

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

'Summertime, and the living is easy'?



Dear Friends,

The lyrics of the Gershwin song underline the way in which we hope to live during the summer months, unless, of course, you are a travel rep! Actually it does often happen that business and busy-ness seem to wind down slightly, perhaps because the summer days have longer hours of daylight and the sunshine encourages us to just sit and take things at a slightly more leisurely pace.

But wait, this year it's the Olympics and Paralympics! The athletes will be running, riding, jumping, throwing swimming.... harder and faster than they have ever done before and the crowds and the spectacle will be thrilling and amazing. It will be exciting to hear the tales of those in our Church who have been lucky enough to buy tickets and those who will be official ambassadors and drivers!

The Olympics can remind us of what St Paul said:

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

The writer of Hebrews adds:

"persevere in running the race that lies before us" (Hebrews 12:1)

These words are not just about living a moral life. In a world that's filled with temptations and challenges, our lives have a purpose beyond just trying our best to be good. These writers tell us that the Christian life is like a race, and that the prize is nothing less than

Jesus himself, the eternal Son of God. No wonder we need to persevere! We are running this race so that we can live with Jesus forever. And not just forever in heaven, but "forever" starting here and now. We have the opportunity to be transformed, to be filled with eternal life.

So how do we do this? Like the Olympic athletes we need to be purposeful and not distracted, throwing off "every burden and sin that clings to us" (Hebrews 12:1). Our days are often full of challenges. We may feel unhappy about our finances, pressed to compromise our values by situations at work, worried about our family. These worries can even lead us to harmful ways of dealing with them — overeating, outbursts of anger, or just plain self-centredness. But the amazing thing is, unlike the Olympic athletes, it doesn't all just depend on us!

Yes, we may have our own races to run, but through grace God is with us. Christian perseverance is not a matter of struggling along by ourselves and hoping we make it. It is a matter of abiding in Christ and letting him walk alongside us. This is undergirded by joining with other Christians as part of the body of Christ and walking alongside one another.

So as we enjoy the spectacle of the Olympics, whether it's from the stands in the stadium or an armchair, let's be reminded, when we see the athletes pushing themselves to their limits, that our discipleship is also a matter of pressing on with our eyes fixed on the prize - eternal life with Jesus Christ himself! And hopefully the summer months will give us plenty of opportunity to contemplate this!

Love,
Jo

Back to Church Sunday 30th September 2012

Get ready to invite a friend or member of your family or neighbour to Church for our service at 10.00 am 30th September 2012. The love of God and worshipping together is so important to us we want to share this with others. This year we are preparing to make Back to Church Sunday a special time.

Everyone will be asked to participate in thinking about someone to invite and we are using special postcard invitations which will be distributed on the first two Sundays of September. You can read more about Back to Church Sunday on page 8.

You are all invited to Doug's 60th Birthday!

Douglas and Jo Loveridge request the pleasure of your company at a special party and concert to celebrate Doug's 60th birthday on Sunday 22nd July 2012, at the Vicarage and Church of All Saints, Hertford.

The celebrations begin in the Church at 3.30 pm, where, in a very Dutch spirit, there will be pieces played or sung by family and friends, and then there will be a concert by Doug's friend and favourite saxophonist David Jackson.

After the concert, a buffet will be available in the Vicarage garden (or in the Church Hall if the English summer lets us down). We do hope that you can join us, and look forward to seeing you.

Your presence will be the only gift Doug would like for his birthday!

Please RSVP if you are coming to the buffet to Jo by letter, phone or email.

Why is Doug's birthday going to include a concert?

You must surely know that Doug is a very keen music fan, and loves most forms of music, except Andrew Lloyd Webber and X-Factor.

Why are people being invited to play or sing at the concert?

With Jo's Dutch connections, this is the form of family celebration which often happens in Holland. It seems like a great idea, and it means you aren't standing around for hours trying to talk to strangers with nothing else to focus on. We hope you will all meet and converse, of course.

Who will be playing?

Doug's brother Rik and Jo's brother Michael (Team Rector of Hitchin) both play instruments and sing, and hopefully one or two other talented people too!

And why David Jackson?

Doug says: *Because I love his music, his unique way of playing, and I need to get through my 60th somehow – there could be no better way. David has been very important to me musically, and somehow my interest in his work has led me into my current work. I first heard David play in 1970, when Van der Graaf Generator's first album was released, and I loved it all. The leader of the band was/is Peter Hammill, whom I also admire, but after the band split in 1973 and 1976 the hallmark of authenticity was whether David was playing on the record or at the concert.*

One evening, much later, in the early 1990s, Jon and Peter were in a large school presentation with an ecological theme (Yananamo) in Bracknell, when I realised that the saxophone sound with the band was very familiar. David and I chatted, and having established who I was he invited me to his wife's birthday party. This happened to be taking place in my parish of Hurst, Berkshire and it so happened that the four band members attended and played together for the first time in almost 20 years. This seemed like an exceptional coincidence.

Meeting Sue Jackson led to an invitation to join the committee of the local Citizens Advice Bureau, where she was manager, and as I had been looking for something outside the parish this led me into the discipline of management, of working with people outside the church and into the world of Equality and Diversity. It was the experience of this which eventually led me into the Hospital Chaplain's role, where we engage with people of all shades of belief and which has broadened my approach to faith and action.

I am very grateful to David for coming to play, and I hope that if you come you appreciate his unique music.