

## THE MINISTER

Dear Friends,

I am so very grateful for the way in which I have been made welcome in Torquay and the many kindnesses shown to me. Thank you.

I am going to make no pretence that after only a few weeks I have got a good grasp on all the questions and issues that face our churches but I have really enjoyed the meetings and conversations and encounters of the past few weeks, and while it will take a long time to really get your names in my head (I must be getting older), I am encouraged by the stories of engagement and faith that I have come across and I look forward to sharing more of such encouragement with you.

I am aware too that we face many questions about the way forward in our churches and sometimes it can feel difficult when we don't know quite how to look ahead or how to discern what the road ahead holds for us as we try to stay aligned to God in all that we are and all that we do. The fact that there has been a lot of laughter in the conversations I have had in recent weeks fills me with hope as it will be in a spirit of hopefulness that we will find the right way forward together. Proverbs 13:12 says;

*“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.”*

As we share in the journey ahead and find new ways of being and doing I wanted to share a poem prayer by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (you will discover that I love poetry) which has so much to say to us about facing an unknown future with neither impatience or uncertainty.

Above all, trust in the slow work of God,  
We are, quite naturally,  
impatient in everything to reach the end  
without delay.  
We should like to skip  
the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being  
on the way to something unknown,  
something new,

And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through  
some stages of instability -  
And that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you.  
Your ideas mature gradually -  
let them grow,  
let them shape themselves,  
without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on,  
as though you could be today  
what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances  
acting on your own good will)  
will make you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of  
feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

I am not sure whether it is more appropriate to quote St Augustine, who said, '*Pray as though everything depended on God, work as though everything depended on us*'; or to quote Oswald Chambers, who wrote, '*We are in danger of forgetting that we cannot do what God does, and that God will not do what we can do.*'

Peace and blessings,

*Jon*