

## Reflections

# Learning for life

I have been serving the parishes of Okehampton and Chagford for 11 years and am often asked if I enjoy this part of the country.

The question is asked with the hope, and often the expectation, that I should answer yes. Since I qualified as a psychotherapist at the doctoral level, many people have asked me if I enjoy doing my clinical work, again expecting me to respond affirmatively. Most of the time I do enjoy serving the people of this area and most of the time I do enjoy my clinical

work, but there are times that I really don't, especially when I don't have control over the circumstances or the environment. Irrespective of the pros and cons, my decisions are based on putting the wellbeing of people at the centre of what I do, so I just get on with things even if they are not enjoyable all the time. This approach does not depress me or drain my energy, but instead gives me a mature understanding of reality and a way to find creative solutions for healthy survival.

There is a utopian idea of

expecting everything around us to feed us with enjoyment all the time. But the reality is different, and sadly most of us are not very good at accepting or managing the reality. We like to enjoy good health, stress free relationships, well-paid jobs, successful studies and interesting hobbies all the time. We plan, work and do everything possible to achieve this. But for reasons beyond our control things happen that hinder our enjoyment all the time. Those of us who are glued to the narrow focus on 'enjoyment all the time' get

frustrated very easily which is what leads some people to have mental health issues. In contrast, people who have a wide and holistic outlook to the reality of life - where unhappiness and misery are part of enjoyment of life - are able to pull through and keep going forward healthily and happily.

Let this new year be a year of learning for life. I personally believe that no other religion can offer as much as Christianity when it comes to learning life skills. I have listened to almost all

the ministers in the area and found them inspiring. We are so lucky to have so many churches and very good ministers around us. Let us take advantage of these readily available resources as we set out to learn life skills. 'O Lord, you are our Father, we are the clay and you our potter and all of us are the work of your hand' (Isaiah 64:8).

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