

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

And now for the real Xmas factor?



Dear Friends,

Many people have been enjoying watching the reality TV programme *The X Factor* where people audition and then receive training and eventually someone is chosen and wins the title because they have what the judges and people believe is that X factor. It makes compulsive viewing and seems to have more and more razzamatazz as it goes along. Sometimes the audience agree with the judges and sometimes surprising and unlikely people are chosen. Yes, the whole thing is very commercial and is also cleverly timed in order to have a Christmas X factor number one hit in the music business too!

What about the real X Factor, the Xmas factor with the Cross and Christ put back into Christmas? At this time of year, with the shops filled with bright and tempting things for Christmas, advertisements encouraging us to buy hugely expensive goods we find ourselves wondering about what makes the **Xmas** factor. We feel that the true meaning of Christmas has become buried underneath all those wrappings and layers of presents, decorations, cards, food, entertainment and our own anxieties to "get everything right" and to have a perfect Christmas!

So what is the right Xmas factor? We believe that God came to us, not in a spectacular, extraordinary way, but rather in the ordinary birth of a child. The current Christian Christmas advertising campaign reflects this well with an ultra sound picture of a baby in the womb depicted with a faint halo around his head. By coming among us in this very natural and ordinary human way, God shows his love for us and through the cross (X) draws us to himself. It is this Xmas factor of God's incarnation as a child in our midst and his

redeeming love for us on the cross, a love that breaks down all barriers and even overcomes the ultimate barrier of death, that is the reality and is not a mere show.

How should we reflect this Xmas factor in our preparations for and in our celebration of Christmas? We can prepare ourselves by joining in the Advent journey to discover new things about God, ourselves and the world, looking afresh and exploring new ways of living God's love by participating in the Diocese of St Alban's weekly reflections and pointers for prayer on <http://www.livinggodslove.org>. You can also prepare with us as we go through the Sundays of Advent in worship and most of all we need to remember to balance all our physical, material preparations for Christmas with time spent in quiet reflection, enjoying the presence of God, listening, watching and waiting in prayer.

The Xmas factor is far more simple and natural than we think – and we don't have Simon Cowell judging our efforts! We can just sit quietly for a few minutes in expectation and hope, and gradually in that time begin also to recognise the concerns that we have, the burdens that weigh heavily upon us and let them go into God's presence. As we become more and more aware of God's love replacing those fears and anxieties, we can take that love out with us in our lives and share this with the people around us and show it in the things that we say and do.

This preparation of seeking ways in which we can keep Christmas as simple and as natural as possible will ensure that we truly will have the proper Xmas factor in our lives!

Love,
Jo

A Curate in the Hertford Team

The Diocese of St Albans has offered the opportunity of a Curate's post to the Team as the Hertford Team Ministry is now well established, providing mutual support between the parishes and the context for co-operation on projects relating to the whole town of Hertford and to our wider concerns. We recognise that the churches together can share in providing the resources needed for the curate's employment and a richness of opportunity for learning and development of good practice.

We would all participate in the training and integration of the curate, providing a wider breadth of ministerial experience within the team, through recognising and developing the person's particular charisms. This would enrich the pastoral ministry of our Team both for church members and to reach out into the wider community.

The curate will be ordained at Pentecost, the last weekend of June 2011, and will serve their diaconal year mainly at All Saints Church. From priesting at the end of June 2012 he/she will then be involved in appropriate projects and areas around the churches in the Team. A curate normally serves 3 years in their first post. The Team Rector, The Revd Jo Loveridge, will have the overall responsibility of training and managing the curate, and other clergy in the team will have responsibility for the curate's work at their particular church and projects or areas that they cover with the curate. The regular weekly meetings of the team clergy will provide a rich resource of experience and support.

The costs for each church to cover the contribution towards the stipend and expenses will be shared by the parishes in the Team on a pro rata basis according to our parish shares. This means that we will need to increase our stewardship but it will be a great opportunity to participate in the forming of a new ministry. All PCCs in the Team are currently prayerfully considering this very important decision.

Rosemary & Don Graves & St John's Hall

Over the last 4 years Rosemary and Don Graves have been looking after St John's Hall in an exceeding efficient manner. Peter Stubbs looked after the hall for many years after Mick Holder retired to Norfolk in the mid 80's and latterly Rosemary & Don occasionally assisted Peter. As many of you know Peter Stubbs was taken ill and died in spring 2007, and at that point Rosemary and Don took over the management of the Hall. Peter was one of those guys who know so much about All Saints, and it was only after he had gone we realised how much, including how the hall was run!

Under their management the Hall has gone from strength to strength and the income generated has increased significantly. The regular bookings have increased and the hall is a real asset to All Saints and Hertford, and used by many people and groups. During the Summer Rosemary and Don oversaw the painting of the hall and it looked splendid – fresher and cleaner than for years! Not many days go by when one or other of them is not there – checking things, cleaning, ensuring it is tidy, mowing, letting people in, and locking up again. There is also the work not seen by most people – the bookings, collecting the money, banking it – all the little details that make everything run like clockwork.

Sadly Rosemary and Don have decided it is time to hang up the hall keys at the end of the year and have a more relaxing life. On behalf of everyone at All Saints I would like to say a huge thank you to them both for stepping into the breach, then continuing to run St John's hall with such efficiency over the last few years. They have worked really hard to make it such a success and we are really grateful to them. It is a pity that the recent break-in has caused so much damage but we hope to get it all sorted out before the New Year when they hand over to Vivienne Robertson who is to be the new Hall Manager. Many thanks again for your work and dedication!

Dorothy Toyn