

Dear Friends,

Had you called me a creative-type person when I was at secondary school, I would have been surprised, to put it mildly. My sympathies lay mainly within what we call today the STEM subjects, and as some of you know my core subject was Maths. I thought that subjects like English Literature were a waste of space, because I could not see what they contributed to the national life. We needed scientists and their like for the UK to flourish, I believed.

Only later did I discover the power of story to communicate truth. Only later did I uncover my own creative impulses. They were there all along, but I never recognised them until I took the Myers Briggs Type Indicator personality test with a group of other ministers about twenty years ago. Yes, it revealed me to be the logical, rational thinker I had always recognised, but it also uncovered hidden artistic traits. No, I couldn't suddenly sing in tune or play a musical instrument – to this day I maintain that all I can play is the fool.

But – yes, I had always enjoyed writing. And yes, ever since I had returned from a mission trip to Norway at the age of 21 where I had found myself the only member of the party without a camera, I had enjoyed photography. Oh goodness, I *did* have imaginative instincts, but I had been blind to them.

The famous Christian Olympic athlete Eric Liddell once said, “When I run, I feel God’s pleasure,” and I could adapt that for my experiences of writing and photography. As one made in the image of a Creator God, these gifts are part of my purpose in life.

And so I enjoy them for their own sake, but the pleasure is doubled when I can deploy them to bring joy to others. To know some people are not only hearing my Sunday sermon but also reading the script I provide to engage more deeply with the biblical text thrills me. To roam around at a wedding blessing Byfleet recently hosted for another church making photos and then surprising the happy couple and their parents with a set of shots to tide them over until the official photographer produced hers was wonderfully satisfying.

Naturally, I hope that my first-ever book is published soon I hope and pray God will use it to bless those like me who have always felt outside the boundaries of popular social acceptance. I am even releasing it via the publishing company of an old friend who never guessed he could write. He was in remedial English at school and was diagnosed as dyslexic, yet to date has written seventeen books and contributes regularly to the Saturday religious column in The Times.

He thought his calling was to be a Methodist minister, but he was rejected while a probationer. However, he found new gifts rising up in him whereby he has made a difference to people as an entrepreneur, an inspirational speaker, a philanthropist, and a local councillor. Now he is coaching people to write.

Hence, I want to close this letter, which will probably be my final one before I leave the circuit, with an invitation to you to recognise the gifts you have that have been lurking beneath your gaze. Might there be something that would give you a sense of fulfilment you have never had before? Might that something be a way you had never previously considered as a means of blessing and serving others?

Here's what I suggest you do. Take those words of Eric Liddell that I cited earlier. Delete the word 'run'. What would your replacement word be? "When I ..., I feel God's pleasure."

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

Now go – and be a blessing!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Faulkner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Dave Faulkner

Resources

Help with Mission Planning

The Evangelism and Growth Team, in collaboration with the Learning Network, offer monthly 'mission planning surgeries'. Circuits and churches can book a two-hour slot during which they receive input tailored to their particular context. You could use this time to help you think through a knotty issue, to ask for specific guidance, or to find out about people and resources in your local area who can continue to accompany you in your mission planning. Ideally a few representatives from a circuit or church team would attend together so that the input from the surgery would be shared among the team.

Surgeries are held at a range of different times of day and on different days of the week, in order to be as accessible as possible to a wide a range of people. Here are the rest of the dates for 2023:

Wednesday 8th March, 1-3pm
Monday 17th April, 7.30-9.30pm
Thursday 4th May, 10am-12noon
Friday 9th June, 1-3pm
Monday 3rd July, 7.30-9.30pm
Tuesday 5th September, 1-3pm
Thursday 5th October, 10am-12noon
Wednesday 8th November, 7.30-9.30pm

Planning surgery slots can be booked online here - [Mission Planning Surgery | Eventbrite](#)

A prayer for the tragic events in Turkey and Syria

God of time and space, we cry to you for your children — our neighbours — in southern Turkey and northern Syria, following the earthquake that has devastated hundreds of lives. Only they and you know what it is like to experience such trauma in the middle of the night.

We give thanks for the aid that is already being given and for the promises of help that have been made by many nations.

Comfort, we pray,
those who are trapped in collapsed buildings;
those who have lost loved ones;
those who wait for news and
those digging through rubble to save others.

Grant the gift of hope so that those caught between life and death know that you are with them and that others are ready to support them as they seek a future that overshadows the experiences of today.

We ask this in the Name of Jesus, who endured so much for love of them.

Amen.

Prayer written by the President of the Conference, the Revd Graham Thompson.

Christian Aid has launched an appeal to help those affected by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria and the link can be found on the Circuit website.