

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Be yourself!



Dear Friends,

Is there is no end to the "talent" shows on TV which seem to have gripped the nation? Seemingly not, and while I don't watch them except for a few occasional minutes when changing channels, they seem fairly harmless. Doubtless they will be produced as long as they remain popular. Thankfully there is something more worthwhile for people to do on Sundays after the Saturday night TV slot – see you in church.

I did become interested in the "John Sargeant" episode on Strictly Come Dancing. The poor man who was previously so often seen reporting from outside locations such as Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament in pouring rain or freezing cold felt that he had to leave the show after people criticised his dancing. Every week he was voted off by the judges only to triumph by the voting of the British Public. It is true that he was not technically a good dancer, but didn't he have the right to win if he had the right to participate in the first place? Instead he resigned from the show, feeling that he was obstructing some much better dancers. Yet clearly there was something about John which people liked and related to, and the fact that they liked to see him dance means that we were robbed!

The Gospel has a strong emphasis on how God loves and welcomes imperfect and sinful people, in contrast to the self-righteous. This does, in some ways, seem scandalous, for those who have been working hard at keeping the rules seem to deserve acceptance, but Jesus shows us that the love of God is available for all of us.

It is not about complete technical perfection, because that is morally impossible, but about God's love for each human being. Some will seem to fall shorter than others in living God's way, but making judgements is a difficult process.

God looks on the heart of each person, and he values all that is good about us and calls us to follow his way as closely as we are able, yet he also forgives us and understands us. Jesus himself suffered because those who had been striving hard to keep rules in a religious way failed to see and reflect the love and compassion of God in their lives.

Sometimes, when life becomes hard, people ask what they have done to deserve their problems. It suggests that God is punishing and judging their failures and shortcomings rather than loving and accepting them.

Of course, we need to know the difference between right and wrong, but God is love and it is not his will to condemn us. Nor are we to feel constantly unworthy when his desire is to welcome us.

We cannot "earn" fellowship with God or his love and salvation, for it is his gift to us. Rather, we can accept that we are loved for what we are, and, if our dance of life is a little ragged and out of rhythm sometimes, that is part of our humanity, and anyone who claims perfection is mistaken.

God loves us all, and we can rejoice in his wonderful love, and seek to show that love in our daily living.

Yours in Christ,
Jo

Confirmation and Exploring the Christian faith

The confirmation service this year will be held here at **All Saints** on **Sunday May 3rd at 10.00am** with the Bishop of Hertford. We will start two groups, one for young people and one for adults very soon. These courses will explore the Christian faith.

If you are interested in joining one of them, if you would like to be confirmed, or if you are just interested in knowing more (and not necessarily sure whether you really want to commit yourself) or you may even be looking for a refresher course where you can ask all the questions that you did not ask before, then please let me know.

We will try to hold the two groups on a day and at a time which suits people and at the moment I suggest that we may be able to meet on **Monday evenings** (straight after boys choir practice at 7.15-8.00 for the young people) and from 8.00-9.15 for the adults. We will meet in the meeting room at the back of Church. Please let me know if you are interested (and remind me again if you talked to me about confirmation last year!) Jo Tel: 584 899

Talents and Stewardship Sunday 8th February

At the end of last year letters about our Christian Stewardship were sent out. It is vital that we keep All Saints afloat financially and running smoothly so that we can serve God and the community. I hope that you can all join us in this.

Please could you hand in the Stewardship forms and talents lists in time for the dedication during the 10.00 Parish Communion service on 8th February and at the 6.30 Choral Evensong. The forms will be gathered up and taken forward at the offertory along with the normal collection.

If you have not received these forms or if you have lost them (there has, after all, been a

lot of post over Christmas) there will be spare forms at the back of Church for the next few Sundays.

Churches Together in Lent

This Lent, Churches Together are offering a Lent study course to deepen our faith and fellowship.

These three... Faith, Hope and Love is based on the three great qualities celebrated in 1 Corinthians 13. This famous passage begins and ends in majestic prose. But the middle paragraph is practical and demanding. St Paul's thirteen verses take us to the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

5 sessions:

1. Believing and Trusting
2. The Peace of God
3. Faith into Love
4. The Greatest of these
5. All shall be well

You are invited to sign up to join a group. The groups will meet five times during Lent, and their activities will be based around the course material. Each group will aim to include people from a variety of different churches, and as far as possible to fit in with people's stated preferences for time and location in and around Hertford.

If you would like to join in, all you need to do is to contact Janet Bird. She will need, name, contact details, preferred time of meeting (afternoon or evening), whether transport is needed or can be offered.

We also need offers from people to host a group in their homes. The responsibilities of a host are to make a room available with enough chairs for up to 10 people, a CD player, refreshments (of the tea & biscuits level).

I do hope that many of us will enjoy meeting together this Lent, and sharing our common faith, hope and love in God.

Nick Sharp