

The New Walk

The bi-monthly magazine of St Stephen's
United Reformed Church (formerly Presbyterian)

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From Rev. Philp Tiplady:

May Day has long been a day of celebration in European cultures, often seen as a celebration of the coming of spring that has its roots in pagan practices. Many of those traditions have become less common in recent times, some here may have danced round maypoles in their youth, Leicester Morris are still to be found in Bradgate Park relatively early in the morning.

A more recent tradition has been to make May 1st a day to remember workers. This came out of campaigns for the rights of workers following the industrial revolution, from trade unions and political organisations. The Roman Catholic Church laid claim to it by making it the saint's day for St Joseph the worker, that is the same Joseph who was the husband of Jesus' mother, who is assumed to have been a carpenter.

The church has shown concern for working people. Churches were built as industrial cities grew, both the established church and the more radical free churches. As people moved for work, their religious traditions followed, for

catholic Irish or Presbyterian Scots in distant times, or the huge variety of religious traditions we find in our cities today.

There are some parts of Christian theology and ethics that come easily out of the bible. An understanding of the place of work in human life is not one of those. The economic systems of biblical times were very different from those of our time. They do not make for easy translation to times of capitalism or communism or socialism.

At the time of Jesus, Palestine was part of the Roman Empire, an area in which trade of goods created a strong economic system, where there was a system of money using coins to facilitate the trade, where people could be hired and paid wages, where taxes were collected.

The disciples of Jesus were working people, a fair proportion were fishermen, presumably catching fish as individuals and groups and selling the surplus in local markets, making an income to cover their material needs. There are also shepherds and farmers and also Joseph, the carpenter.

So what were the views of Jesus on work? He had something to say on the ethics of trading as he overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple, though we need to consider whether this was about the corruption of religious practice or the marketplace.

He appeared to have a radical view of how to pay workers, talking of how payment for casual work should be based upon the needs of the individuals rather than the number of hours worked. This has rarely been put into practice. We can't look for detail of how to run an economy in the teaching of Jesus, but we have to recognise that those who followed him were ordinary people who heard a message that stated that every person had value in the eyes of God; where the least were worth as much as the highest if the order was not to be reversed.

We can join the celebration of labour on May Day. We can bring that Gospel message that all are of value to those who work and those who organise work, to the unemployed and those who run industry or the government. That is following the tradition of Jesus.

Philip

Services for May and June

- May 3rd** **11am Service led by Rev. David Howlett; also on Zoom**
- May 10th** **11am Service led by Rev. Mike Playdon; also on Zoom (Christian Aid Sunday)**
- May 17th** **11am Service, led by Mr. David Coxhead; also on Zoom**
- May 24th** **11am Service led by Mr. Gary Wood; also on Zoom**
- May 31st** **11am Service, led by Rev. Philip Tiplady; also on Zoom**
- June 7th** **11am Communion Service, led by Rev. Paul Ellis; also on Zoom**
- June 14th** **11am Service, led by Rev. David Howlett, also on Zoom**
- June 21st** **11am Service (Father's Day) led by Rev. Philip Tiplady; also on Zoom**
- June 28th** **11am Service led by Rev. Mike Playdon; also on Zoom**

The **book sales** continue every Friday from 11am – 4pm. Volunteers to help on the day are most welcome, either from 11am-1.30pm or 1.30-4pm. Donations of books are always welcome.

Christian Aid Week – 10-16 May

We have supported Christian Aid Week at St. Stephen's for many years and it is hoped we will do so again this year.

Envelopes for cash donations will be available in the coffee area after the service on both May 10th and May 16th. Donations can be made online at any time using the web address below:

caweek.org/CAW

