

Viewpoint

Westcote Methodist Church

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God Has a Dream

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**Two extracts by
Michael Bridgwater from**

God Has a Dream :

A Vision of Hope for Our Time

by Desmond Tutu

DESMUND TUTU is a favourite of retired naval officer and Anglican Reader, Michael Bridgwater.

God Has a Dream was published in 2004, (Random House) and from it Michael offers us a collage of extracts in both his own words and those of the Archbishop.

Recently in *God is Not a Christian*, Tutu reflects on 40 years of public ministry, "For as I see and read about the suffering, the pain, and the conflict that God's people still undergo, their experiences cry out for the passionate involvement of people of faith in advocating for the values of God's Kingdom."

His editor comments: "The values underlying his advocacy – drawn from his faith and the vision of a shared humanity held out by the African spirit of *ubuntu* ("a person is a person only through other persons") – led him to become a campaigner".

"I have a dream," God says. "Please help Me to realize it. It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts, when there will be more laughter, joy, and peace, where there will be justice and goodness and compassion and love and caring and sharing. I have a dream that swords will be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, that My children will know that they are members of one family, the human family, God's family, My family."

Dear Child of God, I write these words because we all experience sadness, we all at times come to despair, and we all lose hope that the suffering in our lives and in our world will ever end. I want to share with you my faith and my understanding that this suffering can be transformed and redeemed. Indeed, God is transforming the world now – through us – because God loves us. This book is a cumulative expression of my life's work. I have tried to offer my understanding of what I have learned from the marvellous life with which I have been gifted and the extraordinary people I have met along the way. It is their faith and their courage that give me so much hope in the nobility of the human spirit.

In God's family there are no outsiders ... You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them. Can you imagine what would happen in this world if we accepted that fact about ourselves – that whether we like it or not we are members of one family?

We are made for companionship and relationship. It is not good for us to be alone. In our African idiom we say: "A person is a person *through* other persons." We are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation. In Africa, recognition of our interdependence is called *ubuntu* ... the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours.

I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness; it speaks about compassion. A person with *ubuntu* is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share.

They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. *Ubuntu* does not say, "I think, therefore I am." It says rather: "I am human because I belong. I participate. I share."

God Believes in Us

Dear Child of God, it is often difficult for us to recognize the presence of God in our lives and in our world. There are times when you wanted to whisper in God's ear: "God, we know You are in charge, but can't You make it a little more obvious?" Many of us can acknowledge that God cares about the world but can't imagine that God would care about you or me individually. The Bible has this incredible image of you, of me, of all of us, each one, held as something precious, fragile in the palm of God's hands. We are those precious things that God carries gently ... as if we were fragile because God knows that we are.

Many people believe that they are beyond God's love – that God may love others but that what they have done has caused God to stop loving them. But Jesus by his example showed us that God loves sinners as much as saints. Jesus associated with the scum of society. He scandalized the prim and proper people of his day who believed he was lowering standards horribly badly. Now anyone could enter heaven. We cannot condemn anyone to being irredeemable, as Jesus reminded us on the Cross.

If God is dreaming of transforming the world, you may ask, why does God need our help? The answer is quite simple: we are the agents of transformation that God uses to transfigure this world. In the Bible, when God wanted the children of Israel to be freed from bondage in Egypt, God could have done it alone, but God wanted a human partner ... so God went to Moses.

Each of us has a capacity for great evil but also for great good, and that is what convinces God that it was worth the risk of creating us. It is awesome that God the Omnipotent depends on us fragile and vulnerable creatures to accomplish God's will and to bring justice and healing and wholeness. God has no one but us. As the great African saint Augustine of Hippo put it, "God without us will not, as we without God cannot."

I have often told the story of the rustic priest in Russia who was accosted by a brash young physicist who had rehearsed all the reasons for atheism and arrogantly concluded, "Therefore I do not believe in God." The little priest, not put off at all, replied quietly, "Oh, it doesn't matter. God believes in you."

God does believe in us. God relies on us to help make this world all that God has dreamed of it being.

The informal group responsible for quarterly Viewpoints would like to hear from you, either in response to what has been written here or previously.

Alternatively you may have something to say which could help Viewpoint readers.

Maybe you find it difficult to put your thoughts into writing, and if so we would like to help by talking with you about them. Let us know and we will arrange for someone to visit you.

The Editor

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