

## Revelation 5 verses 11 – 14 ‘Civic Service’ 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024

On the first morning I lived in Dronfield, I discovered that it was a very odd place, for one thing, the postman said ‘Good morning’ to me. It was a real shock for me, for though we had lived in a friendly part of London, I was completely unprepared for the friendliness of the town. A neighbour of ours in Whitton, where we previously lived, once won a crate of champagne from the Evening Standard for giving the best reason to live in London. His answer was that he did not waste 45 minutes each day saying good morning to complete strangers!! But I’m afraid our neighbour Russell was wrong, as I know Dronfield’s oddity is something which is both life giving and heartwarming and we all rejoice in and give thanks for it.

Today I’m wearing one of my Christmas suits and you may be wondering why I’m doing so. The answer lies in today’s date, which is the 29<sup>th</sup> September. I’m not wearing it because it is Gilli’s birthday or to remind us that it is only 87 days until Christmas. I’m wearing it because today is Michaelmas Day, which is when we celebrate St Michael. When I say St Michael, I don’t mean M&S and the M&S brand name since ‘Michael’ was only used because it was the name of Mr Marks’ dad!! Instead, St Michael is regarded as the chief of all angels and Michaelmas celebrates the ongoing ministry of angels to us all. When I mention angels, what time of year do you think I’m referring to? When I think of angels, I think of Christmas and its carol services and nativity plays when hundreds, maybe thousands, of children with their Christmas cold tell Mary and the Shepherds ‘Do not be afraid’ as they tell them the Good News of a new King born in Bethlehem and lying in a manger. Part of the ministry of angels can be defined by their speaking words of comfort and hope to those who in need.

Michaelmas reminds us that angels are not just for Christmas but for every day because we regularly need to hear their words of comfort, hope and Good News. But it is not only through angels can we hear such words. We can read these words in the stories we find, for example, in the Dronfield Eye; like the story of World War One medals being returned to their family. Or we may hear them at the Dronfield Community Get 2gether organised by Dronfield 2gether on the 31<sup>st</sup> October. Or we may note them on different social media platforms, like the Dronfield and District Forum on Facebook where help can be found, like finding a local, reliable and tidy painter/decorator. Or it may be through every one of us and the words we say to those we meet and the help and encouragement we can give; like saying ‘Good morning’ to people we meet in the street. Or it may be in the story this suit, and my two other ones, speak about of the Good News of God’s love, light and presence bursting into this world at Christmas time that we might know his Good News in our lives.

Our annual Civic Service is when we remind ourselves of how privileged we are to live here in this wonderful town and to celebrate the many voices of friendliness, kindness, goodness and faith we hear around us. May we all add our voices to these voices that we may continue to make this town a good place to live in.