

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Living God's Love



Dear Friends,

It's great to be well and truly back and immersed again in parish life following my Sabbatical. May I say how grateful I am to everyone who made this important time possible. It has been a period of reflection and personal growth, and I feel that I am returning refreshed and renewed.

One aspect of a Sabbatical is travel, along with study and project work, and my travel was chosen as more than a holiday, rather a spiritual odyssey in the Far East, an area which Doug and I had never travelled to before. The high point of the journey was Lhasa, the capital of Tibet and home of Buddhism. It was the home of the Dalai Lama until what our Chinese guide referred to as the "peaceful liberation" of the land sixty years ago. Lhasa was the high point literally in both senses, being some 11,500 feet above sea level as well as a place of tremendous spiritual depth.

The Jokhang Temple is an impressive shrine, and as you approach there are massive incense burners, symbolising prayer, as well as countless prayer flags. What was most inspiring was the devotion of the people who spent a long time making their pilgrimage and approached the Temple with an amazing humility, kneeling outside the building for up to eight hours before entering the holy place.

I was struck by how their faith was lived out, and how open they were in practicing it. Within the temple, the people's devotion and offerings were all given in an atmosphere of holiness. It helped me to reflect that our own worship needs to also assist us in self-giving and in feeling that we are in touch with the things which really matter in life.

The very atmosphere of Lhasa is very rarefied, being so high – it is often called "The Roof of the World". This meant that we needed to take care not to over-exert ourselves, though even so we experienced some nasty headaches. Some in our group needed extra oxygen. The height and the air quality meant that there was a remarkably clear atmosphere. It brought home to us our reliance on our breath, the God-given spirit within us – how fundamental that we breathe in and out constantly, being dependent on this creation for our mortal sustenance. This feeling of breathing an exceptional spiritual atmosphere will remain with us. If it spoke to us as Christians of our reliance on God, we were sensitised to this by the remarkable beauty and commitment of the Buddhist pilgrims.

One aspect of this experience was also the naturalness of faith. People practiced their faith, without any concern that people might criticise or judge. In our culture, we can allow ourselves to feel that it may be best to keep a low profile, perhaps to avoid offense or – more likely – criticism. In this supposedly secular age, we are told to keep faith as a private matter. Yet faith and belief is as natural as life itself, as ordinary as breathing.

We should not be ashamed of the faith to which God has called us; rather we should follow the Lord's leading to share the Good News. The whole concept of "Living God's Love" surely makes that clear: living is done in community, not alone, and what we experience and can share with others is the love and compassion of God. That needs to be expressed without fear or shame, and our worship is the focus of this love which has the power to transform our own lives so that we cease to live for ourselves alone.

We live for God, whose Son laid down his life for us, was raised to newness, and breathed the power of the Holy Spirit into the apostles that they – and, today, we – may live to his glory.

Peace be with you, Jo

Hertford Team Events

July

- 2nd Coffee Morning – St Andrew's
- 3rd Elliot James' Ordination Service
Welcome Tea – All Saints 4pm
- 17th Team Community Afternoon – Hertford Castle

August

- 6th Coffee Morning with Flower Demonstration – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 27th – 29th Flower Festival – St Leonard's

September

- 4th Barbeque 12 noon – All Saints
- 10th Bike 'n Hike
- 24th Coffee Morning – All Saints

October

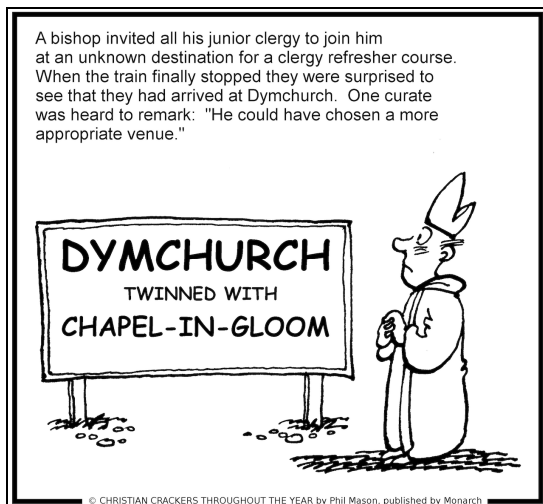
- 1st Harvest Happening – All Saints
- 15th Osiligi Maasai Warriors 7pm – All Saints
- 22nd Exploring Spirituality Day led by Dean Jeffrey John
"In the beginning was the Word"

November

- 19th Barn Dance – All Saints
- 26th Team Advent Quiet Day

December

- 3rd Christmas Bazaar – All Saints



View from the Pew

Jo's sabbatical has now come to an end and about 35 of us celebrated her return at a very enjoyable tea on Sunday 12 June. It is really great to have her back in harness setting forth God's word to us in her inimitable style. I would like to formally put on record our very grateful thank to all the clergy who have helped out during her sabbatical, namely Bill Church, Alan Stewart, Robert Thompson, David Dewey, Anne Voss, David Scott, Nick Sharp and Rod Higham.

Talking of teas, the Senior's tea party on 29 May was very well supported and my thanks go out to Janet and her team for all they did to put this on. Hardly has one gone that there is another on one **on 29 July 2011 at 4pm in St John's Hall**. We would like to extend our outreach into the local community even further so if you can help on that day or know of people who would like to attend then please contact me or Janet Bird.

July 3rd is going to be a big day for All Saints as it is **Elliot's Ordination in the morning at 11.15am in St. Albans Abbey** – if you would like to attend then please contact me - we may be able to offer transport. In my time here we have not had the luxury of a curate so life is going to be exciting and those of you who have met Elliot will know this already. We will have the opportunity to welcome him to the parish in the afternoon as we are holding **a bring and share tea at 4pm- please come along and give him a big welcome.**

A Community Day is being held in the Castle grounds on 17 July at 2.30pm which is being organised jointly by **Hertford Town Council and Hertford Churches Together**. It is an opportunity for all Hertford charities and voluntary organisations to make the public more aware of all the good work they are undertaking in the community. There will be a band playing and The Castle will be open to look around. Please come along and support this. In addition volunteers are needed to man the Churches Together stall and offers of help to me would be gratefully received by me or Jo.

Love, Andrew