

A Reflection on Ordination

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On the Monday following black Saturday, I had intended to quietly slip into my new life at Camberwell as a freshly ordained deacon. Saturday the 7th February was to have contained many happy memories of an important milestone in my ministry to the CGS community. It was this in part, however the record temperatures were to make it a physically demanding experience and as the events of the Saturday evening played out, the discomfort was nothing compared to the horrific and tragic outcomes which have become imprinted in our collective memory.

The above paragraph began a weekly reflection published in the school bulletin on the Friday following February 7. A life time's journey had proceeded that day and, hopefully, more of the journey lies ahead.

As a boomer growing up in the farming community, as it was then, of Dingley during the 50s and 60s, life was uncomplicated, if not a tad austere compared to current expectations. Most boomers didn't think too much about the future. It would come and follow a predictable pattern: go to school, get a trade, rebuild an old car, get married, buy a house on a quarter acre block and raise a family. Game, set and match. But sometimes serendipitous things mould life's journey and variations on a theme play out.

In post war Australia, it was still fashionable to attend Sunday school but, unlike pre-war populations, you were sent rather than taken along by your family. I was sent to a small but quite active congregation which could be loosely described as a Brethren assembly. I later understood that most of the congregation were related but they welcomed a few 'ring ins'. This began my life in the Church. During my mid-teens we moved to a bay-side suburb and I joined the local Anglican church. It was a revelation to find that in this community many of the taboos that dominated the culture of the old church were no longer. You could date without it being understood as announcing your engagement, you could dance, and goodness me, you had real wine at communion. So began my life as an Anglican.

Christians often describe their heart-felt yearnings to follow a particular path in life as a 'call'. The word 'vocation' is based on this same understanding. My call was to the ordained ministry, to become a vicar and the calling was confirmed at age twenty-four and I was designated a 'candidate for holy orders'. Due to a number of ordinary reasons the call was put on hold, well, at least in part. After thirteen short years teaching science I began lay ministry, first in a church and then in school settings, the latter part as a school chaplain and most of it in the State school system. Being a professional Christian in a secular setting is both an extraordinary challenge and a privilege. Apart from the obvious issues of blurring the State -Church boundaries, the chaplain in this context has no building or congregation of the faithful; the chaplain is the sacred space and offers the servant life to any whom might receive it.

Eventually this story comes full circle here at Camberwell. Although some aspects of chaplaincy are the same no matter the school, being at Camberwell with its strong Anglican tradition made it obvious that the most appropriate ministry as a chaplain could only be as an ordained minister. As

such, it is possible to offer the complete ministries of the church. The journey only took thirty-seven years!