

## A Reflection from a St Mary's Churchwarden (Charles Wilson)

We wish you all a Happy Easter, and holidays if you're so lucky!

The death of Professor Hawking (14<sup>th</sup> March 2018) has made me think. Until his final few years, he said that his unifying scientific principles about the physical universe would enable people to "know the mind of God". Thus, for most of his life, this great mind was open to the existence of God, even if he couldn't see a role for God in the physical universe. Hawking, of course, probably understood certain aspects of the universe better than any other person alive.

But in his final years, he concluded that God didn't exist at all. He said "*I'm an atheist*". Was he right about God? Or wrong? One of the greatest minds of the modern era may, by now, know which.

In our Lent course this year, we heard a tale from Bishop John Pritchard about someone he knew at his church, one Mr Wrigley. A no-nonsense, gruff Lancastrian, apparently he took a low profile as Sidesman. Yet once a year he publicly expressed his faith - on Easter Day. He'd walk from the back of their large church to the Vicar's vestry and say "*Christ is risen, Vicar*", to which the Vicar would always reply "*He is risen indeed, Mr Wrigley*".

I'm thinking that Mr Wrigley had his key life philosophy down to three words. Brilliant! How would I describe my life philosophy in three words? I wouldn't adopt Prof Hawking's "*I'm an atheist*". Try - God is love? Jesus is alive? Maybe "*Christ is risen!*" is best, because if Jesus didn't rise again to eternal life thereby conquering death, then we really "*are to be pitied*" if the only reason we are believing is for a happy time in this life, as the Apostle Paul said almost 2,000 years ago. (Google it!)

Often our doubts help to strengthen our faith. I bought a 9 year old motorbike two years ago, with only 3,500 miles on the clock. Bargain? Well, I hoped so. I knew it had hardly been used for 5 years, and I had doubts as to whether it would reliably take Julia and me around Europe. Happily, within a few hundred miles it broke down. Why happily? Because it happened in Horsham, not Thessalonica! The fuel system burnt out, probably due to old, wasted petrol and its lack of use. After repair, I did quite a few hundred miles in the UK, and decided to trust it completely. So now it has now taken us around Europe for two summers, 6,000 miles, without a murmur. But the breakdown forced me to face the issues it had, and it's stronger and fitter than ever. And Istanbul beckons...

So when we have doubts, let's work on them. Journey onwards on the path of life, exercising our faith against those doubts. Like Mr Wrigley did, every Easter.