

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **Tom Stuckey**

**Holy Habits** (Malcolm Down Publishing 2016 £8.99) by Andrew Roberts is a book about discipleship. It has been recommended by Roger Walton, our President, and many others in and beyond the Methodist Church. Andrew has been Director of Training for Fresh Expressions and is currently focusing on discipleship within our Learning Network. The book, drawing on his own extensive experience, gathers together a rich mix of biblical material, inspiring stories and teaching from a host of experts theological and practical.

The list of these is impressive: Alison Morgan, Morna Hooker, Mark Green, Jennie Appleby, David Watson, Sheila Cassidy, David Wilkinson, Roger Walton, David Prior, Philip Yancey, Lucy Moore, James Dunn, C.K.Barrett, Jean Vanier, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Barbara Glasson, Martyn Atkins, Inderjit Bhogal, F.F. Bruce, John Drane, Steven Croft, Ann Morisy, John Hull along with Pope Francis and Justine Welby. Some I have heard of, some not. As the author's own discipleship adventure unfolds I was not surprised to learn that David Watson was a big influence upon his life.

This is a long book (240 pages) in two parts. It gets better as it goes along. The final chapter on 'dare to dream' is really uplifting and motivating. I would suggest it be read at

the start and again and again as you journey through the eighteen chapters.

Part one examines the nature of discipleship where the author tells us about himself before inviting us to respond to the call of Jesus as presented by each of the four Gospels writers. Discipleship is an adventure aimed at transforming the world. Cost and sacrifice is demanded but there are signs and wonders on the way.

The second part, the remainder of the book, is an exposition of Acts 2.42-47 where we are introduced to ten holy habits: the study of the Bible, fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer, giving, service, eating together, gladness and generosity, worship and making more disciples. In every chapter you will find exposition, testimony, quotations, insights, practical illustrations, examples and illuminating stories.

What a lot of exciting things are happening! I already knew something about Messy Church, Godly Play, Street Pastors and Street Angels. I am grateful to the author for introducing me to instances of discipleship within the Grace Church Hackney, Bread Church, the Boiler Room Community, Sanctus I Manchester, Zac's Place, Cook@Chapel, Safespace in Telford and LegacyXS. These radical adventures in 'being church' illustrate Archbishop Welby's comment - quoted with approval by the

author - that worship and making disciples are the two reasons for the existence of the church 'everything else is decoration.'

Contained within the holy habits are not only telling phrases, direction and guidance but important lessons on many issues including living by faith, giving one's resources away (p.165), the importance of food and 'making the most of each precious day' (p.202). At the end of each chapter is a section entitled 'Suggestions for Further Reflection and Action' where one will find a Biblical passage, additional reading, bibliography and endnotes.

Even though the book is easy reading some may find the very comprehensiveness and richness of the material overwhelming. I found myself wondering how many readers would actually persevere to the end. This made me realise that this is really a '*dipping into book*'. The chapters, with their inspiring stories, ideas and insights do not have to be read in the order set. Each chapter can stand alone to inform, teach and inspire. Here is a full eighteen course meal. I encourage you to try some of the dishes! They will feed your imagination and faith.