit the natural

weaknesses. In the towns of Yorkshire we are used to those from extreme right wing organisations who want to come to stir up division. In Bradford, Leeds, and Keighley people of different faiths have regularly stood together to resist such divisiveness. This is necessary so that people of faith are not drawn towards the fear of the other which prevents us respecting one another and building strong, diverse communities.

Nurture relationship, friendship and partnership across the boundaries of

religion. We overcome the 'fear of the other' by getting to knowing people. Some of that will arise

naturally in our work places and with our neighbours but we may need to be intentional about it too. Visiting each other places of worship and learning from one another has been a staple for many years but we need more intentional shared activities. Touchstone in Bradford is famous for engaging in dialogue through hospitality and the creative arts, which enables honest debate and provides a safe space for difficult conversations. There are also other initiatives in youth work and partnerships around responding to the hungry or homeless together. Anne Morisy speaks of three types of social capital: **bonding** social capital which strengths the bonds between people in a community; bridging capital which builds ways of working across different communities; and brave social capital which takes risks to create new possibilities. We need to invest in all three.

Re-examine our own traditions to see how

they speak to these dangerous tendencies. Here again we may be able to help each other. Jonathan Sacks offers a deep and stimulating reading of Genesis which draws out the underlying counter-narratives about sibling rivalry that runs through the book (Cain and Abel; Isaac and Ismael; Jacob and Easu; Rachel and Leah). Jonathan, a Jewish Rabbi, opened my eyes, those of a Christian minister, to things I had missed, though I have read Genesis many times. Scriptural Reasoning – the practice of reading together the scriptures of different faiths – is a growing area which may help us to understand our own tradition better, as well as to understand the sacred writings of others and we may find that there are deep things which help us face the weakness of an organised religion.

Nurture deep empathy. Jonathan Sacks believes that only by being able to enter deeply into other people's experience can we truly know them and build mutual respect, and thus avoid the stereotyping and fear of the other. He calls this role reversal, where you put yourself in the other person's situation and examine your attitudes and actions. This can come out of remembering our own experiences or through sensitive imagination. Either way it can open up understanding and built relationships.

If God is at work in our religion, then God will have made provision for us to overcome the limitations of evolutionary history. Just as human nature, flawed as it is, is no barrier to the grace of God, so the fact that religions have an evolutionary function need not define or confine us. We are called towards something ultimately more liberating and wonderful and the means may be to do it together.

To remember Him is

To remember her.

And to remember her is

To touch His broken body

And hers,

Malnourished and molested
To bind the wounds, perfectly hidden
beneath her blood-stained wrapper
To be crushed by

the heaviness in her heart To bear her scorn and crippling anger And to ask Why it is easier to Hang a woman than to

Kill a fly?

To Remember Her

A poem by by C.J. Ojukwu

To remember Him Is to be unsettled

By her silence and silencing To witness the ego and lust trample upon Her dignity and pearls

To hear the rupture of

His broken heart,

Breaking forth from her lament And His silent tears

And to ask How long

Will a woman cry

before she is heard?

To remember Him is to remember That she is easily forgotten Forcefully evicted from history. To listen to her testimony

And celebrate her heritage
The reflection of His wonderful image

And to ask
Why the faces

Of Sojourner Truth,

Fannie Lou Hamer,

Coretta King,

And all those who pour out their Fractured lives for justice,

Like a broken calabash,

Are still missing from

Our Stained glass windows?

To remember Him

Is to remember that her life
Is a gift; of grace,
Like the fountain of mercy
That flows from His pierced hand to the
Hole in her wounded heart,
Offering healing and forgiveness,
Even to her enemies...



How would you like to be remembered?

'I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.'

Isaiah 49: 15-16

By Dr Helen Reid

God doesn't have a brain yet we believe God fully remembers us. God's memory doesn't simply remember events or facts like some eternal icloud. God exists outside of time and so God's memory can't be a recall of history. God's memory is for the purpose of re-membering; for bringing together what is fragmented. So for us as fallen humanity, it is to be brought back to wholeness. God's memory is sustenance and action, it is Shalom.

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Human memory is so much more than information retrieval because we form and reform our memories through recall. When we remember an important event, we may remember the emotion we felt at the time of that event. The next time we remember the event, we may remember how it felt to remember it the last time. So a process that can be located in the brain (and be described as neurological) also has a clear psychological aspect. In addition to this, other people help us remember all the time, and add their layers of emotion and meaning to our memories. So memory is formed communally too.

As Christians, at the Eucharist, we hear the words of Jesus, 'Do this in remembrance of me'. This central act of faith is more than a retrospective glance back at the cross as an act in history or an emotional connection with that act. It is an opportunity for us to engage with the power and transforming impact of that act for the present.

As the theologian John Swinton describes it: To remember Jesus is to bring him and the sacrifices and blessings that he represents into the present and to allow the memorial presence of Jesus to change, challenge, and strengthen us ... God's active memory finds embodiment in the community memory and resurrection.

Whenever we remember as an act of faith, we do so much more than think about linear history: We are seeking to engage in a timeless activity. When we remember together and for one another, our memory is held between individuals and sustained by God. This brings us to the possibility of transformation, especially when we do so with the weak and vulnerable.

To quote Swinton again, If people act towards us in ways that remind us that we are remembered, then we can see, feel, and touch God's memories in action. As we encounter others, we encounter God.... It is as the church as a living body of remembering friends learns what it is to hold onto and practice the right memories that healing, hope and active remembrance become a practical possibility.

The above reflection draws upon a practical theology of dementia by John Swinton. His explorations of God and memory from a Christian perspective enlivens a broader understanding of remembering. Dementia is the most feared illness in the UK, unsurprising given that our society prizes rational thought so highly. In this context, Swinton seeks to acknowledge the suffering at an elemental level, while seeking hope in the midst of deep forgetfulness. Dementia is suffered by the individual, but the illness impacts on a wide circle of people; society is implicated in its definitions, treatment, and acceleration or retardation of progression.

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For us at LCI, the theme of memory and remembering has got us reflecting together about loss, grief and how we remember people and communities. It has also led us to thinking about history and continuity; and particularly the legacy of our industrial past; and different stages of public policy and its impact on housing and communities. Further, to thinking of the vulnerable and those who are not remembered due to poverty, stigma or exclusion. And into the present day, thinking of those in Leeds who can't themselves remember now, people with advanced

dementia. As a result, LCI has embarked on a programme of podcasts, pilgrimages and performance; articles, comics and images; workshops lectures and discussions: all on the theme of remembrance.

So how would we like to be remembered? Ultimately, we want to remember and be remembered as part of a faith community in the sustenance and action of God's memory. An ultimate hope of our thinking and events around memory and remembrance is to participate in living in the memories of God right now with the potential for growth and development that implies.

Recommended reading:

Swinton, John (2012) *Dementia. Living in the Memories of God Help! We have Dementia* by Gaynor Hammond, Leeds Faith in Elderly People

Hook Lecture 2017: Professor Linda Woodhead on 'Remembering the dead: changing public and private practices'

By Rachel Meurs

As we move through a series of grim centenaries of the events of the First World War, this year's Hook Lecture offers the opportunity to take a fresh look at why and how we remember the dead. How do we make sense of the continued commitment to remembrance, in a secular and multi-faith society where there are so many different beliefs about death and what follows death? What should religious people make of the new practices of remembrance that capture the public imagination in contemporary Britain – the response to the death of Princess Diana, the immense popularity of the "Poppy Field" sculpture? And what do we know about the enormous range of ways in which people today choose to commemorate loved ones - beyond institutional religion?

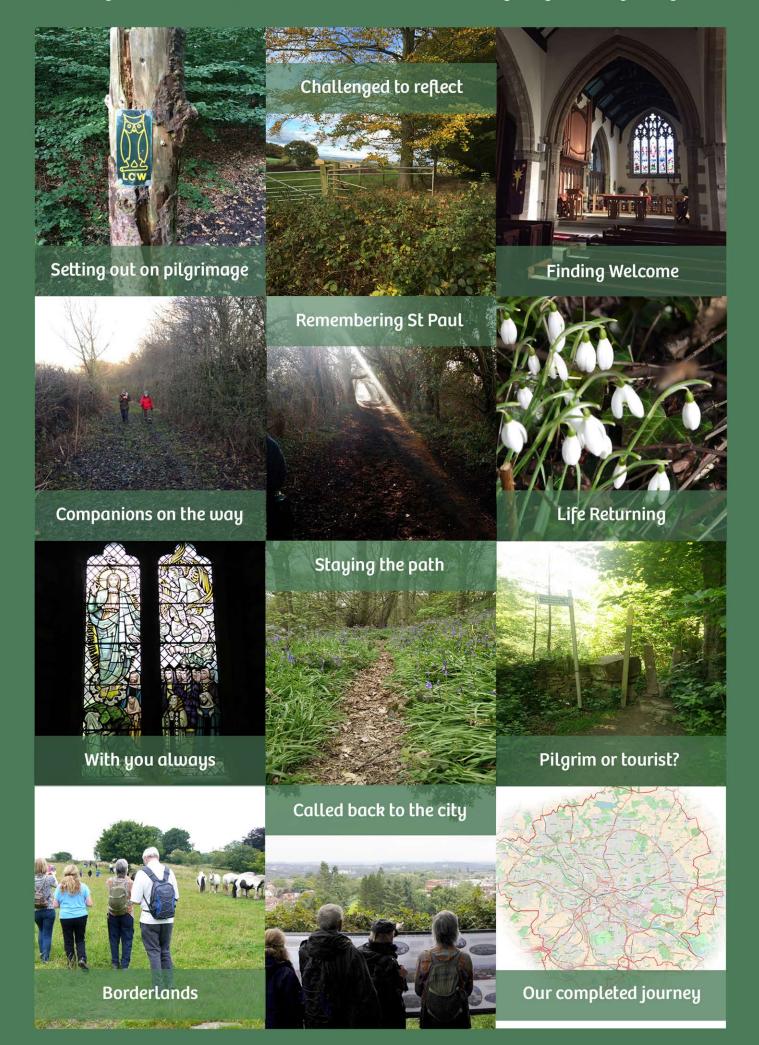
When we gather in Leeds Minster for the Hook Lecture we will be surrounded by memorials — commemorating the dead in ways that weave them into the wider story of Leeds, of Britain and of the world. The different memorials from different eras also reflect changing approaches to remembering the dead. What stories and whose stories do we record in a public space like the Minster? And where else, besides in churches and other places of worship, are memories of the dead told and held? Recent calls for the removal of Confederate monuments in the southern states of the USA, and of monuments to Cecil Rhodes in the UK, remind us how public practices of remembering the dead

can be divisive and oppressive as well as unifying. What should we learn from that about the role of Christianity in sustaining and generating good practices of remembrance?

Our lecturer, Professor Linda Woodhead from the University of Lancaster, is one of the best-known scholars of religion in the UK today. Her research has consistently challenged assumptions about what religion means in contemporary society. In her speaking and writing, she draws attention both to the decline of the institutional power of the churches, and to the persistence of spiritual and theological questioning in a society where increasing numbers of people claim to have 'no religion'. We hope that the Hook Lecture will help us both to look more deeply at Christian approaches to remembering the dead, and to learn from contemporary ways of remembering the dead that have little connection with the churches.

Linda Woodhead is also an ideal Hook Lecturer because of her deep commitment to making the best academic scholarship on religion publicly accessible, and to generating lively debates about the future of religion in society. The Westminster Faith Debates, which she co-founded, share with the Hook Lectures the aim of bringing the academy, the churches and faith communities, and the wider public together to consider the issues that matter most in contemporary society.

Walking once a month, we completed the Leeds Country Way as a pilgrimage...



Leeds Industrial History – a starting point for reflection

By Lawrence Cockrill

Last CITYtheology, Simon Hall echoed the question 'Quo Vardis?' and asked us to think about where in Leeds Jesus might be calling us today. This was in our minds on the last stage of the Leeds Country way Pilgrimage when we climbed through Hunger Hills Woods and then looked out over the cityscape of Leeds. After a pilgrimage in the rural edges of the city looking in, we are going to follow this by walking the canal path straight through the heart of the city.

As we walk, we will look back at some of Leeds' industrial history and the people who shaped it as we think and pray about what makes a good city. It will be an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of the engineers, workers and businesses who used their creativity to better the city, industry and life of Leeds.

People like Leeds resident John Smeaton. The first person to take the title of Civil Engineer, (distinguishing himself from Military Engineers), and who helped design the Aire and Calder Navigation, connecting Leeds' industry with Hull and from there, to the rest of Europe.

Alongside his work on canals Smeaton also designed the third Eddystone Lighthouse after the destruction of the previous two lighthouses. He pioneered the use of Hydraulic lime, a type of mortar that would set under water and his lighthouse lasted until 1877 when the rock beneath the lighthouse began to erode.

But Smeaton wasn't without his flaws. The Smeaton Coefficient, (part of a formula for calculating lift during flight) was used by the Wright brothers in their aircraft design. Unfortunately Smeaton's calculations were a little off and the Wright brothers, through experiments with a wind tunnel, had to first correct this mistake before their aircraft could take flight.

Another example of an engineer motivated by justice to make the world better was John Fowler. The Hunslet based John Fowler and Co. is known throughout the world for their steam powered engines. Fowler himself was from a Quaker family, and as a young man committed himself to making food production easier after visiting Ireland and witnessing for himself the potato famine.

The problem, as he saw it, was that although Ireland had lots of land for growing crops, it couldn't be used due to poor drainage, and the only way to drain land was to use a horse drawn mole plough to dig a deep enough trench for a drainage pipe to be dropped. The process was slow and difficult. And so, Fowler spent most of his life developing better systems for ploughing land. First by improving horse drawn ploughs and then by using steam powered ploughs.

The history of Leeds is full of people who used their intelligence and creativity to try to improve people's lives, with some success, some failure and some mistakes along the way. Last CITYtheology Jenny Jones asked if life really was so good in the past. When we look back, we can learn from the success and failure; and when we can celebrate human creativity in Leeds today, we are aware of the challenges too;

The canal pilgrimage will be continuing in October and November. All are welcome to join us, for details, see www.lcileeds.org

Location Leeds UK

By Awais Dominic, CMS Mission Partner

My call is to share the good news of God's Kingdom and work for social justice, especially for the vulnerable and marginalised, and the empowerment of women. Having been based in both Pakistan and Leeds, I can see the common thread in my understanding of mission and calling in these two very different contexts.

When I first lived my call to mission with Church Mission Society, I was based in Pakistan; a predominantly Muslim country where the presence of Christians can be likened to small mustard seeds. I accepted this call to give myself a chance to practise what the Bible says: "The things you have learned and

received and heard and seen in me, practise these things and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9). I was no stranger to Pakistan, having been born and raised there, but this was still not an easy call. Nor did it mean there weren't things I had to learn. The work of a mission partner in Pakistan is challenging and at times dangerous.

I quickly realised that mission is about learning from challenges and the biggest challenge for me was to support people who were marginalised because they want to follow Christ. Unfortunately, to share the word of the Lord openly with others was considered an offence. I felt anxiety among Christians due to potential political repercussions.

Once I approached the principals of two schools where I wanted to promote community cohesion among Christian and Muslim students. I hoped to engage them in a constructive dialogue by sharing the common religious values from their respective faiths – such as peace and justice – and encourage them to apply this to all humanity. This invitation was received with anxiety and fear. However, with the grace of our Lord, I was able to overcome their initial resistance and delivered a couple of workshops which were well received. I must have done something right as there were no complaints from the students' parents.

My experience in Pakistan taught me the importance of raising awareness of the love of Jesus and his message of hope for rejected ones. I realised that in the UK we take our freedom of expression for granted when in fact we should celebrate this freedom. I am now based in Leeds where my husband Dominic is the vicar of St James Church in Seacroft. Seacroft is a mostly white area, therefore the congregation is not very multicultural. The Bible encourages us to celebrate diversity (see Colossians for example) and learning about different cultures is a way forward. I work with various women's groups in Seacroft in a humble effort to share some cultural traditions so people can understand each other and learn about Christians living in other parts of the world.

In addition to this, my work with Harehills English Language Project supports asylum seekers and migrants to enhance their language skills, giving me an opportunity to practise the verse: "Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (1 John 3:18).

On the surface, this project is about transferring language skills but beneath that it is about creating a friendly space to laugh and smile. What I learned in Pakistan can definitely be applied in this UK context.

Christ came for all and so I see Christians in Leeds and Pakistan as participating in mission that invites people from all walks of life to explore God's love and his presence in our lives. This includes people in the business world, politicians, leaders, rich and poor, people from different faiths and especially those who have moved away from God. In order to honour Christ as the ruler of all cultures we are called to learn how faith in him is professed in more than one way. This includes learning the history of faith, listening to religious leaders, reflecting on our everyday life experiences, seeing God in others, learning from the experience of the young and older generations; and for us in Leeds, putting into practice lessons we learn from a small and persecuted church.

Mission invites us to practise patience, humility, perseverance and living out the Word of God. As it is written in 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." Part of humility is being willing to learn and to share what we have learned with others. I recently came across the new logo of the Diocese of Leeds which reads, "Loving, Living and Learning". For me to love God, the world and one another requires constant learning and this attitude is fundamental while maintaining the practice of the other two values of loving and living.



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