

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Winter warmth on our streets

When did you last try and strike up conversation with a stranger? No ulterior motives, no hidden agendas – just friendliness for the sake of being friendly. Walking around wearing a clerical collar wishing people 'Good morning' or 'Good afternoon' provokes every kind of reaction, from a full scale conversation to the kind of backlash famously described by Hobbes as 'nasty, brutish and short'. Those latter engagements reveal a frame of mind that cannot be countered.

On reflection, I can count on one hand the number of conversations I've had in public prompted by nothing more than a sense of disinterested friendliness. When did you last see two total strangers having a good chinwag about art, politics or even EastEnders, simply for the sake of being friendly?

In other countries around the world such exchanges are commonplace. So what is it that makes us different? The socially suffocating 'mind your own business – don't talk to me' culture currently pervading our country can only be got rid of if we're prepared to take a collective chance and let our public guard down.

I sometimes wonder at the thoughts of people when turning the occasional blind eye or deaf ear to a well-meaning Vicar who dared to acknowledge them passing by. Have they had a particularly bad day? Are their minds elsewhere? You're never quite sure what reaction you're going to get to a friendly salutation – a sad face can break into a wide smile; a pacific look can collapse into a frown.



Affable *bonhomie* never hurt anyone – I'm convinced that it can actually make the difference between having a good day and a bad one. The shared smile in the street, the conversation on the train or the snatch of laughter at the bus stop – these are things which enrich our lives, however ephemeral they might be.

If we can replace surly sangfroid with affable openness, then that's half the battle won. Man is, by his very nature, a social animal – the summits of human progress have all been scaled by cohesive interaction – not voluntary ostracism, inscrutable seclusion or a frosty attitude. We forget that at our peril.

Have a nice day!

Robert Thompson

Apology

Due to a production problem at the printers, pages one and two of the printed version of the January Magazine had the December pages. We apologise for this to you and to Nick Sharp whose New Year Message belatedly appears below along with a (revised) report of the November Team Council Meeting and notices about Bible Studies and Prayers and Bears.

The Editor and Printers

View from Little Amwell ..

Dear friends,

Have you ever played that game when you try to make a sentence using the same word as many times in a row? No? Maybe it's only

people with English degrees who waste their time in such trivial ways.

By the time you read this, I will be starting my sabbatical, which in my guilty moments, feels like I'm wasting my time on a grand scale.

Anyway, if you're still with me: there was a guy putting up a sign for a fish and chips shop. The owner complained that it was too tightly spaced. The signwriter hadn't left enough room between 'fish' and 'and' and 'and' and 'chips'. Can you do any better?¹

In January we all make New Year's resolutions. I've long since given up telling people what mine are, because of my terrible record in keeping them, but I think I'm beginning to find out why they never last.

I don't make space for them. I just cram them in between two 'ands.' Adding one more thing to the list of life is not a great recipe for success. Far better to take a step back and look at the list as a whole. Re-write it. Get rid of a few, change others, put them in a better order. I hope my sabbatical will give me time to do just that.

So here's one more thing for your "To do" list as we start 2010 – and please, don't just add it to the bottom of your list...

Take the wretched list, take a good few minutes of precious, uninterrupted time, and spread your list out before God. Discuss it with him. You might even like to hand God a pen and let him re-write it for you. Let's face it, if you're anything like me, he can't do a worse job with it than I'm doing already.

Happy New Year!

Nick

Ideas for the Hertford Team

We had a great Team Council Meeting in November and everyone shared their ideas about possible activities for the Team. These were further considered at our latest clergy meeting.

¹ Nick's best offering is on page five

Ideas that we are currently working on:

First Aid course – on Feb 6th see page 6

Welcome Course

A team page in each parish magazine.

Marriage Preparation Course

A market stall in Hertford, one Saturday during late Lent, with a prayer tree. We would also have publicity about our Churches and services. We could even offer a free shoe shine as part of a Maundy Thursday type of witness!

In the pipeline

Stars at Christmas: printing a prayer on an attractive star to hang on Christmas tree to be handed to all who visit our churches and at church market stall in Advent

Hertford Passion Play 2011

Developing interfaith relationships

Developing our Churches from the ecological perspective

Arranging a Team Songs of Praise Service

Raising awareness of what our respective churches are trying to do on any big projects, an example being the installation of toilets at St Leonard's.

Creating a database of people who have special skills i.e. marriage guidance, debt counselling etc.

Practical guidelines ie helping a homeless person, giving advice if a marriage breaks down.

Advertising events across churches and encouraging people to come to other churches' events.

Holding a social event to get to know each other ie a mobile supper, or bring and share supper.

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Going on the Christian Aid Walk together.
Holding a different type of service on the fifth Sunday evening of each month in one of the churches that congregations from the other churches would attend. This would be instead of an evening service being held in each church.

A Christmas card from the team, rather than each individual church.

A visiting Sunday – priests give their own congregation permission to go to another church, and also feed back ideas from the service.

A common diary of events.

Joint choir events in the summer.

A joint evening involving prayer and workshop, plus inviting a guest speaker.

A marriage enrichment course where couples sit at their own tables, listen to a talk, and then have a discussion on the topic.

Courses and groups where we can learn to pray together.

Each Church's PCC is going to discuss these ideas to see how some of them could be taken forward. This is your team and if you have any ideas about these and other possible projects please let me know.

Love Jo 01992 584 899

Bible Studies

The second sessions on Chapter 1 of St John's Gospel will be held on Monday 1st February 8.00 pm at Janet and Colin's home (140 North Road) or Thursday 4th February 10.00am in the meeting Room in Church.

During Lent we will be using the Bishops' Lent Course (more information on page 4) so will meet weekly for the six sessions.

Thursday 18th Feb at 10.00am in Meeting room and then:

25th Feb
4th March
11th March
18th March
25th March

Alternatively on Monday 22nd Feb at 8.pm in people's homes and then:

1st March
8th March
15th March
NB Tues 23rd
29th March

There will be other churches following the course so if these two times don't suit you please look at the alternatives which will be on the church noticeboard shortly – or ask Jo.

Prayers and Bears

One Mum and one toddler came to our December Prayers and Bears Service!

We had been wondering what we should do, it seems to be mainly about timing as, being older Mums, we had forgotten about the bliss of babies having an afternoon nap! We decided to see whether it will work better for everyone in the morning now so

Every first **Tuesday of the month at 10.30** in Church, we will hold Prayers and Bears, a service for babies and toddlers and their Mums, Dads, Grandparents and carers. Please let any families know about this lovely and relaxed service.

Why not join us to see for yourself what goes on and if we found that there were enough leaders we could run it each week, which again may be better too, and certainly easier for everyone to remember when it is!

Songs, Bible Stories, Prayers, followed by activity, play and coffee.

The good news is that many more came in January!