

View from the Pew

Janet Oldham

Dear reader, July already and I can hardly believe it is time again for view from the pew two months on, I finally find myself sat in a pew bathed in radiant sunlight – can it be possible? In two months I have gone from donning thermal everything and waddling around looking like the Michelin man to finally deciding to throw caution to the wind and see what is left of my summer wardrobe after the ravages of the winter moths. Summer does tentatively seem to have finally juddered into sight and it is always a lovely surprise for me just how beautiful our church looks when enhanced with a welcome, but all too rare blast of full on summer sun.

June was a remarkable month for us as a community with lots of interesting activities and services to enjoy. Once again for ease of orientation I have broken down the month into sections:

Family Church

Geoff Oates, ably assisted by our very own Debbie McGee's in the form of Richard and James Toyn, gave us all an inspirational and exciting service based around the amazing world of Transport. There were moving cable cars strung between the Chancel, the Lectern and the Pulpit; we were immersed in the workings of rack and pinion trains, designed to climb steep inclines and bringing us into the 21st century, Tom Oates delighted us with nothing short of a NASA experience here in Hertford with a space plane, descending down the centre aisle. At one point the service went aquatic as children of all ages (1 through to 81) jostled to join Geoff as he brought to life what it really took to get a submarine to submerge (in a controlled fashion!). Fortunately, Geoff had pre-planned and brought a state of the art water tank along for the occasion, as otherwise we would have been water deep in the brook outside St John's hall, or crowded in the vicar's bathroom to achieve the same demonstration.

Coffee after the service was a thoroughly enjoyable time with everyone excitedly recounting and sharing their knowledge and observations that Geoff had so brilliantly stewarded everyone through. In fact Janet and I have now taken it a step further and have developed a proto-type micro cable car system to run through the pews delivering hymn books and pamphlets as required, we are just

hoping to secure some of Derek's Working party time to finalise the design.

Active Church

Nick Knowles (AKA Derek Westwood) has once again mustered his intrepid troops in the month of June to keep on top of the mammoth task of ensuring our Church and Hall remain in excellent working order. The sun may be shining but, we have the pleasures and pain of being in a building 100+ years old, so unfortunately there is no such thing as a good month when it comes to building maintenance, something is always falling off, failing to work or just generally looking worn around the edges, and that's just the Church Wardens! The working parties really are the essence of what makes us a community, and I know Derek is always keen to hear from any budding volunteers who fancy scaling the belfry to undertake some remedial masonry work. Joking aside, please, please let Derek know if you have any free time or hidden DIY skills that could benefit the Church and us as a community. I, for one, am now the proud owner of a power screwdriver and will be turning up at the next working party, power tool in hand ready to screw down anything that looks like it may move – so Stephen Bardle be warned!

After the prolonged cold Spring, if you can even call it Spring, we were lucky enough to get the help of the Mudlarks to help tidy and bring the Church flower beds back to life for 2013. The copious amount of rain already this year, and the very recent rise in temperature had resulted in a bonanza of weeds springing up all over; so much so that 2 huge sacks were brimming with weeds by the end of the morning. The flower beds are now starting to come into their own and, as all keen Percy Throwers know, a little and often is the secret to a thing of beauty when it comes to the garden. Therefore anyone who has a spare hour or two to help keep the flower beds in tiptop condition please let me know, as we would love to have your company and help. All gardening abilities are very much welcome.

Open Church

On Sunday 23 June, All Saints took part in Open Church Day, commencing immediately after morning service. Visitors were able to enjoy tea and cakes whilst enjoying the beauty of our lovely Church. Truly there can be few more spectacular sights than that of our own stain

glass windows when the sun brings out their true lustre, brilliance and character. I highly recommend taking the time sit and stare at the beauty of our church. All too often we probably can get lulled into taking such vistas for granted, but from my particular view from the pew I would say there are few sights that can lift the spirits quite as effectively as the magnificent Kempe window, which gives an amazing Technicolor backdrop to the altar. I encourage everyone, next time you are in church, to look all around, find your inner 5 year old and remember when everything around us was truly remarkable; I think you will be surprised at just what you might see in our lovely church.

Creative Church

We are extremely fortunate to benefit from the excellent concerts organised by Chris Benham for the benefit of the music development in our church. The Wednesday Soundbites concerts are truly inspiring music for the soul; coupled with some top quality refreshments, courtesy of the Soundbites refreshment team. Along with others, I enjoyed a superb performance by Aleksander Szram on the piano. In answer to the lady who asked what I had done to deserve a mug, instead of a paper cup, well apparently I was mistaken for the senior Church Warden and given the chipped mug as a sign of status, but I am assured that my soup in a mug tasted just as good as that from the disposable cups!

The All Saints bell ringers gathered to ring a Quarter Peal on Monday 24 June. This is a wonderful hobby for keeping fit, so anyone who wishes to trim their waistlines and tone muscles should seriously consider joining our resident band of bell ringers, who enhance our lovely town with their melodious peals. For further details check our webpage.

Competitive Church

QUIZ NIGHT – a defining evening indeed; I left feeling like my IQ had plummeted by at least 20 points during the evening! This was one of our best quizzes to date and the Toyms really excelled themselves to make us work our grey cells to the maximum, in order to answer a very wide ranging set of questions, some of which seemed to have the entire audience grappling to find an answer. Indeed Janet B commented to me that even her SMART phone had been outfoxed by the Toyms; next time she needed a question answering she would be speed dialling the Toyms and blow her phone contract for free internet anytime - a monthly subscription to the Toyms would seem the better approach!

A big thanks to Richard & Dorothy for organising the Quiz and to their son James, who ably assisted in ensuring the smooth running of the evening; and also thanks to Sue, Janet and Marion for pulling together such a superb supper for us all to enjoy.

Spiritual Church

On Wednesday, 5 June, guided by their respective clergy, 16 candidates presented themselves to Bishop Paul to be confirmed. It was lovely to see so many of their families, friends and members of the wider family of All Saints supporting them in this significant step. Bishop Paul is a real inspiration and his sermon was most uplifting. In talking with many of you after the service, you commented that it was one of the best Confirmation services you had witnessed. Certainly each candidate was made to feel very special by Bishop Paul at such an important moment in their Christian journey and they will no doubt have taken very uplifting memories away from this beautiful service.

By the time you read this, Ginni Dear, whose ordination took place at St Albans on 30 June, will be busy getting to know us all and starting to support Jo with her Ministry here in Hertford. Some of us will have already met her at the Bring and Share Lunch we enjoyed following the ordination, when we welcomed Ginni and her family on return from the Cathedral. Thanks to Marion for organising the Bring and Share. In the next month please take the time to introduce yourself to Ginni and welcome her to what I am sure will be a highly successful time here with us.

So, I hope you have all managed to read this far in my reflections. As is always my request to you, please tell me if I have missed something, invite me to your events or just take the time to chat to me about what you think is important about what is going on in the church, and I will try and capture it in my view from the pew. Any comment, big or small or even editorial guidance is warmly welcomed; at my time in life all feedback of any nature is warmly received.

Until next time, I wish you a happy and sunny Summer and I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual Barbecue on 14 July.

Love
Janet O