

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

'Happy New Year'?

Dear Friends,

What are you looking for in the New Year and new decade? Are you wishing everybody a "Happy New Year!"?

We have been aware for a long time that people in Britain are not as happy as other people. In November the people of Denmark ranked as the happiest people in the world, and Britain was ranked 22nd. Guatemala, though most people live in poverty, was 9th happiest and Japan was low at 46th!

Two Nobel economists, Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, have called on world leaders to move away from a purely economic concept of gross domestic product, which measures economic production, to wellbeing and sustainability. Their report suggested a shift from production to greater attention to household wealth and an assessment of whether countries were growing sustainably or damaging the environment. Perhaps influenced by this, our government will be measuring our happiness in the poll in Spring.

But what is happiness? Is it just well being and sustainability?

They are very important factors and something for us all to consider as we move into the coming year and decade. But isn't it also something deeper more profound still? You may well know those Bible verses, *The Beatitudes*, that begin "Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek ...in some modern translations of the Bible (eg the Good News) the word 'blessed' is translated as 'happy'. In fact the Good News Bible has the title for that particular passage, Matthew 5, as True



Happiness. It certainly seems on the surface that this is a radical way of happiness. Society has encouraged us to think about our own self-gratification as being happiness and yet we have come to find that this pleasure is at best short lived and at worst alienates us from others! Jesus' teaching shows us that real happiness comes from reflecting God's love in our lives so that it flows into our relationships with others.

- ³ Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor;
the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!*
- ⁴ Happy are those who mourn;
God will comfort them!*
- ⁵ Happy are those who are humble;
they will receive what God has promised!*
- ⁶ Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires;
God will satisfy them fully!*
- ⁷ Happy are those who are merciful to others;
God will be merciful to them!*
- ⁸ Happy are the pure in heart;
they will see God!*
- ⁹ Happy are those who work for peace;
God will call them his children!*
- ¹⁰ Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires;
the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!*

The wonderful truth is, of course, that when we live as God calls us, in harmony with his

creation and our brothers and sisters, our lives will be more fulfilled, happy and worthwhile.

And happiness does not have to be a superficial, short-lived experience, nor is it dependent on Government action. Perhaps, like me, you still prefer the word Blessed for those who follow Jesus' words in their lives, and we can know that we are blessed even through difficult times, especially so with our Saviour walking with us.

As the years pass we will not end up despairing and wondering what it has all been about, but feel the assurance that our lives have been worthwhile, having experienced the way that Living God's Love transforms people and communities.

May your new year and decade be happy and blessed!

Love
Jo

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Jan 18th -25th: All Things in Common.

This year the 2011 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes to us from an ecumenical group in Jerusalem.

The Christians of Jerusalem and indeed much of the Middle East are living under tremendous pressure and we are all too aware of the difficulties they experience both in terms of the political and religious situation and their dwindling numbers. However they are also communities of faith that worship, pray and study together, who work for the good of their society and pray for unity of the Church and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In 2011 they invite the world-wide Church to pray with them for the unity of the Church and justice and peace in the Holy Land and through the world. We will be joining Christians of all denominations at St Andrew's for our evening service on January 23rd at 6.30pm.

Lent Course

Join us this year on the Lent course. We will be studying **Rich Inheritance - Jesus' legacy of love**, the York Course written by Bishop Stephen Cotterell.

Jesus didn't write a will. He left no written instructions. He didn't seem to have a plan. At the end, as he hung dying on the cross, almost all of his followers had abandoned him. By most worldly estimates his ministry was a failure. Nevertheless, Jesus' message of reconciliation with God lived on. It is the central message of the Bible.

With this good news his disciples changed the world. How did they do it? What else did Jesus leave behind – what is his 'legacy of love'? Join us in Lent to meet with other Christians to address these questions.

Third Space

From Thursday, 13th January a youth group called Third Space will be held in the Youth Lounge at Hertford Baptist Church each Thursday.

Third Space will be a place where kids from year six to year nine can come and play games, do homework and hang out. In the evening, from eight, there will be a program of bible teaching, discussion and debate.

More information from Jo or the flyers at the back of Church

