



St Mark's Church, Reigate

October 2017

Letter from the Curate, Reverend Anna Moore

Dear Friends

As the Autumn takes hold after summer, I find the changing of the seasons rather comforting. Although I have enjoyed the light summer evenings, being able to walk the dog across Banstead heath at the end of the day, I also enjoy the dark nights too where a nice cup of tea and a blanket tucked up by the fire also brings its benefits and sense of cosiness!

The winter months however can also invoke a sense of anxiety and fear, especially for those living alone as the dark nights creep in earlier and earlier. As I write for this month's magazine, the month of October also brings with it the dreaded 'H' word... Halloween! In a previous parish, the incumbent was very strict in that there was to be no mention of the H word, which for a few members of the parish immediately initiated a sense of anxiety and fear.

So, with the permission of our Vicar, I am going to knock the taboo out of Halloween and bring the festival back to light where it belongs so that we may celebrate and not be scared!

As many of you will know, Halloween was shortened from All Hallows Eve, marking the first chapter of the story, which concludes with All Hallows (All Saints) day. On All Saints' Day, we know and celebrate that death is not the end, that when we die we spend eternity with Jesus, with new life stronger than death.

So, Halloween is a time where we can draw comfort from that, and confront all that scares us in life. Halloween is an opportunity for children to do what they always do when working out issues of life... play!! If approached with a sense of wonder rather than cynicism, it is a perfect opportunity to educate children from a Christian perspective. Halloween enables children to unpack all the usual 'baddies' in fairy tales – witches, ghosts, skeletons and vampires – and confront all that scares them, including death. Then, on All Saints' Day, we hear the second half of the story – that death is not the end, that we do not become eerie ghosts when we die, but we spend eternity with God and those we love but no longer see.

Children who dress-up as e.g. witch, doesn't mean that they are interested in the occult. They are simply working out, through play, good and evil. I do not know about you, but I cannot think of one story in my childhood where the hero/heroine loses! Whether it be a vampire, a witch, ghosts or goblins these playfully represent the DARKNESS and fear in the world around us. But as we hear from St John's Gospel 1:5, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it'. God is always with us in our times of fear, and when we can't see the road ahead, 'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path' Psalm 119:105.

It is an interesting fact that the playful act of Trick-or-Treating began in the British Isles with children going from door to door singing for 'soul cakes' to remember the dead. (Sting on YouTube does a beautiful rendition.)

Also, the tradition of carving a lantern also came from Christianity – this time in Ireland and was used to scare away the devil.

So, the origins of Halloween are steeped in Christianity, unfortunately, the commercialisation of Halloween has meant that the costumes have got rather sinister causing fear and trepidation. But like all things that we face in life that challenge us, it's worth pausing to try and look from a different perspective, and by doing so it allows us to question and consider where God is in all this!

Happy Halloween

Anna.