



## **Vicar's Letter November 2019**

Dear Friends,

### **A Season of Remembering**

November is a month of remembering. It begins with All Saints Day on the 1st of November, when we remember the Christian saints down through the ages. These are not just the well known saints from church history or the people we might see depicted in statue or stained glass, but ordinary Christians known and unknown, who have loved and served the Lord. All Saints Day is a time to be thankful for those Christians who have lived before us, and especially those who have taught and inspired us personally. It is a time to be grateful for what we have received, and recommit ourselves to follow in their footsteps.

All Saints Day is followed by All Souls' Day, or as it referred to in the church calendar the 'Commemoration of the Faithful Departed' on the 2nd November. Although not widely observed by Evangelicals, All Souls' Day, invites us to remember with thanksgiving before God those whom we have known personally who are no longer with us, especially those who have given us life and nurtured us in faith.

It is normally around this time of the year that we hold our annual memorial service, which this year will be on Sunday 3rd November at 6.30pm. This service gives the opportunity to remember those who have died, to give thanks to God for their lives, and to offer comfort and support to those who are grieving. There will be an opportunity in the service for those who wish to light a candle in memory of someone they love, and the names of those whom we wish to remember will be read out. Please come along to this special service, and invite others to join us.

There are other important national events that are marked every November which are linked to the idea of 'remembering'. On November 5<sup>th</sup> we celebrate bonfire night, and on the 10th November we mark Remembrance Sunday when we remember and honour those who have served our country in times of conflict, and especially those who have died to protect our freedoms. We will be holding a special Remembrance Sunday Service on the 10<sup>th</sup> November at 10.30am in both St James Church Carlisle and Cummersdale.

At the Remembrance Sunday service I never fail to be moved when the words of Robert Laurence Binyon's poem 'For The Fallen', which is recited every year:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

One of the most memorable sermons I can recall was a Remembrance Sunday sermon preached in Gosforth church many years ago when I was a child. The preacher described how the opposite of *remember* is not merely to forget - that is the opposite of to recall, but to dis-member. Therefore the very act of re-membering, can bring about healing and restoration.

The word remember appears 166 times in the (NIV) Bible, reminding us of the importance of remembering. Remembering in Scripture is more than simply recalling a past event, it is a vibrant, powerful, and participatory concept where we recalibrate our lives according to what's being remembered.

As Christians our whole faith depends upon remembering. Every time we gather to worship, we remember Christ's death and resurrection. This is brought most clearly into focus when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, and follow Jesus' instruction to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). The simple act of eating bread and drinking wine helps us to remember what it cost Jesus to save us, calls us to reflect on our own response to his love and how we live our lives.

Remembering is important for us all, but especially for us as Christians. Remembering what God has done for us brings healing and power; it *re-members* us- it reunites us-with God, with each other, and with who God has made us to be.

Let's make the most of this season of remembering.

### **Gift And Pledge Day**

Thank you to everyone who supported our Gift and Pledge Day last month. At the time of writing over £18,000 has been pledged or donated (this figure includes Gift Aid). I expect this figure to go up in the next week or two, and am very hopeful that we might reach our £26,000 target!

### **God For All Vision Refresh**

The five year God For All vision, adopted by the Salvation Army, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Church of England in Cumbria in 2015, was that:

**By 2020 every person in Cumbria of all ages and backgrounds will have an opportunity to discover more of God and God's purpose for their lives, so that they will discover more of Jesus and the Good News and become followers of Jesus within a Christian community.**

The 2015-2020 strategic plan has five focus areas:

- **RE-IMAGINING MINISTRY** aiming to widen all forms of ministry to encourage whole life disciples to develop, call people out to formal ministries and recognise that there is a 'ministry of all'.
- **EMPHASISING MISSION** aiming to empower people to be more confident in their faith, in their ability to communicate the Gospel and to have the channels in place to help churches reach out into the local community.
- **ESTABLISHING FRESH EXPRESSIONS** aiming to reach every person in Cumbria through

the development of community, both in existing churches and new settings, meeting people where they are to share the good news of the Gospel.

- **WORKING ECUMENICALLY** aiming to actively come together as Christians in a variety of ways and settings, so that those outside the church see us simply as Christians, and not as denominations. Following on from this, we want all churches working in God for All to feel they have a voice in their Mission Community.
- **FORMING MISSION COMMUNITIES** aiming to see groups of churches working together in local communities to support each other in intentional mission and outreach. There will be about 33 Mission Communities covering the whole of the County.

During the past five years a lot has been achieved across Cumbria, with much greater emphasis on mission (such as the county wide Moving Mountains Mission held in March 2018), and the formation of mission communities, including our own Two Rivers Mission Community which was launched on Pentecost Sunday 2018.

With 2020 almost upon us, the Diocese with its ecumenical partners are seeking to refresh the God For All Vision, and are inviting churches and individuals to help review the current strategic plan and identify priorities for the 2020 to 2025 strategic plan.

With this in mind, I would like to invite you to attend a special workshop that we will be running on **Monday 25th November at 7.30pm** in the Parish Centre. The workshop will last 90 minutes, and will be led by Kerry Roughton, a member of St James, and the 'God For All Management Officer', co-ordinating the day to day programme management of the God for All strategy and activities.

It would be wonderful to see good attendance at this workshop, and for us as a church community to have the opportunity to help shape the 2020 to 2025 strategic plan.

Please also consider completing a short online God For All Vision Refresh Survey online, the link is [shorturl.at/bmx48](https://shorturl.at/bmx48)

### **Youth Weekend Away**

Please pray for the young people from St James who at the end of November will be going away for the weekend to St John's in the Vale, and for Ruth our youth worker as she plans the weekend. The theme of the weekend is 'Identity' - in particular our identity in Christ.

### **General Election 2019**

I believe passionately that as Christians voting in elections is not only a right, but a responsibility. Next month's general election is arguably one of the most important elections in recent history, and not just because of Brexit, but because of other important issues such as the future of the NHS, the environment, education, etc. It is important that as Christians we make our votes count, and to pray for those who are standing for election. If you are not registered to vote, then please do so today, go to [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote). If you know you are not going to be around on December 12th, then please apply for a postal vote, the deadline for applications is 5pm on 27th November.

Christian Action Research and Education (CARE), have launched a helpful election website, the address is [www.engage19.org.uk](http://www.engage19.org.uk). On it, you will find policy information on issues such as assisted suicide, abortion, relationships and sex education and religious freedoms. You can also dynamic video content and, the record of MPs voting over the last few years on key issues as well as a regularly updated blog.

### **St James Men's Group**

Our next men's group meeting will be a curry night at the Stanwix Tandoori on Thursday 28th November at 7.30pm. This is a great event to invite your male friends along to, and for those who are not keen on curries the restaurant are able to provide some English style meals if pre-ordered! A sign up sheet for the curry night is available in church, for more information please contact Paul Crooks ([pcrooks71@gmail.com](mailto:pcrooks71@gmail.com)) or Garry Martin ([garym2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:garym2000@yahoo.co.uk)).

Of course I don't just want the men to have all the fun! It would be great to see a similar group set up for women, so if there is anyone interested in taking on the responsibility of helping co-ordinate a Women's Group please speak to me!

God bless

Simon

### **EVENTS DIARY**

- ⇒ Saturday 2 November, **Messy Church**, Parish Centre, 4.00pm
- ⇒ Sunday 3 November, **Annual Memorial Service**, St James, 6.30pm
- ⇒ Sunday 3 November, **Bring & Share Lunch**, Parish Centre, 12.00pm
- ⇒ Wednesday 6 November, **Prayer & Praise**, 7.30pm
- ⇒ Thursday 7 November, **Christian Pre-loved Book Sale**, Cornerstone, 6.00pm-9.00pm
- ⇒ Saturday 9 November, **Fell Walk**, meet at St James at 9.00am
- ⇒ Thursday 14 November, **Clothing Jumble Sale**, Cornerstone, 9.00am-4.00pm
- ⇒ Saturday 16 November, **Alpha Day Away**
- ⇒ Monday 18 November, **PCC Meeting**, Parish Centre, 7.30pm
- ⇒ Thursday 21 November, **Leisurely Lunch**, Parish Centre, 12.30pm
- ⇒ Friday 22 November, **Youth Weekend Away**, St John's In The Vale
- ⇒ Monday 25 November, **God For All Vision Refresh Workshop**, Parish Centre, 7.30pm
- ⇒ Thursday 28 November, **Men's Curry Night**, Stanwix Tandoori, 7.30pm
- ⇒ Saturday 30 November, **Messy Church**, Parish Centre, 4.00pm