

Statement of Retirement from Revd Denis Tate – 20/03/2022

A number of people have approached me, in recent weeks, to ask me is it true that I am retiring. The answer to that question is yes... but read on because nothing will happen for several months. My 69th birthday has now passed and the Church of England has a firm policy that Vicars should retire at 70.

We have very mixed feelings about retiring. In many ways we don't want to go because we have made some very good friends and it has been a tremendous joy to serve God and this community in this beautiful part of the world. It will be a wrench to leave so many good people after nearly 7 years. However both my wife and I have had health issues in recent months and we look forward to time with our grandchildren (all 9 of them) while we still can. We have a house to retire to in Ben Rhydding, Ilkley but it required and still requires a lot of repairs.

As I leave, the churches in Burton and Thornton are in good positions. They are both paying their way and in good repair. Like every vicar I would like to see bigger congregations but for small villages we are doing o.k. What is more we have a central role in our communities and this must continue. As we serve them we bless God and our neighbours too.

I would like to thank all of you for your support and especially our wardens and Dorothy who have put up with some of my ideas with a smile. I would ask you all to support them especially over the next few months. As the appointment of a new Team Rector has been delayed until July and such an appointee would probably not be able to start for several months, the period until the autumn will be especially demanding. A load will fall on our Readers, retired clergy and Lay Worship Leaders. Please pray for them.

Of course in the Bible it was only the Levites who retired. After 25 years they stepped down for younger ones but were encouraged to stay in the ministry to help with the lighter work. We know that God has a plan for our whole lives, including our old age for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we could walk in them.

Bishop Nick has written to me that retirement sounds like a wonderful idea and an opening to a different time of ministry. Indeed we are not just retiring from something but to something in a new place. Responsibilities will end but vocation will not. The Bible (Romans 11.29) declares that the gifts and calling of the Lord are irrevocable. Gifts from God, refined by experience and matured by the Holy Spirit are not to be put on a shelf for reminiscing. They are to be used for His glory and to benefit others. After 6 months retired vicars can become visiting clergy. As one Bishop told me "Vicars never stop being vicars they just keep going on and on and on...."