

A few words from the vicarage ...



Outside in our gardens we are seeing lots of new growth – which is all very exciting as we look forward to enjoying the fruits (quite literally) of our labours – or at least, of those who have worked hard preparing the ground, planting and nurturing – who, in my case, is Elizabeth.

Anyway, it is great to see at all happening before our eyes and we are able to wonder at God's creativity and mastery of this world which we tend to regard as ours.

This 'new growth' set me thinking about our parish, about our worshipping congregation and the unmistakable fact that, in recent times, we have seen changes in the make-up of our congregation (for one reason or another). It is, perhaps, time to think about introducing some 'new growth, into our church community and we need to look at ways in which we may achieve this.

On September 25th this year the church is planning yet another of its '*Back to Church Sunday*' initiatives – this presents us with an ideal opportunity for each of us to invite someone we know to 'come back to church'. I am sure many of you will know people who used to attend – either regularly or even from time to time. Why not take this very serious opportunity to ask them openly to come along with you to church on that day. Hopefully, such an invitation will be met positively and will rekindle a fire within those invited to return to church on a regular basis once more.

I plan to say more about this in the intervening period to help us all plan for that day but, in the meantime, why not give serious thought to whom you may issue your invitation. Please note that this challenge is not being given out or passed on to someone else – it is being given directly to YOU.

It is a serious challenge and it is one which we all must face – 'new growth' can only be achieved if we prepare the ground, plant and nurture. After all, it is we who are God's gardeners in this. By coincidence – or perhaps by divine providence – this is also the date selected for our Harvest Festival so we have a dual celebration before us which are, in many ways, interlinked. We have an opportunity to join together in celebration of God's harvest and 'new growth' in a truly meaningful way.

In the meantime, perhaps you too can be thinking about how we may present ourselves on this occasion – on '*Back to Church Sunday*' coupled with our Harvest Festival. Perhaps we could have a service of celebration in some way – a '*Songs of Praise*' with some of the favourite hymns which some of you have submitted along with favourite readings or poems. Whatever is decided upon, I look forward to hearing from you with your ideas and suggestions.

On the subject of your favourite hymns, a few people have submitted theirs and, so far, at the top of the list we have '*How great thou art*' followed by '*Here I am, Lord*' and '*The day thou gavest*'.

Next month I propose to publish the 'Top Ten' so, if you want to make sure that your favourite is featured then now is the time to let Linda or me know – we will accept a 'short list' if you are finding it difficult to pick only one.

There is a serious side to this, though it is still a bit of fun, and that is that we plan to include the favourites within the 'play list' for our services. It is appreciated that hymn selection is a serious matter and they are chosen to fit in with the Lectionary readings – a task which is taken most proficiently by Linda. Hopefully this will help us all to experience the width and breadth of everyone's tastes and preferences even more.

Fr D.