

## August - September 2016

*The Rector writes:*

### **Q: What is church for? A: Spirituality**



In posing the question 'What is the Church for?' we have so far considered three answers – Worship, Mission and Community. This month we consider a fourth answer, which in a way overlaps all of the others and provides the glue that holds all the rest together.

We live in a supermarket society, and many people look for spiritual well being in much the same way that they shop for food, clothes and household goods. People today are really into 'spirituality' and there are a whole range of products out there on the shelf that they can try. An awareness that there is '*something*' missing in life leads to an exploration to find '*it*'. Self-help and group therapies abound in the 'spiritual supermarket' – feng shui, shiatsu, crystals, pyramids, t'ai chi, yoga, aromatherapy, horoscopes, tarot, and many others. One high profile businesswoman in the City of London who won an award for her work – paid tribute to the support of Ingrid, Pauline and Bridget – who it transpired were here 'therapeutic healer, psychic counsellor and tarot reader – for inspiring her success.

A 2003 report on 'Wellbeing', by Professor Richard Layard of the London School of Economics, suggested that though we have better health, income, home, cars, food, holidays and leisure facilities than we did 50 years ago – we are actually less happy! Our world of limitless technology and endless consumption has not provided us with the paradise we expected – there is still something missing! 'The attempt to create a secular morality has catastrophically failed', says Prof. Layard who then adds, 'but people with religious beliefs tend to be happier'.

So, people seem to know that that they need something more in life - there is a genuine desire and often a deep yearning for 'something spiritual' to bring richness and fulfilment to our lives. Here is a

challenge for the church – to help restore the sacred centre at the heart of individuals, in community and in society at large.

Yet sadly, people do not look to the church for the answer to their 'spiritual' needs – all too often they see the church as a religious institution and label it as negative, restrictive, old-hat, rule-bound and definitely not for me!

In, 'Going to Church' Bishop John Pritchard reminds us that, 'the Christian faith is an Aladdin's cave for those who want to feed and restore the sacred centre of their lives.' Through the Bible story, worship, sacraments, teachings and traditions the church has all the tools it needs to meet the needs. The church may be a far cry from the self-help supermarket – but it nevertheless offers a real spirituality. As Bishop Pritchard reminds us, 'We are living in a world where there are hard issues to face and tough decisions to make, where summer can soon turn to winter, when all you can do is bump along on the bottom. The beauty of Christian spirituality is that it has at its heart The Lord Jesus, 'a Man for all seasons', who can meet us at every point and mediate the love of God'. Our task as a church is to encourage people to make the exploration.

At St Martin's we are blessed with a building which has been steeped in prayer for over 900 years, surrounded by a churchyard which is a place of rest, beauty and calm, for the living as well as our loved ones departed. What can be done to use these blessings in ways old and new that will help longing hearts to find the heart of God? Many people pass by and visit our church who don't worship here. What might we, as a church, do to enable people to discover, nurture and grow their spiritual life and discover something of God's love for them?

As we welcome the holiday season, I hope you will enjoy a happy holiday and find real refreshment of body, mind and spirit if you are going away.

Yours in Christ,

*Reverend John,*  
Your Rector