

Dear Friends,

I feel I should begin with a few words of self-introduction for, while I have already been serving in the circuit for three years, I am now taking up a new role as your superintendent minister. I don't think it is a too closely guarded secret that I am doing this because the stationing system could not provide a suitable new superintendent minister but I trust that we will all be committed to doing the best we can—that's my commitment.

Born and brought up in Plymouth, my parents were devout Christians and keen Methodists and my Dad was a prolific local preacher and I professed Christian faith as a 12-year-old. After leaving Devonport High School I went to Leicester to train as a law student but during that time felt called to Christian service. I also met my wife, Janet, in Leicester. I offered for the Methodist ministry and trained at Wesley College, Bristol. Before moving to Torbay, I had served in five different circuits—London Mission (Tooting), Newquay, Perranporth & St Agnes, Barry, Inverness and Plymouth & Devonport. In 2012 I was invited to come to Torbay to be minister of Goodrington, St Andrew's and Chelston. After just one year I was asked to be minister for Paignton at Goodrington, Palace Avenue and Southfield. Now after three years, I am adding being superintendent to these responsibilities. I am already in conversation with the circuit leadership team about getting some administrative support as I feel that it would be too much for one person to undertake all these tasks.

My wife, Janet, and I like living in Paignton. Janet, who qualified as a primary teacher in later life and has spent most of her working life with special needs children begins a new job in Dawlish this term. Our three elder children (girls) live in New Zealand, Plymouth and Germany. Our youngest (boy) is a student at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

John Wesley built the principle of itinerancy into the Methodist movement because he believed that a regular change of ministers kept the whole movement fresh but that was 250 years ago. Today, I believe that continuity is also important and that we need to manage change rather than allowing decline to manage us. The essence of Methodism is not as people so often think, the apparatus of itinerant ministers, circuits and so on but the message of being right with God through personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. It is also the challenge to go on to live a holy and Christ-like life. Wesley distilled this into two phrases—'Christ dying for us', 'Christ reigning in us'.

The New Church Year sees the arrival of Revd Doug Rix (and Eunice) to the circuit. Doug and I were on the staff of the Plymouth & Devonport Circuit together for six years and I am pleased that he is coming to Torbay where his main responsibilities will be at Brixham, Flavel (Dartmouth) and Kingskerswell. Revd Gavin Hancocks (and Angela) is going through the process of re-invitation at the moment and that will be resolved at the next circuit meeting. I am confident that we will make a good team. I conclude with a word of thanks to Revd Jerry Cook and wish Jerry and Jean well in their retirement.

Yours sincerely

*John Haley*