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Dear friends

Falmouth & Gwennap Circuit - Pastoral Letter September 2020

As I write, we are all holding Rev Robbie in our prayers. He is still cheerful and is in good spirits. He is at peace, as he enjoys his remaining days with Ruth and their children Hannah and Dan. Robbie's Mum, Marilyn, is staying with them, as well as Ruth's Mum, Jean, and other family members are coming to support as they can. We remember them all in prayer. The ministers are visiting Robbie - one each day at the moment - and writing a daily update and a prayer for distribution round the Circuit.

On Monday, when I visited Robbie, he told me that he had made up his mind that he wanted to hand over the role of Superintendent of the Circuit. It had been decided some time ago that, when the time came, I would succeed Robbie. Although both I and Steve Wild, Chair of the District, told Robbie that it was not necessary at the moment, he had made up his mind, so I was officially appointed as Superintendent this week.

You have exchanged one Superintendent who loves trains and who lived and worked in West Africa, for another Superintendent who loves trains and who lived and worked in West Africa! In addition, we are both married to people called Ruth. And there the similarity ends. Although I am much taller than him, I will always look up to Robbie. His will be large shoes to fill. We all know that we have a huge debt of gratitude that we owe to Robbie and his lovely family for all they have brought to this Circuit. Robbie's faith and commitment, and his certainty of God's love surrounding him have been a remarkable witness to us in itself. His good humour and enthusiasm have been infectious. We have laughed as well as prayed with Robbie! We give thanks to God for his ministry in our midst, and for the way that he has inspired us.

I will endeavour to serve as faithfully as Robbie, though I am, inevitably, a different person, and will undertake the role in the best way I can. I feel blessed to have come to the Falmouth and Gwennap Circuit, and to have made so many good friends. I know that the support you have given to Robbie will be given to me, too, and I am grateful for that. I am reminded of Elisha, when he was preparing to take over from Elijah. He asked for some of the gifts that Elijah possessed to help him as he took over his mantle. I feel the same! I am grateful for the confidence shown in me by the Circuit Leadership Team.

The new Methodist year started on 1st September, and this was due to be the last one for Rev Liz in her first appointment here in the Falmouth and Gwennap Circuit. However, Liz has offered to stay for an additional three years (so until 2024), and the Circuit Team enthusiastically supported that. The Circuit Meeting has had the opportunity to raise any objections. Completely unsurprisingly, no-one has made anything other than the most positive of comments, so we are delighted that we can confirm that we will continue to enjoy the ministry of Liz and John. I am sure you will want to join the celebrations at this news! I am personally very pleased because I need the help of Liz, our colleagues Pastor Jenny and Deacon Jane, our Circuit Stewards Jenny, Tracy and Giles, and, of course, our source of all knowledge and Circuit Administrator, Chris, as I get to grips with my new role and we look to serve the Circuit in the future.

We are aware that there is much uncertainty around. Some churches have resumed their services, while others have yet to make the decision to start. Some members feel comfortable being at church, while others feel it is a risk that they are unwilling or unable to take. These decisions are rightly made at a local level, and no-one should feel pressured to re-open a church building or to attend a service if they are not ready for it.

Many of you have watched the online services that our ministry team have produced each Sunday, and Wednesday Worship which is brought to you mainly by Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. I have received many very positive comments about these services, and I know that they are greatly appreciated. We plan to continue these for the foreseeable future, as we are aware that they fulfil a need for our members and friends who are unable to attend worship in our buildings at present.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been unable to hold many of our normal meetings. However, the time has come for us to work out ways in which we can hold some the most important ones, such as the Annual Church Meeting. Your minister will work with you to find ways of arranging these meetings. We want to involve everyone entitled to attend, but it will be challenging to achieve that.

The new regulations that are due to come into force on Monday will bring us further challenges, though we understand (and hope) that Church services will be able to continue. When rules begin to be relaxed again in the future, we need to take the opportunity to see where God is leading us. It is likely to be different from the past, and will unsettle some of us. But it has all the potential to be an exciting adventure, as we travel with God to build his kingdom. Let's step out in faith together!

God bless you all.

Love

Andrew

Rev Andrew Mumford

Superintendent Minister

Falmouth and Gwennap Methodist Circuit