

**All Saints Community  
Newsletter**

**Christmas 2016**

**Diary dates [What's On](#)**



**Saturday 24th December, 4 pm Crib Service**

**Saturday 24th December, 11.30 pm Midnight Mass**

**Sunday 25th December, 8 am Said Eucharist and**

**10 am Christmas Day Sung Eucharist. ( no Evensong today)**

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January Parish Vision Day**

**10 am to 3.30 pm**

Monday 23rd January 7.30 pm PCC meeting

As Christmas approaches some look forward with hope – wondering if the presents they long for will be forthcoming. Others look forward to a break in routine and the chance to relax. And still others look forward in dread at the amount of money they will need to spend.

Those who have those thoughts and no others and who think that is all there is to Christmas will have missed the point. Christmas is a meeting place; as families gather together; as

friends make sure to meet up; as people exchange cards and emails with those they are close to.

For Christians Christmas is a meeting place between God and human kind and we shall gather in worship to celebrate that and to deepen the bonds between us.

There are two major Christian celebrations in the course of the year that point to Jesus. At Christmas when we reflect on the birth of Jesus and at Easter when we think both of the triumph of Jesus over all that harms human flourishing and of his invitation to us to follow him.

### **Christmas and Easter are concerned with caves.**

Christmas is about what took place in the cave beneath the inn in Bethlehem. Caves as storage areas under houses were a common feature. Easter is about the cave being used as a tomb in the quarry outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Secondly, both are concerned with how few people realised the significance of what was happening. You have to have to make a deliberate effort to approach and enter such places of darkness. Most people would be too busy and pre-occupied.

Thirdly, the few who did actually make the effort to enter those caves were outsiders; shepherds and foreign star-gazers and at Easter fishermen and a lady with a past.

The main similarity is that both stories contain the words 'They went in and saw'. The Christmas passage leaves the significance of 'seeing' in the air. The Easter passage amplifies what 'seeing' meant to those who had developed a close relationship with the adult Jesus who had given them the invitation to follow him, to absorb and then to share. They went in and saw .... and believed. Christmas marks the beginning of that transformation. It shows God's commitment to us and the invitation to go in and see.

May our Christmas celebration be a time of meeting. May we draw aside from the noisy frenzy and in the quietness be lifted

up in spirit and know how precious each one of us is to God. May we then reach out to each other and treat each other with the same generous spirit that God shows us. And may we be encouraged and enter the new year in peace at the thought that God has not finished with us. Easter will come.

## Parish Vision Day Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2017

Many of you will know that whether in conversation, via my questionnaire or at PCC meetings I am keen to discern our hopes for All Saints' Church, and to plan our future direction of travel together. I've been emphasising three areas of our life; prayer, discipleship and community involvement. I am keen for as many people as possible to have a say so please do put our **Parish Vision Day** into your diary. It will be held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January from **10 am to 3.30 pm** in the Parish Hall. **It is for all of us; young and old, men and women, new worshippers and long standing members of the church.** Please come if at all possible and have a say in the future of the church that we love being a part let's build on those qualities we value - the church's welcome, worship and fellowship.

Miles Baker, who preached on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September about this and will lead the day and further the process of producing a Mission or Growth Action Plan.

Miles writes that a Growth Action Plan (GAP) is another method for helping the church to grow in numbers, in discipleship, in evangelism, in community engagement and the parish team to grow in confidence.

It is about creating a plan that is custom made for each individual church. Something that may work for an urban parish might not work at all for something more rural. As Professor David Voas said:

"There is no single recipe for growth; there are no simple solutions to decline. The road to growth depends on the context, and what works in one place may not work in another. What seems crucial is that congregations are constantly engaged in reflection; churches cannot soar on autopilot. Growth is a product of good leadership (lay and ordained) working with a willing set of churchgoers in a favourable environment."

***Anecdote to Evidence***, a report from the [Church Growth Research programme](#) is what Revd Canon Miles Baker, the Diocese Director for Mission, uses as the foundation for the activities and group work used to develop a plan to help each church grow.

Miles explained: "A great Growth Action Plan usually comes from a good vision day."

The vision day asks three questions:

1. Where are we?
2. Where is God calling us to be?
3. How will we get there?

Then with a creative and engaging process, the PCC members and leadership group will work out what is needed in order to be where God is calling the church to be.

This leads to the creation of a written Growth Action Plan. This includes a One Year Plan with measurable goals to achieve a Five Year Vision statement. There is even a plan for a review date to look at the progress.

Miles said: "Having a plan will give a clear sense of missional direction, which is a powerful tool for church growth."

"The churches which are growing are the churches which are intentionally wanting to grow. Research shows that of those who report a clear sense of mission and purpose have grown 64% in numbers and discipleship. For those that stated that they didn't have a sense of clear mission and purpose, 26% had grown and 52% had declined." (Figures from [Anecdote to Evidence](#)).

Bishop Donald said: "We believe in church growth. All our senior staff saw growth in their earlier parish ministries, and it is our expectation for every healthy church. Rather than a detailed diocesan strategy we are working in terms of a vision for each parish or benefice to develop and own a Growth Action

## Have you joined our planned giving scheme?

**What is planned giving?** The planned giving scheme is used by members of our church to donate to the church on a regular basis, usually through a standing order.

**Why should I join?** The majority of our income comes through the scheme. A regular donation allows us to budget our expenditure based on regular gifts. If you pay income tax we can automatically claim gift aid on your donation through the scheme.

**Where does the money go?** Donations received through the scheme pay towards all the running costs of the church, this includes:

- Sustain our clergy - Planned giving allows us to pay our Parish Share which is a scheme used across the diocese to pay for, train and house our clergy.
- Paying to insure, maintain, heat and light the church building
- Director Music fees, organists
- Maintaining the organ and running the choir

**How much should I give?** There is no one, easy answer for everyone. If you are seeking guidance, the Church of England recommends, based on biblical teaching 5% of income to your parish and 5% to charities of your choice. We are called to love God and our neighbour and our giving is an expression of that love.

**How do I join?** To join the scheme please speak to Rob Taylor or a member of the Stewardship Committee. Forms can be found in the foyer of the church.

**Park Streets Ahead Residents Association invites neighbourly people of all ages who live locally - and their friends - to**

**Tea & Cake & Music**

**at All Saints Church Hall, Park Road**

**2-4pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays monthly**

**Drama workshop for age 8+...Activity table for toddlers...Welcome for everyone!**

Helpers, musicians and cake donations are very much appreciated . *If you need help getting to the church hall, please ring Sue on 349907 or Beki on 764130 To book your child into Drama workshop, email [parkstreetsaheadra@gmail.com](mailto:parkstreetsaheadra@gmail.com) and bring £5*