

Dear friends,

Keith has asked me to write this month's letter, to coincide with Bishop John giving permission for ministry in retirement at St. Stephens. Keith has very kindly invited me to preach and celebrate occasionally.



After 41 years of full-time paid ministry, having to deal with the varied and sometimes challenging tasks that ministry brings, I retired. Ministry began as a Church Army Captain at St. Margaret Toxteth, just after the riots, and then onto the Good Shepherd, West Derby, doing detached youth work in Norris Green. During that period, Ruth and I were married, and our two children arrived.

Then God came calling again; that voice that you cannot ignore. After two years of lectures and essays on the Northern Ordination course, I became curate at Christ Church Padgate. I was Vicar at St Margaret and All Hallows Church, Orford, Warrington, then moved to Golborne on the edge of Wigan. St. Thomas' Church joined with St. Lukes and St. Marys, Lowton in a team ministry during that time. My last post was at St. Mary's, Waterloo and St. Faith's Church in Great Crosby.

After this, Ruth and I moved into a house in Crosby, with Socks, the family dog and twenty-five goldfish. We have spent the last year renovating the house we live in and I have had to brush up my DIY skills. Ruth is the house design expert with the skill of selecting colours that look good together.

Finding myself retired in December 2023, I began to look for a new worshipping community. St. Stephens have been very welcoming, and I look forward to getting to know you all better.

Most preachers tend to have recurring themes, and you will know them after sitting through a few sermons. They do develop and change over time, as we continue to read new books and the world changes around us.

For me, the centre of our faith is a man called Jesus, who speaks of, and lives out the love of God our Father. He gathered a group of people into a community to live out that love in the world. A community that practiced the forgiveness and love, exemplified on the cross. A community that is inspired and fired by the Holy Spirit, to love the world that Jesus died for.

There are lots of communities of Christians today worshipping, praying and forgiving. St. Stephens is one of them.

***I look forward to working with you,
John***