

## Autumn 2016

### Dear Brothers and Sisters

As I enter year 4 I find myself deeply grateful for the love and support shown to us by so many of you. Living in an extended family called the church can be challenging as some of us have been considering in a Bible study of Acts. The early church sought out some of their best people and so appointed those who were *'full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom'* to administer community life (Acts 6). We are all grateful to those amongst us who take on the various roles within church and community without which our worship, fellowship and mission would struggle. So next time you see a steward, a treasurer, a junior church leader, a Uniformed leader, a property steward or any other role – I encourage you take a moment to say thank you.

On this theme I would like to share two goals for this year - first that of encouraging more (and new) people to become involved in church and service. Second in support of this to start a journey focussed on discipleship in our preaching and Bible study groups across all three churches.

These themes form a virtuous circle. As we grow in discipleship we give more of ourselves and as we serve the church and world we grow as disciples. 1 Peter 4:10 says: *'As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.'* I am amazed at how God equips those who take on something new and how wonderfully people are changed.

I sat with a man a week ago who is struggling with his future. He has qualifications and a world of opportunities open to him and yet he was stuck, worried about which path to take. In the end I said – have you thought about taking time out to serve others? In my experience one of the best ways of learning and growing ourselves is when we engage in washing the feet of someone else.

These twin goals mean that I will be calling upon some folk who have done the same role for many years to be gracious in welcoming others alongside you, or even in taking a refreshing break. Indeed Methodist policy says that ideally no person should hold office for more than six successive years. Although they recognise that this rotation cannot always be achieved.



Now whilst change can itself be daunting I find myself returning to the wonderful Philip – who was one of those appointed as a deacon to the early church in Acts 6. What is special about Philip's story is that God did not type-cast him into one role and keep him there. In fact, by Acts 8 he is transformed into an evangelist who bravely proclaims the Gospel in Samaria and then witnesses to the

Ethiopian official. Philip's preparedness to trust in God and to go into new contexts with boldness is a lesson for us all.

**So I wonder...** what could you do to serve the church or the world in the coming year? Where is your passion? Is it for justice, hospitality, the old, the lonely or the young? Is it for the Bible, worship or prayer? Is it for our buildings, communications, the web and the world? If you make space to listen to God, what direction are you prompted towards? Across our churches themed preaching on Discipleship will start in the new year as we seek people fired up for God who are prepared to take a step of faith.

**Why not say that prayer, be that person, give more of yourself** and God promises purpose and fulfilment, inspiration and fellowship that go far beyond what the world can offer.

God bless you all as we journey together.

**Alan Combes**

*Minister - Ordnance Road, Goffs Oak and Ponders End*

### *News from our Churches*

**At Ordnance Road** – church improvements from floors to lights to security are planned and we will need help fund raising! We will also launch a new ecumenical group of 5 churches with Community Carols on Dec 11 at 4.30pm at St Georges.

**At Ponders End** – we are seeking spiritual growth through a series of quiet days and soon hope to make start on refurbishing our back hall. Please come to our international evening 26<sup>th</sup> Nov, 6pm.

**At Goffs Oak** – we have introduced data projection to our church whilst making connections to over 500 people who use our premises every week.

*So we pray – dear God help me to know in my heart that 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me' Amen. **Philippians 4:13***