

## **Views from the Pews: Follow me**

The ancient idea of life as a pilgrimage opens lots of instructive images. First, we can visualise ourselves following Jesus long the road, as he commanded. At every fork, he will stop and stand aside, and we must make a choice. If both options look equally attractive, we can ask him which would be best. If he indicates one, and sets off along it, we can follow without question, confident in his guidance. Or, if he does not offer any preference, we have to make the choice ourselves. If so, he will honour that choice, and we can follow him along that route, knowing that he will support us through the tough bits, and that wherever our choice leads to, he will ensure it will be the right place for us. As Paul said, ‘...all things work together for good for those who love God’ (Romans 8:28).

Alongside the main road we often pass closed gates, where we can stop to look at a distant vision of bright happiness and fulfilment of our dreams. We can ask him to open the gate, but equally, he can refuse. We must then decide whether to accept his judgement, put the dreams aside, and continue to follow him, or reject it, and climb over the gate. Even then, he won’t abandon us, but all he can do is to tag along behind, picking up the messes we make and rescuing us out of bogs and thorn bushes. Eventually, even the most pig-headed of us will get the message, stop, turn, and overcome our embarrassment enough to look him in the eye. Instead of criticism we will get a loving smile and a hug, and he will say, ‘OK now, shall we go on?’ and he will lead us back to the main road. It will not be the same main road as before, but it will be the right one so long as he is back in front. With hindsight we will see that the closed gates we accepted without rancour (the failed job application, the rejected proposal) brought us only a temporary ache. The roads beyond any gates we climbed over will have inflicted one painful injury after another, but inexhaustible grace was always mixed with them. That grace often converts such excursions into our most important learning experiences, which in their turn will lighten our steps into the unknown future.

*Kim King*