

Sunday 28th June, Ordination Sunday

“All Christians are called through their Baptism and by the hearing of God's word to ministry and service among the whole people of God and in the life of the world. Some are called and ordained to specific ministries. The Methodist Church has received and transmitted two orders of ministry, the presbyteral and the diaconal.” So reads the beginning of the Introduction to the Ordination Service in the Methodist Worship Book.

Today should have been a very special day in the lives of a number of people within the Methodist Church. It should have been the day when a number of Ministers, presbyteral and diaconal, were to have been ordained. Family, friends and Church members would have gathered together to support the Ordinands and share in a special moment when a process of testing the call to full time ordained ministry in the Methodist Church is complete and confirmed with the cry “They are worthy” and the laying on of hands.

Many of us would have been going to Walsall this afternoon for Rev Josephine’s Ordination; a very good reason to go to Walsall.

These following words, from John’s Gospel, would have been read; as they have been read for many years for they were in the Ordination service of the Methodist Service Book printed in 1975. (I have not checked back further.)

John 20:19-29

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus!), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

I cannot think how many people would have heard those words over the years on their day of Ordination. 28 years ago on the 28th June 1992 I heard those words read in Brunswick Methodist Church, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Presiding was the first Female President of Conference, Rev Kathleen Richardson and the Vice-President was Edmund Marshall, who still sends me a Christmas card each year.

The years have gone by and I cannot remember the sermon, but part of the occasion is still remembered, it was too much to take it all into the memory bank, but to hear the affirmation of the Congregation, “They are worthy” remains in the mind.

May there come a time soon, when Rev Josephine, and those who should have been ordained today, hear those words of affirmation ringing in their ears, however unworthy they feel.