

After only three years this Benefice is experiencing another interregnum whilst we await the appointment of a new vicar. It is therefore, perhaps appropriate to reflect on the (all too) short time Mike lived in the vicarage with Gill and their children, Jason and Hannah. He was the Bishop's choice, an alternative to the churchwardens advertising for an incumbent. On a visit to the Wychwoods, Mike and Gill were given a conducted tour of the parishes which included an excellent lunch in the Red Horse Inn! The subsequent interview chaired by the Bishop was almost a formality.

New broom

Mike was very much a new broom who, from the outset, stated that his position was not only as Priest but also as Pastor, Teacher and Leader (Shepherd) – he never changed these objectives. He was an excellent administrator, 'delegation' being his forte. He soon had the Benefice administration in the capable hands of Ray Muddle. Meanwhile he built up a strong ministerial team around him, the strength of which is very evident during the interregnum. The Bishop also recognised Mike's skills and it was not long before he was being called upon to teach elsewhere in the diocese – a very demanding work load. Many was the time when Mike seemed to gain an inner strength during church services, especially when he himself was not too fit. A powerful preacher whom nobody could ignore – I shall never forget his first Remembrance Sunday sermon when he spoke from his own wide experience. Perhaps because he was not raised in the

Farewell to Mike and Gill Williams



tradition of the Book of Common Prayer he never seemed really at ease in BCP Services and, dare it be suggested, he would change a Matins service to Holy Communion at the slightest excuse, a move strongly resisted by some of the older parishioners! Mike will be remembered in many ways. Certainly amongst these memories will be his arrival at the school on his powerful

motorbike, wearing leathers and dog collar, with a bag of mysterious toys over his shoulder. He lacked no street credibility with those children!

Mike is an excellent golfer. For those who know the game, he is the only man I have seen reach the green on the 5th hole at Wychwood Golf Course in two shots, a distance of some 550 yards!

Gill cannot go without a mention. During Mike's selection process we never once 'interviewed' Gill other than to ask if she felt she would be happy here – which she affirmed. Gill soon became very involved in many ways but particularly in the Old Prebendal and at the Day Centre in the Village Hall where she was a tower of strength. Like Mike she will be very much missed.

Mike has moved to the National Health Service Trust for Thames Valley in Oxford. It is an appointment for which I feel sure he was especially head-hunted. He will take his Christianity to the workplace where I am confident his example and work ethics will be a force for good. He told us that he never stays long in one job, so I wonder what is in store for his future. Whatever it is we all wish Mike and Gill and their family all God's Blessings.

Hamish Harvey (former Church Warden)