

## The Vicar's Report 2022

In the sermon:

### Our Spiritual Journey

In the latest Pilgrimage series (available on BBC iPlayer), following some celebrities of varying religious backgrounds and none on the St Columba's pilgrimage route, Scarlett Moffatt (a Goggle Box star and influencer) is reduced to tears as some of her companions on the journey give her Christian faith a hard time by assuming that it is little more than a matter of preference and hobby; "When did you get this religion bug?" she is asked. This has become the current cultural response to people of faith, and it is all too easy to be influenced by this perception ourselves. Are we in danger of misunderstanding our faith as a matter of personal preference, taste or hobby?

In the Gospel, St Thomas says to the other disciples who excitedly tell him of Jesus' resurrection, "unless I see and feel I will not believe....." - for him this feels impossible. Perhaps like Thomas, we can sometimes feel that we would rather not get involved too deeply or we become overwhelmed by the challenges that face us and we place our own limits on our faith journey, "unless others do "whatever" .....why should I? I don't feel that I like or understand, so I'm out". If so, we are likely to miss out rather than gain anything.

Despite his uncertainties, Thomas continued with the group, which meant that he had a good chance of understanding more and deepening his faith, of moving forward in his spiritual journey. In Thomas's story, we witness the spiritual journey of a person seeking to follow Jesus amid conflicting ideas and staying true to his intellectual uncertainties. In fairness to him, the resurrection of Jesus mere hours ago must have been truly unexpected by all the disciples until they literally met the Risen Christ. His personal calling to follow in The Way (as the early Christians described themselves) came from a close encounter with the Lord Jesus whom he had followed in his earthly ministry and passion. He exclaims "My Lord and my God!". It was a transforming experience, and still for us today we can find our true journey of faith in following he who is The Way, the Truth and the Life.

In the end, according to tradition, Thomas was prepared to give up everything to live the Gospel and his journey meant that he took the Good News all the way beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire, the then-known world, to what is present day Kerala in India. Like Thomas, we cannot know what our faith in the risen Jesus may call us to but being faithful to the pilgrimage of the Christian life brings the joy of knowing that we are living as God calls us to know and share his love and ultimately to come to the joy of heaven through faith in Jesus. Alleluia.

## **APCM MAP**

### **Our Situation**

- We have grown in our understanding of what it means to hold together as the people of God in a time of adversity.
- we grew our media outreach and presence which has influenced our desire to reach out across our community now and in the future.
- more pastoral care has been shared very successfully by our ministers and lay members of our church with regular phone ministry and will continue.

- the Churchyard and North Porch have become important areas for outreach not only for nature but also to share the Gospel using Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter displays, Bible, Prayer, Poetry and Art exhibitions
- we have had some successful fundraising and many members of the congregation have responded generously towards covering the shortfall due to the pandemic and the ongoing expense of maintaining a huge building.
- we have a new St John's Hall sub-committee comprised of members of the church and community to ensure its smooth running and that it is made available to people from across the town.
- Concerts and Soundbites have restarted very successfully with large audiences being enriched by excellent music from amateur and professional musicians
- Messy Church has reopened
- the monthly Family Service has begun to be led by younger members of our church to excellent effect
- Regular Prayer and Praise services at our nearest care home are very popular.

### **Our Challenges**

- We need to look closely at realistic ways to sustain All Saints financially for future years as costs continue to increase. The Parochial Church Council will keep this as a high priority.  
  
Numbers attending worship vary, but we are concerned that some people appear to have lost the habit of attending regularly. They are by no means forgotten or uncared for
- Our Search Course did not attract anyone, so we need to find different ways of inviting people. We ran a course on Prayer on Zoom, attended by regular members of the congregation, how we would love to engage with new people seeking God's presence in their lives
- Some members of the congregation have become more frail and cannot now attend. We are currently reaching out to keep them within the fold through prayer, fortnightly services at one of the Residential Homes in Hertford and Holy Communion at home.

### **Our Vision**

**Growing in God's Love** – is our vision statement, derived from – and in harmony with - the Diocese's vision of Living God's Love. This is about

- flourishing as a church and engaging with people in our community, and in reaching new people of all generations as Jesus commanded his followers to go to share the Good News.

Our Mission Action Plan recognizes that all of us as church members need to hear and engage with the idea of Growing in God's Love, seeing that it has a real depth to it, and when we let God's love lead us we can be open to others, bringing hope and spiritual life to them and feeling fulfilled that we are indeed working together to put God's will into action.

### **Our Values**

- Our ministry and outreach needs to be faithful to the Gospel and to the way of life which Jesus invites all people to share.
- Therefore we are open to all people, remembering that Jesus welcomed outsiders.
- Our welcome needs to be clear, so that when people come seeking care, hope, newness they are assisted in joining All Saints' worship and that, with their consent, details are taken so that they can be followed up and offered further care.
- Our church is a welcoming community, serving God in other people, and our worship and personal devotions need to include this essential gospel value, that together we may Grow in God's Love.

### **Our Priorities**

- flourishing as a church and engaging with people in our community, reaching new people of all generations

### **Making new disciples**

Create a Children's' Area with carpet and suitable chairs etc March 2022

Establish an informal service (lay led) in a café style. September 2022

Extend contact with Baptism families to 5 years. (Funded by Mothers' Union, GDPR permitting. January 2023

To continue to increase our outreach to children and young people May 2022

Contact schools to offer church visits, school visits, assemblies March 2022

Restart the Prayers and Bears service September 2022

Restart coffee and hot Choc as Coffee and Chat after school once a week (payable) May 2022

To build on our musical tradition using this as a springboard for outreach. Ongoing

Build on our Soundbites and Heavenly Harmonies and possibly Big Band contacts Ongoing

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Priority Transforming Communities**

Re-instate a “welcome pack” which can be given to visitors to the church, and to new neighbours, and people in new housing in the parish June 2022

A quarterly newsletter online and printed, ongoing

Use this and or a magazine to establish a better presence in the town a printed version being placed at busy points. September 2022

Make the Open Church sign easier to use. June 2022

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Priority Transforming Communities - Smart goals with dates**

Outreach in the form of meeting and talking to families. Ongoing

Lunch/coffee invitations to occasional worshippers. June 2022

A daytime opportunity for coffee and chat, with the church open (Coffee mornings/lunch?)

To have a quarterly parish lunch September 2022

To hold a termly ‘vintage’ tea party for seniors July 2022

To have ‘new to All Saints’ lunches / suppers at the Vicarage (or elsewhere!) November 2022

To follow up on visitors to All Saints by phone call and then home visit April 2022

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Priority - Transforming communities**

Join the A Rocha scheme - March 2022

Form a group to identify feasible actions towards achieving Net zero by 2030 - May 2022

To have monthly meetings about wildlife and nature March 2022

Start a Friends of All Saints Group January 2023

Pursue street signage for All Saints November 2022

## **Additional Priority - Going Deeper into God -**

Institute a monthly prayer gathering May 2022

Create a Prayer space in the North Porch May 2022

Monthly Bible Study/Discussion Group/Book Sept 2022

## **The Vicar's Report Thanks 2022**

Janet

Nerine

Colin

Martin

Mary

Kay

Wendell

Richard

Brian

Dave

& The Workparty

Julia

Andrew

Luella and Mario

Leon

Amanda

The Pastoral care and phoning Group

David Ford

John Norris

The Choir,

Soraia, Isabel, Kate

James, Ollie and Emma

Malcom Hollow

Ann SJ

Chris Benham and catering team

Verity

The PCC,

Megan

Dorothy & Flower club

Fiona

Linda Dye,

Rosie Dean,

Those assisting with Events, coffee mornings

The welcomers sidespeople

The messy Church Team Shirley

Coffee makers,

Bellringers,

The Mothers' Union,

Lesson Readers and Intercessors, Vergers,

and the Gardening Team.

Art Group

Fellowship Group

Doug