

As Helen and I depart, we are thankful beyond words for your consistent hospitality and the enjoyment of being among you; we will indeed always remember our time here with enormous fondness.

However, there are some things which, even after 8 years, I still haven't managed to get done. (The iron gratings around graves in some churchyards are still illegal - be warned!) Nonetheless, there are a few things which did get done, eg, two church car parks, a toilet, a kitchenette - let alone the plethora of stuff behind the scenes. But actually these "achievements" were the result of other people's hard work and perseverance, so I wonder if I just happened to be here at the right time... So many impressive things have happened around here that I'm convinced the secret is this: you are an amazing collection and variety of Nor Folk! So, to have followed your various stars alongside you, metaphorically, has been both my joy and your blessing on me.

My last service is, appropriately, Holy Communion on Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany means a revealing, and refers to how some wise gentiles (in fact, Parsees lay claim to these "magi") were among the first to realise how critically important this revelation was for humanity, that God has come amongst us: a baby reliant on us for nurture in infancy, a rabbi reliant on us to understand our common mortality, a friend reliant on us for revealing the Divine, irrespective of our blurred perception of one another and of God.

The story of the Magi is that they came, spent some time in witness to what was going on, then returned to lives changed by the experience. The blessing the Magi took with them was to rise above being embroiled in the pettiness and envy found at Herod's palace, viz, the world at large. Hence they journeyed on by a different - better - route.

So the appropriateness of leaving at this time is that I, too, continue my journey in a different way; more informed of communities in which every last person can be known, less impressed by what the world at large thinks is important, more sure of how God is revealed in the vulnerability of personal encounter and its potential for love. By dint of my priesthood, I am confident to say to you that the Kingdom of Heaven has come near in this place, and will continue to do so in every act of kindness continued as you journey on through life together. And by that same privilege of priesthood, my blessing on you:

May the Holy Spirit breathe the fulness of life into each one of you;
May the witness of Jesus, the Christ, guide you in his Way;
May the God who forgives, welcomes, renews, loves, be yours.