

Minister's Letter - 'Moving On'

Dear Friends

It is with some sadness that Louise and I have to announce that after seven years the time has come for us to leave Coggeshall and Great Notley. My brother's health has seriously declined, and my parents are not getting any younger, and I have been feeling for some time that it would be helpful if I could arrange to live closer to them. You will be aware that our journeys to visit them have sometimes been difficult.

In the late autumn of 2011 I was attracted to a new vacancy in the Ringwood group of churches in Hampshire. After various meetings and preaching opportunities they issued a call to me which I accepted, just before Christmas. I am expecting to move at the end of August 2012, ready for a September start. One of the new churches is an LEP with a Methodist minister currently in post, so the date of our move will coincide with all other annual Methodist movements. I assure you all of my fullest practical and pastoral support in both churches over the next few months in preparation for the ensuing vacancy. I have jokingly referred to it as preparing an 'Exit Strategy'. What are the priorities for my ministry over the final few months? Together with the Deacons Meeting at Christ Church, and the Church Council at Great Notley, we want to encourage every member to engage prayerfully in planning and seeking the future ministry that is right for each of the churches.

The news of the coming change of ministry has been shared with the senior leaders of each of our partner denominations and they will be meeting to begin the process of talking about the future supply of ministry to both of my churches. It is too early at this stage to say whether the answers might be the same or different for each church. Once a broad sense of general direction has been agreed, and one partner denomination has agreed that it would be right for them to provide future ministry, then we will know which denominational set of procedures we will be following to fill the vacancy. A church vacancy committee can then be asked to begin the work of producing a fresh church profile, and a profile of the requirements the church would like to see in a future minister.

Why not have a look at the qualifications Paul lists in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 for the qualities required of the 'overseer' (minister) of a church. Do you agree with his list? Would you say the same for your church today, or would your list be different in any way? The needs of Coggeshall and Great Notley in the year 2012 are not necessarily exactly the same as the needs of the church in Ephesus 2,000 years ago. The priorities given to Timothy was good advice for them then, but what would you keep and what would you change for today?

We want to reassure you that Louise and I have been very happy in Coggeshall and Great Notley and our only motivation for the move has been the personal reason given. We will be sad to say goodbye to many dear friends and will miss our involvement with many people in so many different church groups and activities.

'Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.' (2 Peter 3:18)

Mike