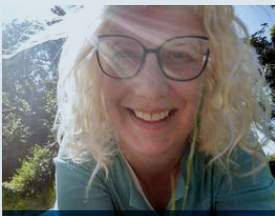


With a hand to the plough



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On a Presbyterian podcast during Covid-19, I shyly shared how each day I would put my hand to an old plough which sat in the farmyard and, considering Luke 9:62, "Pray that I would serve God wholeheartedly and to his instruction that day." I did not foresee then that God would call me to plough a new furrow at Elmwood Presbyterian, Lisburn.

I shared how our ancestors must have come in from ploughing new fields with sore shoulders and tired eyes as new rocks or unexpected stones had been before them. My placement at Elmwood will be new to me and take me a while to become familiar with, but the idea of a deaconess is not unfamiliar to them as they have already had Elizabeth Matthews and Margaret Robertson serving with the church family there.

As I prepared to leave Greystone and begin at Elmwood, the season was marked by blessings and surprises. The blessings of Greystone friends reminiscing together or sharing their hopes for God's direction ahead and the unexpected blessing of a retreat. Covid-19 had deleted the deaconesses' traditional retreat time in the autumn, but Cleopas was organising a retreat. Would we like to go? Yes, please! So, in the last days of the work in Greystone, I with other deaconesses, sat as Sharon Garlough Brown read from the Bible in the 'Water from the Well' retreat. In the times of silent prayer after each session the Holy Spirit ploughed deep into our souls and spirits with precision and direction.

My thankfulness for all that God has been to me during my 11 and a half years at Greystone would exceed the word count for the entire *Herald*. What are my prayers for the new season ahead? Ploughing soil is like turning a page (or the furrow) over. As I turn

my service to God at Elmwood I will need that same 'hand to the plough' resolution.

Praise God that as I begin at Elmwood my new normal is the humility of being part

of the workers in the field, of hearing the Word of God and of a heavenly Father whose guiding heart is close to the harvest.

*The Holy Spirit ploughed deep into our souls
and spirits with precision and direction.*

Please pray:

- Pray for Greystone Road, that their strength in worshipping and sharing the gospel may grow and grow to God's glory.
- Pray for Margaret Robertson, my predecessor in Elmwood, that she would know a new chapter of blessing and God's timing in her life.
- Pray for the new team at Elmwood of Rev Andrew Thompson, student assistant Graham and myself as the deaconess, that we would be a team united in purpose, prayer and unity to Jesus' glory.