

Humbling Highlights

I've been doing a lot of 'lasts' of late. Tuesday was my last worship leaders' meeting, today was the last "Grub Club" and, this is my last lead article for "Crosstalk"! It has been a pretty incredible 7-and-a-half years. I've tried to take some time to think back. There have been many highlights along the way, but the moments that come to mind first are the moments of commitment.

During my time at Christ Church I've conducted three weddings, one wedding blessing and one renewal of wedding vows. All of them have been so special and so very memorable for their uniqueness, character and the depth of love seen between two people. To be standing right next to each of them and asking if they promise to love and honour each other for the rest of their lives is pretty humbling. It's also been a great privilege to seek God's blessing for a considerable number of children who've been brought to church, some of whom are still coming and are a really important part of the church family.

Baptisms and membership services have been amazing too! By the end of 2017, I'll have done ten full immersion baptisms and I've lost count of the numbers of new members across the two churches! Again, the opportunity to stand with someone as they make a new commitment to God in the presence of His people is a real honour.

There are plenty of other highlights of some very varied moments: Nicola Roche's face as she stood next to an apple crumble as I introduced the crumble song for the first time at camp ("Oh what a lovely crumble, Oh what a lovely pud..."), using a can of San Pellegrino to call people to Christ in a Parade service, leading the Ladies' Guild in prayer and communion, standing on top of the roof at Parrs Wood Road church and of course eating - whatever it happens to be - cake, bacon at breakfast prayers, soup lunch, more cake, pancakes, Christmas cake, mince pies, curry, gammon baked in Coke...

We could take pages and pages to look back, and we should celebrate all that has been, but in Jesus and through His Holy Spirit, God calls us **onwards**. We are rapidly approaching that time again when we remember that Jesus: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2: 6-8). We celebrate God on a Mission - His mission - to seek and to save, by coming as one of us, being born amongst us, walking where we walk and calling us to walk further.

I hope that this is the best Christmas at Christ Church so far and that, as the Halls move on, that we can all continue to seek our part in God's mission. I pray that 2018, despite the challenges that seem to be brewing, will be a year of great blessing for you all.

Yours in Christ,
Andy Hall