**Minister’s letter for September 2019**

Dear friends,

Another September arrives, and with it the start of a new Methodist year. Up and down the country, ministers who have moved Circuit will have begun to get to know a new group of people, and churches will be in the early stages of getting to know their new minister. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those concerned, particularly Rev Robert Kasema, following his move to Sunderland, and Rev Joy Langford, as she joins our Circuit staff. Of course, we know Joy very well here in Markfield, and it is a delight to be able to welcome her as a member of our Circuit staff. She will be working particularly with the folk at Epworth and St Andrews GRE Methodist Churches, where she will be minister following Robert’s departure.

The start of a new year gives opportunity both to reflect on what is past and also to look to the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead. For me, personally, it seems like a particularly significant time. I find it hard to believe that, having first started in Circuit ministry in 1990, I now stand on the cusp of my final year in full-time ministry within the Methodist Church! Where have all the years gone? Though there have been some tough times, my overwhelming feeling as I look back through the years and the memories is of immense gratitude; gratitude for the many wonderful people I’ve met, some amazing experiences, and that God should choose even me for this ministry!

No doubt there will be more time at some stage for further reflection on the years gone by. For now, I am focussed on the year ahead. I certainly do not intend a slow drift to retirement. My hope and prayer is that God will have saved the best until last! It has been a real joy to share in many of the special 125th anniversary activities arranged during the year – a big thank you to all those who have been involved in planning and running the various events and activities. We look forward with eager anticipation to the rest of the year and beyond!

You may remember that some time ago we met together as a church and created a vision statement which sets out, in very broad terms, our focus. Do you remember what it says? In case you have forgotten, here it is: *“A community that knows God’s love and grows in God’s love revealed through Jesus Christ.”* Hopefully you will have seen this on a poster displayed at the back of church. It is a good thing to have the vision written down. More important, however, is to live it out. Perhaps one of the focusses of the year ahead will be to discern what further steps we may need to take towards fulfilling the vision.

With love,

Steve