

# All Saints Alive

## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



### *Lent – time for a ‘re-boot’*

Dear Friends,

I was very pleased to see that Benedict Cumberbatch's portrayal of Sherlock Holmes has been voted the top BBC character worldwide, sold to 240 territories. The actor said he felt honoured and added "Who would have thought a high-functioning sociopath could be so popular... all over the world?" Absolutely! The "Sherlock" series is essential viewing in the Vicarage.

This Sherlock series is a "reboot" of the classic stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. They have been portrayed frequently by many excellent actors, such as Basil Rathbone and Jeremy Brett. But this is something else, as they say, in that previous portrayals have remained firmly in Victorian England. This series brings Holmes into the present day, retaining his unique detection abilities, the London address and occasionally the deerstalker and violin, but it is totally up to date. Computers, texting and terrorism all feature and we are able to see Holmes' deductive processes on the TV screen.

Such updating is something which I believe can encourage and inspire us in our perception of life today as people of faith. We can and should be glad of tradition, the very process by which faith has been made available to us, but we are not called to be Christians in the 1st, 10th, 15th or even 20th centuries. There are essentials to hold on to, but if it is not relevant here and now it becomes simply an entertainment or a diversion, or a longing for things past which can never be recaptured.

The time of Lent is always an opportunity to look afresh at our faith, but I wonder whether we really come to grips with that year by year. I say this because the Anglican team of churches has recently invited us all to come to a set of meetings about how we make new disciples, and while a number of good people have come and shared, the limited involvement was rather disappointing (hopefully there will still be some good outcomes).

Lent is for our spiritual health, as we may not be up to date and up to scratch. What if there are depths of understanding which we keep on ignoring? Or if God is calling us to change our way of life but it seems easier not to listen? What if we just want everything to remain as it was some time ago and we become resistant to making progress in the way we serve God? And in any case, whether or not we are willing to change, the world around us is certainly changing dramatically in so many ways.

Our faith needs to be relevant to the world today. Jesus addressed the world of his time with eternal truths and – unavoidably – some ideas and stories which were very much of their time. Farming and fishing, tending sheep, lighting candles under bushels have been removed from most of our lives for a very long time, perhaps always, but we do know what the stories mean. There are still prodigal children and loving parents, even Good Samaritans. We should hold on firmly to the core of the Gospel message and ponder regularly our response in this changing world.

During Lent the Church invites us all to do this in depth, to find a way of re-booting

our faith into the present day, perhaps involving giving or taking something up to re-focus our spiritual lives.

In the end, the story of Jesus sacrificing himself, lovingly, is at the centre of our faith, for God's love is all-embracing and never fails. I pray that we will all engage with Lent in a meaningful way so that we can be true to God and be able to live in today's world in a manner which will encourage others to follow the way of Christ.

Love,  
Jo

## **Mothering Sunday 26th March, 10.00am**

This year we are trying a new approach, and our service will be purely a service of thanks and praise, not a Eucharist (there will be an 08.00 Eucharist). The wonder of motherhood, of parenthood, of childhood and our human development is utterly central to our being in this world, and we feel that giving thanks to God is important at all stages of our lives.

For some this will be straightforward joy, for others there may be reasons why there is an area of sadness. So there is something for everyone, young and old, and we are asking that you invite others to join in with this very special ceremony. We will be working hard to make it a beautiful service, meaningful in affirming God's love in our closest relationships.

### **Lent: Did you know?**

*Why is Lent actually longer than 40 days?* Sundays, being feast days are not included in the count. If you are fasting you can even break your fast on Sundays! The tradition of fasting started as early as the fifth Century.

*Why is it 40 days?* Not only did Jesus spend 40 days in the wilderness fasting in preparation for his ministry, the number 40 is significant in the old Testament as well. In

Genesis, it took 40 days and nights of rain to cause a flood which destroyed the earth; the Hebrews spent 40 years in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land; Moses fasted for 40 days before receiving the Ten Commandments.

*Why "Lent"?* Lent is derived from the Old English word *Lencten* which means "lengthen", a lengthening of the days and hence springtime and Dutch still uses the word Lent for springtime.

*What colour?* Purple or violet is the symbolic colour for Lent, seen on altars, and robes, surprisingly purple symbolises pain and suffering and yet as it is the colour of royalty it anticipates the resurrection and the coming of God's Kingdom.

*Why use ashes on Ash Wednesday?* Ashes were used to symbolise penitence and mortality (*sackcloth and ashes*) and we use the cold ashes from burning last year's Palm Sunday crosses, to place on our foreheads to remind us of our own mortality and in penitence for sin.

*Are there any particular days on which to fast?* Ash Wednesday is often observed by fasting, and particularly from meat but it is also accompanied by prayer as well. Fridays are also meat free day during Lent.

## **HeartEdge launch**



Some familiar faces in St Stephen's, Walbrook on 8th February! Read more about this and the ideas described in Jo's sermon on Feb 19<sup>th</sup> in the articles on pages 3 and 4.