

The older I get the more I begin to understand the psalmist when he sang: 'a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday: the past is as a watch in the night'. Now, twenty-five years is not a thousand years, but to me certainly seems but as yesterday. The past is like a snapshot where all that has taken place over a quarter of a century is revealed in an instant.

The last twenty-five years at St Andrew's have been a significant part of my 'becoming'. You see, life for a Christian is all about 'becoming'. It may *begin* with the waters of baptism, but that is only the beginning, the beginning of the journey, or the process of 'becoming'. And we won't actually have 'become' until we are 'changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place'.

My chief duty and joy at the cathedral has been working with the choir. Every other duty has been subservient. The choir has been my second family, but intertwined with my first family. Jeremy was head chorister, Meghan has been a member of the cathedral orchestra, Amélie has been in the school community and its music department. Antonia has been convenor of choir teas and in charge of robes. And because the choir has been a family it has seen me at my best and at my worst and all stages in between. And there are choristers here tonight from the last twenty-five years who can bear witness to that - who could tell all sorts of stories but hopefully won't.

You see, I hope I am now a little less impetuous and a little more patient, a little less headstrong and a little more gentle, a little less dogmatic and a little more open, a little less arrogant and a little more willing to learn – to see another point of view, a little less moody and a little more stable (although Antonia would tell you I have a long way to go on that one). But I hope I am not less passionate – passionate about the choir and the music and the worship of the church of God. Most of my mistakes have been to do with relationships, and the fact that I still have so many friends amongst former choristers and their families, and former clergy of this cathedral, is a tribute to their patience and graciousness.

A long list of thankyou's would barely scratch the surface. But I need to acknowledge that the team that keeps me going is Mark Quarmby, bearing the lion's share of the organ playing and Jim Boddy the choir manager – at least as far as the choristers are concerned - it would be impossible to manage the lay clerks. I thank Phillip Heath for being the inspiration behind this evening and for a host of anonymous people who have worked behind the scenes *and* in secret to make this all happen. The Sunday congregation and the Dean have already made their gracious farewell to me, but tonight it has been the school, the wider community, former colleagues and fellow church musicians.

And now it's time to say good-bye. I hand over the choir of St Andrew's Cathedral where, over twenty-five years the names have changed, the faces have changed, the voices have changed, but it is the same choir. I hand over a choir that has toured the world - five times to Europe, three times to New Zealand and all over Australia - a choir that has been welcomed into the great cathedrals and abbeys of England and Europe. More importantly, I hand over a choir that has lifted up the hearts of God's people in this cathedral church week by week and in many of the parishes of this diocese. And I hand over a choir that needs constant recruiting, nurturing, energising, motivating and encouraging – or like a garden, a choir that needs constant watering, replenishing, cultivating, pruning and even weeding, but above all, loving.

So I hand over this choir to *another* gardener with much regret but with much faith. And I have to learn to let go. It will be hard. This era has ended – a new exciting one begins for you, for “the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the strain of praise away”. So, angel voices, ever keep singing, round the throne of light. Thank you for having me this long. It has been a profound privilege to have been the tenth organist and master of choristers of St Andrew's Cathedral. Good night, Good bye, and I love you all.

September 8th 2005