Instution of Revd Shona Boardman

Birnam and Stanley

261114

Phil 4: 4-9

Matt 14: 22-23

So welcome to you Shona – called by God to minister among the people of Birnam & Stanley. I know how much you appreciate the welcome you have received and the preparation and care which people have given to the Rectory. There is always excitement and anticipation around an Institution Service and the arrival of a new Rector. The people of the two congregations come today to mark a new and exciting chapter in their life – hoping that you and they together will shape the lives of all of you to be more like Christ.

Of course this is a new beginning in a special way – the first part of the regrouping of our congregations north of Perth. This new grouping of Birnam with Stanley recognises the potential for growth in the new housing areas north of Perth. We are also delighted that it has been possible to create two new groupings – here and in Highland Perthshire – both with full time clergy. That is a step forward for our church.

There is the promise of blessing in abundance in the readings – and we hope and pray that there will be blessing in this new ministry.

St Paul says that a ministry which is without worry and which is prayerful – will be blessed with peace. So will the people who pursue truth and integrity, justice and purity. They too will have the blessing of peace. And there’s a call to faithfulness and consistency in the life of faith – ‘Keep on doing the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me’. There is in Christian ministry – as in the whole of life – a great deal of ‘keeping on’ We sometimes say that it is about ‘Keeping on keeping on’ – not being too quick to measure value; doing things and trusting that God will bless them; offering time, energy – offering a life – that God may use it to bring blessing to others. I have often recited under my breath, ‘the trivial round and common task/Will furnish all we ought to ask/Room to deny ourselves/A road to bring us daily nearer God. I wish you Shona the blessing of faithfulness and constancy – that you too may have that reward.

I smiled when I found that I was expected to preach about walking on water at an Institution. Expectations are always high – sometimes unreasonably high. But maybe this is too much. And yet there is something very important in here. Peter challenges Jesus and challenges himself to help him to walk on the water – so he gets out of the boat and moves towards Jesus. Until he notices the strong wind, becomes afraid and begins to sink. Jesus reaches out – ‘you of little faith – why did you doubt’

In our church, we’ve been giving a great deal of thought to the way in which we select people for ministry – and we are encouraged by the number of people who are coming forward. What matters is vocation – the ability of a person to articulate the call of God in their life. But beyond that come character and temperament – for it is character and temperament which are the vessel which holds the gift of calling. Peter exhibits that wonderful tension between success and failure – between faith and doubt. And I think that’s probably what we look for in those who are ordained – a determination to try something which is difficult, trusting in the power of God; a very human willingness to recognise that what we are undertaking is difficult; a readiness to be caught and upheld by the love of a God who recognises our weakness and yet yearns to lift us up to do his well and build his kingdom.

May God lift you up Shona in this new ministry. May he also lift up the people of Birnam and Stanley. May his will be done in all of you.