

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



Hope

Dear Friends,

The first daffodil in the Vicarage garden appeared on Epiphany Sunday (Jan 7th) this year, flowering even before the snowdrops. Spring flowers have also been on sale for over a month with their vibrant colours and we find ourselves seeking hope and colour in rather grey times.

It's often felt that we need cheering up during these long winter days and self-help books on cosiness and happiness abound on bookshops shelves as well as amongst the ebooks. Comfort eating has given way to healthy eating and the park run grows in popularity. We have another month to wait until Lent begins, so the church has plenty of time to reflect, be truly joyful and encourage positive hope during this month.

We use the word hope in lots of ways in our everyday life:

- *I hope that it won't get too cold.*
- *I hope that I'll not have to wait too long for the train.*
- *I hope that your exams go well.*

Some are more profound:

- *I hope that I make a difference in life.*
- *I hope that there will be peace in the world.*

Hope is a constant theme in the Bible and in our faith. It is based on wanting or looking for a positive outcome in our lives and in our world. Psychologically, hope gives us joy, courage, opens us to new creative possibilities and empowerment. Psychologists have found that hope and forgiveness, two very Christian precepts, are key to living well.

This time of Epiphany and the weeks after express the profound hope that we can all have:

The story of Anna and Simeon at Candlemas expresses, in a time of political turmoil and spiritual unease, the hope that people can have when they remain faithful in prayer and allow themselves to see that greater vision, even in the simplicity of a baby being brought into the temple, where a profound act of salvation has begun.

Then we hear of the call of the disciples, ordinary people called by Jesus to share with others the good news of God's Love - and despite Peter's initial feelings of unworthiness, their hope was so great that they gave up everything to follow him. The following week we hear about how blessed we can be even in our greatest times of need and the hope that we have in the Kingdom of God.

Finally, we read of the storm on the lake and Jesus coming to people in their fear and darkest hour and giving them renewed hope for their lives: 'Be not afraid'.

If we can face the changes and the things that seem to be negative in our lives with hope, we can overcome our worries and concerns. Hope does not mean that life will be perfect in every way without pain or sorrow. Archbishop Desmond Tutu suggests that nothing beautiful comes without a measure of pain, suffering and even frustration. Prenatal research shows that stress and opposition initiate our development in utero and without change and stress complex life and cells would never have come into being.

Like the grit that forms the pearl in the oyster shell, a writer may well have to go through a time of no inspiration, an artist may well suffer, in order to create. Whilst waiting for and after his hip operations Tutu was in terrible pain. He describes offering the suffering up to God in prayer and focussing away from himself and on God and on those who were caring for him in hospital. Hope lies in the knowledge that 'I am not alone in this'. It is, indeed, God's light in our darkness.

*Be thou a bright flame before me,
Be thou a guiding star above me,
Be thou a smooth path below me,
Be thou a kindly shepherd behind me,
Today – tonight – and for ever*

St Columba

Love,
Jo

Geoff and Kath Oates

Kath and Geoff Oates are continuing in their ministry in the wider Hertford Team, but following much thought and prayer are now generally worshipping together at St Andrew's Church.

Kath will still be running our lovely Messy Church in her generously caring way and Geoff will still be preaching his great sermons from time to time at All Saints and leading our Bible Book Club.

We will really miss their company at All Saints in our congregation but understand that the style of worship at St Andrew's feels a better fit for them at the present.

Colin Bird

Congratulations to Colin on being elected Chair of the St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance. More information on page 4.

Confirmation

Sunday 10th March at 6.30pm at All Saints

We are having a confirmation this year at our own Church at 6.30 pm on Sunday March 10th.

If you are interested in being confirmed, confirming the promises that have been made on your behalf at your baptism and christening please let me know. There will be an opportunity to meet and discuss and think through what it means to have faith and learn more about Christianity.

Phew, we just about made it!

Thank you everyone for being so amazingly generous last year so that we could ensure that All Saints did not end the year with too much of a deficit. Many of you joined in the 100 give £100 and some of our visitors also joined in as well. The Christmas Fair raised a brilliant amount and carol services also gave a good boost to our total collections in December. It's a great way to start the New Year and we will continue to look at ways in which we can ensure that the Church can be sustainable.

Open Deanery Synod Meeting

**February 4th 7:45 pm - 9:30 pm
St Andrews Church**

Topic: Environmental Responsibility – **Broken World, Radical Solutions**

We are delighted to be able to welcome Andy Lester, Conservation Director of A Rocha, a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world. He was recommended to us from the St Albans Diocesan Synod where he gave a stimulating address last year.

Environmental Responsibility is vitally important for our churches, our mission and our own lives. The talk will have a wide brief – from our own churches to the global extinction of species and our disconnection from nature.

You can read more about this and A Rocha on page nine.

This event is open to everyone.

Refreshments served from 7:30pm