

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

What lies beneath?

Dear Friends,

There is so much to look at and experience at this time of year: Fantastic decorations, beautifully dressed up shops, tempting foods, bright lights and uplifting music and carols. It is almost as though this is the treasure; it's all so very dazzling, exciting and very tempting!

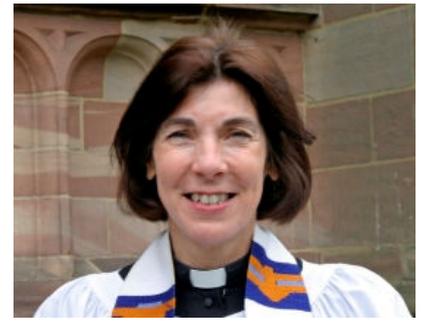
The period of **Advent**, though, warns us to look again, to strip away the surface, and look beyond the superficial. Looking again at our own lives and examining and removing those things that draw us away from God, selfishness, self-centred ways, and open our lives to the searching questions of judgment.

Have we shut our eyes and closed our ears to the uncomfortable message of a loving God? Would we be ready to meet him when he comes? Just as we prepare ourselves for the Christmas season by tidying up, sorting out and stocking up; how much more we really need to do this in our spiritual lives.

Better not leave it any longer, the season of Advent reminds us.

On the mountains,
In the cities,
Through the corridors of power
And streets of despair,
To help, to heal,
To comfort and to love.
O come, O come Emmanuel!
Iona Community

The joy of **Christmas** reminds us that God comes to meet us in his Son. We may feel that we are nowhere near God, that there is still so much for us to sort out but God draws



close. Closer than our very breath, surrounding us with his love and calling us to respond to be the people that he calls us all to be.

Every time we see the Christmas lights, decorations, cards, food, presents and hear the Christmas music, let them remind us of the true treasure that lies beneath, the treasure that lasts for ever, that treasure that nothing can change or damage.

God, who became as we are,
May we become as you are.
After William Blake 1757- 18 27

New Year and **Epiphany** is the ideal time to make a change.

Deepak Chopra, the spiritual writer points out a startling fact that we have up to 50,000 thoughts every day and 98 per cent of those thoughts are the same as yesterday! So if we are walking around with a collection of beliefs, most of which may well be formed in childhood and passed on to us from other people's experiences then repeating those thoughts almost verbatim each day we don't allow ourselves opportunity to develop and when change comes along we generally respond with quite a lot of discomfort!

Why are we afraid? Nothing genuinely stays the same, each one of our thoughts as our cells has the potential for change every moment.

Epiphany: Let the guiding manifestation of God in Christ open our filled –full lives in 2013 so that we can have true fulfilment.

Holy Spirit, guide us as those wise men from the east. Open us to your presence and fill

us with generosity to give of ourselves so we may become the change that we would see in the world.

Arise, shine, for the light has come: The glory of the LORD has risen upon us.

Have a joyful and blessed Christmas time,
Love, Jo

All Saints' is now a Fairtrade Parish

I am really pleased to be able to say that we took the decision at our PCC meeting in November to become a Fairtrade Parish.

The Diocese of St Albans and Hertford as a town have already taken the decision to use as widely as possible Fairtrade products, tea coffee, sugar and biscuits. In the past Fairtrade coffee had a reputation as having rather a horrid taste but over the years they have improved their products, so much so that at a taste test during the PCC meeting we really felt that they were as good as any of the top brands!

Ensuring that people are given a fair income for their work in countries that produce our coffee, sugar and tea is vital as it means that not only can the family eat but also that the children can be educated!

I am sure that many of you already buy Fairtrade products in the supermarkets but if you have not tried them why not do the taster test yourself?

All Saints' thinks ahead. An open PCC meeting on January 15th in Church

Please join us on 15th January at 8pm when the inspiring Revd John Kiddle will be helping us to think about our future at All Saints. This is part of the Diocesan initiative on Mission Action Planning.

As a PCC, naturally we have some good ideas that we would like to explore - you

have heard some at the AGM and read about others in the magazine.

It is always good to have as many as possible help us to think things through or suggest creative ways in which we can develop the mission of God in the Parish and in the Community.

Vote on Women Bishops

After many years of discussion and debate the General Synod of the Church of England rejected the legislation which provided for the ordination of women as bishops on November 21st. A two-thirds majority was required in all three Houses of Synod. Whilst the House of Bishops and the House of Clergy achieved the necessary two-thirds majority, the motion was lost by a few votes in the House of Laity. I have always been a supporter of women bishops' legislation and I share in the disappointment of the many outstanding women priests who play such a valuable role in the mission and ministry of our diocese.

Whilst I recognise that a significant minority of people in the Diocese of St Albans have theological objections to the proposals which were being debated, I have always tried to keep in close contact with them and to support them. Nevertheless I know that the vast majority of people in the diocese were in favour of this development and for them today's vote will be a cause for deep sadness. We need time to reflect on what has happened. In the meantime, I urge everyone to double their efforts to love and serve their communities, offering their pain and frustration to God. No one has any cause for rejoicing; all are aware that the pain felt will affect the whole church. I was grateful for the grace shown when the result was announced to the General Synod in silence.

It is a bishop's task to unite all those in his care and I call on all the people of the diocese that I lead to continue in the service of their communities, loving them as Christ loved us, sacrificing their pain to that task. As we double our efforts to reach out to the most needy, we will discover the future to which God is calling us.

We have more listening and more work to do to achieve the end result which so many believe is the right way forward both inside and beyond our church.

†Alan St Albans