

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : 10:00am *Celebrate Together*,
3rd Sunday after Trinity, July 2, 2017

Last Sunday morning's service was busy – with the baptism of Eliana and a visit from Mark to share what he has been doing in Mongolia. As if that wasn't enough excitement for one day, the young people created a fantastic banner to mark the 40 years ago since I was made a Deacon. I was enormously moved by such a kind and unexpected gesture from them and you which really made me feel at home even though I've only been here for the past two months. Thank you too for the card and cake which I'm glad we could all share – and the champagne which I couldn't easily share with you all – what a shame! No, I really was genuinely touched by your thoughtfulness and it came at just the right time as I was feeling, I will admit, a bit discombobulated. Let me explain. I'd been at the St Albans Festival the day before and had met up with some long-standing friends and seeing them again made me feel, well, a bit homesick for Hertfordshire. That and the fact that my old parish has not been able to appoint a successor the first time round has added to my sense of guilt at having left in the first place. Then when the Bishop of Hertford greeted me warmly and asked me if I wanted to come back to Potters Bar, it was the final straw. But you all changed that on Sunday morning. Many of the clergy who came here during the vacancy have told me what a welcoming and friendly congregation there is at Christ Church – and I have genuinely felt that since my arrival. People ask me if I am settling in Wimbledon – and, after last Sunday, I can firmly say a loud 'yes'. So thank you.

Now some of you, particularly the youngsters, may think it's a bit odd that an adult can feel homesick – but of course everyone can, whatever their age, as it is so easy to look back to the past, often through rose-tinted glasses, instead of looking forward to what the future holds. And it's natural to miss friends and familiar places. Yet I've always been a strong believer in trying to look forwards and not backwards. When learning to drive a car, reversing is much harder than is driving forwards.

And of course this time of year is one of great change for many, not least for our children and young people. Those in year 6 are getting ready to leave their junior school and move on to a new senior school. Then the older ones start to leave school for university and the world of work. Change is very much in the air.

I wonder what they are feeling about moving on: EXCITED? SAD? A LITTLE BIT AFRAID OF WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS? DO NOT FEAR – phrase on the banner you made for me – DO NOT FEAR.

40 years ago as I first put my dog collar on for the first time, started to prepare my first sermon, began the privilege of visiting people in their homes – I knew it was with God's help I was able to do this. **DO NOT FEAR.**

There are lots of other examples where we have to make changes Getting married. Having a baby. Changing school. Changing job. Moving house. All can very stressful – but then we can remember God's promise to us **"DO NOT FEAR"**.

What I want us to remember today is that we are all on a journey – a journey with God. Of course when we travel we are encouraged to take out travel insurance and quite right too – it helps protect us when something goes wrong.

Well for Christians, as we travel through life on our pilgrim journey, there is the added automatic insurance we are given that God promises he is with us, holding and protecting us on our journey.

And that's summed up in the lively song we're going to sing now:

Hymn 510 – One more step along the world I go.