

# Chapel Matters

## DESFORD FREE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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### SATURDAY COFFEE MORNING

- 3 Sue Wilks
- 10 Edith Yates
- 17 Amanda Wootton
- 24 Cathy Cunningham

### SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE

- 4 Michelle Poon
- 11 Cathy Cunningham
- 18 Linda Benson
- 25 Edith Yates and Mary Lloyd

### VESTIBULE ROTA

- 4 Pat Brooks
- 11 Jean Palmer
- 18 Peter Benson
- 25 Cathy Cunningham

### FLOWER ROTA

- 4 Sally Derby
- 11 Mary Lloyd
- 18 Mrs English
- 25 Amanda Wootton

God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble.

*Psalm 46.1*

As we approach the 100th Anniversary of the ending of the First World War (The Great War) we have the opportunity to pause and reflect on the brave men from all over the world who came into a conflict which seemed like it was hell on earth and this year we celebrate the 100th year since the end of hostilities! I wonder if we could ask the men and women of that century old conflict what they think of the intervening years, what might we hear?

I think they would sigh a deep long sigh as we never seem to learn from the past! We all know that there has not been a day since the end of the **“War to end Wars”** that there has not been a conflict somewhere in the world where men and women have been at war!

I think that captures the issue at hand! And it is important for Christians to model what it means to remember in the way Christ remembers. John Drane speaking about Remembrance reflected, "Memory is notoriously selective: we choose what to remember and how to remember it. Nowhere is that more obvious than in the case of the First World War, which some see as a huge disaster while others are inclined to be more generous in their estimation of its significance."

If we read Kings 1&2 we see how God remembers things in a different way to His people! God prompts His prophets in the midst of disaster, or to warn of impending disaster, that there is a better way! God invites us to remember but with real hope.

Therefore, let us fix our eyes on Jesus and recognise that in remembering we are pointed to a better future. A future where people find their redeemer, their saviour, Jesus!

I lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. This I call to mind and therefore I have hope:

*Psalm 121.1-2*

Jim

## A Baptist minister has a chance encounter with an agnostic in a coffee shop. How did the conversation go? By Colin Sedgwick

*“Religion – if we all work together we can find a cure.”*

So proclaimed the tee-shirt worn by a man sitting opposite me in the coffee-shop. (I'm in Waterstone's bookshop in Birmingham, waiting for my train back to Nottingham.) At first I'm not quite clear what the slogan means. Is it saying "If all us religious people work together we could find a cure for the world's ills"? Somehow that seems unlikely. Then I notice something else in smaller print – the name "Richard Dawkins". Ah! So the man is a disciple of one of the most militant atheists in public life: religion is a disease which needs a cure.

I reflect as I drink my coffee. He's quite a beefy chap – possibly a bit aggressive? But I think to myself "Given that he's decided to preach (so to speak) his anti-religious message in this public place – which, of course, he's perfectly entitled to do – why shouldn't I politely challenge him?" Only problem: how to do it? I'm not really the confronting-strangers-in-public-places type (I am *English*, after all). Yet it seems wrong to let the moment pass. I pray, asking for guidance. The taking-the-bull-by-the-horns approach seems the best, so as I get ready to leave, gathering my things together, I address him with a smile: "You seem to be very confident in your unbelief." I'm not sure what I expected might happen. Might he deck me with one blow of his fist? Might he angrily respond "Yes, I am confident in my unbelief, so if you're thinking of ramming religion down my throat, I'll advise you right now not to bother, you pathetic loser"? Might he just tell me to something off? Actually, none of those things happened. No. He smiled in a slightly embarrassed way, and assured me that while he himself wasn't a believer in any form of religion, he respected people who were ("Some of my own family are religious"). He wouldn't actually call himself definitely an *atheist*, but certainly an *agnostic* (which reminded me of exactly what my own father said when I told him I had become a Christian at the age of 15)

I remarked that indeed you need an awful of faith to be a real atheist; at which he smiled. Apparently he had been put off religion by school assemblies ("led by people who didn't believe a word of what they were saying"), and how disgusted he was by vicars who "don't believe in their own Christianity" (apparently, so he said, a survey revealed that 40 percent of clergy don't believe in God: not sure how true that is!).

Time is running on and I need to get to the station, so I tell him that I fully share his dislike of religion: "I don't really think of myself as religious, and I avoid the word as much as possible, but I am a follower of Jesus." He slightly inclines his head, as if to say "Fair enough". Then he raises the old question: "Is religion the root of great evil?" ...at which I wait with attention, expecting the standard answer about all the wars waged, all the blood shed (some of which, of course, we Christians can't deny). But no. "Absolutely not!" he says, and refers to the kindness and compassion and good things done by many religious people.

I need to go. So as my parting shot I simply tell him that I became a Christian over 50 years ago, and that Jesus has been my guiding star ever since. Again he nods his head, and as we part he stretches out his hand and we shake with expressions of mutual respect. Why am I telling you this story? Not, I beg you to believe, in order to show myself up in a good light! – I have no doubt I could have handled the situation a whole lot better. But perhaps for two reasons...

First, it reminded me of the New Testament call to be *"always prepared to give a reason... for the hope that you have"* (1 Peter 3:15). I'd like to be able to tell you that that man, at the end of our conversation (it only took about five minutes) had fallen on his knees crying out "What must I do to be saved?" But I'm afraid I can't. But possibly, just possibly – a seed was sown in his mind which will one day come to fruition.

Second, it reminded me that just as Christians can experience doubts and go through questioning phases in their lives, so too can the strongest-seeming unbelievers. (I read recently about the totally non-religious poet Philip Larkin, who admitted that during a time of stress in his life he couldn't help praying.)

So... That agnostic/atheist friend you have is nowhere near as rock-solid in their unbelief as they might want you to think. No; they too are just as much a bundle of doubts, questionings, prejudices and fears as everybody else! Behind a flinty exterior they may be crying out for peace and a purpose in living. So pray for them with love and compassion, saying with Paul "I am not ashamed of the gospel!"

***Lord Jesus, help me to see every person I ever meet not just as they appear, but as a follower one day of yours. Amen.***

**Colin Sedgwick is a Baptist minister with many years' experience in the ministry.**

# In the World, but not of it

## A morning with Martin Gage.

Martin has worked for Christian Aid for the last 23 years. He had intended to retire in 2020, but has increasingly felt called to these particular words, and so he has retired earlier than expected so he can explore these ideas with churches and interested groups.

What do these words mean for Christians, how can we be distinctive by what we do and say and what we don't do and say? We started by looking at Creation and how creation is an ongoing process. The world was created in love and God's all pervasive ethos is one of love. Martin emphasised the inclusive nature of Jesus' teaching and how he stood with the poor and marginalised. He noted that of Jesus' healing miracles, 5 were children, 3 were women, 25 were outcasts and 2 were male servant, and only 1 rich man. Martin posed the question "But what are we including people into, what is this inclusive community?" After each session we broke into groups for discussion, which was really interesting.

He explored the ideas of Christians being known for being against things, but we need to be for things which then would automatically exclude other things. He divided this section into prophecy, deliverance and forgiveness.

The final section centred on the themes of justice, pro- life and climate change. Throughout we looked at impact and influence.

We finished with checking that our lifestyles reflect our Christian values of love.

Martin shared with us how they had tried to avoid using plastic in Lent;-

Milk from the milkman in glass bottles

Water from the tap

Re-useable coffee cups

Fairtrade loose-leaf tea not tea bags

Pukka 3 mint tea bags, plastic free

Bio bags compostable

Ecover recycled plastic washing up bottles

Paper bags for sandwiches, fruit and veg

Use own bags for shopping

Off the shelf unwrapped bread

Cook fresh

Compost from garden

Useful shops:-

NADA zero waste shop

Leicester wholefood Coop

5 St. Matins walk

Freehold St.

Just Fairtrade shop. Silver St.

Martin will come out and lead sessions for churches and I do hope we will be able to invite him to lead a session for us soon.

Sue Jim and John

## Men's Group

KURLING at Sport in Desford

With supper

7.30pm 8<sup>th</sup> November

All welcome

## Streets for Prayer

- 4 Lockeymead Drive
- 11 Station Rd
- 18 Oak Rd.
- 25 Goulton Crescent

## REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

11<sup>th</sup> November

Combined service with St. Martins at the War Memorial at 10.30 am. Scouts, Cubs Beavers, Guides, Brownies and Rainbows will all be at the service.

This will be followed by a short service in St. Martins Church.

After the service there will be a bring and share lunch at DFC.



## WHAT'S ON IN NOVEMBER

Thurs 1	10.30am	Forget-me-not café at Newbold Verdon Library
Fri 2	10.00am	Prayer meeting with MB at 61 St Martins Drive
Sun 4	10.30am	Joint Service with MBFC at Market Bosworth
Mon 5	9.30am 2.30pm	Meeting for prayer at 2 Rowan Way Emmaus Group at 61 St Martins Drive
Wed 7	2.00 pm	Wednesday Club for Senior Citizens with afternoon tea and games
Thurs 8	7.30pm	Men's Group at SiD
Fri 9	10.00am	Prayer meeting with MB at 61 St Martins Drive
Sun 11	10.30 am	Remembrance Sunday Joint Service with St Martins followed by Bring and Share Lunch at DFC
Mon 12	9.30 am 2.30 pm	Deacons Meeting Emmaus Group at 61 St Martins Drive
Wed 14	2.00 pm	Wednesday Club for Senior Citizens with afternoon tea and games
Thurs 15	10.30am 2.00pm	Forget me not café at St Martins Church Centre Friends and Neighbours
Fri 16	10.00am	Prayer meeting with MB at 61 St Martins Drive
Sun 18	10.30 am	Morning worship led by Jim Mullin (Communion)
Mon 19	9.30 am	Meeting for prayer at 2 Rowan Way
Tues 20	12.30 pm 7.30 pm	Luncheon Club History Society
Wed 21	2.00 pm	Wednesday Club for Senior Citizens with afternoon tea and games
Fri 23	10.00am	Prayer meeting with MB at 61 St Martins Drive
Sun 25	10.30 am	Morning worship led by David Haywood
Mon 26	9.30 am 7.30 pm	Meeting for prayer at 2 Rowan Way Members Meeting
Wed 28	2.00 pm	Wednesday Club for Senior Citizens with afternoon tea and games
Fri 30	10.00am	Prayer meeting with MB at 61 St Martins Drive

If you would like communion at home please ring Sue on 01455822980