

Letter from the Vicar

Friday 30 October

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This past week it has been half-term – a welcome break for all of us in the Macey household as we were all beginning to flag a little and were in need of sleep and a break. Families and teachers across the parish have felt the same. We were fortunate to be able to visit family in Poole for a substantial part of the week and, despite the inclement weather, were able to get to the beach a few times for walks and fun on the sand. Once did we all come back completely sodden – both from the rain and waves going over the top of wellies! Whilst we were away, Abbie turned 4 – it was lovely to be able to share her birthday with some of her extended family well aware that for many this has not been possible this year.

Earlier today I performed the now customary task of carving pumpkins with Sophie and Abbie. This was never something I did as a child but they seem to enjoy it, designing what is to be carved and helping to scrape out the insides. This year there will be no *trick or treating* for us but their lit pumpkins should go a little way to cheering passers-by since their designs are quite friendly.

Halloween is of course the eve of All Hallows' Day or in our modern vernacular All Saints' Day. On Sunday we will be giving thanks to God for all his saints – both living and departed – who have tried to live a disciples of Christ and make known the glory of God's Kingdom in what they have said, done, or shared. Although the universal Church has officially recognised a whole host of people as saints due to miracles or specific things that have been attributed to them, there are millions of other, faithful people, who could be classified as saints due to their witness among us.

On Sunday morning we will say farewell to Ruth, our Associate Minister for the past 2 years. Although not officially recognised as a saint her actions have been saintly (although I suspect she will hate me for saying this!). She has faithfully taught and proclaimed the faith among us; cared for the sick and dying, and comforted grieving families; she has become a friend or strengthened a bond with us by sharing, listening, loving us; and most importantly she has faithfully prayed for us - in our joys and in our sorrows. The life of our Parish has been richly blessed by the ministry Ruth has exercised among us. It will be bitter-sweet during the Parish Eucharist as we give thanks both to God and Ruth for her time with us and bid her *au revoir* with our blessing into retirement from licenced parochial ministry. Ruth will still hold the Bishop's permission to minister so we will see Ruth here again from time to time but alas not be the beneficiaries of her undivided attention and wisdom.

Later on Sunday we will remember family and friends who have died during the past year. For many of these families Covid-19 has robbed them of our usual ways to mourn, to offer comfort, and to celebrate a life. We hope our service will enable the space and opportunity for them to be able to do these things, although even then we will be conducting the service in a socially distanced manner. On Monday and Wednesday we will continue to remember loved ones who have died over the years at our All Souls' services (details in the Newsletter). Here the names of family and friends who have died will be read out, prayed for, and remembered. You are all welcome to these services.

Next Sunday is Remembrance Sunday. You may well have read in previous letters or in the magazine that Covid restrictions mean our main Act of Remembrance will be conducted slightly differently. Instead of gathering at the Town War Memorial we will have our Act of Remembrance inside church, at the end of the Parish Eucharist. Wreaths will be laid and we will observe silence for the fallen. If it is usually your custom to gather at the War Memorial please can I urge you not to, as requested by

the Council, and invite you to either join us in church or to stand on your doorstep to mark the silence, as suggested by the Royal British Legion.

I trust you are all well and keeping safe. As the infections rate rises nationally we are once again in worrying times. The potential for another lockdown looms large but with this comes uncertainty for the future. As ever I will keep you informed of any changes which may affect the way we worship together. Following the clock change and the darker evenings when it is possible to feel even more isolated and vulnerable, please remember to pray for each other and to keep in touch with each other. As always, I leave you with my prayers for each of you; keep safe; and remain secure in the knowledge of our God who loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

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