

View from the pew

Colin Bird

I'm writing this shortly after our Remembrance service. What an amazing occasion this is – for the church to speak to thousands at the War Memorial service and to welcome 350 people from the town to the church for the service afterwards. Jo, with Bishop Michael and Archdeacon Janet led both services and everything went very smoothly. Bishop Michael gave a particularly good sermon, giving a big civilian thank you to our brave service-men without in any way glorifying war.

We had the privilege of welcoming Bishop Michael to our PCC meeting this month. He heard the conclusions of our recent PCC awayday (reported in October's magazine) and heard our plans for enhancing our governance by

- inviting members of the church with special skills to become consultants to the PCC on individual matters,
- to streamline agendas with major themes being set for specific times of the year (covering perhaps Vision and strategy, Worship and Outreach, Parish development, Fabric and Social, Finance and projects)
- and to open up PCC meetings generally.

We also discussed with Bishop Michael how the Church leaders can help us move from being a stable church to one that is growing strongly.

Our presentation to Bishop Michael on Making New Disciples is on our website at <http://www.allsaintshertford.org/reports/PCC/LGL161117.pdf> – please have a look at this to gain an overall perspective of the many strands of our life and work at All Saints.

The Bishop praised us for the breadth of our offerings to our church members and the community at large and for achieving stability in numbers and money over the last

5 years, when demographic changes could have seen us decline.

He gave a thoughtful presentation in response to our challenge of how to make new disciples based on Acts 17.16-34. His main point is that most people come to faith gradually and over time (an average of 4 years) and that whilst we should take every opportunity to widely proclaim the Gospel, we should actively search out the few real seekers and develop an active program to help them take the next steps towards commitment to Jesus Christ.

Following on from the Deanery Living God's Love event, we held an open meeting to consider our mission and to discuss opportunities for enhancing outreach to the many people who come into contact with us through occasional services and events. A number of ideas were tabled, around expanding our community involvement, the use of the church building and fresh expressions of worship. These will be researched in short order.

It doesn't seem possible that another year has almost gone and Christmas is nearly here again. The publication of this magazine will coincide with the biggest event of the year – the Wreath Festival with proceeds going to the Air Ambulance and the Christmas market for All Saints. Many people have been involved in or supported the event and there will have been well over 100 wreaths on show. This is another occasion to draw the crowds into our church.

As usual, All Saints is particularly busy during December; not only with our own services and events but also many other carol services and concerts.

This gives us a wonderful opportunity for outreach as we welcome so many different people to share our wonderful church as we journey through the reflective days of Advent towards the joyful festival of

All Saints Alive

Christmas. In all we are expecting over 6,000 schoolchildren to attend church this month!

We shall be holding our normal Christmas Services of Nine Lessons and Carols, our Christmas Eve Crib Service, Midnight Eucharist and then our Christmas Day celebration and we look forward to seeing lots of you at these services as we celebrate together the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Janet 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 and ask you to remember in your prayers our Vicar Jo, Doug and all others in the Ministry team who will be leading our worship at this busy time. Also the members of our choir, Martin Penny our Director of Music, our Flower Club 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.

Yours in faith,
Colin