

# All Saints Alive

## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

### Get ready – quietly!

Dear Friends,

“Are you ready?” “Are you prepared?”

We begin to ask each other these questions at the beginning of December. Some proudly reply that they have already written all their Christmas cards in November, so that they only need to post them. Others say that they have bought all their presents, and smugly add that they have done rather well as they bought them during the summer sales. Many of us just wonder whether we'll have enough time to even open the Advent calendar! (Although, it's strange that if it has chocolate behind those windows this never seems to be a problem.....)

The season of Advent is also about being ready and being prepared. However, unlike those other preparations, this period in the Church's calendar encourages us to pause, to stop worrying about the “small stuff”, to refuse to let our lives be crowded by material concerns, and to prepare ourselves in quiet stillness for the coming of God's kingdom.

“Your kingdom come” we say week by week, hoping to ourselves that it won't come today as we need to sort ourselves out first.

Well, now is the time to do this, stop and really prepare, by “watching and waiting”. We can do this in a spirit of restraint and penitence, not unlike Lent, calling to mind past mistakes, seeking forgiveness and reflecting on the promise of peace on earth and what that would mean in our lives.

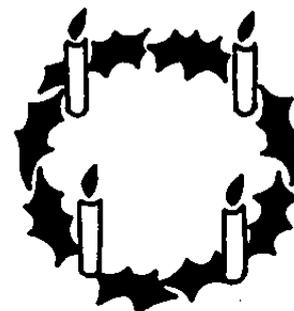
We may want to stop doing the things that just crowd our lives so much that we are unable to concentrate on our spiritual

journey or we may wish to take up something up, like journaling. Journaling means keeping a prayer journal with us at all times so that when we come to pray we can remember the things that have happened and that we need to pray about and for; but even more importantly, to write about our experiences during prayer, thus enabling us to grow spiritually and in our prayer life.

There are four weeks of Advent to help us to prepare, (a church council in Gail, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, originally suggested that we ought to have six weeks of Advent, following the pattern of Lent!) and our worship is carefully structured through the liturgy and music to help us to “watch and wait”.

We are reminded of both the darkness of the world in which we live and the light that comes into the world through Christ, in our Advent carol service.

The Advent services also help us to prepare for the future by examining the past and looking at people who have prepared the way for our salvation.



The Advent Wreath with its four white candles in a ring around the central red candle remind us each week of those whose lives prepared the way for Christ's coming:



The first candle is for the patriarchs, Abraham, our father in faith, and David, the ancestor of Jesus and in whose city he was born.

The second candle reminds us of the Old Testament prophets who foretold of a Messiah and encouraged the people to live up to God's standards.

The third, of John the Baptist who prepared the way for the Saviour and

the fourth candle stands for Mary, who bore Jesus.

The travelling cribs journey from household to household in our church family, reminding us of the importance of making room and space in our lives for the Saviour. The readings, reflections and music of Advent can lift us into the mystery of the divine, allowing us to be transported out of our busy preparations for the great festival to truly "watch and wait".

So please join us in our Advent preparations, take time out and, as we do so, let us use as our Advent prayer the words of one of the new Anglican collects for the first Sunday in Advent:

*Almighty God,  
As your Kingdom dawns,  
Turn us from the darkness of sin  
To the light of holiness,  
That we may be ready to meet you  
In our Lord and Saviour,  
Jesus Christ Amen.*

Yours in Christ  
Jo

## Friends of Aschiana

We will be having a stall at the Christmas Bazaar in St John's Hall on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December. There will be jewellery, Afghan shawls, Christmas cards, calendars and Christmas puddings.

We will also be having open days at home on:

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December 10:30 am – 7:00 pm

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 10:30 am – 5:00 pm

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December 10:30 am – 5:00 pm

These will be at Hailey Cottage, Hailey Lane, Hertford Heath. Coming from Hertford Heath down Hailey Lane, our house is the next on the left after the Galley Hall Pub. Our neighbours are very accommodating about allowing us to park in their space on the Thursday and Friday.

As well as the usual Christmas Cards, notelets, jewellery and a new consignment of shawls, will be the excellent prize-winning puddings made by the Ultimate Plum Pudding Company of Kendal. Christmas Puddings are either 1lb or 2lb size and sell at £5.50 and £9.50 respectively. Chocolate sponge pudding and Triple Ginger are both 1lb and sell for £5.50. We have tried them all(!) and they are truly excellent! Samples may be available to taste. Wonderful in colder weather, they are real comfort food.

Also available will be calendars with images by Joe Cornish – our leading landscape photographer. He has donated these to sell in Aid of Aschiana.

Our telephone number is 01992 462467 if you wish to check on times, parking etc. We look forward to seeing you.

John and Fiona Earle

