

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Can I get a better offer?



Dear Friends,

Everyday it seems that we are regaled with "great offers". Towards the end of last year you could even "buy one get two free" in one of our Hertford supermarkets! Not a bad idea – I bought six: but several packs of the mince pies remain in our cupboard. Was I taken in?

We do all like to feel that we are getting value for money and we are bound to feel tempted by special offers. But this approach could lead us to shopping around to get the best offers online and in shops – and in other areas of life.

In the last couple of decades, in our national consciousness, it seems that we have come to define ourselves by what we buy rather than by politics or class: and who we become, which was once defined by "we are what we eat", tends to be driven by what we have. So we go round accumulating items like footballers' wives collecting scarves, handbags and tasteful trophies for the palatial mansion. But the market economy, which is driven by our instincts for self betterment and self preservation will let us down, and perhaps it already has. No material offers can ever sustain us completely.

One major concern at present is that the latest NHS reforms, which suggest that healthcare should now be market driven and that GPs look for the best offer, could lead to our National Health Service (a non profit making service) collapsing! With less funding, GPs will have no alternative but to go for the lowest cost, but are the cheapest offers necessarily the best offers in all areas of life? Cost itself is no guarantee of quality or suitability for hospital or home.

I can't help feeling that seeking the best offer for goods and services has become so much a part of our lives that we then look around to see whether we can have a better and more exciting offer in our activities too. This can lead to the idea that sport and entertainment take precedence over worship of God and costly service to others. Watching televised games and shows from the comfort of our own home may seem a better offer than the challenging business of going out and meeting people. Is this really a better offer?

This can have an obvious impact on Church life too, just as it can affect voluntary groups, families and so many valuable activities in our community.

Will anyone notice if I don't turn up or help out? Perhaps not – but let us not then complain about how our community and family life has become run down in recent times. For in craving an elusive offer of something truly greater, we may lose the very qualities which we have taken for granted.

We may even find ourselves looking for a better offer in how we live our lives in terms of following God's way and loving him, giving other things priority before God. Does that tempting voice inside us say that God is always going to be there and so this other thing that we would like to do which distracts us can take precedence? It is, of course, a modern form of idolatry which can only lead us away from the Lord.

The truth is that we will never get a better offer! During Epiphany we remember that "We beheld His glory". There is nothing second-rate about what God has done, only our perceptions. We have been offered

God's love through Jesus Christ and we need to accept the offer and live out this love in our lives here and now. In his great work "The Foundations of Christian Faith" the theologian Karl Rahner says that the Christian's relation to Jesus Christ is identical with his or her life-work and destiny, i.e., to the way one accepts God's offer of life and lives it freely and responsibly.

We could use the offers that we see all around us; in the shops, in advertising and on the internet as signs to remind us of that greatest of all offers; that of God's love so that we can turn again to live for Him in each part of our lives and take up some of the offers of sharing, serving and supporting that we find in the family of Christ's church and fellow travellers together, as we *Live God's Love*.

Love, Jo

Celebrating 400 years of the King James Bible

The King James Bible was published in 1611. It was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek languages into English at the request of King James I of England. At the time, other English Bibles existed, but King James didn't like the most popular translation, the Geneva Bible, because he felt that some of the marginal notes encouraged disobedience to kings.

A Puritan scholar, Dr. John Reynolds suggested a new English translation of the Bible at the 1604 conference of bishops and theologians at Hampton Court Palace. Fifty-four of England's foremost clergy, scholars and linguists were asked to form six panels to translate particular groups of Old Testament and New Testament books and the Apocrypha (the Apocrypha was dropped from later editions) into English.

James 1st agreed to the new Bible translation, and it was dedicated "to the most high and mighty prince James," but the King James Version was never officially recognised by the king, nor was it ever really authorised (despite its title *The Authorised Bible*) as the

only text permitted to be read in church. It was completed in 1611 and soon replaced both the Bishops' Bible and the Geneva Bible in popularity and became the leading text for private use.

The rules for the translation project were that the translators should be broken up into six panels, and each panel was given certain books of the Bible to translate. After the translations were complete, a committee of 12-two translators from each of the six panels-reviewed the work based on a detailed set of guidelines that was established to ensure that the translators' personal eccentricities and political prejudices were not included in this new version.

As the King James Bible was developed to be read aloud in church services, the translators gave special attention to rhythm and punctuation to give the text a fresh understandable quality. The scholars were dedicated to translating the Bible into the common language of the people, they included this preface entitled, "The Translators to the Reader:"

Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered."

We will be celebrating the King James version of the Bible by using this Bible for our readings at our Book of Common Prayer services at 8.00am Communion on and at our Choral Evensong on Sundays this year.

Candlemas 2nd February

Also known as the Presentation in the Temple, this is the day (40 after the birth) that Mary brought Jesus to the Temple – the "Light to Lighten the Gentiles"

To mark this there will be a short Choral Communion at 7:15 pm. Please join us – and bring a candle, which will be blessed during the service.