

PRESS RELEASE

From Leicester Secular Society, 27 May 2010

Secularists Appointed as Lady Mayoress and Chaplain

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Leicester, Councillor Colin Hall, has chosen two members of Leicester Secular Society to support him in his role during his 2010-2011 year of office.

Eleanor S Davidson, who is well known by thousands locally for her work in the community, as a Humanist Celebrant at funerals, weddings and baby-namings and as a volunteer hospital chaplain for the non-religious, will be Councillor Hall's Lady Mayoress, supporting him in his ceremonial duties as Leicester's 'First Citizen'.

Allan Hayes, President of Leicester Secular Society, is to be the Lord Mayor's Chaplain.

Councillor Hall explains: "Eleanor is a remarkable woman who has earned much admiration and respect through her work with local communities. She is a successful and renowned student of local history. Now she will be making some of her own!

"The secular and humanist tradition has a long and distinguished history within Leicester and has played a significant role in making the city the diverse, tolerant and inclusive place it is today. I hope the appointment of Eleanor and Allan will give this tradition the recognition and respect it deserves."

Eleanor Davidson, who is a postgraduate student at the University of Leicester, says:

"I consider it an honour to have been invited to take this role and hope to inspire people to fulfil their potential and to make the most they can of life, not only for themselves but also for the wider community. I am looking forward to working with the Lord Mayor to emphasise that every citizen is valued and significant, and to play my part towards making One Leicester a vibrant and caring city for all its inhabitants. I look forward to the support of fellow secularists."

Dr. Allan Hayes, FRSA, who besides being President of the Secular Society is also a trustee of the British Humanist Association and of the Sea of Faith Network says: "I look forward to supporting the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress in the coming year. I particularly wish to help in promoting understanding, trust and mutual respect amongst Leicester's great variety of people and groups; and in encouraging working together in building One Leicester. Leicester Secular Society will play its part in this, as it has over the last one hundred and sixty years."

Former science teacher and Chair of Leicester Secular Society Mike Burden says: “I welcome the fact that two members of the Society will be taking a very public role for the coming year. Both Eleanor and Allan have worked for a long time representing people of no faith and they have sought to build bridges with the various faith groups in Leicester. Both are committed to inclusiveness and diversity, I wish them well.”

The first Mayor of Leicester was William fil. Leveric in 1209 but the ceremonial title Lord Mayor of Leicester was not established until 1928. Colin Hall is Leicester’s 83rd Lord Mayor and has served as a Labour councillor for most of the years since 1991. Coun Hall’s mother, Marilyn Hall served as Lady Mayoress for Coun Phil Swift in 1999-2000, and his father John Hall served as a city councillor for 16 years.

Leicester Secular Society, the world’s first such organisation, was formed in 1851 to oppose religious privilege and to defend the right of all to live their lives with or without religious faith, without discrimination. We stand for inclusiveness, and believe that only a secular state can truly protect and promote freedom of – and from – religion for all citizens as they wish. For this reason we will be doing all we can during the coming year to support and promote the slogan ‘One Leicester’. We also invite all who enjoy interesting talks and open discussion to our weekly meetings.

Further information and events at leicestersecularsociety.org.uk