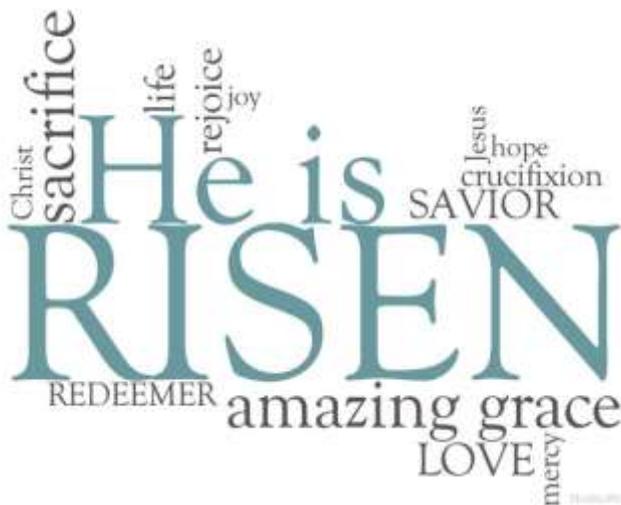


## ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



### **CHURCH OF ST GUTHLAC**

Holbrook Rd, Knighton, Leicester LE2 3LF

<http://www.stguthlac-knighton.co.uk/>

Minister: Revd Richard Bonney 2125677

[rjbonney@gmail.com](mailto:rjbonney@gmail.com)

Churchwardens:

David Hunt

Tina Jarvis

**26 April 2015**

**10.30 am Communion for All**

**12 noon Annual Meeting followed by faith lunch**

### **WELCOME TO ANY OF YOU VISITING US FOR THE FIRST TIME!**

Please announce yourself to one of our welcomers and sign in the welcome book so that we get to know you by name! Also, please introduce yourself to Revd Richard or one of the Churchwardens. St Guthlac's is YOUR local church. We feel part of the local community and we hope that you will feel part of the church community. **We have a welcome sheet:** please ask for one if it is not handed to you on arrival.

Newsletter No 152

## FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Wednesday 29 April, 7.30 pm

Choir Rehearsal

Thursday 30 April, 9.30 am

Morning Prayer (Revd Richard is at a safeguarding course)

Sunday 3 May, 10.30 am

All Age Worship

Monday 4 May, 10.30am-2.30pm

May Fayre

**PRAYERS FOR THE FAITHFUL** We have been asked to keep, **Ann Spring, Marjorie O'Neill, Dorothy Wollaston, Jan and Bob Newell, Margaret Adamson, Saty French, Norman England, Kate Adams, Laurie Jarvis, Margaret Tonkin, Sammy Davis** and **Veronica Brown** in our prayers. Please also pray for the soul of **Matthew Welch** who has died recently. For other prayer requests, please speak to the Revd Richard.

**THE REVD RICHARD WRITES** Our Lent Book, *In God's Hands* by Desmond Tutu, has led to a valuable discussion on two afternoons in the Welcome Area. Archbishop Tutu has produced a meditation on the infinite love of God and the infinite value of the human individual. Not only are we in God's hands, he says, our names are engraved on his palms. Our God has become a real human being, not 'a make-believe or half-phantom'. He assumed our humanity in all its fullness with its strengths and its frailties. He experienced all that each one of us has ever experienced. He was tempted, not once but throughout his earthly life – and he goes on suffering, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it, 'outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people with his own blood.' Only thus could he become our Saviour. We are called to be his viceroys, his stand-ins. And that gives us a huge responsibility – that we should not waste nor ravage the natural resources that God places at our disposal. The Bible also makes it quite clear that all of us are wonderfully made in the image of God – a remarkable and utterly subversive assertion. As Desmond Tutu points out, if we really believed what we asserted – that each human being without exception is a God-carrier – then we would be appalled at any ill treatment of another human being. It's not simply unjust; it's blasphemous – like spitting in the face of God.

*Ubuntu* is a highly sought-after attribute meaning someone who is generous, magnanimous, hospitable, welcoming, affirming of others. It's a Southern African word which could easily be applied to Nelson Mandela, who emerged from 27 years' incarceration preaching forgiveness and reconciliation. Throughout the rest of his life, he exemplified graciousness, concern and caring. And it's that care for others – that none of us can be totally self-sufficient – that points us back to the second creation story in Genesis when God declares that it's not good that man should be alone. We are made for togetherness, created for a deliberate network of interdependence, of complementarity, of family – the human family, God's family. It was Martin Luther King who said: 'Unless we learn to live together as brothers and sisters, we will perish together as fools!' And, as Desmond Tutu observes, it does seem that the early Christians believed that they had been initiated into a new fellowship that did indeed turn the turn the accepted order upside down. They kissed one another as though discounting the divisions of their contemporary society. Slaves were the equals of their owners and women enjoyed rights denied to them by the secular authorities.

There are though, thank God, many glorious moments when we inhabitants of the earth do reveal our true characteristics as members of one family – the amazing outpouring of love and concern and generosity at the times of awful tragedy. Perhaps it's then, deep down,

that we are being made aware of our natural connectedness. The God of the Bible is a biased God. He intervened decisively in the history of a rabble of slaves, long before they had done anything to deserve to be chosen. He acts on behalf of the weak, the oppressed, the downtrodden and the despised. Indeed, as Desmond Tutu observes, he can't help his actions: he showed in the story of the Exodus from Egypt what his fundamental character is. And you can imagine the impact of this quality on people in South Africa who had been used to being treated like scum. It was almost as if the Bible had been written with the particular struggle against apartheid in mind.

God intervened most decisively in human affairs when he chose a humble couple to be the parents of his Son. God, in the infant Jesus, was born not in the splendour of an opulent royal palace but in a stable nuzzled by cattle and sheep. He identified with us at the lowest points of our existence, demonstrating that he took sides. This God wasn't neutral; he was notoriously biased. And when Jesus began his public ministry, after nearly thirty years in obscurity, he patterned that ministry on the history of the oppressed people of Israel. He called his disciples from the riffraff, for that was the company he chose to keep. Again and again he revealed the nature of the God he represented, not least by what he taught his disciples mainly through the parables he told. Perhaps the most significant is the parable of the Lost Sheep. It's no nice fluffy lamb that the Good Shepherd seeks and finds. No, it's the troublesome, smelly old so-and-so. And what does he do when he finds him? Puts him on his shoulders, carries him home and throws a party for him. A biased God indeed!

The essence of chapter 4 is the breath-taking fact, as Desmond Tutu calls it, that God knew each and every one of us before we were born, and he loved us before we could do anything to deserve that divine love. Julian of Norwich, the medieval mystic who was granted visions of the ways of God, says that God did not begin to love us; his love for us is as eternal as God is eternal. We don't need to do anything to curry favour with God. And once again, Desmond Tutu uses Jesus's parable of the lost sheep to point out that our God is ready to leave ninety nine perfectly well-behaved sheep to go after a recalcitrant and troublesome one. He could then announce that there was not just great joy but greater joy in heaven over the obstreperous one who had caused so much trouble than over the ninety nine who needed no repentance. Our God really is amazing – his love gives up on no one. Indeed he invests all his divine love and concern on each one of us.

Desmond Tutu's exuberance is particularly infectious in chapter 5. He stresses again and again that all the magnificent teeming creation around us has come about through the outpouring of God's love as an act of sheer grace. God could have been God without us, but he decided otherwise. Having been lavished with this gift, which is then followed by that other act of sheer grace – the self-giving of Jesus on the cross – all we are expected to do is to be grateful. We who are freely loved and affirmed are meant to be as God to others, caring, compassionate, loving and affirming. It's not easy to be open to receiving when one seems to lack nothing, and Desmond Tutu points out that this is perhaps the reason why so many who come from affluent societies do not easily understand the wonder of grace, freely bestowed by a deeply generous God. But that is the very nature of God: God would not be God without God's *kenosis* or self-emptying. He longs that we will see his image in each other and so recognise that each of us, whatever our gender, our nationality, our orientation, are fundamentally members of one family. If only we could acknowledge this, we would live in a world free of so many nervous breakdowns and stomach ulcers!

The inspiration behind the title of the final chapter (Jesus experiences extreme separation from God – death) is a sermon given by one of Desmond Tutu's heroes, Father Trevor Huddleston, in South Africa just before his return to the Community of the Resurrection

back in Mirfield, Yorkshire. Huddleston had been a thorn in the side of the South African apartheid government and his defiant last gesture assured the authorities that the days of their abominable policies were numbered. God was not to be mocked. All would one day have to give account: in the beginning, God; at the end, God. Desmond Tutu graphically describes how the relationship between God and his creation went awry: where there should have been teeming life, there was a cold clammy death. It was a far cry from the paradise God had intended, and the catalogue of atrocities seems never to end. Yet God hasn't given up on God's dream. Throughout the ages it's been kept alive by those whom God has sent to remind us of it – the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Micah who both speak, almost in identical language, of a time of universal peace. The dream became more and more remote as God's people reneged, until just one representative figure remained – the Suffering Servant. In the divine economy, it was he who would attain redemption through his vicarious suffering. Tempted as we are, yet not succumbing to sin, he experienced the most extreme form of separation from God – death. Wonderfully, he rose again, ascended into heaven and now he reigns for ever. And it's that triumphant victory that awaits us: in the beginning, God; at the end, God.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1vp23x8nRQHDj83RxtqZscb/in-god-s-hands>

Cover image: <http://s3.amazonaws.com/churchplantmedia-cms/stpaulutheranca/he-is-risen-from-studiojru.jpg>

**PARISH WALK** The next walk will be on **Sunday 3 May** starting from St Guthlac's Church at 2pm. Further details in due course.

**MAY FAYRE Monday 4 May.** The fayre will soon be upon us and we need to **stock our stalls! It would be wonderful if everyone was able to help us.** Please bring bottles of anything and any unwanted, saleable children's toys, games, books and accessories as soon as possible. Plants and cakes can be brought to church on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May or on the day. Any further offers of help on the day will be welcomed with open arms! Thank you.

**CHANGE TO ADVERTISED SERVICES** There may need to be a change to advertised services when Richard and Margaret's grandchild arrives. Two different services have been planned which don't require a priest to officiate, and these will also be available for use in future in case of absence.

**KNIGHTON PLAYERS** have raised **£900** from their recent production of Sinbad. This has been split between three charities, Rainbows Hospice, Leicester Children's Holiday Centre (Mablethorpe) and Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland Air Ambulance. Many thanks to everyone who supported this event.

**BUSY BEES** Busy Bees are hoping to run from July 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup>, 9.30am to 3pm, at Stoneygate Baptist Church, if there are enough helpers available. **If anybody is able to commit some time to help, during those dates, please contact Judi Stone** Thank you.

**FOR THE NEWSLETTER** Please contact us at the latest by 9 am Friday for material to be included in the next weekly newsletter. **administrator@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk**