

Judith's going-away remarks:

About 20 years ago, after I had been in Oxford for a year or two, an American organist friend asked me if I knew a certain American chaplain at some college—my friend wasn't sure which—who had been in Oxford for a while. He went on and on about how I really should try and make contact with her, saying how great she was—a really genuine, smart, good-humoured, friendly person, and he thought we'd get along well.

It was several years later that I finally met Judith, and we have both wondered who our mutual friend was (because I can't remember). Judith brought me to Corpus in (I believe) 2008, and for the next 15 years we worked together as a team—and I think as a good one. Together we looked after a succession of organ scholars and kept the chapel services and music not only ticking over satisfactorily, but also coaxing along and helping raise up a few organ scholars. It always amused us when occasionally it was clear that one of our organ scholars thought we didn't communicate about them—there were a few times when they would tell Judith one thing and me another, not knowing that “working together” as Judith and I did, occasionally meant comparing notes.

Judith is a perfect example of why ordaining women is a good thing. She was in the first cohort of women priests in England, and a perfect model of a chaplain for Corpus—on the leading edge of societal changes, academically top-notch, wise, kind, good-humoured, a person of tremendous integrity, a great listener: she has been an inspirational model for young women (and men)—such an important thing in working with university students. She loves music and theatre as well-- which is a true sign of a good person—and has been unfailingly supportive of music in the chapel. She is tremendously respectful of the musicians around her, and never would try to tell them what to do. AND—she has good taste in hymns!

But more than that--I think it is natural to wonder, when looking back at a career, if we have made a difference in people's lives—in 100 years, will Corpus remember us, or will our part in the life of this place somehow change its course? I'd like to quote one of “our” former organ scholars, who said about Judith in a recent email to me: “Judith made an amazing mark on me personally, and on many others as well. I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now if it hadn't been for [her].” We don't always hear about the impact on others that we have made, but I can say with complete confidence that these words are echoed by many far and wide, and that Judith's influence is far greater than she herself realises. These Oxford colleges are very old and venerable, and yet their histories are shaped by the individual lives of the people who have inhabited them. The wonderful qualities that make Corpus what it is—warm, supportive, friendly, academically rigorous—are actually reflections of Judith what she has brought to it. So as Judith goes off to her next step, she is leaving part of herself at Corpus, where her gifts will continue to shine, and I would like to thank her for that.