

I am writing to let you know that I shall be retiring this summer.

I am now (just) 68 and, whilst I could stay on till I'm 70, I have increasingly felt it was right to leave the Benefice this year. I will have been in post for just under 16 years - the longest serving incumbent in our fair city.

Of course, I will be immensely sad to leave you all, this has been the longest I've ever lived anywhere, and I've loved what we've shared together. The idea of moving to Cornwall has been with me for a few years, and has become more solid - from experience this still, small voice is the way I sense God's hand. Recently there have been some exciting things falling into place both practically, and that give great possibilities for some of the ideas that I believe God has been sowing and nurturing in me - and I want to move whilst I am still young and mobile enough to establish a new life. I hope to move to Newlyn.

Further, in all my time here I have never known our churches to be in a better place. We have growing church families not just in numbers but in depth. And we have some wonderful people in both with the energy, ideas, passion, skills and faith to take the churches forward in the ways that they need to. At SS, for example, the embryonic and existential Beacon of Lansdown is starting to gather momentum in such an exciting way. Now is the time for someone new to come and join whilst the project is being shaped.

There's that great verse in Psalm 127, 'Unless the Lord build the house those who build it labour in vain. 'We can work hard and do all we can to make our worship engaging and relevant, our welcome warm and inclusive, our prayer real, our lives focused on Jesus; but unless people come who regularly invest of their time and talent, we can do nothing. I believe God has brought us a rich influx of new folk who, combining with long-standing friends, are forming strong and able churches who are so well placed to face the joys and challenges of our present time. We have excellent wardens, the most engaged and enthusiastic PCCs, great home groups and Sunday rotas full of gifted people. And we have lovely Katy who will join our lovely Debbie in sharing worship supported by the many in our churches who will minister with them.

Ministry is about holding on to the twin emotions of trepidation and excitement, and contemplating retirement (I'm finding) is the same. I will take with me so many amazing memories and friendships, which will always outweigh any difficulties I've encountered along the way, even those I've faced personally in the past couple of years.

My dear friends, let's hold the time we have left well, and have a great last few months together!

Philip