

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



CHURCH OF ST GUTHLAC

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Churchwardens:

David Hunt

Tina Jarvis

2 August 2015

10.30 am Ninth Sunday after Trinity: All Age Communion

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 166

FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Thursday 6 August, 9.30 am

Holy Communion

Sunday 9 August, 10.30 am

All Age Communion

PRAYERS FOR THE FAITHFUL We have been asked to keep **Val Thomson, Pamela, Ann Spring, Marjorie O'Neill, Dorothy Wollaston, Mirriam Norris, John Adams, Helen, Saty French, Rex Mason** and **John McVey** in our prayers. Please also pray for the soul of **Leonard King** who has died recently. For other prayer requests, please speak to the Revd Richard.

THURSDAY MORNING HOLY COMMUNION. During the summer these services will continue as usual except for Thursday 20 August when Revd Richard is unavailable.

THE REVD RICHARD WRITES. The **pew Research Centre in the US states that Christians now face harassment in 102 countries worldwide, the highest number for any religion.** This gives new meaning to the Beatitude on Righteousness: 'Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you' (Matt. 5:10-12). The Open Doors website in the USA states: There is something about hardship that allows us to know God deeply. When times get really tough, we discover more about who God is and how He works. Christians who have endured persecution for their faith, know this well. There are no easy answers as to why God allows his followers to face suffering. However, the lives of persecuted Christians reveal that even when things look out of control believers can rest secure, knowing that God is still in control. He is able to give courage, peace and even joy to stand strong through the storm. It is through these storms that believers discover God's love in new and powerful ways. *Standing Strong Through The Storm* is the curriculum that Open Doors uses to help Christians stand strong in the face of persecution. There are six theological and biblical lessons from this curriculum:

Sometimes you need to build yourself a cell.

Be still, and know that I am God (Psalms 46:10). One Chinese church leader, who spent 23 years in prison, once said this to Christians who did not face persecution: *"I was pushed into a cell, but you have to push yourself into one. You have no time to know God. You need to build yourself a cell, so you can do for yourself what persecution did for me—simplify your life and know God."* It is vital that we spend time with God, to grow in Him, so we are prepared to stand strong in the face of persecution.

God keeps secrets. *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so*

are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). There have been countless stories of persecuted Christians who have died without seeing the fruits of their labour. However, God know all that has been and all that is to come. Our labour is not in vain, it is in His hands.

Weakness is a direct path to power. 'That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Corinthians 12:10). An Egyptian Christian reflected on the way he was treated when he converted to Christ: *"In great suffering you discover a different Jesus than you do in normal life... Pain and suffering bring up to the surface all the weak points of your personality. In my weakest state, I had an incredible realization that Jesus loved me even right then."* True empowerment does not come from human means, but through Christ alone. It often takes being at our weakest point to realize this.

Overcoming is greater than deliverance. *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* (Romans 12:21). Persecuted Christians, no matter what country they are from, do not ask us to pray that persecution would end, but rather ask us to pray that they stand strong through the persecution. They do not wish to be delivered from the persecution, but rather ask us to pray that they would be able to overcome the trials that they are facing in a way that is honouring to God.

Extreme hurt requires extreme forgiveness. *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments—* (Luke 23:34) A Christian widow from Iran said: *"I only had hatred in my heart for my enemies who had murdered my husband. But one day a miracle happened. God taught me how I could love my enemies... I had been praying for this, even though on the deepest level I didn't want it to happen. Gradually, through a process of ups and downs, God answered this prayer."* The only way we can get through extreme hurt is by forgiving people as Christ did.

Prayer is the ultimate fellowship. *Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering* (Hebrews 13:3). Many persecuted Christians often feel isolated and alone, since they are unable to fellowship with other believers. However, prayers from Christians half a world away have brought the same amount of encouragement that fellowship would have for these persecuted Christians. Prayer is vital – not only as a direct line to God, but as a way to encourage our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.

1 Corinthians 12:26 tells us that we are one body – when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is lifted up, we all rejoice. Persecuted Christians and Christians in the free world are not two separate entities, but rather are one body. The persecuted church needs the free church to support them and most importantly to lift them up in prayer. The church in the free world learns lessons

from the persecuted who have stood strong in the face of persecution. Christ is the head of the body and uses the church (both free and persecuted) in unique and powerful ways.

CONGRATULATIONS to Molly Clarke who has safely completed her sky dive! If you have sponsored her, please put your sponsorship money in the container at the back of church and mark yourself off on the sponsorship form. Any cheques should be made payable to Leicester Samaritans. It is not too late to add your name if you haven't already sponsored Molly!

DIARY DATES:

29th August Cream Tea and Treasure Hunt

12th September Harvest Supper

Further details to follow.

THANK YOU to everyone who supported our musical concert. We raised £524.50 for Cancer Research UK. Grace & Suzie

MEMORY CAFÉ FUNDING Spare foreign coins are being collected to help meet the monthly cost of £250 for the two local memory cafés. If you have any coins please donate them and leave them in the box at the back of the church. We can arrange to convert them into sterling. Thank you. Any other suggestions to help funding the two cafés gratefully received.

PLANNED GIVING Thank you to those people who have responded to the recent planned giving mailing. If you are still thinking about responding or would like further information, please speak to Mark Wyatt. Thank you.

RECYCLING FOR CHURCH AND HALL There is now an orange wheelie bin for recyclables, kept next to the general waste bin outside the hall. This is to be used for paper, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, food and drink tins and plastic food/drink containers (rinsed). Please put all suitable recyclable items in the plastic basket at the back of church or place directly into the orange bin. Thank you.

Cover image: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Ecologia.jpg>

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