

# All Saints Alive

## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



### ***Being who we are.***

Dear Friends,

I have just watched the final of the Great British Painting Challenge – mere weeks after enjoying the BBC Young Musician of the Year. There can be good things on television! It is amazing to see so many talented people doing such creative things. I don't worry too much about who will be the winner, as they all try so hard, except that I prefer to see justice done. And this time there was an additional reason...

Throughout the Painting Challenge, different styles were encouraged, and the artists were helped to learn and develop. In this case I had been alerted by Ralph Freeston, a member of our Family Service congregation that his son Oliver was taking part. Oliver impressed from the start and dealt with occasional disappointments with a wonderful smile and a readiness to try again. Oliver was in the final, with Anil, Chris and Callum. Tough competition. Anil had excellent painting skills, although he wasn't impressed by the advice given by his mentor; Chris is partially-sighted and overcame this to produce wonderful results; Callum was a Hyper-Realist who was given about 1% of the time he normally took to paint a canvas and who had been told so often that he should be a bricklayer and never consider art school that the presenters tried their best to help him overcome that mental barrier – I really hope it works (who would not, given gentle pastoral encouragement by the Revd Richard Coles?). They all deserved to win, as the judges suggested but the winner was – long, long silence – Oliver. His brilliant self-portrait was followed by his winning portrayal of a ship in the dockyard. It was very exciting – I hope Oliver will come again

with his family and his husband to All Saints very soon.

Life is a challenge to most of us, at least at times. Outward circumstances can be very important, but it is our inner life that makes the difference in the end. That is what our faith is about. And like those in the televised challenges, we need to listen and grow, in our faith as in so much else. We have our gifts and talents to be used wisely, in the way that God calls us. It is good to learn more and to grow in faith, it is an essential part of the Christian life. However, while we all have our challenge to grow it is not over against anyone else. And we can never excel at everything. Often, we need to accept that we are simply "good enough" – like Callum, we should not let others' judgment hold us back, but unlike Anil it is best to listen to others and give ourselves the chance to make further progress where we can.

Faith in God is about loving God and being accepted by him. He wants us to grow, as I say, but he loves us as we are, already. And God's Kingdom is wide open for all to enter if they only will. Sometimes we hold back, thinking we don't or can't belong, we are not suitable, or it will cramp our lifestyle in some way. God's love is all-embracing, there are no losers or winners, just acceptance and love for all who turn to him. That is what we have been thinking and praying about with the Thy Kingdom Come project, inviting, encouraging and praying for others, that they may find God and the peace, love and salvation which he offers us all.

The BBC Young Musician competition was fascinating – there were so many types of

music played on so many varied instruments. One played a recorder, another a snare drum (both as solo instruments), others the saxophone, the cello, the violin, the guitar, the piano, etc. Much of the music was very challenging. But when Lauren played Prokofiev with an orchestra, she showed amazing flair and technical ability. One knew immediately that, good as the others were, she would be the winner. Yet she is only 16 and came over as very shy. Brilliant, to be able to express yourself in such an epic manner. Now we are looking forward to the BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year. What a breadth of wonderful things we can hear and see, and I am sure that God delights in all of us in our different styles and unique abilities, without setting us one against the other.

With that in mind, may I remind you that we have the Hertfordshire Festival of Music with world-class performers coming to All Saints Church. Do make sure you check the brochure or the website and if you want the live experience of great musicians do book up. Not only that, we do our best to provide varied and stimulating worship experiences, with excellent music, so we look forward to seeing you soon.

Love, Jo