

I stood at the door and knocked

22/07/2026 / Philip Smith



When I stopped being a vicar in Cheltenham in 2018 the first thing Lucy and I did was to go on a song writing week with the poet Stuart Henderson and Willy Russell the composer of 'Blood Brothers'. We had to write a song each day and perform to everyone in the evening in the room where David Lloyd George died. I died many times that week.

The best bit was writing a mini musical where we were paired up and wrote a song for 6 different scenes then brought them all together.

As I was out for a walk, I came across the church above with a lovely green door. There was only one thing wrong with it, for it was locked. So there and then I composed a little ditty about this and sang it later. It simply went 'I stood at the door and knocked but it was locked.'

A few weeks ago, some of us, on our Church Councils gathered for a summer evening with food and Asa Humphries, our Parish Development Adviser for the Buckingham

Area. We were asked a series of questions between courses and the first was: 'What would we wish to keep?' Each table was asked, what it was, but the first table shared immediately that they wanted to keep all four of our churches open every day for the casual visitor.

I was so struck by that answer as it never occurred to our table. It's one of the most selfless answers we could give. We have no idea how many visitors we have or the reasons they come but they would all have been disappointed as I was when I came to a locked door and still am whenever I visit especially a country church during the daytime. This made me think of the verse 'I set before you an open door which no one can close' Revelation 3:8

But I also wanted to flip the question 'What would we want to keep?' to 'What would we miss?' The answer to such questions is always very personal. When the time comes for Lucy & I to move on which was meant to be sooner than later, there are many things I won't miss but there is one I will. I will of course be taking the sun, moon, stars and nature with me and the Lord has already promised to tag along.

For I will miss our fab neighbours, the lovely people we have met in our community, the staff and children in our schools, and our residential homes, our four church families, the amazingly kind Ministry Team, and somewhere in all of those is **'YOU'**.

What would you like to keep, and what would you miss?

It is unmeasurable what takes place in our church buildings when we are not there. The prayers offered up in silence, the moments of peace in a stressful day, the coolness on a hot summer's afternoon, and the presence and essence of The Holy Spirit which none of us can explain. Now that's something really worth keeping.

Doors are like parachutes, and minds, best used when they are open.

Keep the faith, but never ever to ourselves.

Love Philip x