

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Living a God shaped life



Dear Friends,

This year the summer scents in our gardens and countryside seem to have been even more fragrant. Sitting in a deckchair in the garden I also had the chance to read 'Life with God' on my Kindle by Richard Foster who suggests that the Bible can help us to become so aware of God that "Everything around us becomes scented with the fragrance of heaven, and this touches us in ways we do not fully understand. This enables us to 'turn, turn, turn 'til we turn round right' as the Shaker hymn puts it". What a wonderful description; no matter where we are we can have lives scented with the fragrance of heaven!

Scripture can be our spiritual food, nurturing us as individuals and as a community. We don't just study, use or learn scripture; we assimilate it, taking it into our lives so that it is 'metabolised' into acts of love, Eugene Paterson suggests in his book *Eat this Book(!)* The trouble is that although many of us own several Bibles we sometimes feel that we just don't really "get it"!

Is this because we have studied the Bible with the wrong approach?. We may have thought that it will give us information, knowledge –but this doesn't lead to transformation, a turning to God, which is what a God shaped life is all about. Are we looking for a formula, a solution solving the pressing need of the moment? This would mean we turn to particular passages for our particular needs rather than seeing that in the Bible people have a whole life relationship with God and so it should be with ourselves too. Reading it in this way could also be a way of controlling what we read in the Bible rather than allowing ourselves to be transformed into Christlikeness. If we want to receive from the Bible the God shaped life,

we need to be open and have our dearest assumptions challenged.

The love of God as revealed in the Bible and in the life of Jesus can transform our lives and give us true spiritual sustenance. 1Cor 13 reminds us that: " If I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing". The test of whether we have really responded to the Bible in the right way would be in the love that we live. Yes, knowledge of the Bible is useful but the main point is to understand the depth of God's love for us and act in that love ourselves. Richard Forster suggests: "Shall we try to control the Bible, that is, try to make it 'come out right' or shall we simply seek to release its life into our lives and into our world?"

Can we take up the challenge in this season scented in 'autumn mists and mellow fruitfulness' and allow the fragrance of God through scripture to turn our lives around and live this out in lives shaped by God's love?
Love, Jo

Lots of us find Bible reading notes really helpful and Helen Wright has offered to be our Bible Reading Fellowship co-ordinator (Tel 534535, or email wright.helen.m@gmail.com). The Bible is also available on audio on CD read by wonderful voices or on the Kindle which can enlarge the text and reads aloud albeit in a slightly electronic way!

Nina Villa

I do hope that you will understand that Nina Villa, as Elliot's wife, cannot talk about Town Council issues when she accompanies Elliot to Church or attends Church meetings. She is very happy to be approached during office hours at Hertford Castle.

Confirmation

From September we will be holding two groups for those who would like to explore their faith more deeply and consider Confirmation. There will be one for the young people and one for those over twenty. These will take the form of study and discussion groups. If you would like to join in or know of someone who is searching for faith please let me know and tell me the best times to meet up. Jo

Harvest Thanksgiving

This year we will be holding both Harvest and Back to Church Sunday on Sunday October 2nd. Harvest is a great day to invite people to join us for church! The loose collection will be given to the Bishop of St Albans' Water Aid Appeal, a project run through Christian Aid to bring water and wells to villages that have no access to fresh water. Donations of packet or tinned food will be given to the local outlet for the homeless (see page 8 for more information).

View from the Pew

It is really nice writing this in the knowledge that we now have a second churchwarden in place. Thank you very much for putting your name forward Janet and congratulations on being elected – I regret in my absence on holiday !!!

July 3rd was a big day for All Saints and the Hertford team as Elliot was ordained in St. Albans Abbey – there was a small group of us there and afterwards at the Castle to support him and fly the flag. A big thank you to all those of you who came along to the tea in the Hall, a particular thank you to Janet and all who helped put on the tea in any way. By the time you read this Elliot will be with us full time, having taken a week each to visit all the other churches in the team to introduce himself.

September and October are going to be very busy months for All Saints. **On Sunday September 4th is our parish BBQ** which is going to be held in the grounds of St. Johns Hall (subject to fine weather!!!), this will be at 12.30pm, tickets will be available from the middle of August so please see Janet or me if

you would like to come before we collar you!!!

You may recall Bishop Alan's theme of Living God's Love; well, part of that is Mission Action Planning and your Worship and Pastoral Care committee have been studying ways in which we can live this out. Jo has put some ideas together and all the members of the PCC have selected those they would most like to see implemented. The votes have been counted. There are many actions on various committees but the most important is that we consider if and how we can make the back of church more welcoming space particularly after services. Many of you will have heard about the possible removal of pews. **There will be a consultation letter coming out later this month for the entire congregation asking for your views; I would urge you to fill one in.**

Now Elliot is with us we to share his costs with the team. So not surprisingly in October hopefully, we will be having a Stewardship campaign and I am sure there will be more on this in the October magazine. Certainly from my experience of various churches these campaigns have been mostly about money. However I feel that just as important is finding out about the talents you have and if you may be willing to assist God's mission for us here in All Saints buy using them. I feel that, like probably a lot of voluntary organisations, we are limited in the amount we can do by the number of people who will stick their head above the parapet. I would strongly urge you to pray about any new ways you could use your skills and talents to further God's work here in Hertford and to complete a talent form.

Associated with Living God's Love is the welcome we give to newcomers. This has improved significantly over the last year with the new **Welcome Team** and a big thank you to them. **But we need even more of you who can spare a few minutes before and after the 10.00am service to talk to people you do not know or recognise and share a cup of coffee with them to make them feel at home with us.**

Please let me know if you can help!!!

Love

Andrew