

September 2017

Dear friends

We are all very familiar with the pattern of the liturgical seasons that defines the Christian year. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Pentecost take us from early winter to mid-summer. Each is traditionally represented by a colour, which is sometimes used in church and clergy decoration, as well of course being sourced by our lectionary cycle of reading which teach us about the seasons. By far the longest period though is noted as 'ordinary time'. To break up the potential lack of preparation followed by exciting celebrations, the Methodist Church has inserted its very own special, extra season. You won't find it detailed in any liturgical calendar, but it is real enough nonetheless. It is the season of 'Well'. It lasts throughout August and begins with 'Farewell Sunday' and ends with 'Welcome service.'

Of course I jest a little, but for ministers and their families August often means more than a time for holiday. Belinda and I, as well as Choi and Nadine, have just experienced the full effects of the 'Well' season. We have shed many tears of sadness and thankfulness. We have left places where we were comfortable and in control, to new contexts and challenges which inevitably make us feel anxious. Families and friends have patiently understood and taken on board changes that were not of their making. Most of the season is of course filled with dealing with sheer upheaval of moving to a new place. There are very physical and obvious bits to that, in packing and unpacking, trying to squeeze furniture and possessions which had come to fit so well in one place, into rooms and cupboards of very different shapes and dimensions.

Then there are less obvious but much more significant things. Finding out about new communities, finding our way round, building new relationships with people. All of course punctuated by personal welcomes and rounded off with the Welcome Service. With the beginning of September, the season ends and we once again enter 'ordinary time' with only the prospect of Harvest and Remembrance to distract us before Advent.

Perhaps the most important feature of the official welcome is the assurance that things will indeed be 'well'. That is the heartfelt hope of both ministers and congregations. For all the physical and emotional stress experienced by those of us on the move, it is important to recognise too that congregations, communities and existing colleagues all face challenge and uncertainty in this time of transition.

As the new team of ordained ministers begin to settle, and develop understandings of challenge and opportunities we bear in mind the need to listen to one another and understand the pain of uncertainty and loss felt across circuit life. As new ministers have arrived we also acknowledge that circuit steward team has in recent times changed too, including a new treasurer. Growing this corner of God's kingdom is a joint enterprise and we will need to walk together with patience and understanding. Change and growth take time and lots of prayer.

On behalf of all the 'newbies' - I would like to record my thanks for all the work put in by circuit stewards, Manse Committee and volunteers, and so many others, in making our arrivals in Croydon as hassle free as possible and particularly for ensuring that our Manses were spick and span. A particular thank you to Margaret as she stands down as senior steward. This year has not been an easy one for her as she has steered the circuit through a complex round of ministerial stationing. I am sure we are all grateful for her dedication and good humour.

Finally, a question. If Advent and Lent are represented by the colour purple, Pentecost by red and so on – what colour should we adopt for the season of Well? Answers on a postcard please....

God bless

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Andrew', with a horizontal line underneath.