

## **MTS Update Letter: Term 1 2023**

Hello friends,

This year has seen me kick off an MTS (Ministry Training Strategy) apprenticeship at St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta. Over 2 years I will spend time gaining experience and being trained in full-time gospel ministry at my home church amongst people from all ages, life stages, and nations.

### *Why be trained in full-time gospel ministry?*

I reached the decision to give ministry training a go over a number of years as I became convicted of the need for Christians trained for a lifetime of ministry and convinced that I had ample opportunity to receive such training. I first became aware of ministry trainees while involved with student ministry at the Evangelical Union at Sydney University, and later at St John's Parramatta as I observed peers being trained in full-time gospel work.

As we served together, I got to observe and ask about their work. One of them put this to me: in Sydney we are abundantly blessed with faithful Christian teaching and training programs, along with a wealth of Bible colleges. Even being involved with uni ministry means that we are likely to receive better Bible training than many Christians in "Less Reached, and Less Resourced" (LRLR) areas. If many students spend 3-5 years studying a secular degree for a lifetime of work, why not set aside 2 years of full-time training for a lifetime of ministry? Indeed, "[Jesus] said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'" (Matthew 9:37-38, ESV)

Over time I continued to think this through. After I attended the annual MTS Recruit conference for a few years I decided that MTS would be a suitable opportunity for training. The program would also give me a taste of full time ministry and allow me to consider whether I might continue on to Bible college and full time ministry.

At the same time I have grappled with a number of questions: "was I suited for full-time ministry?"; "would I be comfortable up front leading others?"; and "what if full-time ministry doesn't work out and I decide to return to secular work?"

Feeling a relatability to Moses' reluctance, I questioned how God might use me in my circumstance to serve him. Yet I was assured that God could use me even in my weakness as "'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" (1 Cor 1:25-31) Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor 12:9) Whatever time I spent training would surely be put to good use, as Paul states: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Cor 15:58)

### *What will my training look like?*

MTS is about two years of regular, practical, hands-on experience. This will be great preparation for a life of ministry, and it allows a taster of full-time ministry as I consider possible future options including Bible college. For 4 days a week (Sun, Mon, Wed, Thu) I'm involved in ministries at and around St John's, which has so far included: co-ordination of contemporary music ministries, leading a weekly Growth Group, primary school scripture, staff team meetings, discipleship 121s, service leading, delegating welcoming teams, running seminar workshops at a weekend church camp, and assisting with running Explore and Belong courses for those who are new to the Christian faith. I receive supervision and training from the staff team, including weekly check-ins with our senior minister Bruce Morrison, and weekly training from staff members alongside the other MTS interns.

On Tuesdays, I also attend the Cornhill Sydney course at Moore College to be trained in Biblical preaching and teaching skills. This includes components in Biblical theology, teaching from diverse genres, text-to-sermon seminars, and practice talks. It's a great time each week to be trained by experienced Bible teachers and to meet with other ministry peers from Sydney churches.

*How has ministry training been going so far?*

Ministry training has been a fun, insightful, and challenging experience! I'm starting to get a feel for full-time work and the joys and challenges of ministry with diverse people groups. Sundays are a highlight of the week, as the church gathers across various congregations and digs into God's word and fellowship together. This is the most hectic yet rewarding day of the week as we glorify God in love and service and grow one another as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Beginning full-time ministry after 5 years of uni study and occasional part-time work is a significant change. I have become more aware of my finite capacity in hours and energy, giving me a greater appreciation for how God is at work through and despite my efforts and limitations. Ministry has irregular hours, with evening band practice or Growth Groups and down-times during the day. I'm learning how to pace myself and find appropriate times for rest and refreshment. Moving from congregation member to staff team at a church I have spent all my life in has also been a new experience, as I learn how to nurture existing and new friendships within the context of added pastoral care relationships.

I'm keen for opportunities to continue growing in ministry skills, particularly as I learn to teach God's word, pastor and care for church members, and train other leaders as they go on to also teach, train, and care for others. I have also learned how much admin and preparation is involved in ministry. I'm growing in self-discipline and organisational skills. I have the great privilege of being able to observe and learn this from the St John's staff team as they train me, the other interns, and congregation members.

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I greatly value your friendship and prayers. If you are already supporting me and MTS at St. John's then I want to thank you for that also. God's kindness to me through you is my great encouragement! If you would like to partner with me financially on this journey you'll find the details below. You can sign up for my monthly newsletter updates through the Marsden Fund page, also below.

Thanks for taking the time to read my update! I'd love to stay in touch and share future updates on my life and ministry experience over the coming years. I'd also love to hear how you've been going and how I can pray for you!

Kind regards,

Nicholas 😊

St John's MTS Blog & Partnership Sign-Up: <https://marsdenfund.com/support/>

My Personal MTS Donation Page: <https://mts.com.au/give/nicholas-morley/>

*Thank You for Your Gospel Partnership!*