#HereIAmLord – Revd Matthew Sellers

‘So when are you going to get ordained then?’ The question, seemingly from nowhere, felt like a blow to the stomach and left me reeling. Turning away from the questioner, who wasn’t really looking at me at the time, I needed to catch my breath for a few moments. The conversation then jumped back to where it was before this intervention but something had happened, a catalyst to exploring again.

The questioner, a visiting priest, was in school to lead a Eucharist service for a group of students and their form tutor. As the school’s lay chaplain I was helping her set up for the service when this moment came. It was a surprising answer to prayer. For a while I’d been feeling what I’ve heard referred to as a ‘divine dissatisfaction’. I was enjoying my work as an RE teacher, lay chaplain and volunteer youth leader but had started to wonder if it may be time to move into a new season. A friend from church had prayed for me previously, saying, ‘I think there’s something more that God wants to lead you into.’

Before training to become an RE secondary school teacher, I’d worked for a number of years as a church youth worker. It was an enjoyable and rewarding season of ministry. Two of the clergy that I’d worked with had encouraged me to think about ordination. But I decided that God was leading me into working with young people as a teacher and so the idea of ordination went on the back burner. ‘Don’t forget that call to ordained ministry’ were my incumbent’s final words before I left to start my first term of teaching.

I got into teaching and thoroughly enjoyed it, taking opportunities to honestly share my faith with students and staff through lessons, assemblies, Christian Union and building relationships. Within a few years I was able to take up a new role as the school’s lay chaplain. Looking back, I think this, along with volunteer youth leading in my home church, re-ignited the passion within me for being involved in ministry.

The provoking question I was asked by the visiting priest led to prayer and reflection and then arranging to meet up with my vicar for a chat. Having listened to how I felt God was leading me and nodded throughout, he then said, ‘I’ve been waiting for you to come and speak to me about it.’ His encouragement and affirmation meant that I could take the next step of exploring the call to ordination. A few years later I’m in my first year as NSM assistant curate in the Newport North Ministry Area, still teaching RE full time.

So if you are thinking you might be called to ordained ministry then my question would be, ‘how are you serving where you are?’ If you’re not already involved in some form of ministry then look for opportunities to get stuck in, in your workplace, family, school, college, university or church. I’ve learnt that God is intentional, but he doesn’t seem to be in a rush! He leads us step by step. He’s been very gracious and as a family we’ve known his provision at each step along the journey.