

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Keep it simple....

Dear friends,

"I can't stop, I've got so much to do!" we may say when we consider all the things that we need to do before Christmas: shopping, baking, wrapping and writing.

All those preparations seem to fill up our days so much that we may begin to feel quite overwhelmed by it all. We would all do well to remember the humility and simplicity of Christ's coming, and to be wary of commercial and consumerist pressures which tell us that we want or need more and more.

The season of Advent is the Church's spiritual preparation for Christmas and it is a great antidote to all the other busy-ness. It is a time of spiritual clearing out, setting aside time to contemplate the full meaning of the coming of the Christ-Child.

The advent theme is expectation but not in the conventional worldly sense of cramming our lives full but rather in the sense of emptying or opening our lives so that we are ready to encounter and receive God. Amid the flurry of activity, we need to locate that stillness and peacefulness which is an essential balance for our well-being, and true peace can come only through letting God direct and transform our lives.

Advent is a penitential season, which challenges us to face up to the times when we let God and ourselves down. In the church's worship, the plain purple of the seasonal colour, the simple advent wreath, the lack of flowers and decoration speak of a need to clean and tidy up our lives – while the contemplative worship in Advent services



speaks of increased anticipation of newness and joy at the coming of Christ.

This is the season with the darkest, longest nights, which serves to emphasise the symbolism of the light of the candles on the Advent wreath. *"The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world"* (St John 1.9).

In order to have a clearer vision, our personal preparedness is needed, which could be called de-junking or de-cluttering our lives. For if our lives are so full that they feel like a stifling, dusty, crammed junkshop, piled high with all sorts of things, we will not be ready to pray expectantly the advent prayer "Maranatha" - Lord come (1 Cor 16:22).

May God's light shine into all our hearts as Christmas approaches, preparing us for the full joy of welcoming Christ the Lord.

Yours in Christ, Jo

Why not bring a friend or relative this Christmas!

There are so many wonderful services at All Saints now that you can feel confident that there is a service to suit all tastes, from the wonderfully traditional Midnight Mass, the formal Nine Lessons and Carols, the Family Communion on Christmas Day to the informal Crib Service and Carol Praise Service. There is no better way to encourage people to come to church this Christmas than a personal invitation.

And there's plenty happening in Advent too, from the candle-lit Advent Carol Service, the

Toy Service, Prayers and Bears, Compline and all the regular services.

and children up to school age with their parent or grandparent or carer.

The Toy Service

On St Nicholas Day, 6th December we will be collecting unwanted toys in good condition for the children at the local women's refuge.

It is a terrible fact that sometimes women need to flee their homes without any time to pick up treasured possessions to escape from a violent partner or husband. Christmas time can be a miserable time of year for families finding themselves in this situation and to mark St Nicholas time we will be collecting toys at the family service and this could make room for more shelf space in our homes too!

The travelling cribs will also be blessed at the family service and travel around the parish to return to church on Christmas Eve.

Bible Studies

These successful morning and evening sessions will continue into December.

Do join us for Bible Study at Janet and Colin Bird's home (Tel: 587544) on December 7th at 8pm for an hour or on Thursday morning on 10th December at 10.00am in the meeting room and the parable we will be discussing is the Parable of the Talents.

In January we will be looking at St John's Gospel and Sue Horner will be helping to lead these studies.

Prayers and Bears

We will meet on **Tuesday December 8th at 2pm.**

From January we continue to meet once a month starting on January 5th at 2.00pm.

These are informal services in the Memorial Chapel, time for a Bible Story, songs, and prayers (not forgetting our teddies) for babies

Christmas Eve Crib Service

Make sure that you come early to reserve your seats! Our Christmas Eve Crib service at 4pm is a wonderful way to start Christmas off. We sing well loved carols and have a story for all ages. It has become such an annual favourite with so many people that we are contemplating holding two services next year!

Carol Praise

December 27th at 6.30pm.

We all have a favourite carol and it's great to hear about other people's choices and sing them too! This month we have the opportunity to sing all our favourite carols on Sunday December 27th at 6.30pm. Please let me (Jo) or John Horner know your favourite carol and possibly introduce it too!

Christmas Coffee Morning

On Saturday 5th December we will be holding a **Christmas Coffee Morning** in church from 10:00 - 12:00 with Raffle, Cake Stall, Produce, Books, Treasure Stall, Aschiana Stall, Refreshments and lots more for Christmas - free entry.

