

7th January 2021

Dear friends at All Saints,

May I take this opportunity to say a massive thank you for your overwhelming generosity to Kate and me as I retire and as we prepare to move on from All Saints. Your kindness, expressed in the amazingly generous cheque and life membership of the RSPB, the paperweight and flowers for Kate, and the fabulous book to which so many of you contributed photographs and memories has once again left us deeply grateful to you all. Thank you too to those who have sent personal gifts, some anonymously, and to the many people who have written or emailed in the last few weeks to wish us well in retirement. We will always treasure your love, friendship, encouragement, prayers and support and we are going to miss you all terribly in the coming days.

As I said during the presentation, I can't really believe that I have retired yet and when I read and listen to the kind words that people have written and spoken it feels as though they're talking about someone else. The next few weeks will be full as we try to clear the Vicarage of 25 years' worth of 'stuff' – papers which need shredding, books which we won't have room for, furniture which won't fit in the much smaller house to which we shall be moving in Upton. But we will keep on praying for you as you begin the process of appointing my successor and as the leadership will have many important decisions to make.

For myself, I am resolved to wait on God for what he wants in this new season of life; to get to know Jesus better, to serve his people as opportunities arise, to bear fruit on the frontline.

The passage which has spoken to me lately is from Romans 12:9-13. In many ways it sums up what All Saints is and what the Lord calls us to go being. The challenging verse, v11, says 'Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord' and that's an encouragement which I want to take to heart when it could be easy just to sit back and take it easy. But the surrounding verses talk about a church in which love is sincere, which hates evil and loves good, which is devoted to one another in love, which honours one another above ourselves, which shares with those in need and which practises hospitality. A lovely picture of All Saints!

It also calls us to be 'joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer' and I pray that will go on being true of you as I ask you to pray that it will also be true of us as we leave All Saints.

Finally then, thank you once more for all the love you have shown to Kate, me and the family over the last 25 years.

With love and prayers in Christ,

John and Kate