

Yesterday at our 10am service yesterday, and with a heavy heart, I made the announcement that I have made the decision to retire and therefore leave my post as Vicar for the parish of Wrecclesham. While this is sooner than I anticipated, I believe this is the right time – and my last service at St Peter's will be 10am on Sunday 10th August.

I have written the following letter for the June Magazine and will share it with you now because it sums up everything I hold on my heart about the gracious gift God bestowed upon me when he sent me here to be with you all and to serve Wrecclesham as Vicar for the Parish....

"It has been a wonderful journey together and I pray that like me, you will have a sense of being all the richer for it, spiritually and in the spirit of friendship and fellowship.

From the time I arrived you have all been so open and welcoming and together we have worked faithfully to draw church and community closer together to the point where we can say that we are all one in the bond of peace and friendship.

We have celebrated baptisms and weddings, we have wept and lamented at funerals and the departing of dear friends and we have enjoyed social gathering of one kind and another - quizzes and tea parties, barn dances and Christmas wassail, wreath making and jigsaw festivals - and many times of fun and joy along the way!

I came out of my curacy post having served at a lovely church - St John's Merrow – and had no idea that I was to be blessed equally and beyond with the most special and wonderful incumbency post here at Wrecclesham, St Peter's Church – a beautiful church and equally beautiful church family – inside and out!

It has been an absolute privilege to have served here – my first and only incumbency post as vicar – and I have no doubt that I have had the best, and that God had blessed me richly when I found my way to you all here, not only in the church community but the wider, wonderful community spirit of Wrecclesham and even more widely, Farnham.

During these past seven years I have been able to learn about what it means to be a priest in this place, and to live out God's love the best I can as with as much Jesus joy and passion for God's people – the best I can - and with a lot of faithful help from like-minded people along the way! Together we have ensured that on our watch, St Peter's has truly been an authentic example of how to stand at the heart of the community, *offering in Christ's name a warm welcome, faithful witness and loving service – and much fun!*

One of the most pivotal teachings I hold firm to today came right at the beginning of my journey to ordination, when I read a book by Michael Ramsey on being a priest. I was told that the best thing is to simply go out and bring God's love to those around you – no

bells and whistles – just being oneself – warts and all – sharing God's love for us with others – through the church – in the name of Jesus – the good shepherd of the flock – that we 'go to God in prayer for the people, and we go to the people in prayer for God....' I would like to think that I have been able to offer that even in part.

Of course, what Michael Ramsey didn't say in his book – and what I have been so blessed to discover – is just how much of that Godly love I would receive in return, and how much love of the people I would receive in return, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for that gift which I will always treasure and give thanks for in days to come.

Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to be your priest and vicar, for giving me the support, friendship and space to be able to do so and to discover what it means to live out a sacramental life here on the ground as part of this lovely body of Christ that is St Peter's Church, St Peter's School and our wider community.

I might be physically going away from the parish, but in reality, I will always be here with you in spirit as you will be with me – and actually, it is not even a breath away in distance when it comes to being part of the blessed body of Christ – and part of his circle of eternal love and friendship.

Out of sight but never ever out of mind... The Lord Bless you and Keep you always my dear, dear friends....

With love and blessings, Jacqueline