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Friday 2nd February 2024

Dear members of the congregations at Christ Church Thornton and the wider church community,

I have been given permission by Bishop Philip to take a sabbatical this year. **It will start on Monday 20th May 2024 and finish on Saturday 31st August 2024.** A sabbatical is a period of three months taken every seven years of ordained ministry. This will be my first sabbatical. I was ordained in 2012 and in full-time Christian ministry since I was 18 years old (coming up to 24 years!).

In a similar way to a 'sabbath day' being a day away from the busyness of labour and toil, a sabbatical is a time for rest, renewal, and refreshment. A sabbatical is also a time for professional development, giving the opportunity for study and research in a way which is not possible during normal duties. It is also a time for deep reflection on ministry, calling and personal spiritual growth. It's important to say that a sabbatical isn't a holiday! Nor is it a secondment such as doing the same or similar job in a different location. It isn't a study leave as such, nor is it simply a leave of absence.

Andrew, supported by the team of clergy, churchwardens, and others, will be ensuring as much of our ministry and mission activities will continue as normal. There will be many things which Andrew won't be able to take on in addition to what he already does. This will create an opportunity for more people to grow in their giftings, skills and leadership with Andrew's encouragement. The routine of church life will continue as normal as much as possible whilst holding to an attitude of flexibility. There may be some things which pause or change in the way they function. I'm grateful to Andrew for being supportive of me taking a sabbatical and I have 100% confidence in him to look after Christ Church in my absence and to continue to minister with the diligence and care he has already demonstrated.

During my sabbatical I'll be working on three projects:

Research. I'm going to undertake a piece of research entitled: '*Catechism as a tool for growing fruitful disciples in the 21st Century – knowing why we believe what we believe.*' I'll be attending a conference and visiting two theological libraries.

Fruitful App. My hope is to turn the *Core Catechism Classes* I have been delivering into a digital resource to go on '*Fruitful*' – an App for smartphones. *Fruitful* is going to be launched by Bishop Philip at Lent.

Podcast. I plan to create a series of podcast episodes to accompany the digital catechism resource, which will enable people to learn about the history of catechism and their usefulness for today. Podcasts are increasingly used by so many people to learn and grow in their faith.

All three of these projects will require planning and then the creation of the resources. This will take a significant amount of time – time which I wouldn't ever find amidst the usual demands of ministry and mission. The sabbatical therefore creates an opportunity for these things to be created which God-willing will be of benefit to Christ Church Thornton and other Christians across Lancashire.

When my sabbatical starts on May 20th, it will be strange being away from the parish. I will miss you!

Yours in His service,

