

**The Revd John Morris: Farewell. May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.**

It is absolutely right that we are here to honour and give thanks for John and for Gillian...in this, one of the great parishes of England. But the parish is only great because of God's grace and because of the commitment and loving kindness of the people. So, I want to begin by thanking the churchwardens, Peter and Michel, and previously, Keith Newman, who have worked closely with John over the past few years. And of course, Becky, and Jordan, and now Clare, in their work with children, and Rob Lewis and Jordan Theis and the choirs and organists, Julian and Andrew, and the flower arrangers and cleaners and Alf and co...and the PCC... and the Magazine and Newsletter editors, and the Treasurers and sacristans and servers, and the Ministry Team.... and on and on...because whilst the Vicar might be the leader, as John would say, he has only been able to do all that he has done because of you and with you.

And I want also to thank the great encourager, Sandy... because through her gifts of communication and enthusiasm she has brought joie-de-vivre to us all... and again John would be the first to say how much he owes to Sandy and the Ministry Team... and amongst the clergy, Elaine, and Liz, David Adams, Patrick O'Ferall, and Andrew Tuck

Then, there's Gillian. and you won't know this...but Gillian has a great love of poetry...especially a Welsh poem I taught her a few weeks ago. It goes like this: Uchy Puchy was a worm, Uchy Puchy loved to squirm; Uchy Puchy on the line didn't see the train in time...uchy puchy.

Gillian, we owe you more than we can say for your loving good humour, your courage, your ability to make friends, your quiet and heartfelt Christian faith, your professional work in the schools of the diocese, and for just being mischievously and thoughtfully you... and just as John has been surrounded and encouraged by the parishioners, and by the Ministry Team, so he has had the wonderful gift of you Gillian, as his life's companion. You have a special place in the hearts of this parish,

And now, John...

I have a belief that landscape helps to shape character...and John, with genetic, family roots deep in the Black Mountains on the Monmouthshire/Herefordshire border has brought the steadfast beauty and strength of that part of the world to us in his ministry.

He has also brought some of the corniest of jokes to begin his sermons, and catch phrases like 'Be brave' and 'Come on, Eddie' and 'Does anyone know where the mic is?', and 'Excellent... excellent', but he has been a pastor to us all, a man steeped in the Faith... courageous and straightforward, he has ministered during a terribly turbulent time in our national history...lockdowns and Zoom, and pandemics, and now Ukraine...it has been a real comfort to us, that a man who has known what it is to be under enemy fire has been our parish priest... and all the while, his own health has not given him the easiest of rides... I think of you John, as a kind of a kind of Land Rover priest, battered and dented but soldiering on with grace and good humour, twinkling eyes, and a big-hearted faith...

And now John and Gillian, you are leaving us, having been a great blessing to all of us... But perhaps John Masefield, born in Ledbury on the Herefordshire/Worcestershire border might have the last word...now that you are retiring to Worcestershire.

On his appointment as a Freeman of the City and County in 1930, he said this, 'I am linked to this county by ties deeper than I can explain. They are ties of beauty. Whenever I think of Paradise I think of parts of this county. Whenever I think of any perfect human sight I think of things which I have seen in this county and whenever I think of the beauty and the bounty of God I think of parts of this shire. For I know no land more full of the beauty and bounty of God than these red ploughlands and these deep woodlands so full of yew trees, and these apple orchards and lovely rivers and running brooks,"

Well, John and Gillian, just as you have sensed and worked with the heathy soils of this part of England and its people, may that deep sense of place also be part of your retirement life, and from me and all of us. thank you. May God's richest and most holy blessings be upon you, now and always...

The Rt Revd Dr Christopher Herbert

.