

Christianity and Chocolate

"I've always had a bit of a sweet tooth!"

Salisbury born and bred, Robert Lewis' life is centred on the city's High Street. A verger at St Thomas' Church for 15 years, he now owns a chocolatier's at the other end of the street, adding to his well-known farm



shop at Britford.

"I grew up in St Thomas' from Sunday school onward, then became an altar server. Later on we needed a verger, but there were no takers, so I agreed to 'job share' the role with someone else.

"Over the years, we've developed a larger verging team sharing responsibility. Indeed, the parish now has more lay involvement in leadership, instead of things being left to the clergy.

"It's fun and a privilege to serve God in such an active church. Our redevelopment plans are very exciting, especially with more people in the Square in the evening in recent years."

Robert trained as a pastry chef after finishing school, in a company that also made chocolates. But is there any connection between chocolate and Christianity?

"I love being able to bring a little bit of affordable luxury into people's lives. People come in for a treat, often for other people, rather than themselves. That mix of joy and generosity strikes me as being something close to Christ.

"While I stock a lot of Belgian chocolates, I make my own products for Christmas and Easter. That allows me to express my God-given creativity. It also means my busiest times in the shop and the church coincide!"

Bishop's Letter

The Right Revd Dr Edward Condry
Bishop of Ramsbury

I gave up the car for Lent. I wanted to do something positive. I don't find giving up cake a great spiritual help (and not easy either!) I wanted to say something about our responsibility for God's creation.

It was - mostly - enjoyable. Rolling along Wiltshire's beautiful lanes is such a pleasure. There was one afternoon when I got soaked as if someone was throwing buckets of water over me.

I do not pretend that I have saved the planet by saving 1500 miles of car fuel. It did raise a lot of interest in all

kinds of places.

My blog was read by people in 45 countries, and national TV was sufficiently intrigued to do a piece about my carless Lent for Songs of Praise.

Some have asked if it was a Lenten and spiritual experience. Yes, it was.

First of all, I have always puzzled as to how giving up chocolate relates to Christ on the cross or in the wilderness.

Secondly, I am not one of those who feel themselves constantly in touch

with God. I am one whose faith is enlivened by glimpses of the divine. I certainly had more glimpses on the bike than driving the car. Someone once wrote a poem saying prayer

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was like a kingfisher – the sudden unexpected heart-lifting flash of gold and blue.

On the bike every journey becomes a pilgrimage: a time to converse with God. A car journey is so much more utilitarian, our aim to follow the satnav until we reach our destination

Supporting Single Parents

The Diocese's St Mary's Fund helps single parents in need, especially with household essentials like cookers, fridges, and bedding. Up to £300 can be awarded to replace worn items or £750 for mums setting up their first home.

Applications are received from those working to support single parents with dependent children, such as health visitors and social workers.

Diana James, Grant Administrator, said, "A Mum and young daughter moved back to Dorset to escape

as soon as we can.

Cycling reminds me that, as R S Thomas wrote, "Life is not hurrying on to a receding future".

I think that also means that I can leave a decision about next Lent until next year.



domestic violence. She was pleased to be home, but didn't have a cooker or washing machine, and her family couldn't afford to help. These are the situations we make a real difference to.

"For further information contact me on smcf@salisbury.anglican.org."

A Passion for Fairness

"I'm inclined to challenge things and ask awkward questions to satisfy my passion for fairness."

Sarah Gooch has just started her year as High Sheriff of Wiltshire, meaning she is Her Majesty's representative for law and order in the county.

"I'm there to support the courts, prisons, judiciary and emergency services. I have few formal responsibilities, but I meet a lot of

people and help make connections between them.

"I was a magistrate for 23 years, some of it as Chairman of the Bench for Northwest Wiltshire, so I have seen the system from the inside.

"The focus for my year is on giving young people opportunities."

Sarah's home church is All Saints' in Chitterne, and her commitment to fairness is rooted in Christian faith. But that faith took time to develop.

"I was confirmed in London, where we had an inspirational vicar. Yet I didn't have a strong church base, as I grew up mostly abroad.

"My husband, Arthur, had a more traditional church upbringing and his father was a churchwarden. So I became more 'churchy' after we married.

Success for St Martin's

St Martin's Primary School in Salisbury is celebrating an 'outstanding' SIAMS inspection report for religious education. The diverse school has high levels of special needs, English as a second language, and free school meals.

The report praised pupils' ability to speak about faith articulately and with empathy for different faiths.

Headteacher Kate Chisnall said, "Our diversity is a gift to be cherished. God nurtures all of us whatever our culture and faith. Our inclusiveness springs from our Christian ethos.

"Daily collective worship supports that ethos. A Churchwarden from the parish takes Songs of Praise every week. Our chair of governors is a priest who also takes a service for us once a fortnight."



"We came to Chitterne just before Arthur retired from the army, where my faith really took off. Until then it had been quite childlike and I didn't question things too deeply.

"Canon Edward Eason, then Vicar, helped me mature as a Christian. His gripping sermons taught me to 'walk by faith, not by light'.

"One thing I still struggle with is having patience with God's time!"

Sarah is also Deanery Lay Chairman of Stonehenge, and has been awarded the Aldhelm Cross for services to the Church. She says, "I really couldn't do all this without Arthur and the family."

