

Twelve years ago, I moved from Oxford to become vicar of Radley with Sunningwell. Kennington was a place that I passed through on the 35 bus or I skirted if I walked along the river to Oxford. Little did I realise what was in store.

I began to get to know a few people and later, as Area Dean, began to know people from the church. Then we were all told that I was also to be Priest in Charge of St Swithun's!

All I can do us look back on the following years and say that I'm sorry I am going. I have grown to love and admire the church in Kennington—and church means people of God, not just a building!

St Paul wrote a series of letters to the churches in Asia Minor giving them a sort of report. If I were to do the same for St Swithun's, I would say something like this: I commend you for your love and faithfulness. Your generosity is amazing: you are always ready to give of your best gifts and efforts to make things happen. Your faith and trust in the goodness of God are steady and growing, and together you believe and carry on. Nothing is impossible even if it involves sacrifice and a lot of hard work. You smile. Somehow or other everything gets done. You understand and have experienced hardship but are confident and optimistic that all will be well and God will bless you. You want others to know the amazing, generous and sacrificial love of God and the joy and peace that it brings... so keep on going! My prayer for you is that you and all Christians in Kennington will show and spread the love of God in the village.

For those of you who aren't familiar with St Swithun's, come along and see. You won't be bamboozled, and the friendship and the coffee are good! Messy Church is brilliant if you have kids, and it's fun! There are groups and activities for all ages and stages from the children's stuff to the bus pass group.

I am moving to Cold Ash, a village just outside Newbury, sometime in November. Clergy are given up to a month to get out of the vicarage, so I shall soon start on a grand clear-out and begin to dispense things I can't fit into a much smaller space... and retirement will bring different sorts of challenges from all I do now.

THANK YOU for the welcome and kindnesses you have all shown to me. I shall miss you! The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always.

My going will leave a vacancy for a Vicar in our Churches. The appointment process can take a while but the Church Wardens and PCCs will move it along as quickly as possible.

Until a new Vicar arrives, Glynis, Alison, Tony and a number of others will make sure that everything is covered. At the beginning of October we will put a list of whom to contact about what on the website and in the Church porches. The main contact number will be 01235 554739. Any calls to that number will be passed on to the best person to deal with it!