



Saint Luke's Church Kingstanding

Parish Priest: Father Darren Smith

PASTORAL LETTER

My dearest friends,

I thought it would be best to put some things in writing to you all, as I anticipate it will be very hard for me to go through all the details verbally with you this morning.

I will be taking up the position of General Secretary of The Additional Curate's Society, which many of you know is based in Birmingham. Here at Saint Luke's we have benefited from the A.C.S. for many years in terms of the financial support that they have offered to us. My own vocation was nurtured through the work of the A.C.S. when I was but a young lad at school, and everyone of my parishes has been financially supported by them. I would wish to stress that this isn't promotion, this is just God leading me in a different direction, and believe me it is very hard indeed to leave Saint Luke's behind and all of you, as ones I regard as my dearest friends and family.

My very last Sunday here will be on 13th January, and I hope we will then have the opportunity to say a proper goodbye. It is not as though I am going a million miles away, and of course we will see each other, but it is on that day that I will relinquish my role as Parish Priest which will return to the Bishop and remain with him until a new priest is found.

My new ministry will be very different to being a parish priest as I will be required to travel all over the country every weekend, telling people about the work of the A.C.S. and trying to generate some of the funds necessary to continue their vocational activities and their financial support that they offer to poor and populous places such as ours. Mid week I will be based in their offices, which are on the industrial estate behind Fort Dunlop, Spitfire Road.

Here at Saint Luke's Father Paul will be still with us, as will Brother Leonard, and the churchwardens will be required to arrange suitable cover for the parish as they assume the legal rights over the day to day running. **Nothing** should change during the interregnum, and you as a congregation will have some input into the new priest that is to be appointed, so this is something to pray about. What is so vitally important is you all maintain a solid commitment to this church and to each other. The thing that will break my heart even more than leaving you is if I subsequently hear of petty squabbles, arguments and disputes. This will not only undermine all the work that we have done together over these last 16 years, but could jeopardise the future of the parish. More than ever Saint Luke's needs *you*.

Our plans for the future will still go ahead. The building of a new welcome centre, meeting rooms and offices are progressing well, they are with the planners and the diocese for a faculty. So long as funds continue to come in you have much to look forward to.

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Web Site: www.saintlukeskingstanding.co.uk

I would like to thank you all most sincerely for the kindness and love that you have shown to me over the years. I would ask your forgiveness for the times in which you feel I have let any of you down. The decision to leave believe me was not an easy one, but it is one I have made for the best interests of the parish and in obedience to God's call. I am also hoping that I might be able to arrange a farewell meal for us to share together, but at the moment I am not able to give any more information.

Saint Luke's existed well before I arrived and will continue well after I have gone. My mandate to you all over the last 16 years is that this is *your* church and I hope you will show how much you really value it, and believe me you will all be very much in my prayers as I hope I will be in yours as over the next few weeks we prepare for the future.

May God richly bless you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. James". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Your dearest friend and parish priest.

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