

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Thirteen Little Words

Chocolate, alcohol, carbon emissions, Facebook..... what are you giving up for Lent?

A few years ago my mother-in-law vowed to give up her own particular addiction: shouting at the people on the TV. A valiant attempt at cold turkey followed; not even Jeremy Clarkson succeeded in breaking her fast. Eventually however the temptation to heckle proved just too strong.

It's interesting how many people, religious and non, still see a value in this time of abstinence. We live in a culture where we can have almost anything at the push of a button or the click of a mouse. We get frustrated when it takes two whole minutes to download a song or when we have to wait for snow to be cleared from an airport runway. We don't 'do' delayed gratification, and yet waiting is part of appreciation. Think of the things we have had to wait for in our lives; often the longer the wait, the deeper the enjoyment.

Lent is much more than an exercise in self-control or a 40 day detox. We don't just give up for the sake of giving up. We let go of something which matters in our lives in order to ask ourselves what really matters. We give up something we value in order to discover what is really of value. In Lent we dare to ask ourselves that deep question we usually avoid; 'what am I living for?'

Lent commemorates the 40 days Jesus spent soul-searching in the desert. There he came face to face with himself, and there he began to discover what his life's work should be. Lent is a time for making a desert space; clearances in our own lives so that we can re-evaluate who we are and where we're going. It's a time for listening to our hungers



and tuning into that deepest hunger - the need to be known and loved. Just before Jesus entered his desert, he heard some words which spoke to that deep hunger; words which gave him the strength to resist the temptation to compromise or diminish himself; words from the Father which he held onto even in the deepest struggle... 'This is my Son who I love, with whom I am so pleased'.

These same words are meant for every one of us. We were each created for great things; for love; for lives of infinite possibility; lives that can only truly find their meaning when they begin the journey back to their source; to the Maker himself.

Lent is a time to discover, or to remind ourselves again, that God loves us and is pleased with us. We forget this too easily. I heard recently of a church where everyone was given a little sticker to put on their watches. Most of us look at our watches regularly throughout the day and every time this little sticker would serve as a reminder of those simple words: '*you are my child who I love, with whom I am so pleased*'.

This Lent instead of giving something up, why not try taking something on? Or more precisely, in; thirteen little words that can lead us through any desert.

Alan Stewart

What's going on this Lent?

Have you noticed how the colour has changed on the Altar and the priest's chasuble and stole (robes) are purple? Purple is traditionally the colour for penitence and sadness. As we move through the 6 Sundays or 40 days of Lent, we remember

Jesus tempted in the wilderness, his passion and his death. We remember how Jesus suffered and died for us so our sins could be taken away and that we might have life in all its fullness. We acknowledge, with sadness, all that keeps us away from the presence of God and we resolve to move closer to Him as we know he is always there for us.

Here are just some of the opportunities we have to move closer to God during Lent.

Lent Lunches held at Castle Hall on Wednesdays from 12.00- 2.00pm. These are a great opportunity to meet with members of all the Churches in Hertford and to eat frugally and raise money for Christian Aid.

Soundbites on Wednesdays; a wonderful opportunity to sit and listen to fantastic musicians and meditate and to give yourself space to let the music move you onto a higher plane.

Compline at 7.15 pm by candlelight on Wednesday evenings, a prayerful meditative way to end the day

The Bishops Challenge, a Bible text can be sent to your mobile or email every day for you to ponder on

Parish Vision Evening At our PCC meetings we have been thinking about the future of our parish. We have decided, as a PCC, to have an open evening inviting everyone to join us to discuss the future together. We intend to do this by looking at the Parish Profile (the opportunities, hopes and challenges at All Saints) which was put together about three years ago and examining what we are doing now and thinking about clear aims and objectives for the future at All Saints. This meeting will be led by the Parish Development Advisor, Revd John Kiddle, from the Diocese. I am hoping that lots of people will be interested and want to contribute to this vital discussion. The evening, March 9th 7.30- 9.30 will give us all an opportunity to explore together and share our ideas on the future direction of All Saints. This is your Church, so please join us if you can!

Bible Study

Don't forget it's not too late to join us in our Lent group bible studies. In the six sessions we are focussing on passages from the gospels. You will hear them read in church on Sunday and a sermon preached on them. During the week we need to let these passages permeate our lives so that God's grace can gradually transform us.

If this is going to happen, we need to engage with scripture, with our hearts and with our minds.

Listening with our hearts

In order to allow God's living word to penetrate our hearts, we suggest using an ancient method of reading the scriptures called 'Holy Reading' (sometimes called Lectio Divina)

- The first stage is reading (lectio) the Word of God slowly and prayerfully. As you read, take note of any words or phrases which particularly strike you.
- The second stage is reflection (meditatio) where we think about the text and ruminate upon it, asking God to speak to us directly.
- The third stage is response (oratio) where we stop analysing the passage and offer our inner responses to the passage to God.
- The last stage is rest (contemplatio) where we listen to God at the deepest levels of our being. We open ourselves up to God and allow him to work in us.

This excellent way of studying the scriptures can also be done effectively alone too if you cannot join us at our Bible study.

Listening with our minds

In our Lent course the second part of the session will be to read the Bishop's reflections on the passage and then we discuss the questions that they have set.

At the end of the discussion, we allow three minutes for each person to jot down

- One thing that has struck me
- One thing that I want to do
- One thing that I want to pray about or for

The session ends with prayer, enabling each member of the group to pray in their preferred way and to share in ways that others find helpful. Why not pop in and join us for an hour each week?

Love, Jo

Sessions at All Saints		
Date / Time	Leader	Topic
Thursday 18 th February 10.00 am	Jo Loveridge	Lent 1: Luke 4. 1-13 The Temptations
Monday 22 nd February 8.00 pm	Jo Loveridge	Lent 1: Luke 4. 1-13 The Temptations
Thursday 25 th February 10.00 am	Sue Horner	Lent 2: Luke 13. 31-35 Jesus laments over Jerusalem
Monday 1 st March 8.00 pm	Sue Horner	Lent 2: Luke 13. 31-35 Jesus laments over Jerusalem
Thursday 4 th March 10.00 am	Janet Bird	Lent 3: Luke 13. 1-9 Jesus invites repentance
Monday 8 th March 8.00 pm	Janet Bird	Lent 3: Luke 13. 1-9 Jesus invites repentance
Thursday 11 th March 10.00 am	John Horner	Lent 4: Luke 15. 1-3; 11b-32 The prodigal son
Tuesday 16 th March 8.00 pm	John Horner	Lent 4: Luke 15. 1-3; 11b-32 The prodigal son
Thursday 18 th March 10.00 am	Jo Loveridge	Lent 5: John 12. 1-8 Mary Anoints Jesus
Tuesday 23 rd March 8.00 pm	Geoff Oates	Lent 5: John 12. 1-8 Mary Anoints Jesus
Thursday 25 th March 10.00 am	Gerry Booker	Lent 6 (Palm Sunday): Luke 23. 1-49 The Passion
Monday 29 th March 8.00 pm	Gerry Booker	Lent 6 (Palm Sunday) Luke 23. 1-49 The Passion