

RECTOR'S PINT

In a recent conversation, a friend of ours wondered if I had any regrets about leaving my last parish to be here. Of course, there have been things we have missed and there have been things that have challenged, that is to be expected. But no, there have been no regrets.

I write this because in September, it will be seven years since we moved here for me to take up my post as Rector (although it was made official in October). So, this is a moment to pause and reflect. What have the challenges been?

I will name two of them. Having been responsible for only one parish before I came here, I had forgotten the demands of connecting with more than one parish, and with several church buildings. The prospect of retirement in a few years' time and with that, the shedding of multiple PCC's, committees and meetings can result in the sin of me wishing my time away! I have also found that being a Governor at two schools rather than one, is hard. I have made it clear to both schools that I can only be 'governor light' when it comes to the never-ending deluge of policy, safeguarding, educational targets, and so on (and I have now been doing it for twenty-six years, so I understand what is, and what isn't possible!)

So what has been good? I will highlight a couple of things. With the last observation in mind, I love visiting the schools, simply as the Vicar. I know that I am much better used in that role, and that is really enriching.

I did find the first few months here challenging, especially having been in a church with up to a hundred and fifty people coming on any one Sunday to worship. Here, we are more likely to be groups of up to thirty, across all three churches. I did find that difficult first. Now though, I love 'ministry in the small,' I love the personal nature of it, and knowing the people who are here as 'family'. There can be tensions of course, but we work through those; every family has them after all! I also love the connection with people beyond the Church.

Of course, I long for, and pray that what I hold dear will have an impact, that the love of God seen in Jesus Christ and how his life, death and resurrection will bring us hope, meaning and purpose, especially when we face difficulties. That is, essentially, why I do what I do. I love living in a village, and I really appreciate the cycles of the year and the rhythm of nature and how I connect to those things, spiritually. I know this is my natural environment.

So yes, of course there are things I have looked back on and missed, but there are so many blessings here, and I am glad of them. There is a new sense, in that last year was particularly difficult for many personal reasons, but arriving now at our seventh anniversary, I find that I am very, very grateful.

Simon