

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT - AUTUMN 2026

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND PRAYERFULLY

“the sons of Issachar (who) understood the times and knew what Israel ought to do”.

(1 Chronicles 12:32)

It has always struck me that the sons of Issachar must have been very useful people to have around! The gift of understanding what God is doing now and how to respond accordingly is one of the greatest gifts we can have on our journey through life. The spiritual journey is not a static one, as the very word ‘journey’ implies, and we should never assume that what is good for today will be equally good for tomorrow. God is moving on and invites us to follow, and in fact Jesus’ first invitation to His disciples was simply “Follow Me”. I hope that during my time here we can all say we have moved on with God, and found that in doing so He has proved faithful and true to all His promises.

In early July Tracey had her regular CT scan and at our review with her oncologist we were shocked to learn that the cancer in her chest wall lymph nodes has become more active which means the treatment she has been having has ceased to work effectively. Although we understand full well that Tracey’s ongoing treatment is not promising a cure, only a slowing of the rate of progression, this news was still hard to hear. Due to this recent finding she has undergone 5 further sessions of radiotherapy, and we now stand poised for a different regime of anti-cancer medication too - not quite knowing what that will hold. These fresh revelations always bring with them shock, disappointment, and the sense that life has once again become profoundly uncertain. That said, we know and trust that our lives are in God’s loving hands and we take each day as it comes. We also continue to pray for God’s healing as we know that nothing is impossible with God.

In the light of this reality, and given the fact that I am now 65, along with the fact that my energies have been at full stretch for quite a time now, I do not feel able to continue in my ministry here in the Benefice. I sense that we are at a critical moment in our journey as a family of churches. I think we now have a window of maybe 3-4 years in which the Benefice will need to pursue mission more vigorously, continue to grow in prayer, and look to exploring new ways of being church, whilst treasuring the old ways too. This kind of robust vision requires considerable energy to lead, and I simply do not have that energy any more.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the significant sacrifices that Tracey has made over the past 3 years of her cancer journey in order to allow me the expenditure of time and energy needed to do my work here. That is time she could well have claimed as rightfully her own, but she has never failed to support me wholeheartedly throughout my time in post here, even to her own cost. I feel now it is right to give her my wholehearted time and attention which retirement will make possible.

Therefore, in the light of the above, I need to announce that I will be retiring from my post at the end of November with my last Sunday being Sunday 22nd November 2026 - the Feast of Christ the King. Incidentally, as Bishop Michael pointed out when I told him this news, this date seemed most apt as it is the last day of the church year.

I know this will come as a shock to many of you, but please rest assured that this decision has only come after much thought and prayer. We first came to Martock for the Parish visit on the 5th November 2020 and I accepted the post on the 6th November 2020. I count my time here in the Benefice as the very best years of my ministerial career. Despite the personal pressures and challenges of the days since Tracey's diagnosis we have still enjoyed fun and laughter plus a true sense of being part of God's precious family in this Benefice. We both want to thank every one of you for your love, support, prayers and friendship over the past years. In addition, our thanks to all of you who faithfully work so tirelessly to make our churches the wonderful communities they are; we could not have come so far without your exceptional efforts.

I will spend my remaining time here making every effort to be sure that everything is left in the best order possible, to work with all our PCC's to prepare for the ensuing vacancy, and above all to ensure we proclaim effectively what a great incumbency this is to attract your future Vicar as soon as possible.

With our love, prayers and blessings always

Paul & Tracey xx

(& Poppy  xx)

14 August 2026