

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...



Dear friends,

Some of the stories that we have heard as children we remember for the rest of our lives, and even now as adults we love to hear stories. We may also need to be sitting comfortably in order to really enjoy those stories! Jesus used stories to explain the love of God and also how we need to respond to that love. Parables set in the very ordinary scenes of life would amuse and sometimes shock Jesus' listeners.

In our Bible studies that we have begun together at All Saints, we have once again been surprised at the freshness of the story and moved by the meaning for our lives.

We might think that we have heard it all before and know the stories so well but no, the impact is as fresh as if we were hearing it for the first time. Learning more about the background of those parables and hearing about how others in our groups respond, and then coming to see new depths in the situation and in our own lives has been brilliant. Each of our sessions is self contained so please try to make even just one of them so that you don't miss out!

This is the season in the Church's year when we think about other people's life stories and take time to stop and remember them. We begin with All Saints, then move on to Remembrance Sunday, then our Memorial Service and finally, at the end of the month, on to Advent Sunday. The idea of All Saints is all-encompassing, remembering the "vast cloud of witnesses" to which we belong. Some of those saints have been recognised widely by the Church, but many of the saints are ordinary people with an extraordinary faith and love, those who have heard the

story of Jesus and followed the way to which he calls us. On Remembrance Sunday we remember the vast number of brave people who have given their lives for our freedom in the shocking conflicts of the World Wars but also in recent and ongoing conflicts. Our own Memorial Service is deeply personal, about those whom we love though we see them no longer – a chance to renew our thanks for the way they have enriched our lives, and to share our confidence that through faith they are forever with the Lord.

Advent Sunday leads us to turn the focus onto our own lives in the light of eternity. The story of the human race, and so of all of us, is one of people made for glory yet fallen from grace. We needed the Saviour to lift us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. With the recession still biting hard we can expect an even more crass commercial exploitation of Christmas this year than ever before. Let us turn every reminder of the coming of Christ to our own spiritual good, remembering with joy his love and salvation, and how in his birth, teaching, death and resurrection our humble human story is forever connected with the glory of God.

Yours in Christ, Jo

The Hertford Team is your Team!

We are making great progress in the Hertford Team, with the Team Council made up from members of each Church's standing committee. We have had many successful united Team events and courses: Developing pastoral visiting teams, Youth events, Children's leaders training, Training in Godly Play, Intercessor's training, and Nurture

courses (meeting in a local pub and leading to confirmation for some participants).

Our united team services have been great opportunities to worship together and to get to know one another better. It was profoundly moving to be able to share Ash Wednesday, some of the Holy Week journey together and Ascension Day in our beautiful churches, on our faith pilgrimage together. We now have a united Choral Matins service at All Saints on the Second Sunday of the month at 8.30 am (apart from Remembrance Sunday).

We are looking forward to: A Quiet day on November 28th (Saturday), A First Aid Course (invaluable to have such skills if people are taken seriously ill), A Welcome course and A united magazine reflection /letter

I have met with all the churches' PCC's and this has given us all an opportunity to discuss the team, its vision, benefits and challenges and for us to get to know and understand each other better.

The full time clergy meet up once a week to pray, talk and share lunch together and have become great friends, finding these meetings useful support and good opportunities to plan together and keep parishes in the loop. The Team clergy have had a quiet day each year together, sharing their vision at Pleshey, a retreat house near Chelmsford, and their imagination at the Tate Modern in London!

We are developing a Team strategy although we are enjoying the informality and the opportunity to just feel relaxed about maintaining individual parish traditions and celebrating our diversity.

Being together means that we can really engage in God's mission strategically, working, praying and planning together. We look forward to even more members of our congregations joining us for joint events and training as the more of us that join together, the more successful we can be and together we can achieve so much more than by ourselves! Love, Jo

The Healing Service

I felt very privileged to be asked to preach and assist with the ministry of the Laying on of Hands at All Saints' first Healing Service (4th October). I do find that there is a quality to the family feeling of Christians in our church which means that I can receive a great deal of spiritual care just as I seek to offer it in Jesus' name.

You may imagine that Healing Services come easily to a Hospital Chaplain. But, of course, we do not have the opportunity for a large service of this type. Instead, I tend to visit people individually and I feel that our prayers, our sharing in communion or hearing God's word, brings healing. But I am aware that people do not suddenly jump up out of bed, miraculously restored – although if it is God's will for that to happen I will always be thankful. Rather, we are affirming the loving presence of God in our lives and in our world, acknowledging his Lordship, trusting his will. And the healing may be a process of recovery and renewal of faith, or it may be the experience of a strengthening of the body and soul.

So we were fairly gentle about the service, simply seeking God's presence and whatever healing He has for us. What has been wonderful is that a number of people have come to Jo and I since the service to say how helpful they had found it. Such feelings as inner peace and reduction of pain are the sort of reactions described, and it is wonderful to hear such reports. These are genuine experiences of God at work in our midst. We are thankful to the Lord for His care.

Our prayer at the Laying on of Hands is for God's healing for each person, wanting the Holy Spirit to work in their lives. It may be that we need to wait and trust, or that we receive spiritual strength, or that there may a physical healing. That is how we can all be – open to God and asking that His loving will may be done, in our own lives and for all whom we care for.

Doug Loveridge