

February 2013

## Heretics' Dinner

**17:00-19:00 on Sunday 17th February, at the church.**

You may be wondering what this is all about....!

Well this is a space created for a no questions barred discussion about Christianity and the Church which we hope will attract people with a broad range of opinions and many doubts!

We want to talk with you who consider yourself perhaps not to be religious about some of the most important questions of religious life. What is Church? What is it for? What about prayer? What does a real community look like? We're sure that you all have important things to say about these topics. This is a dinner for 'heretics', so no need to be anxious about having standard orthodox answers trotted out, and no need to hide your thoughts because they might be unusual.

You might have heard the story about the visiting priest who was talking to some of the children in a church during the service. He asked them 'Can anyone tell me what is small and red, with a long tail, and buries nuts in the autumn?' There was a long silence. Finally, a small voice piped up: 'I know the answer must be Jesus, but it sounds more like a squirrel to me'. Sometimes we think that just because a question is asked in a church the answer has to be a bit holy. You have to centre everything on Jesus or God. At the Heretics Dinner we want to have an open discussion with people coming from many different perspectives. We want to discuss unorthodox perspectives. For example, what do we value about our church that would also be valuable for an atheist?

Here are a few questions to start you thinking:

What about prayer? Most of us pray from time to time. But what is the point? Why should we bother to pray in a modern society, where most of our mundane needs are met at the supermarket or the hospital? What do you value most about prayer, if you pray at all? Is prayer the only thing that could play that role, or could you substitute something else, like meditation or a quiet walk?

What do you think about church? If you had to give a picture of what church is all about, what would it be? The body of Christ? A family? Or something completely different? Perhaps church needs to be completely different nowadays, when society has changed so much. Or maybe some things are so important they need to be preserved in the teeth of social change. What do you think?

What about stories? Church services are built around stories: the readings from the bible, which is chock-full of stories. Are there any stories that inspire you? They don't have to be from the Bible, or even from religious books. And are there any stories that you hate, stories that make you shudder every time you hear them mentioned in a church? How do we choose which stories to build our lives around?

What about right and wrong? Even when we can tell what is right or wrong, we often end up doing the wrong thing. How can we be inspired to do what we know is right? Does it help to have an absolute foundation for morality, and if so where can we find that foundation? How can we access it? Perhaps you don't feel you have a foundation you can stand firmly on, but you have to keep on living anyway. If that is you, how do you work out what to do when the wheels fall off?

Should be a very interesting dinner! Please do come.

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