

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



'Rejos and singen'

Dear Friends,

I sat in the Archdeacon's lounge and noticed a coaster saying "Life without music is a mistake". This thought chimed in (yes) with my thinking that at Christmas time, and each side of it, our church has a great deal of music. We have the "regular" services plus the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols and the Advent and Epiphany carol services at their appropriate time.

People have sung at Christmas for many centuries, and we all love the carols and associated songs even if we don't find carollers knocking at our door very often these days, whether seeking figgy pudding or charity donations. Which is a shame, but there are so many houses/homes in any parish. Carols and yuletide songs have a wonderful jollity about them which is about the feasting in the winter season and "Remember Christ our Saviour was born on Christmas Day".

The way we present services with carols, readings and prayers is another well-established tradition and I hope that we come along to celebrate and participate rather than to be entertained in some way. Worship is an activity to really give ourselves to, to enter into the wonder and mystery of it.

The services are put together to provide a narrative of the Christmas story and of the meaning of Advent and Epiphany. We all can all share in many of the carols and hymns, and the choir sings relevant music which comments on the meaning of the Bible readings. It is usually beautiful (although some modern pieces may seem a little discordant on occasion) so we can

simply get the feeling of it, which suggests that we need to value it as part of our shared involvement and refreshed understanding.

The services are not designed as entertainment. We do have concerts and music at other times, which is wonderful, but our services are all designed to find as good a blend of worship as possible. So, to get the best out of the services, we need to allow ourselves to be involved in listening to what God is saying through the Scriptures as they are read and in feeling that sense of praise and adoration which can transform our lives.

We cannot, of course, just blithely sing and rejoice when life is not always kind. This is why St Andrews in our Team Ministry has a service called "Blue Christmas", to care for those for whom the season is a challenge, whether from past or current hurts. At the same time, despite the appearance, the true meaning of Christmas is that God has come among us to save us, to bring us hope, to shine light in the darkness.

We all find Christmas a flurry of activity, though hopefully a good one. The words and music of worship can bring a new harmony to our souls and lift us to a new height of adoration. In the Christmas story, we hear of the birth of Jesus being announced to the shepherds by angelic music: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth". Let us not make the mistake of failing to appreciate this music and its sublime meaning, and let us rejoice and make merry together in praising, feasting and joyful, hopeful prayer.

Love,
Jo

Christmas

In coming to the world in Jesus....

God knows,
God shares,
God cares.
God's arms are strong to hold our
weakness,
Overcome our fear,
His presence is peace
His love is there for us
Always.

Preparing for our Guests

We have a great opportunity to welcome guests over the next month into our amazing Church. We will be hosting Carol Services for all the primary and secondary schools in our parish, the Fire and Police Services as well as our own special celebration services. This means hundreds of children and adults visiting us who might not often go to church.

Just like welcoming guests into our home we have the privilege of welcoming everyone into church and this takes careful preparation particularly if we want people to feel at home and comfortable.

How are we making our home welcoming? How will we greet our guests? Can we set aside some of our concerns and show visitors where the best place is for them to sit?

Here are a few ideas:

1. Welcomers: This is a ministry of hospitality and there is no better time than this season to warmly welcome our church visitors.

Even if you are fairly new to All Saints this is a really great time to greet others as it's such a time of celebration. We have a sign up board at the back of church so you can get involved and have the fun of seeing so many young people performing, proud parents and new imaginative, creative approaches to the sacred stories.

If it's not too cold, someone just outside the main doors can be helpful to reassure people that they have come to the right place and advise on parking when it gets busy!

It's good to open our meeting room and toy cupboard doors just in case someone needs a bit of quiet time and it's good to make sure that pushchairs and wheelchairs are put in safe places with a good view so that everyone feels part of the service.

2. All Saints Christmas Cards Please take part in the delivery of these cards. You can do this by posting them through letter boxes in the parish, giving them to your friends and handing them out at the school carol services and concerts. If you can help please talk to Geoff Oates.

Please let people know what is going on at All Saints and, better still, invite them to join you at a service.

3. The Service: Remember that when people are new to the church they may need extra help and reassurance. There may well be the beautiful chaos of squirmy and excited children but imagine how amazing it feels to them when they come into this fantastic sacred space.

4 Social Media: If you are on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, please comment on your favourite carol, service or church music and decoration and follow ours.

5. At the end of a Service. It's lovely to be able to engage in conversations with people after the service, showing how pleased we are that they have come and inviting them to join us again soon, handing out publicity that you think may be suitable for them (Messy Church flyers, All Saints Magazines, a brief history of the Church etc).

If there are refreshments please stay and perhaps challenge yourself to talk to someone you don't know, perhaps asking them what they will be doing over Christmas assuring them of your prayers for them.