

David's Report to the APCM on 7 April 2024

When I first came to St John's, it was as an Interim Minister, and it was for just 18 months, and which was then extended by a further 3 years.

I've now completed 4.5 years here, and my contract as an Interim Minister comes to an end next Sunday.

Monica and I didn't plan or choose that our last Sunday with you would be next Sunday, 14 April. But next Sunday is when we do leave as my license on that day expires, and I will be retiring.

We leave with a very heavy heart, because we have grown to love you and respect you so much. But we also know this is God's timing for us, and for St John's.

We have learnt so much from you, and hopefully we have all learnt together, a little more what it means to be disciples of Jesus - disciples loving God, disciples loving each other, and disciples loving our community, city and world – UP, IN and OUT!

We are so grateful to you, and of course so grateful to God.

St John's belongs to Jesus. It's His church, and He is the head. And He is building His church.

Monica and I leave, confident that God's plans for St John's will prevail.

And the plans for St John's are very exciting. Normally what happens when a vicar leaves, a church goes into an interregnum, there's a vacancy.

Often no dedicated church leader is appointed for many, many months, and sometimes the gap can be more than a year, and there's rarely any guarantee that the outgoing vicar will be replaced. But here it's different.

The Diocese really wants to back us, to support us, recognising that God has His hand upon us. So as most of you know, another leader has already been appointed.

Rev Luke begins here, after a short gap, and he arrives on 23 June.

He will be full time; I was part time. He will have responsibility for just this church, which is unusual. And there is a significant amount of financial support we will be receiving from the Diocese for salaries, and to help to improve the building - all to enable St John's to prosper and flourish.

And St John's already benefits from having Rev Olusegun, as our Associate Minister.

This is really good news.

In thinking about what to say for this meeting – my last Annual Meeting, I've decided to share a passage from Ephesians, a letter you'll be looking at Sunday by Sunday until Luke arrives in June.

Ephesians 3:14-21 *A Prayer for the Ephesians*

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on

*earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with **power** through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have **power**, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his **power** that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Paul has already made it clear in Ephesians chapter 1, that the Lord Jesus, raised from the dead, who is seated at the right hand of God the Father, is head over everything, head of the Church, head of St John's. And now Paul is praying for these young Christians in Ephesus.

And he kneels before the Father.

Prayer is the key

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 to pray in the Spirit on all occasions

So St John's – keep on praying, as Monica and I will continue to pray for you.

Pray on Sundays, pray in the week, pray online, pray in your homes, pray at work, pray on your own, pray with others.

Paul prays here for one thing – **Power**, having confidence in God's **power**.

Power for you individually. **Power** for you collectively as God's family here at St John's.

Power that Christ may strengthen you, in your inner being, deep within you. **Power** that Christ may dwell in your hearts. **Power** that Christ may help you to be rooted, and established in love – having deep roots and firm foundations in Jesus.

Power that you may know how wide, and how long, and how high, and how deep is the love of Christ for you, and for all the Lord's people, a love shown by your support of one another, by upholding one another, and by encouraging one another. **Power** that you may be filled with all the fullness of Christ.

And finally, whatever you are planning for the future, hoping for, dreaming of, for yourselves and for St John's, could well be, and probably is, far, far too small. Why?

Because through the **power** of God at work within you, He is able to do far, far more than you can ask or imagine.

To him be glory, in the church, and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Thank you! We do hope to see you next Sunday.

David

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