

Scott Lunn:

What a strange but wonderful task this is: to write a short self-introduction to the communities of The Penhill Benefice. I have the privilege of joining your worshipping community at the end of June. Whilst there are different aspects and reasons for looking forward to this, the primary blessing is in joining the church communities in Wensleydale that from generation to generation have offered a welcome and common call to the love of God in Christ Jesus. When our Church is under strain, as it is just now, we are reminded of the value of the on-going presence of the church in the dale; it is a value I do not take for granted.

Twenty-five years ago, I was given a welcome at the church in Richmond. Two years ago, I was welcomed afresh at Middleham (as an ordinand on placement, and member of the worshipping community). There is enormous value in the welcome being offered to me by The Penhill Benefice, not least because of the hard work, sacrifices and love that have ensured the churches' continuity through the generations. That work, love, and commitment continues afresh today. I do not underestimate the value of people simply turning up Sunday-by-Sunday, when we are able, as even if this is all that we do it is an essential encouragement to others.

I also come to join you as a curate. This too, as I write this, seems strange and wonderful as my ordination, in Wakefield, is not until the end of June. Whilst each believer's story is unique my new identity as 'curate' will have some notable characteristics: I will be SSM (self-supporting minister), as is Penny; I will part time with half my life committed to church work and half my life continuing as a mathematics teacher at Richmond School and Sixth Form (those of you with longer memories may remember me working at The Wensleydale School and Sixth Form); I am 53 years old, which is very much at the older end of those being ordained this summer.

Some of you may have met my lovely wife Gillian; originally from Gourock but now finishing her third year of curacy at Leyburn and Bellerby. We have three grown up children: Helen (previous Alastair) who begins an organ apprenticeship at Chelmsford Cathedral in September, James studying Mathematics at Sheffield, and Andrew finishing his studies at Richmond School before heading off to London with his trombone. And we have Benji, our dog, who is an eleven-year-old Springador. (*Above: Scott and Gillian*)

As someone who loves to sing and play the piano, I am looking forward to hearing more of the concerts held in the benefice. And it is very possible we have passed each other when I have been out-and-about on my bicycle in the beauty that we share in both Wensleydale and Swaledale.

There's much more I could add but suffice to express my sense of excitement and privilege at the prospect of getting out-and-about in the benefice and hearing your stories and perspectives!

We worship Christ who is the Suffering Servant and so alongside the beauty around and within we acknowledge the deep challenges we face in life's seasons. My prayer is to serve and support whilst having the wisdom to know when I am in need of help from others. Alongside my ministry as a Reader (LLM) since 2000 a distinctive aspect of my ministry is

working alongside our Church's Survivor Engagement team as well as some of the work of our National Safeguarding Team (NST). It is a busy time.

I was asked, recently, by our Diocesan Director of Vocations how I imagined my role as a curate within the Penhill Benefice. "I don't know", was my honest answer. We don't write the script. We can and do, however, dedicate ourselves to God in worship, love and hard work. Our prayer is that in journeying together, committing ourselves to each other, and sharing stories, we will always be following the guidance of our living God. There will be both blessing and challenges but through all our loving and living and learning together we grow deeper in the knowledge that

"in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:37-39.