

APCM 2020 Vicar's Report

2019 was a busy and successful year for All Saints. Our attendance numbers have grown, particularly those for evening services. It been lovely hearing the voices of children having fun in the Church on Monday afternoons at Hot Choc stop, leading our Family Services, learning together on the Easter Journey and having fun at Messy Church.

Families joined us on our Eco Churchyard walks and at the major festivals and at the very successful Starry Christmas Event. Our elderly kept lithe and supple at the Get up and Go and wholeheartedly joined in the worship at the end of HertsWise and at Bentley House.

We had nine of our new members confirmed by Bishop Michael four of whom were also married in church this year. We have run Bible Studies, joined in the Lent Challenge and ran a new course based on the television series Broken, started new reflections using choral music, *Heavenly Harmonies*, and opened our church daily for the Thy Kingdom Come Novena of Prayer.

Some of us were able to attend the Church Growth conference in Swanwick, inspiring us to think creatively about reaching new people, and the new quarterly Craft Church meant that young and old were brought together making some amazing things. Our church building was enhanced by the cleaning of the Reredos, the swift boxes and we began to raise money to maintain our bells. All of our Church activities wrapped around by our worship together, prayer, pastoral care and music.

My thanks for making all this possible go to Colin, Julia, Janet, Martin, Kay, Wendell, Nerine, Brian, Dave, the working party, Dorothy, Richard, Shanti, David, the Choir, Mary, Ann, Chris and the Soundbites Team, The PCC, Megan, The Flower club, Andrew, Don & Rosemary, Martin, Linda, Rosie, Luella and Mario, Leon, Rosemary, Renee, The Events Team, The Cleaning Team, The Servers and Sacristy Team, The Sidespeople, The Welcomers, The Messy Church Team, Coffee makers, Bellringers, The Mothers' Union, everyone working with young people, Lesson Readers and Intercessors, Vergers, the Pastoral Care Group, the Easter Journey Team, and the Gardening Team, Hot Choc Team, HertWise Dementia Group, Art Group, Fellowship Group, Doug and all of you.

Looking forward

At All Saints, since March, we have been engaged in new ways of ministry, pastoral care and outreach. We've seen people caring for one another on a deeper level. We've seen people making phone lists and calling one another, praying for one another, and then serving others by shopping for those who had to stay at home. We haven't been able to shop so much, visit places or go away on holiday and so we have become used to consuming less. We have realised that we can make do with less and found contentment in the simpler things of life.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we didn't go back to a consumer-driven world? Ecologically, if we are to live more sustainably, then we need to. What about our faith as well? Christianity sometimes used to feel like rather like customers lining up outside a supermarket or shop, about to load a basket with their personal choices and preferences. Wouldn't it be great if we no longer acted as consumers of religious goods and services but instead we grow in our discipleship seeing ourselves as the co-labourers in proclaiming the Gospel?

1Peter 4:10 says, *"As each one has received a special gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

The church has not been able to gather in ways that we used to enjoy and love but the lack of gathering has actually helped us to look at other areas in the life of the church beyond the building. I've heard a lot more people talk about those in trouble, pain and the marginalized. There's a fresh perspective on the "least of these." We've seen the devastation in our nursing homes, the elderly, the sick, and people with compromised immune systems. And, we've seen heroes like those who helped and served and heard stories of first responders and healthcare workers sacrificing greatly.

As we look forward, how can we continue to focus on and develop what we have seen emerge? Returning to normal after such a devastating time would be nothing short of missing one of the most vital opportunities of our time. We have the chance to be better and do better. Let us go and do it!

Love, Jo