

# All Saints Alive

## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

### Use Lent thoughtfully



Dear Friends,

The artist Mark Wallinger is to create a fifty-metre high sculpture of a white horse at Ebbsfleet in Kent, more than twice the height of the Angel of the North and a only metre or so shorter than Nelson's column! It will surely create quite a talking point as passengers on Eurostar pass by and see it gracing the Kentish skyline. Remember the stir created by Antony Gormley's Angel of the North and the diminutive Christ figure, "Ecce Homo" on the plinth in Trafalgar Square .....

When artists express themselves creatively, some people may find the work fascinating, moving and enriching, while others will dislike the work and be critical. New art often takes us out of our comfort zone, challenging us to see things in a new way. Appreciated or vilified, such sculpture is seldom ignored.

The previous Bishop of St Alban's, Christopher Herbert, frequently referred to the gospel writers as great artists, with their gospels as the amazing canvas on which they portrayed Jesus. Each of the canvasses brings to light a new depth to the understanding of Jesus. I believe that Lent can be a time when we can look at Christ afresh through the scripture, through literature, through art and music, or through studios, contemplative reading revisit pieces and parts long forgotten, to help us in our spiritual lives and deepen our understanding and our own mental portrait of who Christ is for us.

Just outside the shopping centre in Reading there is a sculpture of shopping bags on a wall. I never realised that it was an

installation as people always put their bags next to them as they sat on the wall. There seemed little if anything that distinguished them from the real shopping bags, and so I passed by the art without a second glance, until I happened, one day, to touch one of the hard sculpted bronze bags.

Of course, such a sculpture could seem to be an obvious one in such a context, but art is about seeing something deeper in the everyday things of life, about wondering, perhaps questioning our own existence. Is this why I came into town, to collect some bags, like so many other people? Has the artist a critique of the emptiness of shopping, retail therapy and dependence on constantly receiving more items to fill our empty lives? Or is it a celebration of the joys of capitalism? On what do our lives depend, where do we find meaning and fulfilment?

Lent is a time that we can use to go outside our comfort zone, that we may enrich our experience and understanding. Historically it was a time when people fasted and prayed for large parts of the day, with the discomfort that this brought enabling them to focus beyond the material to the spiritual dimension of life. It could be that for some of us this is a practical possibility, but for the rest of us, a mini retreat (and this could be anything from five minutes to an hour) each day with a suitable poem, a piece of music, slipping in to a gallery, or a time of quiet with the Bible will enable us to build up our own understanding and our response to God, the Creator, the Saviour and the Holy Spirit.

The church, with its liturgy and its focus on Jesus' life and passion, can help us to bring this together. Let us not allow Lent 2009 to slip

by because we find ourselves hurrying and worrying, but rather may we notice more of the world that surrounds us, be more attentive to God's presence. For we have this special time in which to stop, to be moved, respond, even allow ourselves to go through the uncomfortable desert or dark place, and moving on, find ourselves in a greater and deeper relationship with Christ.

Yours in Christ,  
Jo

## **John & Sue Horner**

Last month Jo welcomed the Rev John and Sue Horner as they joined the family of All Saints'. Sue writes:

John knew from the age of 14 that he was called to be a priest: he was informed that he should first get an academic qualification and then some experience in the professional world. In 1979 (by then teaching Geography at Simon Balle, having obtained a double honours degree, met Sue at University, married at Digswell in 1964, had twins and became Foster Parents of 2 Anglo-West Indian foster lads), he was ordained Deacon by Bishop Robert Runcie and in 1980 priest by Bishop John Taylor.

For the next 12 years he served as non-stipendiary curate in Tewin & Datchworth and then St. Mary's Ware. He had the honour of playing rugby for his first parish – the trick was to avoid the cow-pats on the pitch! He also did his MA at the then Middlesex Polytechnic in Modern Economic & Urban growth...doing some research on the cholera outbreak in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hertford and sang in the school choir (including concerts in All Saints).

In 1991 John had the opportunity of going as a stipendiary priest in charge in South Ashford (Kent), then to St. John's Hatfield, and in 2002 retired as Vicar of Sandridge. Since then he has served wherever the need has arisen including a 6 months stint as interim priest in charge at Broxbourne & Wormley. He was for a time chair of the English Committee of the

Mission Populaire – the urban ministry arm of the French Reformed Church and also the diocesan branch of the Society of Catholic Priests.

Sue was born in Welwyn Garden City (her family originate in North East England – hence the family tradition of supporting Middlesbrough!) She became a history teacher, and was Head of Humanities for many years at Bishops Hatfield Girls School.

When John moved to Ashford she became a part-time Education Consultant at Eurotunnel and helped plan the Songs of Praise to mark the grand opening of the tunnel. To have been part of one of the major engineering achievements of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century was a great thrill. At that time Sue did an M.Phil.in Theology at the University of Kent and was also President of the Ecumenical Association of the Churches of the English & French Channel Coast (a sort of Churches Together Cross Channel). Since their return to Herts, she has taken her part in parishes undertaking catering duties, reading the Gospel, Serving, administering the sacrament and taking the Holy Communion to the sick. She is Deanery Synod Secretary.

One of her hobbies is tracing her family tree (the earliest ancestor is Richard Yorke of Barwycke upon Twete (Berwick on Tweed). Her other hobby is studying Early Netherlandish Art of the 14<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

Their family is now scattered to the winds but within the UK. Their daughter Elizabeth (the elder of the twins by 10 mins) is part of the management team in a local housing association and their son Gareth is now in charge of an international accountants office in Edinburgh. They have 3 grandsons aged 6-8 years. Being grandparents is one of the joys of their life.

We both look forward to working and worshipping amongst the Parish of All Saints, under Jo's wise and sparkling direction. Thank you All Saints for your warm welcome – and please pray that our work here may blossom and grow.