

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

How do you do Christmas?



Dear Friends,

As a family we do Christmas slowly and so instead of tearing into presents for a ten minutes rush of adrenaline, we open them one by one and take all afternoon. (Church services have taken up all of the Christmas morning, and there are rounds at Watford Hospital for Doug and then Christmas Alone at Sele School!). We wrap everything and if something can be divided into two packages, we do it. Even sweets are wrapped.

It happens like this. Each gift is handed over, and opened as dramatically as possible. Exclamation follows and a huge hug and "Thank you; that's just what I wanted!" You understand, we want it to take some time, to enjoy it, to savour it, not conquer it. We have our Christmas dinner in the evening and wonder each year why we can scarcely make it to the pudding course. The next day, Boxing Day, it all begins again when we meet up with my Mum and my brother Michael, who is also a Vicar, and have a vegetarian celebration with his family.

Now this brings up an important point. Should we really do all of this? The Puritans did not think so. They felt that it distracted people away from the plain message and Cromwell in the 17th century even stopped Britain celebrating it!

Today Christmas seems entirely secularized. It is retailers' most profitable period as eager shoppers empty their shelves. I still believe that we should celebrate Christmas after all God loved the world so much that he sent his Son as the greatest gift and we reflect this in gift-giving and generosity as well as in singing carols and telling the story. We can also be *Christian* about everything we do.

Emphasising the giving part of the day can heal wounds, open locked hearts, stir up gratefulness, and just be plain fun. Jesus brought joy to the world didn't he?

We need to show this love and joy in the way we treat others: not just family and friends but those at work, and other shoppers, sales assistants and those on the street, the warmth of our hearts, our generosity, the thankfulness we express and really *feel*. And this needs to continue into the New Year at Sales time too!

There are some great opportunities to make Christ known during Christmas. With all that is commercial about it, we can still make our point! Christmas Eve services, short ones of only 45 minutes, will be packed and packed with meaning. The Church will be full and all will hear the good news about the love of God.

What really bothers me is the mix of the secular with a superficial acknowledgment of Christ's coming. This is why it is great to step aside at Christmas and join in worship. I find that the words, music and sacrament are really the best way to reflect on the marvellous incarnation of Christ, our hope, our salvation and then our giving and receiving reflects this great gift.

What about the superficiality in understanding Christmas? Well, each year we have an opportunity to deepen our understanding. So as sincerely as we know how, let's celebrate Christ's coming and understand that he is God with us, Emmanuel.

However we celebrate, let us continue our celebrations, allow ourselves time to deepen our understanding of the incarnation, and let our goodwill spill over into the New Year.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

A joyful and blessed Christmas to you all and a peaceful New Year!

Love, Jo

View from the Pew

I would like to thank everybody who helped make the Christmas Bazaar such a success. Unfortunately I was only able to be there for several short periods but I felt that everybody really enjoyed themselves and worked hard to raise as much as possible, which I hope will be reflected in some significantly improved accounts compared with those we had for the third quarter.

May I just remind you - it would be very helpful, if you have not yet reviewed your giving, if you could do so in the coming weeks. I know this is not the best time of year to be making this request, but we would not be able to cope with the size of deficit that was being forecast in October without your support. Please contact Judy or Malcolm Oughton if you need any help or advice.

You will be pleased to hear that the Quinquennial inspection late last month went well and there are no large items of expense on our church that are needed. Needless to say there are a number of fairly small items and the work parties will probably be able to cope with these. However some of these are no more than weeds growing in places you would never expect them to grow, but are going to be quite a challenge to remove. I suggest you look outside just above the west window on a little sill – any bright ideas as to how we remove them would be appreciated!!!! (Without infringing health and safety regulations)

Please note that the **Family Service next month is on the second Sunday - Sunday 8th January** as New Year's Day is the first one. In addition **Prayers and Bears is on Tuesday 3 January at 10.30am as usual**. Although this is primarily for pre-school children, during school holidays please always feel comfortable about bringing along older children – the more the merrier!!!! We would not want to

prevent a child coming just because there is also an older one to be cared for as well.

Thank you all for your help and support in 2011 and I hope that we can significantly further God's work in this Parish together in 2012.

My I wish you all a very blessed Christmas and New Year.

Love in Christ, Andrew

A Passion Play for Hertford 2013?

If you are interested in hearing more about a possible Passion/Mystery Play for Hertford in 2013, please come along to St Andrew's Hall (behind St Andrew's Church) on Monday 23rd Jan 2012 at 8pm.

Wanted - HDCT Secretary

Hertford and District Churches Together need a secretary to:

- ✓ Attend AGM and Forum meetings
- ✓ Support Chair and Vice Chair
- ✓ Distribute information to all Forum Members, by email or post
- ✓ Collate and circulate reports from groups before each meeting
- ✓ Prepare Agenda for all meetings
- ✓ Circulate Minutes of meetings (these are typed up by Margaret Hogg)
- ✓ Prepare and circulate annual Calendar of HDCT events
- ✓ Answer queries from Members of the Public (if any)
- ✓ Represent HDCT at Hertford Civic Events

If anyone is interested in taking over this role, please contact me by email or phone (01992 413275 or 07584 357497) and I can arrange to meet and discuss what the role involves. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Secretary; it can be a very pivotal role within the life of our Churches and our Town. Next year will be especially important with the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics.

Michelle Cowin