

The Rectory,  
Escrick

Dear Friends,

### **So long!**

It seems a generation ago that I first thought of applying to come to the benefice of Escrick, Stillingfleet and Naburn in 1996, and here we are twenty five years later. We arrived in July, but because of moving and holiday I was not licensed until September. At the time our youngest daughter was one year old and now she is to be married in Escrick church in early June.

Computers and mobile phones were not really part of parish ministry much then, but how could we do without them now. Naburn church was up for sale (now restored and re-opened) and much work has been done to the fabric of our churches with the help of many grants, local fundraising and dedicated parishioners. Sometimes we can take it for granted that our parish churches are always there for us in times of need and celebration. They bear witness to the faith of past generations and we are charged with passing them on to the next. These past fourteen months or so with the Coronavirus Pandemic to cope with our lives have had to adapt to not meeting, worshipping at home or on Zoom! When we have not been able to socialize with family, friends and those in our communities we realize how important our relationships are and how we should nurture them.

Churches are there to facilitate the sharing of learning about God, in the community and in our church schools. They are focusses for community in themselves but they need the vibrancy of worship and prayer to play their part, they are expressions of faith and places of faith but cannot exist without a worshipping community.

Perhaps the most challenging task for all our church communities is to make known the gospel to younger generations. Today we as churches do this through schools, through "Open the book", "messy church" and "Open door", but we also need to reach young adults as children will not be introduced to the gospel unless their parents are engaged.

One of the lessons from the recent pandemic is that mental health is important to our wellbeing. One of the sayings of Jesus was that he came "to bring life in all its fulness". Evangelism sometimes has a bad press, but surely life in all its fulness is something as Christian communities we must all share in whatever way we can.

Can I ask for God's blessing on you, as a man of faith I have my story to tell but then so do you. What has God done in your life? What does the gospel of Jesus mean to you? Hold on to it, but don't keep it fast, share it as best you can.

Yours, Richard.