

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

New Life, new responsibilities

"The future is in our hands" say climate change advertisements. And while there is a debate about just how much human activity is responsible for, this fact seems inescapable. We can build for the future or destroy our environment, just as we can build or destroy relationships or live in hope or despair. God is loving and creative, and he wants to bring new life out of harsh situations. We can be part of God's plan for peace and joy or work against it, which is what our human sinfulness all too often leads to.

The future of the planet can feel like a heavy responsibility for any of us. Even sorting out our rubbish and recycling it can seem time-consuming and difficult enough – so councils are beginning to use computer chips to monitor our compliance - let alone looking at the bigger picture and thinking about how we use all our resources. It seems a huge uphill struggle when we look around and see the waste, the discarded debris of society. But we must not allow the size of the problem to overwhelm us.

One recent development is that amidst all the terrible urban decay and utter poverty in Detroit, U.S.A., places where buildings have fallen and been bulldozed have been lovingly created into green spaces, gardens and small scale farms for the local community. There is talk of the area returning to being prairies. It is also a fact that this stems from major cutbacks in the motor industry, which generates so much pollution.

To me this seems to reflect the resurrection, for in a place where there was desolation and ruin, where no one seemed to care, a movement arose to make something of the landscape, to re-establish the earth. Unlikely-seeming streetwise young people were cultivating these green spaces, finding a



future, not to make huge amounts of money but to find a new pride in themselves and their ability to grow and be creative.

The resurrection of Jesus, the good news of Easter, is that even when things seem absolutely hopeless, and that death and decay is inescapable, New Life springs up, giving us all every reason to be full of hope and joy.

The cross was a place of desolation and seeming hopelessness, where a great man with such good news was murdered. Yet God acted to raise him to new life, and in doing so confirmed Jesus' message for mankind and showed that God is offering us a new creation, a new way of living. The Bible tells us that when we are "in Christ", having put our trust in him, we are a new creation, God's resurrection people. We can live with a hope in our hearts that this world's sorrows and fears can never destroy.

"The future is in our hands", as the adverts say, and for our own lives and the shared life of our planet the Easter message is that God offers this new life to us all. Of course, if it is to truly change our lives we need to come to him in faith, turn from the sins of the world and seek to live God's way as Jesus shows us. With this hope in our hearts we can make a difference for our own lives, for our community and the world in which we live.

Have a joyful Easter,
Love Jo

The Easter Vigil

In the Easter vigil we watch with the grieving disciples, we walk with the women through the empty streets of Jerusalem in the hour

before dawn, sharing their horror, loss and confusion, and we bring to God a world which throbs with those feelings still. However, on behalf of that world – and for ourselves – we face those feelings with faith. The set readings provide a wonderful series of Old Testament passages which lead up to a powerful climax in the readings from Romans and Luke, proclaiming the resurrection of Christ.

And so, as light enters the Church, we turn from all the sins, longings and imperfections of our world – from its horror, loss and confusion – to the new life won for us by Christ, and so wonderfully opened on Easter morning. Can we grasp it with something better than the incredulity which gripped the disciples? Can we truly receive it, face the world and say “Christ is Risen!”?

Do join us for this moving service on Easter Eve (April 3rd) at 8:00 p.m.

Love, Jo

Bible Study Notes

If you have been attending the Lent Bible Study sessions, you may be wondering how you can continue with your Bible Study once Lent is over.

This can be a daunting prospect and most of us feel we need some extra help with this, perhaps some guidance on where to begin, or help with understanding what we are reading. The Bible Reading Fellowship notes provide just that. They are small booklets containing a short Bible passage for each day of the week, together with an explanation and a thought for the day. They are not complicated to understand and can be read over a cup of coffee or in conjunction with your lunchtime sandwich if you are pushed for time.

The booklets are published three times a year at a cost of around £11 for the year. If you would like more information on these or would like a sample copy to have a look at please speak to Denise Dillely – 01992 587113 who will be happy to order them for you or provide further details.

Annual Meetings and Electoral Roll

The Vestry Meeting (to elect the Church wardens) and the Annual Parish Church Meeting will be held after Parish Communion on 18th April.

If you are not on the current electoral and would like to vote at the APCM, please fill in the electoral roll form – obtainable from Gillian Harman or one of the Wardens

Gluten free wafers

We have a supply of gluten free wafers. If anyone is on a gluten free diet and would like a gluten free wafer, please speak to one of the Wardens.




Vision Evening

A group of 34 people from across the parish met on Tuesday 9th March both to listen to presentations and also to discuss aspects of our growth and development as a parish, led by Canon John Kiddle, Diocesan Officer for Mission and Development.

This was a stimulating and lively evening and many ideas were generated. These are being collated and developed and on 22nd March the PCC agreed that some should be presented and discussed at the APCM on 18th April.

John presented two key 'benchmarks' that may well stimulate thought:

The Five Marks of Mission of the Worldwide Anglican Communion

-  To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
-  To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
-  To respond to human need by loving service

- ✚ To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- ✚ To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Seven Marks of a Healthy Church

1. Energized by faith rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive

- *worship and sacramental life*: moves people to experience God's love
- *motivation*: energy comes from a desire to serve God and one another
- *engaging with Scripture*: in creative ways connect with life
- *nurtures faith in Christ*: helping people to grow in, and share their faith.

2. Outward-looking focus with a 'whole life' rather than a 'church life' concern

- deeply rooted in the *local community*, working in partnership with other denominations, faiths, secular groups and networks
- passionate and prophetic about *justice and peace*, locally and globally
- makes connections between *faith and daily living*
- responds to human need by *loving service*

3. Seeks to find out what God wants discerning the Spirit's leading rather than trying to please everyone

- *vocation*: seeks to explore what God wants it to be and do
- *vision*: develops and communicates a shared sense of where it is going
- *mission priorities*: consciously sets both immediate and long-term goals
- able to call for, and make, *sacrifices*, personal and corporate, in bringing about the above and living out the faith.

4. Faces the cost of change and growth rather than resisting change and avoiding failure

- while embracing the past, it dares to take on *new ways of doing things*
- *takes risks*: and admits when things are not working, and learns from experience
- *crises*: responds creatively to challenges that face the church and community
- *positive experiences of change*: however small, are affirmed and built on.

5. Operates as a community rather than functioning as a club or religious organisation

- *Relationships*: are nurtured, often in small groups, so people feel accepted and are helped to grow in faith and service
- *leadership*: lay and ordained work as a team to develop locally appropriate expressions of all seven marks of a healthy church
- *lay ministry*: the different gifts, experiences and faith journeys of all are valued and given expression in and beyond the life of the church.

6. Makes room for all being inclusive rather than exclusive.

- *welcome*: works to include newcomers into the life of the church
- *children and young people*: are helped to belong, contribute and be nurtured in their faith
- *enquirers* are encouraged to explore and experience faith in Christ
- *diversities*: different social and ethnic backgrounds, mental and physical abilities, and ages, are seen as a strength.

7. Does a few things and do them well focused rather than frenetic.

- *does the basics well*: especially public worship, pastoral care, stewardship and administration
- *occasional offices*: make sense of life and communicate faith
- *being good news* as a church in its attitudes and ways of working
- *enjoys what it does* and is relaxed about what is not being done

Do come to the APCM and share your thoughts and ideas.