

A REFLECTION FROM RICHARD

We are living in peculiar times. One of the real challenges of ministry is the time of transition, when you are dealing with the excitement of moving to a new challenge contrasted with the sadness of impending departure, leaving people and the familiar behind. I confess I have been savouring my favourite view hereabouts. It is my Thursday night delight for part of the year as I return home from a house group in one of the villages near to Skipton. It is not famous but it has been a regular thing for me: as the road turns, and from the advantage of height, the valley sprawls out before me and it has a rare beauty. Equally there are the folk with whom I have journeyed over the past 10 years who like me are feeling the pain of impending departure.

Don't get me wrong - we are very excited about moving south and the exciting journey that lies ahead - but there is a rare beauty discovered in the people, and places that we will leave behind. Transition can be hard: the thought of trying to learn names, discover relationships and getting used to the new geography is not adding to the thrill of moving. What is intriguing is the stories of pilgrimage that will emerge as we arrive, settle and become part of the life of AMC, and then the even more exciting dimension of where our collective journey may take us as we seek the Spirit's guidance for the future.

I think the idea of pilgrimage is central to our faith that we are, to quote the hymn, "a wandering, travelling race." This is true whether we have moved about or if we have stayed in the same place. We have the privilege of blending what has been, where we are now and the way the future will map out, all safe in the knowledge of the God who journeys with us. So, these are exciting times as we await where God will lead us.

I am so grateful to Helen, who has rightly encouraged momentum and is now removing the foot from the pedal, for the church is much more than the person in the dog collar. We come to help shape the journey rather than impose a set of co-ordinates and expect everyone to follow. We are

a community of faith with no hierarchy, no elite - a people, hopefully intent on journeying together. You will read something of who we are in the Circuit Magazine; we come with our foibles and peculiarities, our strengths and our weaknesses, but with the belief that Aylesbury is where God has called us, and over the ensuing months and years we will hopefully together discern what God has in store.

I have no doubt when we come to say our farewells tears will be shed; we have been very happy in Yorkshire. Final visits and last services are emotional times because of the bonds of love developed over time. In a sense we will be fragile when we arrive, but safe in the knowledge that love awaits, for which we are so grateful

Blessings, Richard