

TEAM RECTOR'S COVID LETTER ~ 4/2/21

Dear Friends,

My time as Rector of North Wingfield Team Ministry is rapidly coming to an end. On 1st March 2021 I will no longer be the Rector as I announced back in July of last year. I will have been in parish ministry for thirty-four years, twenty-eight of them as an incumbent.

The Covid pandemic and its associated 'lockdowns' have made everything in life difficult and this includes saying 'goodbye'. I had felt towards the end of 2019 my time in North Wingfield Team was coming to an end, that I had done all I could here, and it was time for a younger person to take over. However, clearly, Linda and I would not have chosen these circumstances in which to retire, yet the truth is, none of us would choose these circumstances to do anything in!

It has been my intention to leave the Team in the hands of capable and committed people. I believe I have done that. I feel sure North Wingfield Team can thrive and grow going forward into a period when the Team Rector's post is vacant (that is a time without a Rector) and then into a fruitful time under new leadership. In all this, let's keep ever before us that a church is not the clergy, it is the people. The church is a family into which God, through his Holy Spirit, has placed a variety of gifts and talents.

The announcement that Derby Diocese will undertake a significant pastoral reorganisation leaves many wondering what shape this will take. What will it look like? At the moment it is difficult to be specific, but the cut in numbers of paid full-time ordained ministers will mean no church will be unaffected by the reorganisation. My advice is to keep in prayer about the plans and keep informed by attending Deanery meetings.

As my wife Linda and I have served in parish ministry (I certainly could not have done my job without her), we consider it a privilege and blessing to have got to know and love so many lovely people. We have found we have got attached to folk and have always tried to have a 'people' orientated ministry. We have always believed good relationships and friendship are a vital part of what it means to be a church family. We will find it hard to leave and will miss you

very much. With this in mind, I would want to encourage you to keep on doing four things:

- (i) Keep on reading your Bible (2 Timothy 3:16 – 17)
- (ii) Keep on praying (Philippians 4:6)
- (iii) Keep on talking to each other (Proverbs 15:22)
- (iv) Keep on encouraging each other (Hebrews 10:24 – 25)

So, our last service will be on Sunday 28th February and that will have to be a 'virtual' farewell. However, Linda and I consider 'goodbyes' to be important, so at the suggestion of the church wardens at St. Lawrence's, there will an opportunity for a 'face-to-face' farewell when, it is hoped, the Covid restrictions are eased. On the weekend of 24 -25th July we will come back for a bbq and final 'in person' Team service. These dates are provisional at the moment but please put them in your diary as we would love to say 'goodbye' personally.

Next week my letter will have a Q and A feel to it as I attempt to answer questions about the vacancy.

To finish, let me urge you to keep safe, have the vaccine when offered and keep remembering 'hands, face, space'.

With love in Christ,

Colin Cooper