

Pastoral Letter August 2022. Revd Sue Cooper writes:

Dear Friends, as we enter high summer, many folk turn their thoughts to holidays or day trips out, and to keeping children or grandchildren happy and occupied during their school summer break. Do you remember when you were a child, how great it felt when school broke up for the six weeks through summer. The possibilities for fun and adventure were endless. Childhood is different these days as children don't have the same freedoms that we had when we were younger. We felt safe, and could be out playing for hours on end without our parents needing to worry. The simplicity of our childhoods was a wonderful thing, and there was not much that upset us.

Last week I had the great pleasure of attending the school leaver's assembly at Farthinghoe, where the children that are leaving the school this summer to go up to seniors had written a play and performed it for us. The play had them all meeting up for an imagined reunion later in life, where they had all gone on to do wonderfully interesting things. It was great fun listening to their imagined futures. But as the play continued the group began to reminisce about school days, and about things they had done,...the people they had met,,, and the teachers that taught them, and how much they had enjoyed it all. It was a very emotional assembly; the children received awards for their skills and achievements, and they were celebrated by us all. But after the assembly it was time to say goodbye, and there were lots of tears.

These children had formed relationships, and for most of them it was the first time that they were leaving somewhere significant and saying goodbye to people who had impacted their young lives in very positive ways, and the reality of the moment was quite overwhelming. As we go through life, we know that this kind of situation is repeated many times as we journey on. Leaving places and people that we have grown fond of and that mean a lot to us is hard, and it doesn't get any easier the older we get; but it's all part of life's rich tapestry, and on the positive side, we continue to make lots of new friends along the way.

I will be saying goodbye to you all at the end of August when I leave the Astwick Vale benefice, and it feels painful. I have made lots of friends and had lots of happy times in the benefice. There have been tough times too as we have all gone through the past few years of Covid crisis together and had to navigate our way through it all. But I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your kindness and support towards me during my time here. I particularly want to thank our wonderful Ministry team and Church Wardens for all their hard work in the Benefice Churches. They are an amazing group of people whose commitment to the Lord and the Churches is outstanding; thank you all.

Then there are all the members of our PCC's, who keep the Churches going; I thank you all. Thank you to all the Church organists, flower arrangers, church cleaning teams, folk who tend the Churchyards, our welcomers at Church, the folk that set up our altars for Communion, the choir, the bell ringers, the folk who produce our parish magazines, the fundraisers, all those involved in our Sunday Services reading lessons, leading prayers, and serving refreshments. What a blessing all these folk are to us, and I thank you all.

I also want to thank our Congregations for their friendship and fellowship which has meant so much to me, and for the wonderful times of worship we have shared together. I want to thank the people of the villages for the many messages of support and goodwill that I have received over the years in support of my ministry here.

Special thanks go to Norman White our benefice treasurer who has the most wonderful sense of humour, and has always made me laugh a lot. And finally, my special thanks to Joyce Stevens who produces the Pews News for us, and always manages to include lots of interesting little snippets of information to inform and inspire us; her support and friendship has been a great source of encouragement to me. But most importantly I thank God for my time here among you all.

Thank you all, and may God bless you richly.

With much love always,

Revd Sue. Xxx

Eph3:20-21 " Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."