

## PASTORAL LETTER FROM BISHOP JOHN PRITCHARD TO ST ALDATES

15 September 2010

Dear St Aldates family,

As you all know, St Aldates has always been very close to our hearts, as we both have fond memories of our formative years in the Church. Recently I have spent considerable time with Charlie and Gordon discussing the future. Change is never easy, especially when it comes at leadership level...but it is so important for you all to embrace it together as you move forward into this new church year. Some of you may have already heard whispers of this change, so we felt it was important to clearly outline the Leadership change that is planned from September.

Charlie and Anita spent 3 months away seeking God about the shape of the last phase of their ministry in St Aldates (Charlie is 60 next year). They returned from sabbatical with questions concerning the team that is best suited for St Aldates for the next 5-7 years: whilst Gordon Hickson has had a vital pastoral role in the Church over the last 5 years, conversations began with him concerning his future due to apparent differences of theology and church practice. In agreement with the Wardens, Charlie suggested to Gordon that he should seek to transition to a new role outside of St Aldates with a time scale of no more than 12-18 months. Gordon understandably felt that under these circumstances, he would prefer to move on sooner, namely in December of this year. This has been accepted and agreed. He has expressed to me that, although this all came as a surprise and a shock to him, he has come to accept their decision and is now looking for what God has in store for him and Rachel.

Gordon has had an outstanding ministry at St Aldates and is highly valued and respected. Obviously, as he has been a key Pastoral figure in the Church for over 5 years, this will require a significant reshuffle of the staff: I am confident that Charlie and Anita along with the large pastoral staff at St Aldates (in addition, St Aldates is currently blessed with two full time and two NSM curates) can make the necessary adjustments. Gordon will be on staff until December to help with the hand over. The Parish Vicar position will then not be filled until later next year at the earliest.

We do sincerely request that you all respect this decision, and work together with the Leadership as they seek God for the future impact of St Aldates into Oxford and beyond. We are all well aware that many of you have been loved and pastored by Gordon and Rachel over these years, and this decision will not be easy for you to understand. Charlie and Anita and the Wardens are happy to listen to you, and hear your concerns, but again I would ask you to give them your full support and prayer as they take the Church into the next decade.

Yours in the love of Christ,

**Bishop John Pritchard**