

Moving on

Revd Sue Kirkbride reflects on saying Goodbye



I am writing this article in my study in Finstown, Orkney, not something I would have predicted saying 12 months ago, but God moves in mysterious ways.

I was not looking to move from Saughtonhall Church where I was very happy in my ministry so how did this come about? Mark and I have had an interest in islands, having visited most of those around Scotland. In September last year a coincidence of change, Mark was offered early retirement and the Peedie Kirk was on the vacancy list. Was this a gentle nudge? Only one way to find out, testing the nudge. After testing of the call I was inducted into Peedie Kirk on 4 May.

What is the hardest part of moving on? Moving on includes leaving, journey and arrival. I wondered if 'journey' would be the hardest part? The fraught process of selling and buying a house, packing up and unpacking, arranging tradespeople to do some work at a distance... all can be quite stressful.

Telephone companies have shown they know how to raise stress to a whole new level. My previous mobile phone provider has poor coverage in Orkney. The transfer to a new provider ended up with me having to carry 2 phones, 1 for incoming calls and 1 for outgoing, both with the same number! Not to be outdone the landline change took us to the land of farce. Our phone and broadband providers in Edinburgh refused to take on a new account in Orkney. An off guarded explanation was '[Orkney] is too expensive as we have to use real people up there not computers to do the transfer'. We therefore needed a new telecom supplier. Ofcom rules dictate that the phone line to our new home was literally cut off and we had to start afresh. This resulted in a period of time with no phone, (no mobile signal either) and, greater horror, an extended period without home broadband. Any naïve past desire to live without email or internet has been entirely eradicated.

However 'journey' has not been the hardest element for me, the hardest part has been 'departure'. Saying goodbye to those who I have walked alongside during my 10 years in Saughtonhall has been so tough. The people of the church and local community in which it is set are very special and dear to me. I feared I was letting them down by going. Making the announcement of our departure was just awful. I agonised over how to do this in a way that was right and did not detract from Sunday worship. In the end I told Hazel, Saughtonhall's wonderful Church Secretary, a couple of days before, the other ministers in Murrayfield Churches Together and the elders shortly before Sunday worship.

I have been thoroughly touched by the farewell events, the huge stack of cards with such lovely comments. I left with fondest memories after a weekend of a church members wedding on the Saturday followed by my last leading of service as minister of Saughtonhall Church on 1 May. It was then straight to Aberdeen for the late ferry to Kirkwall.

But as Christians our calling is not to stand still but to pitch our tent where God calls us. As such I knew I may have to move on and I know God will not call me to somewhere and then abandon me. Moving on is not easy, but if we never left we would never arrive anywhere different. Also we would forgo the joyous experiences of moving on which partially compensate for the sad ones.

Sue will reflect on arriving in the next issue of SynNews—Ed.