

Letter From Revd Sandy Cavalier

Dear friends,

As I write this it's that lovely time of the year when we enter the season of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness'.

We have just enjoyed a visit from Bishop Jo Bailey Wells (the Bishop of Dorking), who remarked upon the beautiful atmosphere in the church, and how inspired the church reordering was.

It was that 'beautiful atmosphere' in our church which inspired me to come here ten years ago. It felt a very special place to me, and over the years I have seen that it is a special place to many others too.

The church is described in the Bible in a number of pictures - such as 'the Bride of Christ', 'the Body of Christ', and 'the Army of God'. My favourite picture is that of the family. Now you won't find that phrase the 'Family of God' in a concordance. But the idea of the people of God as family runs right through the New Testament. God is our Father and we are adopted into his family as his children. So we are no longer strangers to God but 'fellow citizens' with God's people and 'members of God's household'.

We have also just enjoyed a service celebrating with those who have been baptised here in the last year. It was a lively service full of joy and cake and balloons, which emphasised the vital part that children play in the life of our church. They are not just the church of the future, they are today's church. It always gladdens my heart when I hear the children from St. Peter's school calling the church "my church" when they come for their end of term services.

In the same way it is equally important to stress that the older generation is not yesterday's church. In a world which increasingly sidelines the elderly, we need to affirm and celebrate their centrality to the work and witness of the church. As people live longer we need to learn how to harness their wisdom and spiritual potential.

In Psalm 68 the psalmist says that 'God sets the lonely in families'. However, many today are lonely because of family break-ups, redundancy, bereavement and old age. My vision for the church is that it should be one large extended family where young and old, and everyone in between, all

belong and worship and share together. A place where all find a welcome and none feel lonely or excluded.

In these times it is sometimes difficult to be optimistic, in human terms, about the future of our planet. The challenge for the Church is to demonstrate to the world what family and community life is meant to be. To aspire to be 'communities of Light' in times of joy and in times of darkness and despair.

My hope is that many will encounter in St Peter's church that 'beautiful atmosphere' which Bishop Jo found when she visited us.

Blessings, Love and Joy

Revd. Sandy.