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Dear friends,

The retirement of John Gladwin as Bishop marks the end of an era. There will now be an interregnum of around a year when Bishop Laurie will be covering a lot of the duties associated with the Bishop of Chelmsford. The joke doing the rounds is it takes that long to find a suitable person whose name is John. Before John Gladwin it was John Perry. Before him it was John Waine. He was preceded by Albert John Trillo and before him John Tiarks. The first Bishop of Chelmsford, consecrated in 1914 was John Ditchfield. So the statement, "His name is John," did not just apply when asked of the father of John the Baptist! Those of us who have had any involvement with Bishop John have known him to be a straight talking man of integrity and deep convictions. Everyone who knew him will miss him, and that will include Michael in the hairdressers opposite the church where the Bishop went regularly and lamented the fact that there was increasingly less for Michael to do on each visit! I am sure we all wish Bishop John and his wife Lydia a long and healthy retirement. Though knowing Bishop John, he is already planning ministry for the future and activities he will undertake in the service of God. Frances Drake used to say that she was not retiring, but "redirecting energies". These are wise words and apply to any Christian who is always looking to serve God.

We share the delight with our neighbouring benefice on the appointment of the Revd. Jean Halliday as their new incumbent. Jean has been much admired in her role as Diocesan Child Protection Officer, a role she will combine with her new responsibilities. I know that everyone will take Jean to their heart and welcome her warmly to the wider community.

Sue has had the pleasure of attending a number of ordinations this year in her wider ministry. This is always a great privilege and a reminder of the ever changing ministry of the church. In

2007 552 clergy were newly ordained, with 595 entering training. I spoke at a briefing meeting for the new people to be licensed in the Diocese for the ministry of Reader. I enjoy my role as Local Advisor for Readers in the deanery as it enables me to work alongside those called to this important ministry. I spoke at the recent series of Churches Together meetings about the Church of England and reminded everyone that there are over 20,000 licensed ministers in the C. of E. including Readers and Church Army Officers. There are also 1,600 chaplains in the armed forces, hospitals and prisons. These figures do not include the over 7,000 retired clergy, most of whom are still very active in ministry. Clearly the Church of England is a force for good in our society and I trust it is something that we treasure.

When we look at our two lovely Grade 1 listed churches, they should speak to us of both the history of the mission in our local communities and also of their continuing relevance of bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to people and helping them to see the values by which God encourages people to live. But of course the Church is more than the building. The involvement of church people in the wider community is immense. We have many school governors, councillors, those involved with local societies, all kinds of voluntary groups as well as people simply being good neighbours and quietly helpful to those in need. The church is alive and active in our community, as God would desire. The historic role of the church in the community was well demonstrated by the Mayor of Brentwood, Tony Sleep, wanting to re-establish a Civic Service for the borough and asking that we host it. The church was packed for a very memorable occasion. The Church Junior School Choir sang. Sue led the service and I had the honour to preach. I reminded everyone that Christian values and prayer should underpin all public service and quoted the prayer read before each sitting of the House of Commons. If all those who worked there had followed the principles in the prayer, public life would be held in higher esteem. Christian values of humility, integrity and honesty should be at the heart of all life. One of the roles of the Church is to remind everyone of this reality.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*