

'I've heard there's a new curate coming. What 's he like then?'

'Oh, I don't know — I haven't met him yet, but I've heard he's nice enough.'

'Well, I'm glad about that — and I heard he was married, with kids'.

'Yes, that's right! He's married to Sarah — she's lovely, and she bakes the best flapjacks in all Christendom* — and they have three children — Isaac (almost 6), Inigo (4) and Raphael (16m) — they're pretty bumptious if you ask me, but pleasant kids. They have a daft dog and a haughty cat, too.'

'Presumably, they'll go to the primary school?'

'No! Sarah's home-educating them — they say it's because they're moving house a few times because of Tim's training, and it's better that than that they keep changing schools. There were other reasons, too, but that was the big one.'

'So what else do you know about Tim?'

'Well — what can I say? He's a bit of an introvert (until you get to know him); likes board games like chess and backgammon and a great game called Pandemic; runs and cycles a bit when he can get the chance, loves classical music and opera, is a bit of a nut for classic literature, tells bad puns, quite easy going, plays guitar, he's left handed. Oh, and he's got coeliac condition — so he can't eat gluten, which is found in wheat, barley and rye.'

'That sounds tough — no bread, cake, biscuits or pies?'

'No. He'll try to be gracious if you offer him a biscuit by accident, but on the other hand he's really thrilled if you offer him something he can eat.'

'So what's he going to do for us, then, while he's our curate?'

'Now that's a question. He's keen to learn the business of leading services, preaching and pastoral work; he's keen to see how mission works in this sort of place, and to get involved in that. I think he's also quite keen on teaching and discipleship, encouraging the prayerfulness and faith of other people (ask him about the 'house of prayer' when you have a free hour!), and inspiring them with new viewpoints that they hadn't thought of before.'

'How do you mean?'

'Well, faith is a journey, he'd say it's also like a beautiful garden. Tim thinks it's good to go wandering around the garden, looking for the beauty, and then coming back together regularly, to tell each other about the things we've seen and loved.'

'Does that mean Tim's got an "anything goes" kind of faith?'

'Oh, no, I don't think so. His favourite verse is John 10:10 — "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full", and he thinks that if we were born in the image of the Creator God, then we should rejoice in God's creativity and our own, and the variety of ways God meets us.'

'Oh, I see, like the way we all have different faith stories, that speak of the variety of ways that God touches our lives.'

'That's it!'

'So what's his story like — is it one of those dramatic Chasing-the-Dragon-type conversions?'

'No, nothing so grand. Christian mother, mixed church experiences in childhood, enquiring mind, a tussle between science and faith when he was only 11, and inspiration drawn from CS Lewis and the wonder of the created world. After university he spent a year in South America which had a big effect on him, but then spent years doing admin work and trying to write unsaleable novels.'

'You're kidding?'

'No, it's true. I think he was a bit in limbo when he met Sarah. Now that's a funny story — she was a student (Arabic and art history/archaeology) and turned up at his church... But Sarah loves telling that story, you'll have to ask her!'

'And what about his call to ordination?'

'Ah, well, when Sarah suggested to him about being a vicar, he was dead against the idea. Slowly he admitted that it might eventually be possible. Then one Epiphany Sunday he was asked to preach. He said he felt a tremendous sense of excitement as he preached, and when he sat down again he started thinking: "I wonder if there's some kind of job where I could talk about God?" From that point he was off to see the DDO and it was straight to college for him.'

'I wonder if there's anything specific they'd like us to pray for them in these first months of curacy.'

'I'm sure they'd really appreciate prayer, that the children settle in well and make new friends and the house gets sorted so that it feels like a home. Also for Tim's mum who has just moved into the Depperhaugh Care Home in Hoxne, that she settles in quickly.'

'That's easily done. Well, I look forward to meeting him and his family. Perhaps I'll pop round for a cuppa.'

'That sounds like an idea - they love meeting new people and feeding them! I'm sure they'd appreciate a break from unpacking boxes. Well, I must be off. Toodles!'

'Tatty bye!'

* in Tim's not-so-humble opinion.

- See more at: <http://www.7churches.org.uk/blog#sthash.QcCEpUjG.dpuf>