

## **Emmanuel Church Family message**

Across our four congregations, Sunday 15th October 2017

Dear church family, we have stood on these steps a number of times together over the past three years. We stood here at the beginning of last month closing off almost two years of interim leadership, as your Associate Vicar. We spoke of the privilege of having been a type of foster carer helping a transition into a new family. We stand here today, on another happy-sad day as we share news that I have been offered, and accepted, the post of Vicar at Swanley and Hextable in North Kent. We have been entrusted, as it were with a new one to care for.

Just as God graciously and clearly guided us purposefully to Emmanuel in 2014, so we have seen and trust His hand in this detail. It is, for us, a bittersweet announcement. Leaving you all here at Emmanuel and the wider parish community will be painful. Yet we believe the season and circumstances invite it for the good of all going forward. The unanimous invitation of the parish reps, patron and diocesan Bishop to serve this one church family across two locations, as well as being a New Wine hub, is an exciting and significant opportunity for us.

We have known God's clear leading and provision in the details and events of the last few weeks. We are still working out the timescale for finishing here at Emmanuel with the start planned for Rochester diocese as we join in with all that God is already doing in that place.

We know the truth of 1 Thessalonians 2v8, "Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well!" We love you and leaving will be a wrench, but know our fond thankfulness for the gift of this season of life together. The good news for us as a couple is that we will get to live together as well as serve together; it takes us nearer family and for that we are truly grateful.

We covet your prayers in the weeks and months ahead in this season of change; know that we will continue to love and hold you in our prayers.