

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



A NEW BISHOP FOR LEICESTER

CHURCH OF ST GUTHLAC

Holbrook Rd, Knighton, Leicester LE2 3LF

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

Minister: Revd Richard Bonney 2125677

rjbonney@gmail.com

Churchwardens:

David Hunt

Tina Jarvis

3 January 2016

10.30 am All Age Communion: Epiphany

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 187

FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Wednesday 7 January	No Choir Practice
Thursday 7 January, 9.30 am	Holy Communion
Friday 8 January, 8.00 am	Ecumenical Morning Prayers
Sunday 10 January, 10.30 am	All Age Worship and Holy Baptism
Sunday 10 January, 4.00 pm	Advent Book discussion (Welcome Area)
Sunday 17 January, 10.30 am	Matins

PRAYERS FOR THE FAITHFUL We have been asked to keep **Daisy Reynolds, Terry Cocks, Dermot Heffernan, David Pallot, Ann Spring, Dorothy Wollaston, John and Flo McVey** and **Saty French** in our prayers. For other prayer requests, please speak to the Revd Richard.

THE REVD RICHARD WRITES: Richard and Margaret wish everyone at St Guthlac's and St Mary's a Happy Christmas. Here's a considerably shortened 'think piece' that Richard came across just before Christmas which gives food for thought as we approach the year 2016 together in faith. (Note: Richard was thinking of the problem of the decline in the number of Christian worshippers *across the country* and not the problems of any specific church.)

Dear Church, Here's Why People Are REALLY Leaving You. You may think you know why people are leaving you, but I'm not sure you do. You think it's because "the culture" is so lost, so perverse, so beyond help that they are all walking away. You believe that they've turned a deaf ear to the voice of God; chasing money, and sex, and material things. But those aren't the reasons people are leaving you. They aren't the problem, Church. **You are the problem.** Let me elaborate in five ways ...

1. Your Sunday services have worn thin. They have so little relevance in people's daily lives that more and more of them are taking a pass. Ultimately Sunday morning isn't really making a difference on Tuesday afternoon or Thursday evening, when people are wrestling with the awkward, messy, painful stuff in the trenches of life. We can be entertained anywhere. Until you can give us something more than a Christian-themed performance piece; something that allows us space and breath and conversation and relationship, many of us are going to sleep in and stay away.

2. You speak in a foreign tongue. Church, you talk and talk and talk, but you do so using a dead language. You're holding on to dusty words that have no resonance in people's ears, not realizing that just saying those words louder isn't the answer. All the religious buzzwords that used to work 20 years ago no longer do. This spiritualized insider-language may give you some comfort in an outside world that is changing, but that stuff's just lazy religious shorthand, and it keeps regular people at a distance. They need you to speak in a language that they can

understand. People don't need to be dazzled with big, churchy words and about eschatological frameworks and theological systems. Talk to them plainly about love, and joy, and forgiveness, and death, and peace, and God, and they'll be all ears. Keep up the church-speak, and you'll be talking to an empty room soon.

3. Your vision can't see past your building. Most of your time, money and energy seems to be about luring people to where you are, instead of reaching people where they already are. Rather than simply stepping out into the neighbourhoods around you and partnering with the amazing things already happening, and the beautiful stuff God is already doing, you seem content to franchise out your particular brand of Jesus-stuff and wait for the sinful world to beat down your door. Your greatest mission field is just a few miles (or a few feet) off your premises and you don't even realize it. Leave the building.

4. You choose lousy battles. We know you like to fight, Church. That's obvious. When you want to, you can go to war with the best of them. The problem is, your battles are too small. They're paper tigers to people out here with bloody boots on the ground. Every day we see a world suffocated by poverty, and racism, and violence, and bigotry, and hunger; and in the face of that stuff, you get awfully, frighteningly, quiet. We wish you were as courageous in those fights, because then we'd feel like coming alongside you; then we'd feel like going to war with you. Church, we need you to stop being warmongers with the trivial and pacifists in the face of the terrible.

5. Your love doesn't look like love. Love seems to be a pretty big deal to you, but we're not getting it. In fact, more and more, your brand of love seems incredibly selective and decidedly narrow; filtering out all the spiritual riff-raff, which sadly includes far too many of us. Can you love us if we're not sure how we define love, and marriage, and Heaven, and Hell? It sure doesn't feel that way. From what we know about Jesus, we think he looks like love. The unfortunate thing is, you don't look much like him. That's part of the reason people are leaving you, Church.

These words may get you really, really angry, and you may want to jump in a knee-jerk move to defend yourself or attack these positions line-by-line, but we hope that you won't. We hope that you'll just sit in stillness with these words for a while, because whether you believe they're right or wrong, they're real to us, and that's the whole point. We're the ones walking away. We want to matter to you. It's here, in my flawed, screwed-up, wounded, shell-shocked, doubting, disillusioned me-ness that I've been waiting for you to step in with this whole supposedly relentless, audacious "love of Jesus" thing I hear so much about, and make it real. Church, I know how much you despise the word Tolerance, but right now, I really need you to tolerate me; to tolerate those of us, who for all sorts of reasons are struggling to stay.

Even if we are the woman in adultery, or the doubting follower, or the rebellious prodigal, or the demon-riddled young man, we can't be anything else right now in this moment; and in this moment, we need a Church big enough, and tough enough, and loving enough; not just for us as we might one day be then, but for us as we are, now. We still believe that God is big enough, and tough enough, and loving enough, even if you won't be, and that's why even if we do walk away, it doesn't mean we're walking away from faith; it's just that faith right now seems more reachable elsewhere. If someone tells you they are starving for compassion, and relationship, and authenticity, the last thing they need is to be corrected for that hunger. So yes, Church, even if you're right, even if we're totally wrong; even if we're all petty, and self-centred, and hypocritical, and critical, and (I'll say it) "sinful," we're still the ones searching for a place where we can be known and belong; a place where it feels like God lives, and you're the ones who can show it to us. Even if the problem is me, it's me who you're supposed to be reaching, Church. So, for the love of God; reach out now.

NEW BISHOP OF LEICESTER ANNOUNCED The new Bishop of Leicester is to be the Rt Revd Martyn Snow, currently Bishop of Tewkesbury. The announcement was made on the website of 10 Downing Street on 15 December. Bishop Rachel Treweek of Gloucester says 'I have deeply appreciated Bishop Martyn's friendship, support and collegiality. Whilst I am sad that Bishop Martyn will be leaving us so early on in my ministry here, I am convinced that today's announcement marks a very natural and appropriate step for him. Bishop Martyn's gifts and experience will be richly used in Leicester.' Martyn is 47, married to Lynn and they have three children. Bishop Martyn spent his first day in the diocese visiting a variety of projects and places with which the church of England is involved. Later in the day the bishop met some of the diocesan staff at St Martins House, and attended evening prayer in the oldest church in the city, St Nicholas. The Bishop will be installed in Spring 2016.

DEPARTURE OF THE REVD KEITH MAGEE The Acting Bishop announces that the Revd Keith Magee, Vicar of the Benefice of Knighton, has been appointed as Vicar for the Parish of St Peter Braunstone Park, Leicester. The date of Keith's licensing will be announced in due course. His last service in the parish will be on 14 February.

AFTERNOON TEA at the centre raised £355 for Rainbows. Thanks to all who supported this event.

SKY DIVE THANKS A huge thank you to all who sponsored me so generously. £1600 was raised for the Samaritans. A film of my jump will be shown at a coffee evening in the New Year. Members of the Samaritans will be present to explain how the money raised is spent. Everyone welcome, details to follow. Molly Clarke.

FOR THE NEWSLETTER Please contact us at the latest by **10pm Thursday** for material to be included in the next weekly newsletter. administrator@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk