

# St Agnes

Everybody's Welcome

ISSUE 011 - NOVEMBER 2007



## DON'T SUFFER ALONE

These days suffering seems to be a part of life we all have to deal with. If it's not health worries it financial struggles. If work is going well, it's likely that home life is not. Helen tells us of some of the suffering she has had to deal with and how she has remained positive throughout her experiences.

*I am a curly, 51 year young Geordie. I moved from Newcastle to a new job as a junior sister in Dudley Road Hospital elderly Care Department. After trying a couple of churches in the local area I found myself at St. Agnes Church.*



*It was Easter time and the first service I attended was a Maundy Thursday evening service. As I sat in the pews enjoying the hymns and prayers, it suddenly dawned on me that this was a washing of the feet sort of service. Blind panic set in! As far as I knew, the vicar would choose random people from the congregation to feet wash. I could no longer concentrate on the service: I just kept thinking 'I have tights on underneath my trousers'. How was that going to work?*

*Luckily the washing of feet part of the service was all pre-arranged so I was not chosen. After that, however, attending any other service at St. Agnes was a doddle and I made friends easily.*

*One thing you need to know about St. Agnes is the "cogs". These cogs are what move into action if anyone is in need. I had my first child in the December of that feet washing year, and my second followed much to my shock a year later. The cogs were there to help with shopping, housework and even babysitting.*

*What many people did not know, was that I had suffered four miscarriages. One was before my first child was born and three after my second child. These were not easy to bear but God held me up through all the grieving for those babies I would never meet.*

### "Blind panic set in!"

*In October 2001 I had a bad fall and broke my right ankle badly. I was in hospital for weeks and had numerous operations, which have left me rather disabled, still in some pain and not able to walk far. That tested my faith but as I ranted at God He calmed me and held me. And the cogs of St. Agnes whirred and moved and made meals and did washing.*

*The piece de resistance, however, came in August 2005. I was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer. Everything happened so fast. Within weeks of being diagnosed I was on the cancer conveyor belt with chemotherapy booked, scans and biopsies imminent and a traumatic operation on the horizon. *continued overleaf...**

### St Agnes Church - Everybody's Welcome

#### Sunday Service Times

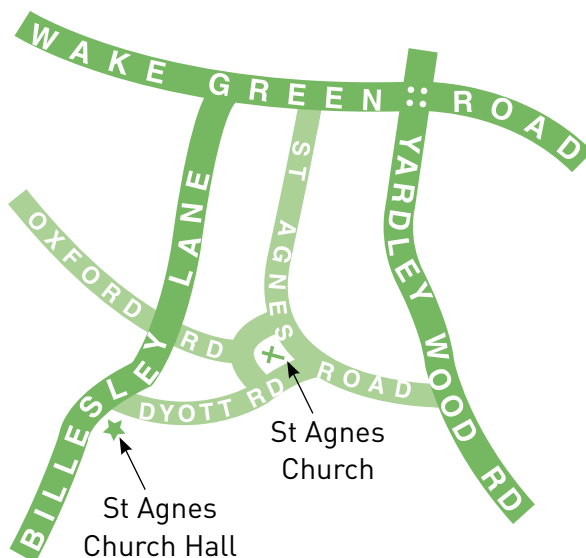
8.00am - A quiet, peaceful communion service.

9.15am - A communion service with traditional hymns played on the organ.

11.00am - A family friendly service with hymns and modern choruses and a Sunday School.

#### Wednesday Morning Prayer Meeting

6.30am - A chance to start the day in prayer or quiet reflection.



# WHY DOES GOD ALLOW

# SO MUCH SUFFERING?



The world seems to be full of suffering. There are wars and conflicts, famines and earthquakes. In the news we see refugees and displaced people, starving children and whole nations affected by poverty and disease. It seems so unjust and so wrong.

Our own lives are touched by sorrow as well. Many of us have experienced bereavement or ill health. We have worried about our family members or friends. We may have been ill treated at work or let down by broken relationships. Even if our own experience of life is relatively trouble free, we are all too well aware of those around us who suffer and we may well wonder 'why?'

Where is God, when there is so much grief and suffering? Why does He allow it to take place unchecked? Is it that He doesn't care? Is He helpless to intervene? Or is there a God who can help us to make sense of suffering, who does care and who can come alongside us and be there for us when we need Him most?

PLEASE COME AND EXPLORE THESE ISSUES  
WITH US IN A FRIENDLY INFORMAL SETTING AT  
ST AGNES CHURCH HALL ON SUNDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER AT 3PM  
AS WE ASK - WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SO MUCH SUFFERING?

*continued from overleaf...*

## **DON'T SUFFER ALONE**

The McMillan nurse explained to us as a family that I would be operated on through the abdomen and chest (breaking ribs as they went). It would be worse than a bad car accident, the operation could take 8 hours and I would be in hospital for up to six weeks.

Did I lose it? Did I fall to pieces? Did I rant or say I didn't deserve this? No. Through this black shock was still a light, God was still there holding me up, helping me to walk on these stormy waters. It was amazing. I still can't believe as I look back that I was so calm and so able to deal with it all.

*Death was not on my cards but if they had to be dealt I was being held up so nothing was too scary.*

*I did a lot of praying and bible reading which really helped. This verse was one of the ones which jumped out at me.*

***May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit***

*Romans 15: 13*

*So that was it. I started my chemo on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, and had my operation on the 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2005. Of course I thought of giving up, the pain was incessant and*

*intense. I was on a prayer cloud with prayers from so many different people. God heard those prayers and held me, and my family together. I came out of hospital on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December and am slowly, slowly recovering. It's a long slow job. I have learnt to be patient and humble, and bask in the knowledge that my God has got me through this.*

*I am lucky; I have always known that God is there for me and that I could talk to Him about anything at any time. Because of that faith I am annoyingly cheerful whatever life throws at me.*

*And what of the St Agnes cogs? Yes they stepped up in style!!!*