

Advent marks the beginning of the new church year. This year, it also marks a new chapter in my life and that of the Downlands benefice. Until recently I was working for the Anglican mission agency USPG, which started life in 1701 as SPG; The Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts. I was interested to learn that I will be the many times successor of the first SPG missionary, the Revd George Keith, who became Rector of Edburton after returning from America in 1704.

He was the full time Rector of just one of the four villages to which I have been appointed on a part-time, house-for-duty basis. I am also working for YMCA England and Wales, another venerable charity now focused on the wellbeing of young people in some 114 communities throughout England and Wales and the largest provider of accommodation for young people in the country.

I have been working for church based charities for the past 16 years or so. Engaging with social justice in a national and international context has been an enriching and, at times, humbling experience. But I have always also valued being involved in the ministry of the local church, most recently helping out various parishes in Brighton and Hove during vacancies, just as I know a number of priests have been helping out here. I am delighted to be establishing a spiritual home in this beautiful part of the country and look forward to getting to know you in the coming months.

My first Sunday services are on Advent Sunday, 2nd December, at Holy Trinity, Poynings and St Andrew's, Edburton. And then, as we approach Christmas, I will look forward to greeting you at our various festive services as we celebrate the coming of Christ, 'the true light, which enlightens everyone', into the world.

With every blessing,

Tim Harford