

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Getting back to God



Dear Friends,

I noticed that a local school was promoting an Advent Fair in early December. I wondered immediately whether they would have many people attending. Everything's Christmas at this time of the year, isn't it? Especially if you want to make some money..... and my thoughts turned to admiration. There's nothing wrong with preparing for Christmas, and people have done so for centuries, but that is Advent, surely. The school has a point, for despite Advent calendars the focus tends to be on Christmas for several months before 25th December.

In a nation encountering severe financial difficulties and with unemployment and poverty increasing, adjacent to a continent where nations need to be bailed out from their debt crises, the idea of massively increased personal spending feels deeply uncomfortable. We now have over one million young people out of work, and it is hard to calculate the feelings which so many people may feel when they have no way of earning money from their skills and time. And what will they feel in having no means of giving and sharing in the manner that seems to be set before them?

Advent has traditionally been a time for penitence as a spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ. It recognises God's values for our lives and for the world around us, and while much of what is wrong in society and commerce may be due to vast forces which we cannot personally control, the fact is that the personal attitudes of many people have led to this and we all bear some responsibility.

There is much criticism of bankers, with huge bonuses for failing businesses but they are not the only people, it's just that they have more opportunity and it is more noticeable! All of us can harbour attitudes towards others that fall short of concern and love and which result from selfishness. They can affect our lives and those of others profoundly.

The spiritual preparation of Advent can be valuable in bringing us back to God's ways – and in helping us to truly celebrate Christmas. It is not a religious exercise for special “holy people” (whoever they may be!), but a challenge to all of us to look at our own attitudes in the light of Christ's teachings. He calls us to love God and our neighbour. As St John's gospel says, however, as read at Nine Lessons and Carols and Midnight Mass, “the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not”.

Sharing in the worship of Christmas Day is an affirmation that we want to live in the light of the new day which Christ has brought to us. And it is a great joy, for among all the sins and problems of our world God has come to free us from sin. Through Jesus he opens to us the gate of glory, of eternal life, and when we prepare by turning from sin to follow Christ we can feel renewed spiritually, knowing that God's love and salvation finally transcends and triumphs over this world's many problems for “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”.

I wish you a Blessed Advent and a Joyful Christmas,

Love,

Jo

View from the Pew

Christmas is nearly here again and there is such a lot going on at All Saints during December, not only with our own services and events but also many other carol services, Christingles and concerts. It is such a privilege to be able to share our wonderful church with so many people at this time of goodwill towards men.

The month starts with our Christmas Bazaar on Saturday 3rd December which we are holding in St John's Hall from 10am until 2pm. The dancing group which normally meets in the hall have agreed to perform for us at 11am, so why not come early to get the bargains, have a rest whilst you enjoy the dancing display and then join us for a home cooked lunch! As you will know, like everybody else All Saints has suffered from the economic downturn so it will make our Treasurer happy (and my life easier!) if we can hold a successful Bazaar to end the year. We have various stalls and sideshows planned but we need your support, both as customers and volunteers. If you have any articles, including books, bric a brac, jigsaws, raffle or tombola prizes which we can sell please contact me or Andrew. Homemade cakes are always very popular so please get baking. There will be various Christmas goods, many made by groups within the church and of course refreshments, including hot lunches. If you can spare any time to help it is not too late to offer.

On Sunday 4th December we will be holding our own Christingle service, a lovely service for children and adults alike with the collection going to the Children's Society to support their work with underprivileged and socially disadvantaged children and families. In the afternoon we are all invited to join with the congregation at Holy Trinity, Little Amwell (Hertford Heath) at 3.30pm for a combined Team Evensong. For those of you who have never been into Holy Trinity it is well worth a visit.

On 18th December, following the morning service we will be drawing our Christmas Grand Draw. If you haven't already had tickets do make sure that you don't miss out

on a chance to win one of the many prizes which include £100 cash, Afternoon tea for two at Hanbury Manor and a three course meal for 2 at The Salisbury Arms Hotel.

The Christmas services then begin in earnest in the evening with our ever popular service of Lessons and Carols.

Andrew and I would like to wish you, your families and friends a very happy Christmas and a joyous, healthy and peaceful New Year. We look forward to seeing you at one of the many Christmas Services (although I will be absent on Christmas Day, preparing for the Christmas Alone party at Sele School) and would ask you to remember in your prayers our Vicar Jo and all others in the Ministry team who will be leading our worship at this busy time and also the members of our choir, Martin Penny our Director of Music and all others who will be using their many talents to enrich and enhance the beauty and majesty of our worship during the Christmas season.

Love

Janet

