

Thank you to the Vice-Chancellor for the invitation to share a few words.

I began my theological education coming up to 10 years ago now. It was a Certificate IV, and at that time making a vocation of Christian ministry wasn't at all on the cards. I simply thought it would make for a good gap year, while I work out what I really wanted to study.

But it wasn't long before God gripped me with a passion for the local church, and if studying theology and ministry would better equip me to serve God's church and his purposes in the world, I wanted more of that.

So a Certificate IV led into a Diploma, and then a Undergraduate Degree, and now tonight a Postgraduate Degree. And while that sounds like quite a linear progression, in my mind it hasn't been linear at all.

It's more like a dog following its nose from one point of interest to another.

In Eugene Peterson's autobiography, he talks about the way dogs move 'intently haphazard'—you know, from one light pole to the next, then over to the next bush, then over to the fence, but all in a very focused manner.

Peterson observes, and I quote,

"There is obviously no lack of intention in the dog's behaviour, but if you could have asked him what his intention was and he could have answered, he wouldn't have been able to tell you where he was headed—just one scent after another. Seemingly haphazard. But not without purpose."

And now as I've come, God-willing, to the end of my formal theological education, that's the best picture I have for my journey. I wouldn't have been able to tell you where it was all headed. I had no guarantees that my education would lead onto ordination nor job security.

But as I look back on the way my nose has led me from one checkpoint to the next, I can now see the gracious involvement of our God. He challenges and rebukes and rewards and comforts those who seek him. And it gives me confidence that perhaps he was the scent I was following from one light pole to the next.

I did slowly work out my vocation, and last year, together with a small team, I planted a new church in Perth's southern suburbs, and just last month I was ordained as a Pastor of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

So in closing, I want to thank the University of Divinity and Australian Lutheran College for answering God's call and providing me (and students like me) an environment to follow our nose.

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