18 Priorsfield, MARLBOROUGH, Wiltshire, SN8 4AQ.

12th January 2023.

Dear Friend,

As you are aware, Christchurch Methodist Church formally closed on Sunday 8th January 2023, after a Service of Thanksgiving and Moving On. Those of us who were able to be there felt very supported by former Christchurch members, people from the Circuit and the town churches. It was a time of mixed emotions. We thanked God for the faithful worship and witness of previous members from over two hundred years ago to the present day, but it is still very hard for many people as the building has been an important part of their lives. We hold each other in prayer as we acknowledge the sadness in leaving.

In the service, we also put our trust in God as we move to worship with St Mary’s Parish Church and become Christchurch Methodist Fellowship. Revd. David Gray, the Circuit Superintendent Minister, challenged us to be church beyond the walls, reminding us that Jesus’ ministry mostly took place outside the synagogue. After thanking God for our memories and those who have been part of Christchurch, Revd. Chris Smith warmly welcomed us to St Mary’s. The future is full of hope. I am looking forward to sharing worship and mission with our Anglican friends with joyful anticipation and eagerly waiting to discover what God has instore for us, his Christian people. Looking to the future, it was good, as part of the service, to be able to pray for Emmanuel Church, knowing that as they buy the premises and it make it their own, the building will still be a sacred place of worship and witness.

I take this opportunity to thank you for being part of Christchurch Methodist Church. Thank you for being part of the worshipping community and for all the ways in which you have served the Church, here and elsewhere, over the years. I hope that you feel able to become part of Christchurch Methodist Fellowship and worship at St Mary’s. If so, I look forward to seeing there on Sunday. However, if this is not for you, then I hope and pray that you will soon find your new spiritual home. I also hope, if you do not worship at St Mary’s, that I will see you at either Pewsey or Aldbourne and Ramsbury Methodist Churches.

However, if you are no longer able to attend Church and would like to receive Holy Communion at home, please contact me to arrange a time.

Christchurch Methodist Church has witnessed many changes over the centuries, both inside and outside of the Church. We have experienced much in the last three and a quarter years that Jane and I have been part of the fellowship. We have come to this historic moment after a lot of prayer, careful and sensitive exploration, work and planning. Thank you to the “Exodus” and “Milk and Honey” teams, and especially to Jonathan and Sandra for leading them, for all the hard work that has been done. No one will know the total hours involved to bring us to the Promised Land.

As we continue to be the faithful disciples of Jesus, let us keep our eyes focussed on Him and remember that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Sandra’s lovely bookmarks, which were given out last Sunday, remind us that “the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

In the coming days may the words from Lamentations and these words from Jeremiah encourage you. **“**For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (29:11). Finally, we hear the words of Jesus, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age,” (Matthew 28:20).

May God bless you richly at this time of new beginnings,

Stephen