

HDU Farewell

You just know that one day it will be time to say goodbye. To move on and start to walk pastures new. And you know that from the very beginning. Whether you are a long serving vicar or one who breezes in and moves on quickly to another more senior role, you know that you will play just a small part in the much bigger and longer and wider story of what God is doing in Sunningdale.

January 1998 we arrived with a little family, great plans and high hopes for what God might achieve here.

As Vicar of Sunningdale you have a care, of course, for those who come to church and for those who don't. And over 18 years you see comings and goings, hellos and farewells many times over. This time it is we who are saying goodbye.

It has been a huge privilege to share life with so many different kinds of people – at the exciting times of the birth of a baby, or a wedding. As well as in the heartache and crushing pain of an illness, a tragedy, a bereavement or a death.

This has been the place we will always remember as our family home. You have heard me say before that our kitchen table has heard many conversations, has witnessed much joy and laughter and has offered hospitality to some wonderful friends.

We had initially thought that leaving the house for the last time would be hard – but God was gracious and had prepared us all for moving on. We had our final weekend, celebrating and enjoying our favourite things. On the Monday, the removal men came (at 7.30 in the morning) and the transition began. For the last three weeks I have been a bit of a commuter.

I am so very grateful to you for your trust and your support in so many ways over the years. We have had our ups and downs – any church does over a period of time. But we have seen God's amazing faithfulness, his refusal to be denied and his plan and purpose worked out – even when we were not too sure of the next step.

Kathryn and I were very moved and humbled by your wanting to help us and to be with us for Zoe and Ed's wedding just two years ago this week. This expression of love on your part meant more than we can say.

I want to leave you with a gift ... a small card which contains some important words. It was tempting to use my favourite psalm, Psalm 132:1: O Lord, remember David and all the hardships he has endured!

The words are not from this psalm but from today's reading from Philemon ...

When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus.

I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.

I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you ...

On the reverse is our address, phone number and e-mail. We do hope that you will come and be with us on 29 September if you can and whether you are able to do that or not, you might find us in Farnham in the autumn in the centre of town and come and see us to say hello.

I am very hopeful about the future for HTS. The Wardens are on it. The PCC is on it. The profile is well on in the preparation stage and moving towards its first draft.

Please do pray for us as we will for you. We all have much to be thankful to God for.

We would like to sign off with a musical gift from the family ... written while we were away last weekend.