

A Warm Welcome from your New Editor



This is my first 'attempt' as editor of the parish magazine so please bear with me...

I wanted to share with you how I came to be involved with the magazine and my experiences of being welcomed at St Mary's as a new member of the church.

I attended a church school in Hendon in the 1970's and regularly went to Sunday School. We moved to Potters Bar in 1980 and I attended church parade once a month, first as a Brownie, then Girl Guide, then as a young leader. As a teenager my interest had waned and I found this to be a necessary chore and, if honest, a bore.

By 1989 I had a place at University and thought I had my life mapped out, but at 20 years old I had to grow up very quickly with an unplanned pregnancy and a hasty marriage to deal with. Consequently, as a young mother I had neither the time nor inclination to attend church. Whilst I did not look to God for guidance at this time my decisions to get married and raise my child seemed a no-brainer despite parental advice to the contrary. A loveless marriage and the additional strain of my son being diagnosed disabled resulted in my returning 'home' to Mum only eighteen months later. Despite having tried to make the marriage work I still felt a failure having broken my vows. At this time if you had asked for my views about God I would likely have dismissed Him or cursed Him for my lot in life. I did not see any evidence of His existence around me; a single mum with a disabled child did not figure on my life map anywhere and I needed to apportion blame.

However, life goes on and I met John in 1995, we supported each other through University and he took on the responsibility of raising my son as his own. We lived happily together for twelve years with no intention of either of us marrying again. During this time I did not consider myself a religious person, more a spiritual person, who tried to live in harmony with her fellow human beings and treat people as I wanted to be treated. I was not consciously aware that I was following the moral lessons I had learnt in my childhood; only that I lived respectfully of others and always tried to forgive rather than judge. I did not always succeed and I was no saint!

In 2006 John's father Fred died. I was the organiser in our relationship and took on the role of arranging the funeral. Fred was not a religious man and there was a suggestion that there should not be a Christian ceremony. I could not imagine

a funeral any other way and pushed for a Christian ceremony even though I was unable to justify why I felt so strongly about it.

I suppose my advocacy skills won the day and as a result I met Reverend Sally for the first time. I know that all the family felt a feel sense of peace following the service and were able to take comfort from her words.

John and I decided to marry. It was a joyous time and after twelve years together I wanted it to be a real celebration and was determined to have a Church service. I knew a lot of churches did not conduct marriages for divorcees however it had become very important to me to take my vows in a church. Also I knew I wanted Rev'd Sally to conduct the service, and she agreed to, following a series of meetings in which we spent time exploring our pasts and the importance of our forthcoming marriage. Our wedding will undoubtedly be the second greatest day of my life, next to the birth of my son, and the church was full of over 150 friends and family who all commented on what a special service it had been.

During the twelve months leading up to the wedding we had both been welcomed at the church by many of the parishioners and I had come to know a few of the regulars well. It felt a natural progression to continue attending and whilst I still have unanswered questions over the relevance of the Bible to the 21st Century I cannot find any defect in the moral obligations He asks us to follow. In fact I have found a sense of inner peace and I look forward to the opportunity to quietly contemplate my week during the calm of Sunday service. It is the closest I get to meditation in what is otherwise a stressful and busy week and gives me the opportunity to take time out to think of others and also how I am impacting on those around me, hopefully ensuring this is as positive as possible. The only sadness is that there are only a few of us 'thirty-somethings' at Church and I would like to see more people my age with similar interests.

I am not sure this explains how I came to volunteer to be the magazine editor. I do know that Rev. Sally had made many pleas seeking help! Most likely I felt a sense of obligation; my gratitude for her willingness to marry us and conducting such a beautiful ceremony. Let me say that this is not an obligation I have been made to feel, far from it, which is probably why I volunteered so freely!

What I hope it shows is how pleasant and welcoming the Church has been and I have not felt pressured to come every week, or be a part of everything. The Church has something to offer everyone and taking some time out to discover some of these benefits for myself has not only been worthwhile but enjoyable.

I would encourage those who have not been to Church for a long time, even not at all, to come one Sunday and give it a try, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Please email me at tracydavies@davidbarney.co.uk