

A few words from the Vicar

*"The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."
(James 5:16)*

I've said before that Polly tends to take charge of the remote control in the vicarage, so it's a good job we have similar viewing tastes.

Polly likes watching murder mysteries and I must admit I quite like watching them too.

As far as I'm concerned, murder mysteries that are based in the past, like *Miss Marple* (particularly the 1980s version) have the edge over series that take place in a contemporary setting, like *Midsomer Murders*.

Why? Well for starters *Miss Marple* is based in a world that seems so different and distant from our own. It's still England but the England of long ago when everyone was ever so terribly polite, even when they were trying to bump each other off!

What's more, I'd much rather be the vicar in St Mary Mead, the village where Miss Marple lived, than a vicar in Midsomer.

In *Miss Marple*, the vicar is often portrayed as someone who is more or less normal, if sometimes a little ineffectual or even absent minded. Generally the vicar in *Miss Marple* is not only a pillar of the community but, in most cases, one of the select few who manage to survive intact until the end of the programme.

Whereas, in *Midsomer Murders* (or *Morse* and *Lewis* come to think of it), the vicar is either the murderer (protecting some salacious secret by bumping off the witnesses) or the corpse (killed to keep him or her quiet)!

I know which side my bread's buttered! It's St Mary Mead for me!

An added bonus to being the vicar of St Mary Mead is that *Miss Marple* is set in the days when vicars kept the funeral fees. All those murders Miss Marple solved must have represented a nice little earner for her vicar. No wonder he could afford to employ servants and pay for the upkeep of a palatial vicarage!

And there's always a good turnout at Evensong.

Coming to faith later in life as I did, Evensong is not something I grew up with. However, it is a service that I've come to know and love. There is a certain beauty and timelessness to Evensong. It's a service that grows on you and, I must admit I was rather pleased to come to a parish that continues with the tradition.

If you think this is an advert for Evensong, well spotted! So, if you've not been to Evensong for a while or have never experienced its delights, let me encourage you to come along one evening and experience it for yourself?

Finally, in St Mary Mead the church is never locked.



Agatha Christie

Sadly things don't always change for the better. Maybe I'm wearing rose-tinted glasses but at one time, even in areas with high crime rates, nobody would steal from or cause damage to a church. It was safe to leave a church unlocked all day long so that anyone could come in for prayer, to sit for a while or to look around.

Isn't it sad that we can't safely leave churches unlocked anymore!

Yet people's spiritual needs don't change. People have asked me on a few occasions, "When is the church open for prayer?" At other times I've been doing something in church when people have turned up on spec, relieved to find that they can come in and sit down in tranquillity for a few minutes.

Therefore, we are doing something about it!

Thanks to a team of volunteer church sitters, we plan to open our church for one afternoon a week so that people can come in for personal prayer. Appropriately, we begin on the Wednesday of Holy Week (4th April) and from then on we will be opening the church every Wednesday afternoon from 2.30 – 4pm.

So, if you need somewhere peaceful to pray, you know where to come.

Dave