

# An end and a new beginning

Rev'd Kaz reflects on her ministry and how Easter might prepare us for new seasons ahead



By now, most of you will have heard my news, but it was announced in church on Sunday 10th March that after 20 years of ordained ministry, I will be retiring on Sunday 30th June 2024. This decision has not been easy. There has been a lot of prayer and soul-searching and wrestling with God, but it is the best way forward for my health, and for St Peter's and St Elizabeth's. I was really hoping to make it to 70 (just shy at 69!), but it is important to know when to leave, and to leave well. By the time I retire in June, it will mark five years of my ministry here.

It is difficult to summarise over 20 years of ordained ministry in a nutshell; longer if I take into account my ministry before training. We are all called by God to ministry, not just clergy. My calling started the moment I gave my life to Jesus at 30. We have overcome so much as a church over the last five years. Can you believe that four years ago we were going through a pandemic? It all feels so recent, yet also so long ago. We had to find new and creative ways of being the church. We saw our church undergo a massive project in getting our services online so that we could worship together. It was never going to be the same as attending in person, but we made the best of it and it was a source of comfort for many. In spite of the hangover effect of COVID, we have seen real fruit in our outreach to schools, and to young families with Messy Church and the legacy left by Melissa Wearden, and also with the introduction of Contemporary Praise. It has been such a joy to see older generations welcome new generations - that is what discipleship is all about. We also officially became an Inclusive Church, which sends an important message that all will find a warm welcome here, whoever they are.

As we approach Easter, we are reminded of the events of Good Friday, of the moments that led to Jesus' death. For the disciples this was the end of all they had known. They thought it was over. Their master, their leader and friend was dead. In their despair they could not see the bigger picture of what Jesus was preparing them for; they did not understand what Jesus would accomplish on the cross. And so what was thought as the end, was in fact the germination of a new beginning, out of which the Church would scatter and multiply. Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you the truth, a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die to make many seeds. But if it never dies, it remains only a single seed" (John 12.24). Three days after Jesus' death, on Easter Sunday, Jesus would appear to his disciples alive. He had risen. He would then spend 40 days with them before ascending into Heaven (Acts 1). The promised Holy Spirit would come and empower the disciples (Acts 2), and thus the Church was born. In order for something new to happen, something needs to end. This is the way of the Kingdom of God. My ministry here is no different, much like the ministry of my predecessors. Although I'm retiring as vicar, I know my ministry will continue in new and unexpected ways.

I am sad to be leaving such good friends and co-labourers in Christ, but I have faith that good things await St Peter's and St Elizabeth's. I will be praying for you as you enter into this new season, please also pray for me as I enter into mine. Thankfully, I still have a few months left, so you're not rid of me just yet! I will be having a farewell party on Sunday 30th June, after the 10am service in the Assembly Rooms. More details to follow.

This Easter I hope you will discover afresh God's love for you through Christ crucified. Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Rev'd Kaz