

Dear Friends in the Whitton Parish

It's an odd feeling, writing this – I've finally run out of licence as a Team Vicar, and now "R-day" has finally arrived, and I have officially retired!

But I owe you all a huge debt, and that needs to be acknowledged. I initially started on the road to ordained ministry because I thought I might be able to be useful, but I have increasingly discovered that ministry is as much about what it does to us inside, and how it helps us grow and change, as it is about what we actually *do*. And that is the gift that you have given to me (and there's maybe a lesson for all of us in there...).

So, thank you for the love and the care and the friendship, the laughter and the fellowship, as we've lived, together, in the light of God's generous love. We've shared a lot over the past fourteen years – sad things and glad ones, silly things and serious ones – and I thank you for them all, and for allowing me to be part of your lives. Thank you for putting up with the mad ideas, and the nagging, and the mess in the vestry, and thank you for your willingness to help make things happen as we serve God together in this very special bit of his world.

We had a lovely Team service on the 1st May. Thank you for the beautiful flowers and stupendous Krystyna cake, and to all those who have donated to Mike's charity, the Amandla Trust, which supports the KGV Centre in Bulawayo for deaf and disabled kids – we'll be sending them over £1000 of desperately needed funds, with more promised. Bless you all!

However, we're not physically going anywhere (apart from more time on the boat, of course!). Because I don't get paid anyway, and we live in our own house, we can stay in a place that both Mike and I have grown to love, and – even though I'll be doing less – Beth and I will work out what I can do that would be helpful to the Parish and fulfilling for me, within my "Permission to Officiate" as a retired priest.

Nevertheless, I wanted to take this chance to send you all my love and to say thank you! And if anyone has any piccies of things we've shared over the past fourteen years – places, events, and especially people – please send or lend them to me so I can put together a record of a very special time and place and community.

With love

Sue Rodd (Now Retired Team Vicar)