



From STOP to START

Rob Hawkins shares his experiences of when to pick up an activity, be it personal or church, and when to let it go.

I was a supernumerary minister in Derbyshire, but this autumn and quite unexpectedly, I took on the responsibility for three churches. This restart was, I believe, the call of God, that came whilst I was on a sun lounger in Lanzarote. I don't often get these dramatic experiences!

Perhaps more importantly, it is learning to hear God in the everyday.

During lockdown I started joining Michael Harvey, the Church Growth consultant, online using his 'ACORN' process to discern the call of God in the everyday. This simple but profound shared discipline has helped enormously. I'm not surprised Christians across the globe are now adopting this simple daily discipline. (For more information see ACORN on YouTube or email michael@unlockingthegrowth.com)

I have been fortunate to have had quite an innovative ministry, and know the importance not just of starting something, but prayerfully adjusting to what

is currently happening. A verse which is of great encouragement to me is Psalm 92:14, 'They will still bear fruit in old age; they will stay fresh and green'.

In a church facing many changes and challenges, it's more than just trying the latest trend. It is about listening to the Spirit, knowing that only a few loaves and fishes can feed a multitude!

There are times to STOP too.

Listening to how and when to stop an activity can be hard. Especially if it has been successful and pleasurable. It may be stopping something completely, or stepping back to let someone else take over. Stopping can involve a sense of bereavement.

Returning to minister in a church 30 years later is a strange experience! I undertook this interesting step in the last few months. Remarkably, some people can remember something I did or said all those years ago which had been so helpful to them – but which I had completely forgotten. This can be affirming and it is a strong reminder to keep close to the nudge and power of God.

I pray that this article may encourage you ... whether you are planning to stop or start!



ROB HAWKINS

Rob is a Supernumerary Minister living near Derby. He has been in circuit and chaplaincy roles in the Notts and Derby and Newcastle Districts.



Flourish

Katie Hawkins shares how something which started in a difficult time continues to bear fruit.

It's the vaccination season - Flu and Covid. This season reminds us of very difficult times of the pandemic.

'Flourish' is a blog which began during the Covid pandemic. It came about because I had asked God a question when the country locked down for the second time. A simple question: 'Lord will I ever preach again?' I had so missed worship and preaching. I had missed that special close time of preparation and the fellowship. I missed Sundays as I had known then for over 30 years.

I sensed an answer, 'Work from home, as others are doing'. So, the journey began. I set up a Facebook page and invited friends from all over the country and beyond. I posted something every

day for months. The blog was entitled 'Flourish', and its purpose was to encourage followers to acknowledge that God wants us to flourish in every season of life, even a lockdown, to lean into him and on each other.

Posts were frequently prompted on my daily walk. Remember those days, free for an hour in the fresh air? During my walks, as the Lord and I walked together, he showed me so much. I took photos on my phone when the Lord pointed out something, such as the re-purposed buildings in the town and how the Lord was at work re-purposing me and our fellowships. Then I came across a bank of daisies and a reminder that unlike the 'he loves me, he loves me not' game, God's love never changes. There were reminders of God's protection as I walked the hedgerows – of his love being a presence surrounding me – and so much more. I shared these prompts and reminders every morning on my Flourish blog. I was indeed working from home and my followers were on Facebook – the online congregation. The followers

commented on the posts, asked for prayer and shared with each other.

When we were eventually able to meet with friends in our gardens, we visited some very close friends. The conversation was full of what had been happening, what we had been doing and how we thought this might have changed our futures. I told them about Flourish. They were very interested and asked me to email some of the posts – and by that time there were around 200 of them. Our friends read them and suggested that they were ideal for publication as a reflective, devotional book. They kindly introduced me to a publishing company, an editor and a fund set aside for first-time writers. My one, and only book: 'Flourish – Stepping out and beyond' was published in 2021. Copies were bought by followers and friends. One bought 20 copies and has used them for outreach in Northumberland. Other followers hosted book events.

Flourish continues weekly. I am humbled when a friend tells me how encouraged they have been by a particular post. It has been a privilege to hold others in prayer at very sad times. In every season of life, in every situation, God is working and he is faithful.

If you would like to follow the Flourish blog, then contact admin@metrevive.uk and your message will be passed on to Katie.

KATIE HAWKINS

Katie is a Local Preacher in the National Forest East Circuit, married to Rob Hawkins. She has held a number of district and circuit roles over many years in the North East and East Midlands.

