

Thoughts from the Manse 17th July 2020

Preparing worship for this coming Sunday prompted the thought what have I learnt in the last ten years? In 2010 I had been working for the South Western Synod for a year and part of that role was looking after and developing the Synod website. It was a steep learning curve. In my final year at secondary school I took a mathematics course which involved learning a computer programming language, long since obsolete, but the logic of computer programming appealed. When schools began introducing computers, I taught myself BBC Basic, the language most school computers used and created some mathematics games for the school Kirsten attended. As home computers became the norm we began with an Amigo and then progressed to a pc built for us by a Scouting friend from parts which had been updated from other computers. There have been many computers since and all the while there is something new to learn, and all the resources of the internet to help.



I really enjoy running a website, it is a creative process and combines visual and language talents, and there is always something to learn, especially when something goes wrong! However, there are many more things which I have learnt in the last ten years. During my sabbatical in 2013 I was able to devote more time to learning about Quantum theology and this has been a huge part of my faith journey over the past ten years as I have explored oneness and connectivity and all that means for what I believe. Alongside this my prayer life has changed also and as a minister I have had to learn ways of communicating all that I am learning, it is exciting.



One constant in my life has been an interest in photography, starting with my dad's Box Brownie and then his Ilford colour film camera. I remember saving up to buy my first camera, it was a Kodak Instamatic which travelled with me for eight or nine years, including on a skiing holiday to Austria and a

Mediterranean cruise. It was during this cruise that I was introduced to 35mm cameras and on returning I bought my first 'proper' camera, a Zenith. On this I learnt about apertures and time to create the correct exposure and the real journey began as I learnt more and more and progressed through many different cameras. I have done wedding photography, children's portraits, air displays and all the time I was learning. I developed my own black and white photos, blacking-out the kitchen and using the pantry to get the film from camera to developing tank. Then came digital cameras and new skills to explore, including the art of knowing when to delete. I am less mobile now, but macro photography means I can set up my camera and explore things in fine detail without having to venture far.



There are many aspects of life which involve constant learning, relationships, cooking and leisure to name three. Meeting new people involves learning about them, getting to know them and sharing something of who you are, and this too can involve learning as putting something into words always involves an amount of reflection which is form of learning. A passion for cooking definitely involves learning, with new recipes and new techniques to explore, and my recipe book expands every week. For me one of my relaxation techniques involves Japanese logic puzzles, Sudoku is probably the



most famous but there are many more to explore and each one involves learning a new technique, I have ten different forms that I do every week. Zentangle has been another joyous discovery and developing the skills to relax using a simple pen and line creation system has both calmed and fulfilled many hours. The more I reflect the more I discover I have learnt in ten years. Every day brings new opportunities and during lockdown this has accelerated with Zoom for meetings and worship, grabbing videos, creating a new website with new features.

When we learn we are fulfilling our potential and there are things to learn every day. What have you learnt in the last ten years, reflecting on this may remind you of something you have not done for a while that could restart a passion, or open up new opportunities? Learning is fun, life is about learning.