

Willesden Area Apologetics Group –

“The World Through Christian Eyes”

Through working with other faiths at [London Inter Faith Centre](#) we had become aware of the clarity of their articulation of their world views, and were also receiving questions concerning the Christian world view and belief system. Thus a group of clergy in Willesden Area of London Diocese, from conservative evangelical to liberal catholic, was convened by the Area Inter Faith Adviser, under the oversight of the Area Bishop and with the support of the Archdeacon. Over a period of eighteen months the group met about once every six weeks, to work together on a summary and overview of ‘*The world through Christian eyes*’.

description of Christian belief

Christianity

“We believe in one God : Father, Son and Holy Spirit”

God the Father

God is known to Christians as the Creator and Father of all. The Bible emphasises the goodness of God and that everything he made was in the beginning good. Human beings have a special place in God’s creation. We are created to enjoy friendship with God - as one famous 4th century African Christian, Augustine of Hippo, put it, “You have made us for Yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.” Humans are also described as being made “in the image of God”, and one very important element in this is the idea that men and women have a shared stewardship of creation, accountable to God for its use and care. The first commandment in the Bible is to love God and the second is to love our neighbour. Genuine love is a choice, so God created human beings with the ability to make choices, and we acknowledge that we do not always make the right ones. Thus in the creation story at the start of the Bible while God gives the first people everything they need and asks them to show their love and trust towards him, they choose to disobey. This disorders their relationship with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation, making them and the created order, susceptible to pain, sickness, and death.

God the Son

God’s desire is to forgive and to restore all in life that has been damaged and corrupted, and the first part of the Christian Bible, the Old Testament, tells the story of God’s faithful love for his people.

God promises Abraham that through him all the families on earth will be blessed. In the history of Israel the people see for themselves God’s power to rescue when he frees them from slavery in Egypt and from exile in Babylon. They receive laws including the Ten Commandments, which express God’s will and way for human life. God also reveals his character and purpose through prophets. An expectation grows of a great “day of the Lord” in which evil will be defeated and the good rule of God will be established on earth. Some believed this would involve a special ruler known in Hebrew as the Messiah (in Greek ‘the Christ’). Christians believe that all these hopes were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

The life of Jesus is mentioned by ancient historians but described in more detail in the four books called Gospels which begin the second part of the Christian Bible, the New Testament. Jesus was born in Bethlehem: Christians celebrate this at Christmas and believe that in this event God took flesh and became one of us. Jesus taught almost exclusively among his fellow Jews. His central message was that “the kingdom of God has come,” declaring that the hope of the reign of God had begun to be fulfilled. Jesus showed what this was like by healing the sick, casting out demons, declaring sinners forgiven, welcoming outcasts and challenging the rich and powerful. He claimed that in all this he was fulfilling the Scriptures. Opposition to him led to his arrest, trial and death by crucifixion, but Christians believe that on the third day after his death and burial Christ was raised bodily from the dead. They believe that through this, his radical path of uncompromising love amid misunderstanding and rejection was vindicated. By his death and resurrection, life overcomes death, good defeats evil, and human beings are able to have their relationship with God fully restored. It is the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection that Christians celebrate at Easter.

God the Holy Spirit

Jesus' disciples acclaimed him as the Messiah and the Son of God. They began the work of calling all people to receive God's forgiveness and the gift of a new life by turning from sin and putting their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. With the coming of the Holy Spirit at the festival of Pentecost the first Christians experienced the presence of God and the abiding power of the risen Christ in a personal way. Through the Spirit this experience is promised to all Christians.

Pentecost is therefore regarded as the birthday of the Christian Church, the community of those who belong to Jesus Christ. Christians seek to model their lives on Jesus' teaching and example of generosity, purity, justice and forgiveness. Thus the purpose of Christian life, within the community of the Church, is to live and share Christ's self-giving love. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught his followers to pray to God as Father, seeking his help and living in daily relationship with him. By the power of the Holy Spirit and through the guidance of the Church, Christians seek to discern God's ways and to work thereby for the fulfilment of God's kingdom of justice and peace. They believe this will not be completed until Christ returns as judge to renew all of creation. As Christians proclaim, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

One God for all the World

So Christians believe in one God.

Without ever ceasing to be the Creator and Father of all, God became a human being, Jesus Christ, God the Son, in order fully to reveal his love and to undo the consequences of our disobedience.

Without ever ceasing to be the Father and the Son, this one God gives himself as God the Holy Spirit to all who put their faith in him, and is active in all the world.

The one God, revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, offers himself to all people to work with him to rescue, renew and restore all of his creation.

Among the challenges posed by this task were –

seeking to provide a concise, succinct and coherent account of our living faith

seeking appropriate language and concepts so to do, that would be able to be accessed by those of other faiths

seeking at one and the same time to provide something informative for those outside other main faith traditions

seeking to take account of the differences in the theological spectrum within the group without producing a document compromised by the committee process

This material is offered for use in a variety of ways

Information - Early within the development of a cross faith relationship, this account can be given to the other faith, as a matter of information, with the request to receive something similar back from them (which in our experience is often readily available).

Dialogue - The material can help inform cross faith conversation, interaction and dialogue.

Christian Reflection - This material can be used by Christians to reflect up the degree to which the group may feel it does or does not focus on Christian priorities that we may want to live out and share in our relationships with others.

Education - The material possibly has potential within educative processes to inform or stimulate engagement with these issues.

Members of The London Diocese Willesden Area Apologetics Group are:-

The Revd Fergus Capie, The Revd Laurence Hillel, The Revd Simon Reed, The Revd Preb John Root, and The Revd Felicity Scroggie

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