

Vicar's Overview 2017/18

***For with God nothing shall be impossible.
Luke 1:37***

Work has been progressing with our All Saints Serving Harrow (ASSH) Project. Structural surveys have been completed and community consultations are continuing. The ASSH team intends to submit a bid to Heritage Lottery in time for the August 2018 deadline. The bid will be for £1 million. The HLF grant criteria require a clear focus on heritage outcomes. The ASSH team are presenting All Saints' as a Butterfield church with a unique story to tell. The nineteenth century development of the church encompasses William Butterfield's entire career as a pioneering Gothic Revival architect. The bid will also highlight All Saints' place in holding the story of the Harrow Weald community over time, drawing on our successful 'One Place, Different Time' project, which was supported by HLF. We are grateful to Charmian for stepping up to the mark as project manager for this vital stage of the ASSH initiative.

Our partnership with the Sinai Mar Thoma church has continued to develop. It was good to be able to host a joint Confirmation Service in November, led by Bishop Pete. Once again we were spoiled by the generous and delicious servings of Kerala curries, plus an enormous cake, courtesy of Aga and Gail's Bakery. In the summer term, the All Saints' and Mar Thoma congregations hosted a memorable Churches Together 'Forest Church' act of worship and celebrated the 'Great Get Together' inspired by friends and colleagues of the late Jo Cox MP. The event attracted over eighty people, including many children. We intend to repeat this event in June 2018. The Fabric Committee continues to be grateful to Abraham Matthews for so ably enabling us to tackle the maintenance of our premises and resolve all the urgent issues highlighted in our recent Quinquennial Architect's report.

***How very good and pleasant it is when
kindred live together in unity! Psalm 133 v.1***

As noted last year, fluctuations in congregation numbers continue to puzzle. Some Sundays our morning services will welcome 70 plus adults and around 20 young people, others will see numbers drop to 50 or so adults and half a dozen children. I am sure this reflects the business of family life, but there would seem to

be no obviously discernible pattern to this fluctuation.

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

Attendance at our Christmas and Easter services was very encouraging again this year, especially the family focused Nativity Service, which filled the church to capacity on Christmas Eve. Once again, five hundred or so young people visited the church from local schools during the Christmas Tree Festival and were introduced to the story of Christ's birth. Heavy snow fell on the day of our Carol Service, but a good number turned out undaunted by the weather.



Snow Sunday resilience amidst the Christmas trees!

Messy Church has continued to meet in the woods and draw in families who would not necessarily be attracted to our regular Sunday patterns of worship. *Forest Church* has also been successful in drawing an eclectic group of eco-orientated worshippers from beyond our own core congregation. Mandy Whitfield, Jan Boresta and Katherine Harrison (from St Michael's) deserve special mention for supporting and enabling our fresh expressions. Our monthly act of *Taizé* worship also attracts a loyal group who are occasionally joined by

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visitors exploring a meditative spirituality. Thanks to James Watts and Glenys Barker for leading and facilitating our *Taizé* worship. If you haven't yet ventured to join with any of our *fresh expressions*, do take a risk and be open to surprise encounters with the Holy Spirit.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord". Isaiah 55:8-9



Messy church in the woods

The Forest School suffered something of a set back over the Easter Holidays when it was subject to an arson attack. However, Jan and the team have done a fantastic and creative job in restoring the site and school visits have continued without interruption. We are grateful to Archdeacon Duncan for financial support from the Diocese to help rebuild the outdoor classroom area.

Emma Briscoe will be leaving the Forest School team this summer. We are grateful to Emma for her energy and the skills and ideas that she has brought to the Forest School programmes over the past eighteen months.

The Forest School has won funding from the John Lyons Charity to make a short film highlighting the impact of the project on young people's lives. The film will be premiered in September 2018. The Forest School continues to be supported by an invaluable team of hard working volunteers, to whom we are very grateful. The Forest School is a significant part of All Saints' outreach and service to the local community and extends imaginative Christain hospitality to young people and adults of diverse faith, ethnicity and often, disadvantage. Jan's woodland based women's wellbeing group has addressed real individual needs throughout the year.

...all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Isaiah 55:12-13

Ofsted visited the Pre-School in the Spring Term. Well done to Deepa and the team for the very positive outcome of being declared 'good' by Ofsted.

The two Thursday conversation groups continue to play an important role in offering a place of welcome and bible study. Thank you Edith Steele, Mandy Whitfield and Philippa Jackson for leading these groups. Do know, you are most welcome to join either group and to become part of their ongoing conversation. A joint Mar Thoma/All Saints' study group also meets fortnightly on Thursday mornings.

Denise Mordell was commissioned as our third Pastoral Assistant during the autumn. Denise is currently exploring a calling to ordained ministry. It has been encouraging this year to explore potential vocations with a number of people within All Saints'. The Holy Spirit is abroad.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

Denise, Jennifer Stapleton and Iris Wheeler are amongst unsung heroes of All Saints'. Week in and week out they visit the housebound and those in residential homes in the parish and offer prayer and support to many.

Under Jennifer Stapleton's dedicated direction, the Monday Fellowship has continued to

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flourish and develop into a vital opportunity for conversation over a two course meal, served in the Blackwell Hall. The Monday Fellowship meets a real need for companionship amongst older members of our community, extending beyond the church. We remain grateful too to Iris for all her hard work in ensuring we meet our responsibilities towards the Harrow Night Shelter.

Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Romans 12:13

For the past year, All Saints' has hosted a monthly fellowship meeting, after the midweek Holy Communion service, for people with learning difficulties. This is organised in partnership with Men-cap. It is good to report that the Wednesday service is thriving. Thank you Peter for taking lead responsibility in facilitating this act of worship.

On the first Sunday of the month, we have continued to encourage and enable our young people to participate in leading the liturgy and intercessions and serving and reading. Eliza and Taylor have become confident servers and certainly look the part in their new robes.

Sue Ellias and Katherine Viala and team deserve thanks from us all for their ongoing work with *Mighty Saints*.



'The Waverley' approaching the Dartford crossing on one of Graham Jenkins' adventures.

The PCC revisited our *Mission Action Plan* during their autumn 'away day' at the

beautifully reordered St Michael's, Harrow Weald. Before the summer is out, this will be shared with everyone, as together, we look to continue to discern God's call for us, as his people, in this place at this time. John Tigg has made good his intention to encourage a 'men's group' to meet - beer, conversation and good company have been enjoyed throughout the year. A new women's group has also been formed. The intention of both groups is to offer a space to build friendship and hopefully, enjoy activities to which *not yet* Christian friends and acquaintances can be invited.



Forest Church and the 'Great Get Together'

Lynda McDonald has regularly burnt the midnight oil in bringing order to our ever challenging church finances. During 2017 we met our £70k obligation to the Diocesan Common Fund and just about managed to balance the books (albeit by the skin of our teeth). 2018 however is proving tricky. To cover our costs and to sustain and grow our ministry, we need to increase our income by circa £10k - which is a big ask. That equates to an extra £15.00 per church family per month.

Please do take this challenge seriously and prayerfully.

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

We said goodbye to our cheerful administrator, Androulla, just before Easter. Androulla is now working with the Harrow Churches Housing Association. Thank you Androulla for all that you contributed to the life of All Saints'. You are much missed. We are pleased to

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announced that Anna Dias will be taking up the role of Administrator in May.

I conclude with thanks to all those who contribute, often out of sight, to the life, mission and ministry of All Saints, mentioning by name:

Sally for coping efficiently with the challenges presented by our premises;

Diane for the creative leadership of all things musical and choral;

Alison, ever organised in reclaiming our gift aid from HMRC and coordinating the catering team;

Joel for pounding the streets with Street Pastors;

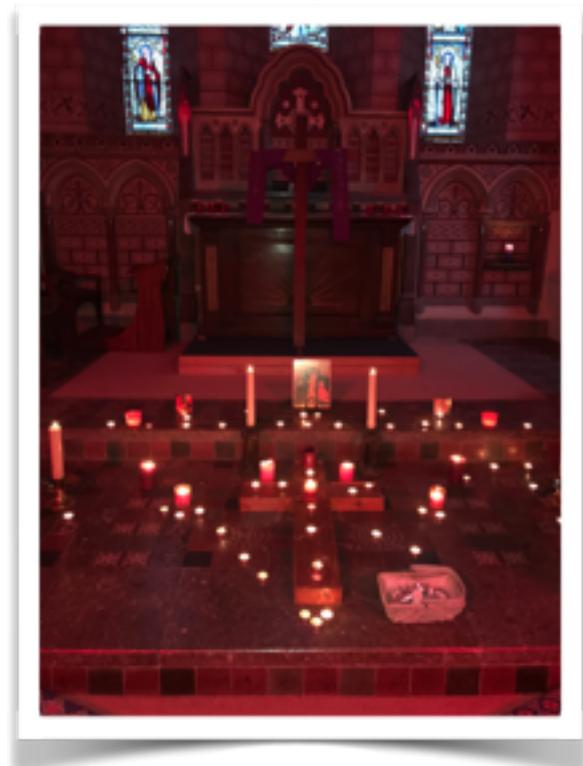
Pam and Andrée for beautiful flower arranging;

Sue for editing our monthly newsletter and enthusiastically chairing the Events committee;

Graham for leading us on visits and adventures, by water and road;

Mary for overseeing the implementation our safeguarding policies;

Charmian for making sure the bells are rung Sunday by Sunday (new ringers always needed...);

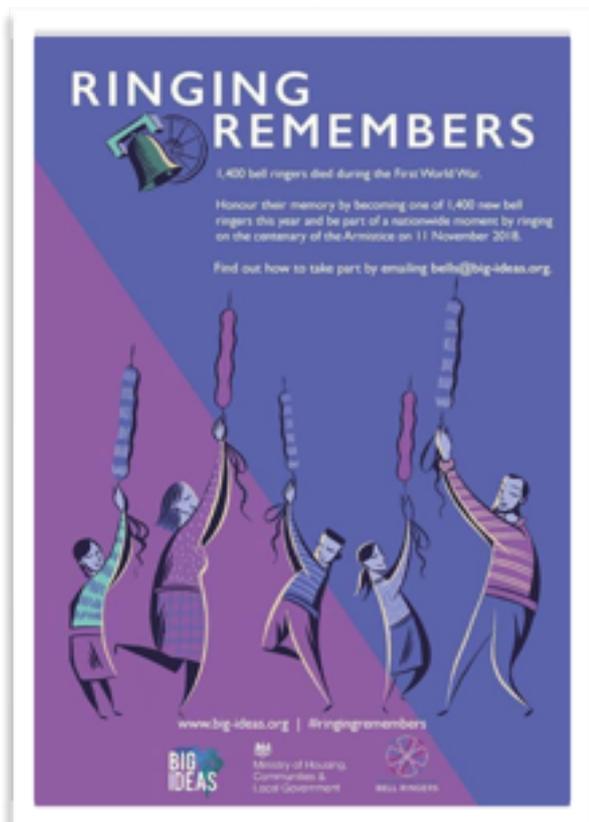


Easter Taizé vigil

Tony and Philippa for their generous service as Church Wardens and Linda as Assistant Church Warden, banker and payer of bills;
Nick, tireless secretary of the PCC;
Ron, our unflappable sacristan;
Ann and her team of tea and coffee servers;
All involved with prayer ministry, serving, worship leading, music and preaching;
Jo and Deborah for so competently leading our worship;
Heather, so efficiently and meticulously keeping the books for the Blackwell Hall;
Peter for his collegiality and support;
Jan, for her energy and creativity in sustaining and enabling the wonderful forest school project which brings so many blessings to so many people;
The Green Team - Doug, Chris and Eddie, keeping the churchyard wilderness under control;
and of course, many others.

We are blessed by the many individuals and groups who do so much to support the life and witness of All Saints'.

And the bees are once again thriving, thanks to Victoria's beekeeping skills!



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***So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.
Galatians 6:10***

And finally, thank you for all the prayers and support and kindness Gail and I have received in what has been a difficult year.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gail and I", written in dark ink.

29 April 2018