

Dear Friends,

How to measure an appointment? In terms of preaching appointments, committees chaired, sermons preached or articles written? Or else it could be described as 4 years, 3 major property schemes, 1 pandemic, 3 lock downs and the birth of 1 grandson to join our 4 granddaughters. I guess you could say it's been an eventful time! It has also been an unusual appointment because I have not been asked to officiate at any baptisms or weddings, although I did act as authorised person ('registrar') once at Godalming. I have had the privilege of officiating at a handful of funerals, and I have preached twice at Guildford Cathedral, for the University Carol Service. I have valued the support of circuit lay employees, circuit officers and church members, the fellowship of colleague ministers & supernumeraries and I have learnt much from being part of the multifaith chaplaincy. Weekly Zoom meetings with other superintendent ministers were a real source of blessing, especially during the worst of the pandemic.

Whatever activity we are involved in, it is important to know when to finish. Having set off to the Salvation Army training college in 1975 and entering Methodist Ministry in 1987 it is definitely now time to hang up my cassock. And so, retirement beckons as we move back to one of the two circuits where I previously served for 10 years. I hope to share quality time with Hilary and the family while we still enjoy reasonable health.

Last Sunday I made the 'mistake' of choosing the hymn, *Lord, you have come to the seashore* (STF 558). On so many levels it triggers deep emotions for me at the best of times, because I identify with so many of the sentiments expressed very beautifully in the hymn, which is set to an equally lovely lilting melody. At this time of transition its effect was very powerful for me. After a lifetime of itinerancy, we will be settling in our 'forever home', thanks to the help of Methodist Ministers Housing Society and the generosity of the local preacher who bequeathed the property back when I happened to be her superintendent. Little did anyone realise that, in the providence of God, Hilary & I would be the first supernumerary couple to reside there (it has been rented out commercially for 14 years.) It feels like an example of God's providential way.

So, thank you for the kindness and support you have given me. I am grateful for the use of the Guildford manse, and its location, and for the honour of exercising presbyteral ministry. Obviously, I realise that ordination is for life,

and doesn't expire on sitting down, though I am told that it becomes easier to say 'no'. Thank you for the lovely letters and cards and generous gifts we have received. In the words of Edward Turney, we go 'in the strength of the Lord, in paths he has marked for our feet'.

God be with you till we meet again.

Keith

Keith C. Beckingham

Superintendent Minister