

# ELSTOW MAGAZINE



September 2011

## ELSTOW & ST MICHAEL'S MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2011

### **Dear Parishioners,**

I am conscious that writing this magazine article falls on the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary since moving into the vicarage, with Beth and a three month old Tabitha! In one sense it seems such a short time that I have been with you, in another sense a lot has happened; let me re-cap some highlights:

- (i) The Churchyard has had a makeover with the churchyard looking the best it has ever looked; the boundary walls are safe and the new paths and boiler system. The gates are a fitting memory to Norman Thompson.
- (ii) The Church services are at regular times each Sunday, with a new service book, more people involved; and Sunday School every Sunday with a big increase in Baptisms and Weddings.
- (iii) The Team Ministry is supported by five clergy, and we regularly meet with our ecumenical partners.
- (iv) There is a lot of Youth work in all parts of the benefice, and a Team Youth worker David, who has supported us over the last 5 years.
- (v) A new statue has just been unveiled in the children's part of Elstow cemetery given from John Bunyan Upper School to remember the Head Teacher and children who have died in Elstow.
- (vi) Weekly: various work with the young children and the elderly bereaved of the Parish. Regular lunches together.
- (vii) Annually: the re-creation of the May Festival; The Bonfire Night; The Pantomime; Shakespeare Production; Recitals; Tours and visits; Children's Holiday Club; Parish Holiday and BBQ; and very busy Christmas.

On September 21<sup>st</sup>, we are hosting a service to celebrate the completion of the restoration of the Hillersden Ruin (7pm @ Elstow Abbey), which will conclude with a Gala Event hosted by Sir Samuel Whitbread where we have invited back all the benefactors who have helped to make this journey possible.

With the good fortune of a legacy from Helena Gibb, just before I moved in, and the support of charities and some local members, we have raised and spent nearly £400,000 up until now. We have used every penny that has been given to us. **Thank you.** On the 29th September we shall hear the tender figures for the final phase. I will then need to ask for your support. In early October, an appeal display will go up in church and as soon as we have enough we shall begin the final part - I would dearly love to start the final phase in December, which will take 26 weeks to complete – it will be amazing when completed!

After seven years, have I got an itch? Well, yes! To complete the new hall – because I firmly believe that this will provide most of the pastoral needs for many years to come, and to put Elstow Abbey on a good financial footing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Two new ideas that we are trying in the coming months are:

- (i) Back to Church Sunday on 25<sup>th</sup> September. Where we shall invite back all the Baptism and Wedding families over my seven years to one of the morning services (10am - Holy Communion with Sunday School or 11.20am - BCP Holy Communion);
- (ii) On the second weekend in October (8<sup>th</sup>), at 7pm we are planning to hold a traditional Harvest Supper for the church and community at Abbey Middle School, *all monies raised in aid of the new Church Hall*, and on the Sunday 9th Harvest Festival.

All of this couldn't have been achieved by me alone. First I would like to give thanks to God for all of his blessings to us, and for all of your support and trust.

'With God, nothing is impossible.'

With Best Wishes,

**Jeremy**

## THE CHURCH CALENDAR

### SEPTEMBER 2011

1 <sup>st</sup>	Thursday	11.00am 11.45am 12 Noon 6.15-7.15pm  7.45pm	Holy Communion (JRC) Churches together meeting at the Vicarage Monthly Lunch at The Red Lion Yoga (for mixed abilities) <b>Elstow Abbey Church</b> for more details call June Hannigan 07817601686 Wedding rehearsal in the Abbey for Saturday (JRC)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Friday	8pm	Bell Ringing
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Saturday	2pm	Wedding of Chloe Emma Barlow & James Laurence Hooley
4 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday	10.00am 10.15am 11.20am 2.00pm 2.45pm 3.30pm 6.30pm	Holy Communion (JRC) <i>Holy Communion at St Michael's, includes London Rd (NM)</i> Mattins (JRC) Baptism of Daniel Rayner (JRC) Baptism of Olivier Kinns (JRC) Baptism of the Price children (JRC) Evensong (JRC)
5 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	10.00am 2.00pm 7.00pm 8.00pm	NO Mums and Toddlers in the Vestry Prayer Group in the Vestry Wedding interview at the Vicarage (JRC) Liturgy Meeting at the Vicarage
6 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	3.45-5.15pm 6.30-8pm 7.30pm	No After school club at St Michael's No Youth Club Elstow Parish Council Meeting
7 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	11.30am 7.30pm	Coffee and Soup in the Vestry Bedford Street Angels Meeting
8 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	09.30am 11.00am 4.30pm 6.15-7.15pm  7-8.30pm 7.30pm 7.30pm-9.30pm	Morning Prayers at St Michael's (JRC + SS) Holy Communion (JRC) Wedding rehearsal for Saturday (JRC) Yoga (for mixed abilities) <b>Elstow Abbey Church</b> for more details call June Hannigan 07817601686 London Road Youth Club. PCC meeting in the Vestry Bedford Bagpipes rehearsing in the church
9 <sup>th</sup>	Friday	<b>7pm</b> 8pm	<b>Choir Practice for junior members only</b> Bell Ringing
10 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	12.30pm	Sponsored Cycle ride from church to church in Bedford Wedding of Verconica Dilawari and Graham Parker (JRC)

11 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday	10.00am 10.15am 11.20am 2.15pm 6.30pm	Holy Communion (RC) <i>Holy Communion at St Michael's (JRC)</i> Mattins (RC) Baptism of William George Rouse (JRC) Evensong (JRC)
12 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	10.00am 2.00pm 8.00pm	<b>Mums and Toddlers Starts again</b> Prayer Group in the Vestry Team council meeting in Elstow Abbey Vestry
13 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	3.45-5.15pm 6.30-8pm 8.15pm	<b>After school club at St Michael's starts again</b> <b>Youth Club starts again</b> Wedding interview (TBC)
<b>Deadline for submissions to the Parish Magazine, email <a href="mailto:jakhat77@hotmail.com">jakhat77@hotmail.com</a> or send to Jacquie Waterfield, 269 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK41 9PH</b>			
14 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	09.30-10.30am 11.30am	<b>Wilstead Children's Centre singing group starts again for under 5s and their carers – in the Abbey</b> Coffee and Soup in the Vestry
15 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	09.30am 11.00am 6.15-7.15pm 7-8.30pm 7.30pm-9.30pm 8pm	Morning Prayers at St Michael's (JRC + SS) Holy Communion (JRC) <b>NO Yoga</b> London Road Youth Club. Bedford Bagpipes rehearsing in the church Deanery Synod meeting at St Mark's, Bedford
16 <sup>th</sup>	Friday	7pm 8pm	Choir Practice for junior members only Bell Ringing
17 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	12.30pm 1.45pm 4pm	Wedding of Victoria Ebsworth and Andrew Clark (JRC) Wedding interview at the Vicarage (JRC) John Hinson's licensing at Sawbridgeworth
18 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday	10.00am 10.15am 11.20am 2.30pm 6.30pm	Holy Communion (JRC + preacher JH) <i>Holy Communion at St Michael's (RC)</i> Mattins (JRC) Baptism of Frankie DeAngelis (JRC) Evensong with Holy Communion and laying on of hands(JRC)
19 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	10.00am 2.00pm	Mums and Toddlers in the Vestry Prayer Group in the Vestry
20 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	1.45-2.30pm 3.45-5.15pm 6.30-8pm 7.30pm	<b>First Sing and Sign of the new school year</b> After school club at St Michael's Youth Club JRC to Alms meeting at St Mary's, Cardington
21 <sup>st</sup>	Wednesday	09.30-10.30am 11.30am	Wilstead Children's Centre singing group for under 5s and their carers – in the Abbey Coffee and Soup in the Vestry



**SIDESMENS ROTA****SEPTEMBER 2011**

<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	10am	Mrs G Freeman	Mr A Freeman
	11.15am	Mrs D Fordham	
	6.30pm	Mrs G Annan	
<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	10am	Mrs S Batiuk	Mr P Batiuk
	11.15am	F. W. Crossen	
	6.30pm	P. Moss	
<b>18<sup>th</sup></b>	10am	Mrs A Barfoot	Mrs S Brown
	11.15am	Mrs A Knight	
	6.30pm	Miss M Eastwell	
<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	10am	Mrs A Morris	Mrs B Routledge
	11.15am	Mrs M Crossen	
	6.30pm	Mrs C Parrish	

**OCTOBER 2011**

<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	10am	Mrs A Morris	Mrs A Barfoot
	11.15am	F.W. Crossen	
	6.30pm	Mrs G Annan	

## READERS' LIST FOR SEPTEMBER 2011

<u>DATE</u>	<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>1ST LESSON</u>	<u>2ND LESSON</u>	<u>READER</u>
4th Sept	10.00 am	Exodus 12: v.1-14	Matthew 18: v.15-20	Lynne Faulkner
	11.20 am	Jonah 3: v.10 --4: v.11	Revelation 8: v.1-5	Delphine Fordham
	6.30 pm	Ezekiel 12: v.21--13: v.16	Acts 19: v.1-20	Glynnis Annan
11th Sept	10.00 am	Exodus 14: v.19-end	Matthew 18: v.21-35	Peter Batiuk
	11.20 am	Isaiah 44: v.24--45: v.8	Revelation 12: v.1-12	Ann Knight
	6.30 pm	Ezekiel 20:v.1-8, 33-44	Acts 20: v.17-end	Peter Moss
18th Sept	10.00 am	Exodus 16: v.2-15	Matthew 20: v.1-16	Joanna Jameson
	11.20 am	Isaiah 45: v.9-22	Revelation 14: v.1-5	Eric Crossen
<b>H.C.</b>	6.30 pm	Ezekiel 33:v.23,30--34:v.10	Mark 9:v.30-37	Barbara Routledge
25th Sept	10.00 am	Exodus 17: v.1-7	Matthew 21: v.23-32	Michelle Tuck
	<b>H.C.</b>	11.20 am	Isaiah 48: v.12-21	Luke 11: v.37-54
	6.30 pm	Ezekiel 37: v.15-end	1 John 2: v.22-end	Catherine Parish
2nd Oct	10.00 am	Exodus 20: v.1-4, 7-9, 12-20	Matthew 21: v.33-end	Lynn Harris
	11.20 am	Isaiah 49: v.13-23	Luke 12: v.1-12	Tim Elliott
	6.30 pm	Proverbs 2: v.1-11	1 John 2: v.1-17	Dorothy Steele

**If any of the above dates are inconvenient, please arrange a swap and let Ann Knight know that you have done so. Thank you. Telephone: (01234) 854036**

**Harvest Supper 2011**

**Abbey Middle school**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October, 7pm**

**Music, auction of promises, raffle, food and  
fundraising**

**All proceeds to the Church Hall building fund**

## SUNDAY SCHOOL HELPERS ROTA

DATE	NAME OF HELPER
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Sara Canavan
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Michelle Flemmons
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Rebecca Taylor
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> Sept (Back to Church Sunday)	Sarah Duffy
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct	Susie Masih
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct (Harvest Festival)	Liz Russell
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Joanna Jameson
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> Oct	Sara Canavan
Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Fifth Sunday – Benefice service at St Michael's
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Michelle Flemmons
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Rebecca Taylor
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Sarah Duffy
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Susie Masih
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Liz Russell
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Joanna Jameson
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Sara Canavan

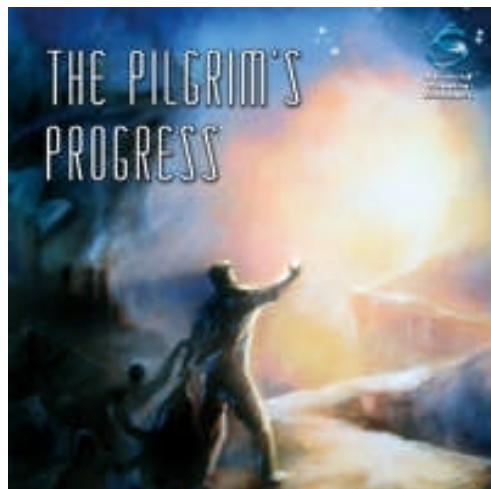
If you are unavailable for the date(s) above, please swap with someone else on the list. Thank you.

**7.00pm A short service of celebration at Elstow Abbey to mark the restoration of the walls of Hillersden Mansion, followed by reception.**

***All are welcome at the service. To help with catering, please let Sarah know if you are staying for refreshments (261477)***

## Saltmine Theatre Company The Pilgrim's Progress

Adapted for the stage by David Robinson and Richard Hasnip



**Set in the Industrial Revolution, this new play is a modern adaptation of John Bunyan's classic novel. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been heralded as a literary masterpiece around the world and having never gone out of print, it is the world's second most read book.**

Follow Christian and his companions as they set out on a dangerous adventure, a journey that will see him meet both friends and enemies along the way. With challenges great and small on his path, will he ever reach the Heavenly City? This remarkable retelling brings this timeless story to life for a whole new generation of people.

Suitable for everyone aged 12+.

Ticket Prices: £10, Concessions and Groups (10+) £9

This production will be performed at **the Civic Theatre, Bedford** on **Wednesday 28th September at 7.30pm.**

**For tickets, visit the Central Box Office or call 01234 269519.**

## A New Christian Bookshop in Bedford



As you will know, the loss of the *Living Oasis Bookshop* earlier this year has left Bedford without a Christian bookshop for the first time in over 20 years.

In early September, though, we shall be opening a new shop at 167 Castle Road, Bedford MK40 3RT. Joy, who ran the *Pilgrim Bookshop* in St Loyes Street for eight years, will be the owner manager and Martin, who is an accountant, will provide the business support.

We look forward to seeing you at the shop, which will be called *The Word*. It is near our church, Russell Park Baptist, on the corner of Castle Road and Denmark Street. Parking is free and we are only two roads up from the *Jaffa Orchard*.

Once we have a definite opening date, we shall be in touch again. Meanwhile, feel free to contact Joy at [joydenny316@gmail.com](mailto:joydenny316@gmail.com). We are keen to meet churches' requirements for Bibles, books, reading notes and children's materials, as well as supplying church bookstalls and events. We shall also be selling cards and Christmas cards.

Martin and Joy Denny

# Transforming Communities in the Big Society

**Wednesday, 12 October 2011**

**Civic Responsibility in the Big Society**

**Michael Campbell, Luton Town Centre Chaplaincy**

**Wednesday, 19 October 2011**

**Poverty and Wealth in the Big Society**

**Money Advice at St Andrew’s Team: Fiona McLeod (Administrator) and Suzanne Clackson (Chair)**

**Wednesday, 2 November 2011**

**Young and Old in the Big Society**

**Circles of Support: Ron Overton, Director of Reach Out Plus; Friends for Life: John Bassill, Co-ordinator of Friends for Life**

**Wednesday, 9 November 2011**

**War and Peace in the Big Society**

**A Services Chaplain with experience of tours in war zones will lead this session**

**Wednesday, 16 November 2011**

**Crime and Punishment in the Big Society**

**Rev Sharon Grenham-Toze, Co-ordinating Chaplain, HM Prison, Bedford**

Venue: The Holt Room, St Andrews Church, Kimbolton Road, Bedford, MK40 2PF, beginning at 7.45 pm and ending at 9.30 pm.

Cost: This course will be free of charge. Donations welcome towards the costs and refreshments.

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Yes, please, I would like to come on the following evenings (please circle dates):

12 October 2011      19 October 2011      2 November 2011      9 November 2011      16 November 2011

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Please return this slip to BELIEF, c/o St Andrew’s Church Centre, Kimbolton Road, Bedford MK40 2PF.

**CHRISTIAN SUPPORT FOR  
OLDER PEOPLE  
CONFERENCE**

**SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup> 2011**

**9AM-12.45PM**

**ST MARY'S CHURCH HALL**

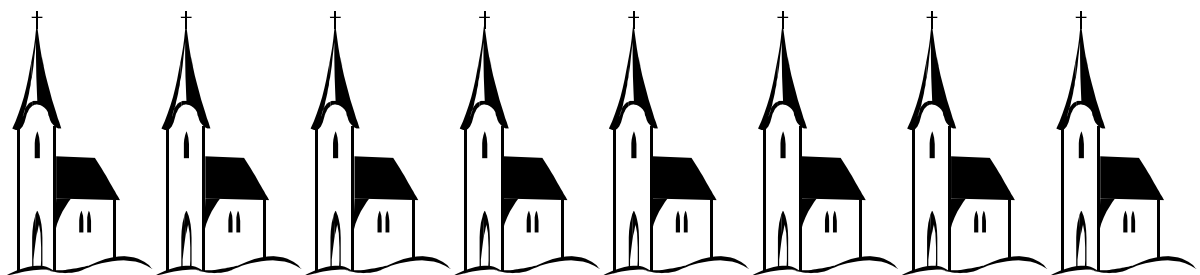
**CHURCH LANE**

**GOLDINGTON**

**MK41 0AP**

**Speakers to include representatives from Age  
UK, Friends for Life and local GPs**

- ✚ Raising awareness of physical, spiritual and mental needs**
- ✚ Looking at ways the church can reach out to those who are housebound and those in Nursing and Residential Homes**



## **YMCA BEDFORDSHIRE SUPPORTED LODGING SCHEME**

**DO YOU HAVE A SPARE BEDROOM?**

**COULD YOU OFFER SUPPORT TO A YOUNG PERSON AGED 16-20?**

**THEN YMCA BEDFORDSHIRE NEEDS YOU!**

A new Supported Lodging Scheme is being implemented across Bedford Borough. We need individuals, couples and families who have a spare bedroom and would like to help a young person to learn independent living skills so they can move on to live successful adult lives.

**Anyone can be a Host - we need a diverse range of people:**

### **You can:**

Work full or part time or be at home

With or without children

Be any age (just 21+)

Couples of same or different sex

Have a disability

### **As a Host you will receive:**

Training and on-going support

A financial payment whilst a young person lives with you

Sense of well being that you are preventing a young person from becoming homeless

**For an information pack or informal discussion please contact me on 01234 307040 or 07508807441 or on my email: [amy@ymcabedfordshire.org.uk](mailto:amy@ymcabedfordshire.org.uk)**

**BACK to CHURCH SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup> September**

**We would like to invite back to the 10am Holy Communion or the 11.20am BCP Holy Communion all baptism and wedding families.**

**DETAILS FROM THE REGISTERS****MAY 2011**

Date	Communicants	Attendance	Collections
1st	40	102	316.68
5 <sup>th</sup>	9	9	4.00
8th	60	96	213.02
12 <sup>th</sup>	9	9	6.00
15 <sup>th</sup>	44	70	204.79
19th	7	7	3.00
22nd	14	86	294.95
29th	105	121	272.25
	<b><u>278</u></b>	<b><u>500</u></b>	<b><u>1314.69</u></b>

**JUNE 2011**

Date	Communicants	Attendance	Collections
2nd	20	20	7.00
5 <sup>th</sup>	47	87	232.65
9th	8	8	4.00
12 <sup>th</sup>	31	39	100.15
16 <sup>th</sup>	7	7	6.50
19th	42	79	264.55
23rd	4	6	2.00
26th	35	67	333.80
30 <sup>th</sup>	7	7	2.70
	<b><u>201</u></b>	<b><u>320</u></b>	<b><u>953.35</u></b>

**JULY 2011**

Date	Communicants	Attendance	Collections
3 <sup>rd</sup>	50	79	330.58
7 <sup>th</sup>	9	9	5.50
10 <sup>th</sup>	42	89	242.39
14 <sup>th</sup>	5	5	3.00
17 <sup>th</sup>	44	111	261.90
21 <sup>st</sup>	8	8	4.00
24 <sup>th</sup>	19	86	250.98
31 <sup>st</sup>	---	122	122.59
	<b><u>177</u></b>	<b><u>509</u></b>	<b><u>1220.95</u></b>

**BAPTISMS**

June 19 <sup>th</sup>	Madison Paige Foster	
	Belinda Watts	
	Richard Burraway	
	Paige Jones	
	Jake Ridge	
June 26 <sup>th</sup>	Chardonnae Brana Shaw	
	Lianah Renae Shaw	
	Melissa Rossi	
	Sienna Rosetta Sells	
	Daniel Wayne Richards	
July 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sienna Grace Thomson	
July 19 <sup>th</sup>	Alannah Louise Brown	
August 7 <sup>th</sup>	Lee Gilbert	
	Lee Christopher Hammer	
	Lauren Haddy	
	Lily Grace Haddy	
	Jasmine Ferguson	August 14 <sup>th</sup> Ashley Honeybourne

**MARRIAGES**

June 25 <sup>th</sup>	Michelle Ann Baker and Daryl Endersby Clare Kelly and Andrew Paul Harris
July 16 <sup>th</sup>	Katrina Nicola Eaton and James Daniel Carroll (Blessing) Katy-Ann Christina Plumb and Kevin Richard Nash
August 13 <sup>th</sup>	Tarnya Ann Billington and Christopher Henry Neal

**BURIALS**

June 7 <sup>th</sup>	Robert Charles George (Ashes)
June 28 <sup>th</sup>	Anthony Patrick Ledwith (Ashes)
July 18 <sup>th</sup>	Graham Wildman (Ashes)
July 24 <sup>th</sup>	Alan Chapman (Ashes) Elsie Chapman (Ashes)
August 10 <sup>th</sup>	George Nolan (Ashes) Faith Christine Merrill (Ashes)

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Remember Jeremy's quick quiz from the last edition of the parish magazine? Hope you all had fun trying to find all of the answers – here's where you can check how many you got right!

**Quick Quiz by Jeremy Crocker – Answers****EXAMPLE 7 = D in a W****7 = Days in a Week**

26 = L of the A	Letters of the Alphabet
7 = W of the W	Wonders of the World
1001 = A.N.	Arabian Nights
12 = S of the Z	Signs of the Zodiac
54 = C in a P (with Js)	Cards in a Pack (with Jokers)
13 = S on the A.F.	Stripes on the American Flag
32 = D.F. at which W.F.	Degrees Fahrenheit at which Water Freezes
18 = H on a G.C.	Holes on a Golf Course
90 = D in a R.A.	Degrees in a Right Angle
4 = Q in a G	Quarts in a Gallon
3 = B.M. (S.H.T.R.)	Blind Mice (See How They Run)
24 = H in a D	Hours in a Day
1 = W on a U	Wheel on a Unicycle
57 = H.V.	Heinz Varieties
29 = D. in F in a L.Y.	Days in February in a Leap Year
40 = D and N in the G.F.	Days and Nights in the Great Flood
76 = T in the B.P.	Trombones in the Big Parade
5 = G.R.	Gold Rings
16 = O in a P	Ounces in a Pound
9 = P in the S.S.	Planets in the Solar System
88 = P.K.	Piano Keys
200 = P for P G in M	Pounds for Passing Go in Monopoly
64 = S on a C.B.	Squares on a Chess Board

## Presidential Address - 25th June 2011

### The Bishop of St Alban's Presidential Address

#### Diocesan Synod

#### June 2011

One of the subjects that politicians have been very concerned about in recent years is the decline in a sense of community in our country. The jargon they use for it is social capital. What is social capital? It is the glue that holds communities together. For example, the way that people take responsibility for each other by caring for their neighbours; by helping children to read at the local Primary School, by being part of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme; by getting involved in voluntary work and charitable giving; by voting in local and general elections. It is also (and perhaps crucially) about the level of trust between neighbours and strangers in a community. All these things contribute to the bank of social capital in society.

One of the profound worries of the Government is that research shows that for some years social capital has been declining in Western Europe and in the USA. For example, it is becoming harder to persuade people to serve as school governors or as local councillors. The proportion of our income that we give away to charity has been declining year on year. And worst of all, we hear horror stories in the papers of someone dying alone in their flat and not being found for months, simply because no-one missed them.

The person who has written most compellingly about social capital is an American scholar called Robert Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone*<sup>1</sup>. He identifies two sorts of social capital: bonding social capital and bridging social capital.

*Bonding social capital* is where a group of people have such a strong sense of identity that they look after one another. So, for example, in clubs, associations or churches members may lend each other their lawn mowers, do one-another's shopping, or baby-sit for each other. This is all good, but bonding social capital can be exclusive and does not necessarily look out for people who are new to the area or to strangers. When the life of our churches is based simply on bonding social capital they quickly become cliques of like-minded people who may be extremely friendly (do you know any parishes which advertise that they are not friendly?) - but (and this is the important point) they are only friendly with each other.

Putnam goes on to contrast this bonding social capital with what he calls *bridging social capital*. This is where a club or group, or indeed a church, is so confident in itself that it reaches out to people who do not belong to it. Let me illustrate the difference between the two sorts of social capital.

Typically, churches based on bonding social capital collect money from the community to repair the church roof, whilst churches based on bridging social capital will also raise money to help other good causes in the community.

Churches based on bonding social capital want people to come to them. Whereas congregations based on bridging social capital want to reach out to people in their locality.

Churches based on bonding social capital want to attract like minded people who will fit in with church life. A church governed by bridging social capital delights in welcoming people who are different and who will enrich their life even if they challenge it.

Churches based on bonding social capital are quite happy that the church building is locked all week; after all it is their 'clubhouse'. Congregations built on bridging social capital are always trying to work out how to keep the church open and accessible and at the heart of the local community.

Churches based on bonding social capital want the clergy to be their personal chaplain. Bridging social capital enables the church to set the clergy free to be leaders in the community, working for the common good.

Churches based on bonding social capital want children and youth to keep quiet since they are tomorrow's church. In contrast, congregations motivated by bridging social capital welcome children and young people to participate, recognising that they are not tomorrow's church, but today's church.

Now, let me return to politics - always a tricky subject for a bishop. A common phenomenon in modern Western democratic societies continues to be the seemingly inexorable decline in the number of people who vote in elections, whether local or national. This is just one symptom sociologists point to as evidence of the decline in social capital and they relate it to the increasing emphasis we place on the importance of individuality. So right across Europe traditional political parties are finding it harder to attract members and to get votes. Meanwhile many smaller political parties are emerging<sup>2</sup> with the result that some commentators predict that in the future we are going to see more coalition governments, some of which may not be able to last the whole term.

Governments are realising that there are many problems in society that they simply cannot solve by themselves. This is behind David Cameron's call for the Big Society. He has prompted much thought about what it means to be a citizen today. Luke Bretherton, who is a Senior lecturer in theology and politics at King's College London, has identified three models of citizenship<sup>3</sup>:

1. First, the citizen as voter. An individual listens carefully to what is in each of the manifestos of the candidates. The citizen expresses their preference for a candidate and then lets the politicians get on with their job. In this understanding there is no sense in which each of us has any real responsibility to contribute towards the good of the whole community. This is, perhaps, how many people in Britain think today - it is primarily the responsibility of someone else. One of the difficulties is that fewer and fewer people can be bothered even to exercise their democratic duty to cast a vote.

Following the debates about the Alternative Vote and the recent referendum we have become more aware how in many parts of the country, one's vote can never make any difference because the constituency in which you live is one of those that always returns a MP of the same party. So why bother?

1. Secondly, Bretherton talks about the citizen as volunteer. This is one of the predominant ideas that has been explored in discussions about the Big Society. Can

we ask individuals voluntarily to take on responsibility for maintaining our common life, so that the state does not have to do it? The problem is that this goes against several decades of political dogma that proclaims the sovereignty of the free market. We have been told by our leaders that human beings are ultimately motivated by money and material gain. There has been, for example, an extraordinary change (and some would argue catastrophic change) resulting from the introduction of the National Lottery. Unintentionally, it succeeded in undermining centuries of charitable giving because it changed the underlying reasons why we should give to charity in the first place. In the past we gave because it was the right, moral and responsible thing to do. Now we are told we should give via the Lottery as a bi-product of gambling on becoming very rich. This has complicated the problem for successive governments in their struggle to persuade people that it is a good thing simply to volunteer.

2. Thirdly, Bretherton talks of the citizen as vow-keeper. This is based on the idea that 'no man is an island' and that we are social creatures. To be human is to live in relationship, in community, with its pattern of obligations as well as its rights. This is a deeply Christian view of humanity. As Christians we believe that we are made in the image of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is in himself a community of love and our life should and can reflect this divine reality.

Bretherton argues that "people of faith need to avoid co-option into being either voting blocks or service providers, and be true to their own best insights by upholding a vision of the citizen as vow-keeper." I respond to his plea because it is based on the fundamental Christian conviction that I have a commitment and an obligation to my neighbour. This is surely what Jesus was affirming in his summary of the law, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. He told the parable of the Good Samaritan and spoke of the repentance of Zaccheus who gave away half of his possessions to charity. It is this sort of conviction that shapes our motivation as men and women, and which has the potential to inspire people to work for the common good.

A comment of Simon Jenkins - who is as far as I know not a practicing Christian - writing in The Guardian in April (The Guardian, 21.4.2011) struck me very forcefully. He said: "There is no such thing as a big society, just thousands of small ones" and he pointed out that many of these small societies were, as the headline put it, 'under steeples'.

I too confess that I cannot always get my mind round David Cameron's idea of the 'Big Society', but like Simon Jenkins I want to affirm and celebrate the hundreds of 'little societies' I meet Sunday by Sunday in our Diocese. And with you I pray for God's grace to renew them. Research shows that church going is profoundly transformative<sup>4</sup> and we need to hear that and stop being apologetic about it. The Christian faith is one of the powerful tools by which people are turned outwards from their own agendas to becoming more concerned for others. This is all about 'transforming communities'.

What our churches are doing week by week in virtually every community in the diocese is nurturing small societies, 'vow-keepers', communities of people who do not go along with the mantra of 'self first' but rather understand themselves as being bound to others. What we are involved in is not some nice but quaint activity that has little to do with real life. What we are doing is contributing to the very fabric of our common life as we pray for the

coming of God's kingdom. We need to find ways to celebrate the amazing contribution that the individuals and churches are making to their local communities.

That takes me to this year's Diocese of St Albans Annual Report. In the past we have had worthy but rather dry reports. This year, thanks to Susan Pope, Arun Kataria, Claudia Brown and others at Holywell Lodge, we have a colourful, readable report which spells out some of the differences that we as the Diocese of St Albans are making. Among other things you can read about the Fairtrade Network; the Community Care Group planning a conference on Christian ministry in residential homes; the Penal Affairs Group working to help rehabilitate offenders; the environmental group. Turn to page 15 and you will see that in the Diocese of St Albans last year 4130 people were baptised, 870 were confirmed, 1640 marriages or blessings were conducted, 5370 funerals were taken; 43600 came to church over Easter, 93100 came at Christmas and about 25,000 people are in church each Sunday.

Each parish, church school and chaplaincy also has stories to tell. As elected leaders in this diocese, please take this report; read it and pass it onto someone else to read. Have confidence in the story of your own church. Share it and celebrate it. We need to raise our sights, give thanks to God for the contribution that we are able to make to maintain social capital and to work for the flourishing and thriving of our communities and the coming of God's Kingdom in the future.

+Alan St Albans

21 June 2011

<sup>1</sup>Putnam, R. D. (2000), *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American Community*, New York, Simon and Schuster.

<sup>2</sup>See *The Shrinking Big Tents* in *The Economist*, April 30<sup>th</sup> 2011, page 38: 'A new politics has emerged in which old allegiances have frayed, political identities have blurred and voters' trust in familiar parties has crumbled. One result is that voter turnout has fallen almost everywhere'.

<sup>3</sup>Luke Bretherton, "Votes, vows and volunteers" in *The Tablet*, 10 July 2010.

<sup>4</sup>Gill, R. (1999), *Churchgoing and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

## **Harvest Supper 2011**

**Abbey Middle school**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October, 7pm**

**Music, auction of promises, raffle, food and  
fundraising**

**All proceeds to the Church Hall building fund**