

September is - in the school calendar at least - a time for new starts. New starts for children: with new classes, new teachers, perhaps even a new school to get used to; and when moving on to a secondary school that may even involve a new journey, and certainly new independence. It is also a time of new starts for teachers and support staff: with new children, new curriculums and new targets to get used to. Also new starts for parents and carers: getting used to new schools, new timetables, new routines, and new teachers to build relationships with.

This September, however, is even more exciting in both our villages, with two major new starts to enjoy.

Benenden Church of England Primary School, at long last, has the anticipation of starting this new academic year in a brand new building. After all the years of discussion and planning, it has happened. How exciting is that?

In Sandhurst we are starting 'Blend', a weekly after-school club for children in years seven to nine, where children from the primary school can come back together, hang out with old friends and catch up. All in a relaxed, friendly environment in the Mission Church with refreshments, such as milkshakes, fruit and snacks, and games like table tennis, pool and an Xbox. More excitement!

Both of these have been long needed. I hope and pray that everyone will get behind these developments and that they will, in their separate ways, flourish and serve our children and the community.

I also hope that following the summer break, the holiday, or the change of routine, you will also be energised and ready for a new start. Our summer did not go quite as we were expecting; my elderly father Bill (whom some of you will have met) passed on from this life in July. He had 'a new start', following the Christian belief that death is something we pass through - a moving from this way of living life to another way of life. And Helen and I, in turn, now have a new start as we try to get used to life without my dad as part of it. Thank you for all the messages of love and support that we have received.

But going back to the thought of a new start for you, could I put out another plea for help in the churchyard please? Once again I have received a few letters (one anonymous, which doesn't help) about the state of the churchyard in both parishes, but I also frequently receive comments about how beautiful the churchyards are. As I've said before, the churchyards seem to generate a 'Marmite' reaction, but both are maintained by the hard work of volunteers. Could you make a new start and get involved helping to look after one of the churchyards? If you can, please get in touch.

Revd David Commander, Rector