

All Saints Alive

PRIEST'S PERSPECTIVE

Confirmation, commitment, celebration

I am looking forward to our parish's Confirmation Service on May 3rd when we come together for this important ceremony. When we look at the church, it is always the nurturing of faith and expressing that faith in commitment which really counts. We all have the opportunity of seeking God, and our life within the Christian community is vital in supporting that faith.

Confirmation is a time of personal commitment, when having looked outwardly at the faith and inwardly at our feelings about the Christian life, we accept that our lives will be led by God's Spirit. So, the promises which were made at Baptism and which have helped to shape our lives become a living spiritual reality for us. We state publicly that we have faith in God and that we are turning from all that is evil to follow Christ's way, joyfully.

The Confirmation ceremony is full of questions and decisions, of offering and welcome. We become full members of the church, and in response the church asks the Bishop to come to confirm the candidates. It is wonderful that the Laying-on-of-Hands, as used by the apostles and through the ages, is still used to bring people into full communion with all the faithful. It shows the presence of God's Spirit in our lives when we come to him and confirm that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Traditionally this ceremony has also been the time for admission to Holy Communion. This means that we can share in the holiest feast of the church, when Christ's presence in our lives and among the faithful community is made real for us as we celebrate joyfully as Jesus commanded us in memory of him. As the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer states, a Sacrament is "*an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual*



grace". In other words, it makes real in the world what is happening spiritually within us. This is the case with Confirmation, Baptism and Holy Communion. Of course, we need the eyes of faith to fully appreciate this, but God is already graciously acting in our lives, inviting our response.

So, welcome to our candidates into the fullness of discipleship, and I hope to see the widest representation possible of all our church members as Confirmation invites us to support those new to the full fellowship of the church and also reminds us of the promises which we have taken to follow the Way of Christ with all God's people.

Doug Loveridge

Vicar's report to APCM

Thousands coming through the doors of All Saints, the church filled with music, the sound of children and, of course, the holiness of worship!

We have had a great year, with so much going on and so many people attending events and worship at All Saint's. The highlight special event of the year was the Christmas Tree Festival. Who will forget that amazing sight of a hundred sparkling Christmas trees and all the fun that we had, not to mention the money raised for the Isabel Hospice and the Church?

There have been some fantastic concerts at All Saints, and Soundbites has continued to grow, producing music often of an international standard. The choir sang the services for a week at Wells Cathedral and they even allowed the Vicar to tag along as an honorary parent!

The family service has become our best attended service with numbers of families joining us and loving the all-age approach with activities and its very warm welcome.

Yes, we have had set backs with the flooding (even two fire engines were not quite enough to empty the moat that had developed around the church, bursting the churchyard walls and filling the boiler house).

Nevertheless, we have had more weddings and baptisms than previously and many more people feel able to ask for a funeral in church. These events are great ways in which to show that All Saints is warm, – well, when the heating is not flooded - welcoming and just the sort of family and building that everyone can feel at home with!

We have had services with pets, trains, and even vegetables, as well as all the usual great services such as the Nine Lessons and Carols, Fire Brigade, St George's Day and Remembrance Sunday.

We have even managed to keep our Church finances in the black this year despite the fears that we had at the beginning of the financial year.

The Anglican Churches in Hertford became a Team in August with the Inauguration two months later. The clergy meet, pray and plan regularly and it is a support and inspiration to be part of this developing work. Together the churches are beginning to work together more to the benefit of our town.

It has also been good to develop closer links with Hertford through the privilege of being Mayor's Chaplain and making the most of opportunities to network with those around the town.

All these factors combine to make me feel very encouraged that we are doing more than "holding our heads above water". We cannot be complacent, and our success comes from the dedicated work and prayerful support of many people in our church. We share that ministry together, and as we work with God's mission in mind we

can see his blessing in many areas of our shared life.

Love, Jo

Are you interested in visiting?

We are keen to ensure that we have good pastoral care at All Saint's and in the Hertford Team Ministry.

We have invited Canon Robin Brown, the Local Ministry Advisor for the Diocese of St Alban's, to lead us in our initial training course for all those interested in visiting.

There will be three sessions on Wednesday evenings from 8.00pm – 9.30pm following the weekly 7.15 pm Compline service at All Saints. We will start with a cup of coffee or tea served from 7.50pm:

- 6th May *Pastoral Care and Listening*
- 13th May *Befriending those who are Bereaved*
- 27th May *Communion to the Housebound*

Do let me know if you feel that you may be able to join us and do not hesitate to ask me more about the course or potential team. Members of All Saint's current pastoral care team are: Janet Bird (the pastoral care co-ordinator), Revd John Horner, Sue Horner and I.

There are brochures with more details about the course at the back of Church and I look forward to people joining us in this vital part of the Church's ministry.

