



So I said to the Vicar As you announced your retirement in Church after the Annual Meeting, I thought it might be nice to make this edition of 'So I said.....' about you today!

And the Vicar replied Well I'm not entirely sure that's the best idea but you don't sound as though your mind might be changed.

I believe you reach a big birthday on July 3rd **I said**..... a number with a six and a five in it?

Yes, that's true..... **the Vicar went on**.....I was Ordained four days before my 32nd birthday which was 33 years ago. When I first set out (in June 1985), when I took on holy orders, my plan was to retire around my late 60s. As you know, the current retirement rules have moved the designated retirement date to 68. Emma and I made the decision in July last year after a lot of thought and prayer.

It must have been hard **I interjected** (*as I sometimes do*)..... To keep it all to yourselves for so long.

And the Vicar said..... Yes, it was – some people found out though and some- like the Bishop and the Arch deacon were told straight away.

And are things a little easier now that everyone knows?..... **I asked**.....

.....**and the Vicar went on** (*as he sometimes does*) Yes, a whole lot easier. There's still plenty to be done though but there will be no new big ideas in the next six months and obviously we're moving house so that will generate a bit of work. It will be more than 22 years in the Benefice by the time we leave.



So then I said..... What sort of things stand out for you over those 20 odd years?

.....*There was a pause*.....

Well..... **the Vicar said**..... I think one of the biggest things we've been involved in was celebrating the 300th anniversary of Hallow School in 2012. That was probably the single biggest event. I've organised two Civic Services – one was for Susan Gill in (I think in 2007/08) when she became Chairman of Malvern Hills District Council – that was at Holt. The other one was for Alwyn Davies – Chairman of Worcestershire County Council and it was held at Hallow.

So what stands out for you in each of our churches?.....**I asked the Vicar**.....

And the Vicar repliedLooking back over the past year and seeing Hallow enveloped in scaffolding is certainly one thing. I had several comments from people about that, who mentioned it because it was such a sight. Beyond that the three flower festivals were incredible. Hallow and Grimley Churches full of school children at Harvest, Christmas and Easter celebrations will always stick in my memory too.

And what about Holt?.....**I asked**.....

That's an easy one.....**replied the Vicar**..... I always think Holt is known as one of the gems of Worcestershire. I like the simplicity of the place, though the Italian mosaics do make a bit of a contrast.

..... **at which point I said** So what does the future hold for you and Emma do you think?

..... **and the Vicar said**..... Well, we are going to live initially in Kenilworth as we shall be renting a property from the Church of England Pensions Board scheme called the 'Church's Housing Assistance for the Retired Ministry'. After a while we hope to buy our own property but obviously we don't know exactly where yet. That's likely to be governed by house prices when we're ready to move.

So will you work?**I enquired** (*'cos I'm nosey about that sort of stuff*) **and the Vicar continued**.....All priests are expected to work in some form or another. We've had a lot of help from retired priests here over the years. However, I believe my calling is on to other things, not sure exactly what yet but I believe that the Lord has some other ideas for us.

So then I said..... Will it be hard to go?

..... **and the Vicar said**..... Of course, some things will be far from easy.

And when will it all happen Vicar?I asked.....



..... **And the Vicar told me**.....I had planned for my last Service to be on Sunday 28th October, but that looks like being postponed for a week. We are given an extra months holiday though to finally sort ourselves out and move.

So I said to the Vicar Do Vicars get recruited through the same sort of process as accountants and bus drivers etc. etc.?

Well no, not really..... **the Vicar said**.....The process starts with consulting all the parishes involved. This will mean the long awaited Deanery Plan to make ours a Benefice of 4 churches, including Lower Broadheath, will finally come about. The Archdeacon will gather representatives of all the churches and together they will work out what sort of priest they want to look for, then compile a job description before the post is advertised.

Sounds like a long job..... I **said**.....

And the Vicar replied Yes, it's pretty much the same all over the country. I do feel though that there will be a desire to get things in place but in the meantime, I'm setting up a programme of services for the first three months and hoping that Andrew Bullock, Adrian Graesser and some other Lay people will handle most services. Of course it will depend on the availability of local retired priests and it will be down to the Archdeacon to fill the gaps.

Can we still have our monthly chats in the meantime ?.....**I asked the Vicar** Or is this going to be the last one?

And he said..... Certainly we can until September and I'll probably write my letter for October but there won't be much else from me.

So then I said..... Pity you can't continue to come over here once a month really.

Not very practical..... **said the Vicar**..... I have to be very careful about return visits but will consider what will be possible.

So I said to the Vicar..... I've got at least another four visits left then! Shall we arrange the one for July now?

..... and out came the diaries.