

## **LENTEN BREAKFASTS**

*Organised by Churches Together in Balsall and Berkswell*

The Breakfasts are a series of Talks and Discussions that have been developed jointly by the six churches in Churches Together in Balsall and Berkswell. They are held in the Methodist Church Hall on Saturday mornings of Lent. The first of the Breakfasts will be held on Saturday 9 March 2019.

The Breakfasts have established themselves in the village as a lively intelligent forum. Themes are taken for which straightforward answers are not available. The intention is to encourage people to think through the difficulties and so to strengthen a religious faith in their ordinary daily life. They are enjoyed equally by people who attend one of the churches, as well as by many others who are not church members.

Breakfast begins at 8.30 am and consists of cereals, croissants and tea or coffee. At 9.00 am, after a short introduction, the Guest Speaker introduces the theme for the session and usually speaks for about 20 minutes. The meeting is then thrown open for discussion, and a Question and Answer session ensues. The discussion will close no later than 9.45 am to allow the hall to be cleaned and cleared by 10.00 am.

There is a small charge of £2.00 for the breakfast and the surplus after deduction of costs will go to a mutually agreed charity.

So why not put these dates in your new diary  
and come along and enjoy the discussion.

You will be very welcome

*For information about Churches Together events please  
contact Hon Sec Claire Laland on [clmap18@gmail.com](mailto:clmap18@gmail.com)*

CHURCHES TOGETHER  
IN BALSALL AND BERKSWELL

LENTEN BREAKFASTS 2019

9<sup>th</sup> March – 6<sup>th</sup> April

“BIG QUESTIONS”

All of us, if we are at all reflective, will have asked fundamental questions relating to the meaning of our existence: Who am I? What am I? Where am I going? There is no single answer to any of these questions as the fact of myriad religions, spiritualities and philosophies attests. For some, seeking certainty in an uncertain world, the multiplicity of responses is a source of anxiety. For others, it is an expression of the boundless variety of personal, social, cultural and historical experience. In the modern West, a rational and scientific understanding of the world has acquired huge prestige and has undoubtedly contributed to huge advances in our understanding of the world and human welfare. Stephen Hawking’s recent book *Brief Answers to Big Questions* demonstrates several ways in which this has been true. However, as the novelist and thinker Marilynne Robinson argues in her book *Absence of Mind*, a wholly rational and scientific understanding “threatens to exclude from the world much that is best in it, and much that is essential to our humane understanding of it.” The relationship between science and religion, the nature of human experience, the sources of morality, the problem of suffering and humanity’s ultimate destiny are just some of the ‘Big Questions’ that invite mature thought and discussion.

## **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March - *Do we have a 'soul'?***

**Speaker: Dr Sue Chetwynd**

Dr Sue Chetwynd is a philosopher by training, who has spent her academic life teaching professional ethics in the fields of business studies, engineering and medicine. She has been a member of the Teaching Engineering Ethics Group of the Royal Academy of Engineering, and has served on an NHS Research Ethics Committee, as well as currently being a member of the Clinical Ethics Forum for a local hospital. Her publications include articles on conjoined twins, with Mark Bratton, and the right to die, as well as a contribution to *God, Ethics and the Human Genome* (published by Church House Publishing). Sue is an active member of her local church.

Abstract - Being primarily a philosopher, it might not surprise you to know that Sue thinks the answer to this question depends on what we mean by a soul. Sue will be considering views of the soul held by philosophers ancient and modern, the Christian church and the Bible. All raise questions, and perhaps none of them is unproblematic. Sue will try to navigate through them and draw at least some conclusions!

## **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March - *Should we build intelligent machines?***

**Speaker: Revd Dr Mark Bratton**

Mark is Rector of St John Baptist Berkswell and an Associate Fellow of the Warwick University Medical School where he teaches medical ethics and law on a sessional basis. He is the Bishop of Coventry's Adviser on Medical Ethics and a member of the General Synod of the C of E. Mark thinks of himself as a sort of 'public theologian', that is, trying to speak to the world both with Christian integrity and practical wisdom.

Abstract - We live on the cusp of a technological revolution in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Self-driving cars, powerful intuitive computers, synthetic biological interfaces are signs of what is to come. The benefits for humanity could be enormous, educationally, medically, occupationally etc. But there are potential dangers also. The misuse of powerful technologies could be catastrophic. Were 'machines' to become conscious, would their values align with or diverge from ours, and how would/should we respond if they did? Mark will consider whether the biblical and Christian traditions can help us to address these issues with integrity and wisdom.

## **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March - *Where does morality come from?***

**Speaker: Dr Steve Wigmore**

Steve studied mathematics and philosophy at the University of Warwick. His PhD at Warwick focussed on the remarkable Ethical Theory of Max Scheler, a leading early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Phenomenologist. Steve is an Anglican Christian, with a keen interest in how History, Theology, Ethics, Politics

and Culture combine to create the world we live in. He is currently training as a Chartered Accountant at National Grid PLC based in Warwick, and previously worked for the Diocese of Coventry with their Listed Buildings Committee, the DAC (which he hopes you won't hold against him!).

Abstract - Steve will look at questions including - Is religion or God necessary for morality? Is there a 'natural' morality that comes from our evolution? Or is morality just socially constructed? Drawing on Max Scheler and other philosophers and theologians Steve will try to shed some light on these difficult questions.

**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March - *Why do bad things happen to good people?***  
**Speaker: Stig Graham**

Stig (and yes, that is his real name) has been a metallurgist (lead smelting and iron making), a database designer, ordained as a priest in the Church of England (Middlesbrough) and spent 20 years as a hospice chaplain (Teesside and Myton). Whilst wondering why life is filled with parentheses Stig is passionate about science, faith and caring for those in spiritual pain.

Abstract - Using case histories and examples, Stig will explore some of the many responses people have offered to explain why life, God or the universe has failed them, betrayed them or just let them down. Stig will offer some of the classic Christian responses to this question which can still be heard to this day. And then invite you to offer your own ideas.

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April - *Has science 'disproved' religion?***  
**Speaker: Revd Alan Bayes**

Alan is currently Chaplain to the Whitgift School in Croydon. After a curacy in Taunton, he was Chaplain to the College of SS Hild and Bede in the University of Durham and then Vicar of Penllergaer with Pontlliw in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon. He has been interfaith advisor to the Bishops of Durham and Swansea and Brecon respectively. Before Alan trained for ordination, he studied Physics at Imperial College, London followed by postgraduate work in Astrophysics at University College, London.

Abstract - Drawing on his background in both science and theology, Alan will challenge the 'conflict' model that has dominated modern thinking about the relationship between science and religion. He will challenge the false presumption built into the title of this talk. With reference to the spurious claims of New Atheists, such as Richard Dawkins, he will point out that the scientific enterprise is itself 'fiduciary', assuming the intelligibility of the universe, with its method inductive and its findings provisional. Indeed, Alan will suggest that only a religious worldview can provide the preconditions of an intelligible science.