

Dear Friends

Happy New Year! I know it is starting to feel a bit late and tatty to be still talking of New Year, but this is the first Parish Magazine of 2024. It is also the first Vicar's letter of the interregnum, following the farewell service for Steve, and of course Elaine, Samuel, and Phoebe. Although it was a very sad day, I believe we gave them a great '*St Johns Farewell*'. Thank you to all those who baked, and helped it to be a great send off. It was lovely to see the church full. Also thank you to those of you who gave towards a leaving gift. The churchwardens were able to give Steve a generous cheque, which will no doubt be useful as they move into their brand-new home. Some of you will know that Steve is taking up a senior officer's role in the Diocese, working out of Church House and this post does not come with a house. Their new home will be in Burley-in-Wharfedale, but currently the walls are only about 6 feet high! Consequently, they will be renting the vicarage until about March, when hopefully the builders will have completed their new home. This means that you may see them still around for a while yet, walking Pepper and doing the school run for Phoebe. Also, for the more vigilant among us, that is why it looks like there is still some one living in the Vicarage.

So, New Year brings New Beginnings and some things done differently. Firstly, it is me writing this letter, yes, the 'Associate', the one currently off sick! However, there are somethings I can do to help, and for the time being this is one of those things. Every interregnum brings challenges, but I also believe it brings new opportunities. We will all have to take extra special care of each other, and whilst St Johns has a history of people stepping forward to volunteer, we will need this willingness to 'have a go' like we haven't over the last 6 years. It would be good to have different people writing this letter maybe, and certainly we will need willing helpers to assist with Zest, and with aspects of the 11am service. Different priests will be visiting each week and we will of course make them welcome in the hope that they will want to come and help us again on further Sundays, we need to make new faces feel welcome. Its always a joy to welcome new people, but as the word gets around that we are in vacancy, we may get 'undercover clergy' visiting to 'sniff us out!'. One thing is clear, things will change, and for those of us who are anxious about change, it is important to remind ourselves that Gods vision and mission is bigger than all of us. Our responsibility is to be faithful, to trust that we are part of Gods Story here in Menston, and to pray that He continues to hold us in His hands, and to fill us with his Spirit.

Finally, a word about the process. Many of you will remember the process from six years ago when we needed a priest to replace Ruth. A new vicar does not arrive quickly. The churchwardens and the PCC are working as quickly as they can to prepare all the documents and launch our vacancy. The Area Dean, The Archdeacon, and Bishop Toby will be doing all they can to help bring the right person into post. Following a meeting of the area mission and pastoral committee, discussion took place about our vacancy and the best way to provide a new incumbent. With prayer they agreed that whilst it is not necessarily the outcome that some might hope for, a half-time priest being paired again with the half-time assistant diocesan director of ordinands (in other words exactly the same as Steve's role) would be the best way of ensuring that we get a new priest.

As you can see there is a lot to pray for, please do continue to prayer for the wardens, who have a significant amount of responsibility during an interregnum, and continue to pray for each other as we carry on being Gods people here in Menston.

Amen

Andrew