



## From Our Vicar

Rev. Wayne Walters

### **Pumpkins and Persecution—All Saints' Remembrance**

As we see large orange pumpkins proliferating in our supermarkets and imitation cobweb on neighbourhood trees, those who have not grown up with this tradition might feel that they have been transported to America. Halloween is a mix of pagan Celtic traditions with the timing of the Christian Church traditional observance of All Saints' Day (November 1) – or All Hallows Eve (31 October). All Saints' Day recalls that the early church suffered periodic severe persecution and many people died as martyrs for their faith. These people were honoured and held up as models of dedication to Christ, having made the ultimate sacrifice. All Saints' Day was established as a day to give thanks for them and to be challenged and inspired by their example. It has become over time an opportunity to affirm the connection of all saints - those living and those departed in the great cloud of witnesses whose example Hebrews 11 and 12 highlights to inspire us to allegiance to Jesus in trying times.

Of course, persecution has been part of the experience of Christians in different parts of the world throughout history and has taken many forms. It has been calculated that in the twentieth century more believers died for their faith than in all previous centuries combined. And there has been an escalation of this tragic occurrence in the present century – most severe in Africa (Nigeria and Mozambique in particular) and in Myanmar, parts of India and the Middle East.

May we give thanks for the lives of those who have handed down the faith to us and who have courageously maintained witness to Christ. May we also pray for those facing oppression, discrimination, and the daily fear of violence. And let us give thanks for the freedoms we have and pray for courage and compassion to live out and share our faith as God enables us.

God bless you,  
*Wayne*

NB: The current Barnabas Magazine (copies in the foyer) has a broad-brush feature article on the history of Christian martyrdom up to the present day. It makes for important reading.