

Light in darkness testimony

I'm Emily - for those of you who don't know, I'm training as a youth worker here at St Swithins. Like many of us here this evening, 2020 has been a rollercoaster of a year for me. I was so fortunate to spend the first half of the year on a discipleship school at LIV Village - a foster care home for orphaned and vulnerable children in Durban, South Africa. LIV is a second home for me, and whilst the rest of the world was in lockdown, I was able to go about life fairly normally; I still had so much freedom and purpose, I was always busy, surrounded in community and social distancing was not a thing. It was great - I knew this was where God had called me to be for this season of life, and I was loving it.

However, as the pandemic got worse, it was strongly suggested that my group and I got repatriation flights back to the UK in June, and I was faced with a really heartbreaking decision. I felt like I'd be leaving the light and returning to darkness. My prayers for the discipleship school were that by the end of the school, God would have showed me what he wanted me to do with my life, and that I would actually be ready to leave. I felt that neither of these prayers had been answered, but I also heard God clearly tell me to go home.

A week before I came home, I felt it was the right time to get baptised, making the promise to live a life surrendered and obedient to God. That evening, God started to speak to me about exploring youth ministry when I came home, and those prayers for direction in my life began to feel answered.

A week later, I was home and faced with the reality of the UK in lockdown and it was really tough: I had FAR too much time on my hands, I felt so so distant from everyone, and I was longing to be back in South Africa. On top of that, I suddenly had some tough health issues to contend with and I had no idea how I was going to find a job in the middle of all of this... it felt pretty dark.

A scripture that kept me going through all of this is 1 Thessalonians 5:24 "the one who calls you is faithful and he will do it". God is GOOD, He is faithful. His promises are yes and amen, and when he calls us to something, he parts the waters and makes a way.

I started to have conversations with people in church youth ministry, and it was suggested I applied for the Church of England ministry experience scheme, and here I am now: exploring my calling into youth ministry and loving it. I'm so aware of God's promises in my life and his purposes for me.

When I think back to where I was six months ago - it was definitely was quite a dark time, but God calls us out of the darkness into his light. In his light there is goodness and mercy, in his light is fulfilling of promises and great purpose. There is hope.