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What is the meaning and purpose of life? I have just watched an episode of *The weakest Link*. One contestant was a student in the last year of studying philosophy. After saying this would only qualify him to work in MacDonald's, Anne Robinson asked the contestant to say what he had learnt. "Well you start off my thinking life is just about material things, then you go through thinking it might be about something deeper, then you return to thinking it is just about material things". How sad that this young man, with a life ahead of him and clearly interested in the meaning of life, should come to such a negative, self-centred conclusion. How many people do you know who would agree with him? Even more worrying, how many young people do you know who think in this way? Jesus said life was about loving God and our neighbour as ourselves.

The confirmation service on the 14th of this month will be a wonderful occasion. As well as candidates from Ingatestone, there will be some from Mountnessing, Ingrave, Warley, and East Horndon. There will be over 25 candidates, ranging in age from 11 years to 65 years plus. All of them will be making a public statement about wanting to love God and live changed lives because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. A confirmation is a really powerful service. When I take a baptism service I always emphasise that the promises made on behalf of a child need to be confirmed by that individual when they are older and be made their own. Confirmation cannot be a simple rite of passage, it has to be about personal commitment. It is wonderful that these good people will be undertaking the service. We already have two people talking about confirmation for next year. Could you be joining them?

I am delighted to say that the Churches Together will be undertaking an Alpha Course this year. The Elim have run them for many years in our village. Alpha is a Church of England initiative that began a number of years ago at Holy Trinity,

Brompton. The ten week course is for anyone wishing to explore the Christian faith and will be at the Elim Church in the High Street. We begin at 7.45 on Tuesday 7th of October with supper before discussions. I will be involved as other commitments permit. Do you know someone who you could tell about this course and encourage to attend? Might you attend?

From October 23rd I will be involved in running a Cursillo weekend for the Diocese at Pleshey. This was something I experienced last year myself and is wonderful weekend of truly experiencing the love of God. Such events are run throughout the world and follow a set format. There will be two next year, one around Pentecost and the other in October. They book up very quickly. If you would like to know more about next year's events, please talk with me.

In June next year I will be leading a week long Retreat Holiday to Gdansk in Poland. I experienced this last year and had a really refreshing time. This is being advertised nationally, but it would be wonderful to have some local people in the group. Again, if you would like more information, please be in touch.

In November Sue and I will both be going to Bulgaria with Harvest for the Hungry. Our Harvest Festivals at both churches and the Church Junior School have been for this excellent Essex based charitable project. Apart from the produce being sent from our local area, we have some furniture to take from the Church Junior School. There is an excellent video presentation of the delivery of food and other equipment last year. It will be very moving to physically be part of the deliveries this year.

Confirmation, the Alpha Course, Cursillo and a time of retreat are all about deepening our love of God and our relationship with Jesus Christ. Harvest for the Hungry is about loving our neighbour as ourselves and deepening our love through service. Christianity is not simply an intellectual exercise, any more than it is about worship for an hour when we can find the time. It does aim to be able to answer the question, what is the meaning and purpose of life? Can you answer that question?

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*