

*Reverend Jack Hemsworth provides our front article this month.*

To my friends at St. Martin's,

Just over six years ago, before I was licensed as Priest-in-Charge of St. Andrew's, Bishop Mark said to me, that he really wanted me to work towards a closer relationship with St. Martin's. As this had been the hope of the Diocese for some considerable time, I thought, "OK, I can work with that". You may well remember what happened soon after that time. It came as the proverbial "surprise out of the blue", Revd Donna announced that she was to move to Bury. This left Penny Mittler without a Vicar at a crucial stage of her Reader training, so I was asked to be her mentor, a role that I felt privileged to accept.

Whilst all this was happening we, at St. Andrew's, were experiencing another major upheaval. We were preparing for the closure of our old church building, the construction of the Church of the Epiphany, and the formation of a Local Ecumenical Partnership. As they say, "Just get on with it", which is exactly what we all did. Over the next year or so, our new church grew on the site of the original St. Andrew's and the Church of the Epiphany came to life. Revd Jo was licensed as Priest-in-Charge of St. Martin's and we began to explore the possibility of forming a Mission Partnership.

It would be very convenient at this stage of my epistle, to conclude with, "the rest is history", that, however, would be too easy. Our journey, (and my part in it), has not been without some heartache and worrying times. There have been many, many questions from people of both our congregations, Mission and Ecumenical Partners, and members of the Community, about the future. Some fears have been allayed, some of the questions are still unanswered.

As most of you will know, I shall be retiring at the end of March, so my last service as Priest-in-Charge of St. Andrew's, will be on Easter Day. I am thrilled that Easter falls as it does this year because I can't think of a better day to complete my time at St. Andrew's. Easter Day - the great celebration of our Lord's Resurrection and having the joy and privilege to celebrate the Eucharist on that Day, it doesn't get much better!

Thinking back to all that we have travelled through together, is a little bit like what the Disciples and other followers of Jesus went through. When they followed Jesus, they often didn't know where they were going, sometimes they couldn't understand what He was saying. In short, there was a lot of uncertainty. This all changed with the Resurrection of our Lord and His appearances to the Disciples over the next forty days. In those days before His ascension, Jesus said some pretty amazing things; "make Disciples of all Nations, Baptise in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit", "Ask in my Name and it shall be so", "you will do great things", "I will be with you to the end of the age". These words are our assurance for the future journey together.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of being your Assistant Curate, for all your

friendship, and the welcome that you have always extended to me and “my flock”. I promise you that you will always be in my thoughts and prayers.

May the Risen Christ be always with you.

*Yours in His name,*

*Father Jack*