



# Why I'm voting Balls

I'm definitely a fan of Strictly Come Dancing. I realised how much when one of the former professional dancers, Ian Waite, happened to be a Godparent at a baptism at St Andrew's last year. He walked into church and instead of welcoming him in, like I would for any normal person, I just gulped and said, "Gosh, you are tall," in a star-struck way, and then went to hide behind the baptism register, feeling like an idiot. He must have thought I was a real oddball.

But 'Strictly' is a great show, a family knitter of glitzy, stress-free entertainment. Celebrities, colour, music, dancing, you can't go wrong.

Except you can, and I think the producers may have done so this year. They have done so because almost all of the new contestants are just too good. I watched last week, which was the first week of the competition: at this stage, they've only been dancing for three weeks, so you expect most of them to be pretty hopeless. You typically watch and see someone galumphing around the dancefloor holding on to their professional partner for dear life, followed by some tart remarks by Craig Revel Horwood and some down to earth encouragement from Len Goodman.

But no, we had high kicks, somersaults, backflips, rhythm, hip-swivels, and all sorts. Not only that, they were almost uniformly good looking.

The BBC did have a dance show like that once. It was called "Come Dancing" and nobody watched it. The reason we didn't watch it is the British people don't actually want to see great dancing; we want to see ordinary people having a go, and maybe turning themselves into great dancers by the end of the run.

Thank goodness for Ed Balls who did his dance at the end, was a bit crap at it, but was obviously trying his best and mostly enjoying it.

It made me realise that mediocrity is a lot more reassuring than shiny success.

Social media has probably made this worse, as people put their best photos forward on Facebook or whatever, but just as we can succeed, there are a thousand ways we can fail. Being a parent can make this worse: not bringing the right PE kit to school; turning up late for a child's birthday party; forgetting even to turn up at a party...

And that's okay: we're not meant to be perfect parents, have wash-board stomachs, wrinkle free skin, or even be the best at our job. God wants us just to have a go and try our best and that's enough.

So that's why I'm voting for Balls with more passion than I ever did (if I ever did) when he was a politician. He's a welcome blast of mediocrity in a sea of shiny brilliance.

*September 2016. Thought for the Train is a short column written by the Reverend Robert Stanier, the vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train, or elsewhere. [www.surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://www.surbitonchurch.org.uk).*