

## **FROM OUR MINISTER**

Dear Friends,

I am writing this from the kitchen table in our temporary accommodation while the manse is being repaired, following the structural damage to a wall when a delivery van inexplicably reversed into it at speed. I am sitting at the laptop typing away after having taken a break to walk around the village and acquaint myself with our short-term location. It has all the accoutrements of the traditional English village: a green with cricket pitch (yay!), a duckpond, a village store, a parish church, and two pubs. This is so different even from Liphook, let alone my upbringing in London! But despite its smallness, it manages to have a better bus service than Liphook.

It's quite an adjustment, and not just for the location. Our first battle was with the heating, especially because we have never stayed anywhere before that had underfloor heating. Then it was the hob (why is the pan not heating up?) and after that a plug in the sink that seemed to have vacuumed itself in place.

Add to that the fact that for our first week here there is a road closure not far from here which means we have to go up to Guildford to pick up the A3 and come down to the circuit and you will see that for this short period we have a number of challenges and a selection of learning curves.

Still, as they say, these are just 'First World problems', and millions of people face far graver problems than our transitory challenges.

But being at a distance is not ideal for a minister. We need to be earthed in a local community - something that is a challenge for a Methodist minister anyway as we travel around being 'itinerant', to use the jargon.

In fact, being at a distance is not ideal for any Christian if we are to be faithful witnesses to Jesus. John wrote of him, 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us'.

In one town where I served, a group of Christians decided to break away from their church and form a new one. They presented a grand vision of how they were going to take the Gospel to a deprived estate.

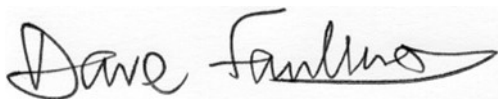
"But do any of you live on the estate?" I asked them. "Or are you going to move there?"

Not one of them. All they were going to do was hire a hall there for meetings. It was hit and run evangelism.

Let's be committed to faithful witness as those who are embedded in our the places God has put us: the locations where we live, our workplaces and community groups, our leisure interests, and so on. Jesus did that even when those he lived among were so offended by him that they put him on a Cross, as we shall remember in the coming weeks.

But look at what came of that.

Your friend and minister,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Faulkner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.