

An Introduction to Rev Richard Atkinson and Family



When the list of available appointments was published it provides a geography test as you try to work out where various places are. Aylesbury, I confess required a map to discover its precise location. We have spent the last twenty-one years on familiar ground living in places of which we had

knowledge and experience beforehand, moving to somewhere new is a bit like our first appointment which was very much a venture into the unknown. However, as Methodists, one is always aware of our Connexional nature which usually manifests itself with people with whom there is a link. We have already “discovered” three people who know friends of ours and there will be doubtless be more connections once we arrive. This is one of the things I love about our Church, these connections that hopefully make new surroundings feel less intimidating, that remind us we are one family. So time to write the ‘here we come’ letter and give you a little insight into what you might expect. I suppose I am becoming a veteran, as the Vale of Aylesbury will be my fifth appointment as a Methodist minister having previously served in Nottingham, Clitheroe, Bradford (as a school chaplain) and latterly in Skipton where we have been for the last 10 years. Prior to candidating I spent four years teaching history in Tunbridge Wells. I am a proud Lancastrian having been born in North Manchester and then moved around the north of England with my Dad’s job. Aylesbury will be home number 17, so moving is nothing new and offers an opportunity to have a clear out!! My wife Louise and I will celebrate our 28th wedding anniversary the day after we move into the Manse. She is a teacher of History, vice principal in her current school. She has always been involved in church life pursuing her cherished ambition of one day being a “proper minister’s wife!!”

We have two; Ben will be 25 soon after we arrive. He has a Masters in Music then spent eighteen months living and working in France and Germany before

returning home to work as a teaching assistant. This resulted in him being offered a maternity cover teaching music. He has so enjoyed the experience that he will be starting a PGCE in September to become a qualified teacher. Our daughter Fran will be 22 and about to enter the final year of a Social Care degree in Cheltenham after a change of course. She is very involved in church life and will be spending some of the summer volunteering at various Christian camps sharing something of faith with the youngsters who attend. She has a keen sense of humour, writes for and performs with the university Drama Society. I am the family cook, something I find really relaxing. And love trying out new recipes and cuisines. I am a huge music fan spending my last sabbatical looking at the way music influences our spirituality. I am an advocate of how instrumental music is more able to enhance our spirituality because it demands an imaginative response. Words often drive a reaction unless of course they are in a language we do not understand when it feels more like an instrumental piece. Listening to music is a means of encountering God, it is one of his greatest gifts to us. In addition we are both history graduates so this influences how we like to spend our free time. Then there are the quirks; the folk in Skipton will talk of tea which is insipid without milk while the children will tell of family holidays abroad and Dad declining menus in English and risking ordering things he has no idea about what they are. In ministry my primary hope is to enable conversations about faith within and beyond the walls of the church. Too often folk are held back because they think all around them have a stronger more confident faith, we all need the courage to display our vulnerability and dare to talk, in the hope this will aid faith development. We are all on a journey remembering key points from the past and hoping for significance looking into the future. I think this a model which enables a cherishing of what has been, alongside an enthusiasm for what will be. Please bear with us as we try to learn names, work out relationships and how things are “normally” done. May our communal journey be one in which we all find blessing.

Richard