

The Rectory, 1 Rectory Close, Fryerning Lane, Ingatestone,
CM40DB

01277352562 patrick.sherring@fryerningparishchurch.org.uk

Dear friends,

Change is really the only given in life. We like to pretend sometimes that nothing changes, but the reality is that we all know we are fooling ourselves if we think this is the case. We only need to look into the mirror to know of the reality of change in our own lives. I have often used the analogy of life being a journey and through any journey we experience change.

In our Church life we also experience change, in both personnel and in the way things are done. If we did not, then the Church would be static and it would not reflect the dynamic world, a world of change, that God has made. We are experiencing considerable change in personnel at the moment, and we need to express our gratitude.

Sylvia Benson has been organist at St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church for over ten years. During that period she has been the backbone of the music in the Church, guiding the choir and choosing the hymns. Sylvia has adapted positively to a period that has seen considerable change, providing music for an increasing repertoire of types of worship, respecting traditional music, but also being open to music of the modern era.

John Prichard has been a Reader in the Church of England for forty years. The congregation at Ingatestone has particularly benefited from John's ministry, but he has also led worship at Fryerning and regularly at Margaretting and Mountnessing. Those who know John cannot help but be impressed by his energy and commitment.

Duncan Stewart has been P.C.C. Secretary at St. Mary the Virgin, Fryerning for over ten years. During that period, one of considerable change, everyone will have been impressed by Duncan's dedication and efficiency. It is usual practice for Duncan to produce minutes of a meeting almost instantly and

for those on the P.C.C. to have them in their hands inside 48 hours.

We all need to acknowledge the debt of gratitude that we owe to Sylvia, John and Duncan. The Church is, of course, the people who attend. It is right that we should spend time considering our buildings and how they can be adapted for our use to serve God. Our Christian brothers and sisters down the centuries have always done the same. Both of our churches would be practically unrecognisable inside to anyone who worshipped in them 150 years ago. Church buildings are always 'work in progress'. But churches without people would be just empty shells. It is the people who make the churches. It is also lay people who provide a sense of continuity. Sylvia, John and Duncan have all worked with a number of clergy. In all walks of life it is appropriate for people to retire from their positions, and this is the case in relation to Sylvia, John and Duncan. They have all made their marks in the long history of ministry in our ancient Church buildings.

As we enter the season of Lent, traditionally we enter a time for self-examination, a time for looking at our own life and seeing just how we are undertaking our Christian journey. As time moves on, if we are not careful, we never take time to stock and re-evaluate. Many of the older people in our parishes have fond memories of the Revd. Monty Knott. I was delighted to help him celebrate his 100th birthday. I was also pleased that I was able to be at his bungalow, along with Sue, to say prayers before the funeral directors arrived. In many chats with Monty he would talk of his life, being aged 50 when he was ordained. He had seen enormous changes in his life. His conversation was always of his love of God and knowing God's presence with him throughout the changes. Our Lent courses this year look at where God is when we make all kinds of choices in our journey through life, including in facing death. I do hope you consider coming along to these sessions, Tuesday evenings at the URC. For God is there to help us through all the changes of life. For our faith is dynamic, not static, in the same way that our lives are dynamic and not static. The same is true of our Churches.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*.