Week 8

We may wonder how appropriate it is to share our faith with people of other faiths. How do we feel if someone from another faith tells us how and why it is important to them? I am sure we would love to hear. There is no reason why we shouldn’t equally tell those of other faiths how and why Christianity is important to us.

Nearly 100 years ago there was a missionary in India called Stanley Jones, who was concerned about how Christianity could be made acceptable to the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists etc in India. Jones became friends with Mahatma Gandhi, and asked for his advice. Gandhi made four suggestions.

First, Gandhi said, all Christians must live more like Jesus. How do we do that? Practising the Holy Habits is a good start – so far we have focused on Biblical Teaching, Prayer, Gladness and Generosity, Breaking Bread and Fellowship. Make those our daily habits and we won’t go far wrong.

Second, Gandhi said practice your religion without toning it down. Sometimes we are told that we can’t have Christmas cards or decorations because that would be disrespectful to people of other faiths. This is completely wrong. Respecting people of other faiths does not mean we don’t practice our own. We must celebrate our festivals and share what we believe as much as we can, because other people want to know what we believe. John met a Muslim recently whose first question was ‘Do you believe in the Trinity?’

Third, Gandhi said put the emphasis on love, for love is the heart and soul of Christianity. He was spot on! Meeting everyone with love is living like Jesus and practising our faith.

Lastly, Gandhi said study other religions, so that you can understand others more sympathetically. Most of us probably know little about other faiths. We have an opportunity to learn the basics of Islam here at Bents Green on Saturday 9 November, from 10.00am to 3.30pm, when Chris Hewer, a Christian who has studied Islam for many years, will share his experience. Come if you can, and bring sandwiches if you can stay for the afternoon.

Stanley Jones was in full agreement with Gandhi on his four points. They remain a good guide to Christian witness today, whoever we are talking to.

*Produced by Daphne and John Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*