

Dear Friends,

It has been both a joy and a pleasure to be priest in charge of Balcombe. Pennie and I are so grateful for the many kindnesses, love and goodwill that we have received whilst we have been here. I do not want to leave when I have lost energy, and would like some left for the organising and living out my retirement. We will of course have an interest in the continuing life of the village and its people.

There is a sensible protocol that outgoing clergy do not judge or impinge upon the ministry of their successor. Due to the wonder of our creator God, She has made us all different, individual and precious. When my mother was not so enamored by a priest she would say in all charity "It's not the person that counts but the sacrament and the service". Then, "I am sure he is a holy man you know". Of me she often said, "Oh no Desmond and you're a priest". Almost in despair.

I, like you, will look forward to the appointment of a new priest in charge which I expect will take some time. Then it will take them some time to get used to the parish and its ways. I expect that the Churchwardens, Parochial Church Council, Patron and Bishop will make a wise and valuable decision about succession.

It has been my playful suspicion for many years, that we have an extra parishioner. Sometimes in Church things disappear, reappear, change, and move without explanation. Is it just possible that a previous priest or priests collectively, with a sense of humour, have a giggle at another priest's occasional confusion? My thoughts are prompted by little things that probably only a priest would notice. My rational side says 99.9% impossible. However if there is a vacancy, I may join in one day.

Perhaps I will drop in as I pass through Balcombe, just to remember people and a place where we enjoyed and shared much kindness, love and fun. It helps to leave when the countryside looks very beautiful, as does the Church. Soon the Half Moon will be open again.

It will be as good as ever to have a pint of Harveys.

Thanks for reading.

Love,

Desmond and Pennie