

# All Saints Alive

## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

### Sharpening the focus



Dear Friends,

A monk returned to his monastery after a thirty day Ignatian retreat. The next day over breakfast a rather grumpy member of his community remarked, "We've been working like slaves while you've been swanning around doing nothing! You don't look any different". "You're quite right, I probably don't!" he replied, "but you do!"

The monk may well have learned, on his retreat, to love the grumpy member of the community more and accept him as a beloved child of God. "To be a real agent of God, to connect with our neighbour...each of us needs to know the truth about himself or herself" as Rowan Williams said.

The purpose of a retreat – or a sabbatical – is to see things in a fresh, new light. The quietness of a retreat removes the need to communicate verbally and gives us the chance to concentrate on our interior life. It can lead us to pay attention to things which are normally hidden, and therefore it can expose the inadequacy of our spiritual life before we gain a new, fuller vision of God's love for us.

Paying attention helps us to understand ourselves and others in the light of God's presence in the world. There is an art in paying attention, and we may have lost something of that in this busy age with rapid travel, instant communications and all the tension and distractedness which it implies. I heard it said recently (the word "dress" meaning apparel) that "You have an appointment with God. The address of that appointment? The dress of the next person you meet, whatever it is. Their dress is God's address.

Do we want to find God? Then we need to look at the face of the person next to you or the next person we meet." Seeing the divine in another person rather than their eccentricities or potential value to us requires spiritual discipline, and it is a discipline borne of attention to what really matters, infused with the love of God.

In the first Letter of John, we are asked "*If we cannot love the people whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?*" This challenge is there for us all, for we can have a very private faith which we hold on to just to give us comfort rather than a faith which reaches out to others and to care as God cares. The sort of "random acts of kindness", the "going the extra mile" and the continuing to give despite the inevitable difficulties are very much in the spirit of Jesus and they are about a lifestyle which does not retreat into cynicism, indifference and selfishness but blossoms into practical ways of Living God's Love.

Our Ignatian friend had taken time to dig deep spiritually, and had come up again to see the world and other people in a new light. There are such retreats if we wish to attend, but let us remember that the scriptures which we read and the worship in which we share so often point to developing our spiritual perception, to leaving what lies behind and seeking God's way for the future. For the more we are aware of God's presence in our own daily lives, the more we will find ourselves seeing his presence in others.

What a way to live, with such a sharp spiritual focus that we can notice that God is present everywhere and for all people – even us.

Love,  
Jo

## View from the Pew

Christmas has come and gone and by now our New Year resolutions are probably also a distant memory. However, I would still like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who worked so hard to make Christmas at All Saints such a wonderful experience for all. The church looked beautiful, the music inspired and enriched our worship and the preaching and leading of services was of the usual high standard, and included a few surprises, not least a travelling star!!

My own view from the pew has been somewhat limited since the beginning of December since Colin and I have been spending time in Greenwich helping our daughter following the early arrival of Florence May and also visiting my Mum who has been in QE2. I would like to thank everybody for their support and prayers at what has been a rather hectic time, especially with Christmas Alone to organise.

2012 promises to be an exciting year with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics and Paralympics and we are currently considering ways that we at All Saints might join in the celebrations or become involved. We would welcome any suggestions for events which you would like us to consider. Hertford Town Council is also planning its own celebrations and it would be very good to see All Saints well represented at the Town events as part of our reaching out into the wider community in Hertford.

We are now planning our first social event for the year – our February Frolic on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February. We have decided that the evening should have a 60's theme and already have a star list of entertainers who will provide music and songs from the pop charts of the 1960's. Food will also reflect that which many of us were eating in our teens and twenties and we would encourage you to dress accordingly (surely worth a visit to one of Hertford's many charity shops!!) Tickets will soon be available at a cost of £10 for adults and £3 for children.

Lent will soon be upon us and I would commend you to consider becoming involved in a course of study as you prepare

for Easter. Many books are available, hopefully a Churches Together Lent Course will be available and the Diocese is once again providing an on-line Lent Challenge so there is plenty to think about. Please feel free to talk to the churchwardens or any of the ministry team for further information.

Love, Janet

## Team Events

### February

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 16<sup>th</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 25<sup>th</sup> February Frolic – All Saints
- 27<sup>th</sup> Team Council

### March

- 1<sup>st</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- Team Confirmation Service – Holy Trinity, Little Amwell
- 15<sup>th</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe

### April

- 5<sup>th</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 19<sup>th</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe

### May

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 17<sup>th</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 19<sup>th</sup> Plant sale – All Saints
- 27<sup>th</sup> Team Pentecost Service (The Very Revd Dr Jeffrey John) 10am – All Saints

### June

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Queen's Diamond Jubilee Service 3pm (Hertford Castle Grounds)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 21<sup>st</sup> Charity Cafe – Holy Trinity, Bengoe
- 24<sup>th</sup> Open Churches Day

