

Building Better Childhoods

“Walking home from school in Trowbridge aged about 14, I had a sudden thought, ‘I want to give people the childhood I wish I’d had’.”

After working for employers from Tesco to the MoD, Steve Dewar grabbed the chance to work full-time for Youth for Christ in Potterne, where he lives and worships at St.



Mary’s.

With a four year-old daughter, youth work isn’t the most lucrative profession, but Steve says, “I try to put obedience to God’s call above money. The job has its struggles, but I know it’s where He wants me to be.

“It’s a joy when a kid learns something new, almost like watching your own child grow up.”

With council services seeing drastic cuts, the Church is now the largest provider of youth services in Wiltshire. The club Steve runs three times a week at Potterne Youth Club is the only regular youth activity in the village.

“I see up to 50 young people in a typical week, and with different clubs running at different times, their ages run from six right up to seventeen. I also work in schools, on the streets, and in the villages of Worton and Marston.

“We keep running events in half-term and school holidays. That’s when we’re needed most, especially for young people with tough home circumstances.

“There’s a shortage of adult youth work volunteers. One person doing one thing can move mountains. Youth For Christ UK can help, and we can help locally. We’re at www.wiltshireyfc.org.uk.”

Bishop’s Letter

The Right Revd Dr Graham Kings
Bishop of Sherborne

Deep conversations sometimes happen in unusual circumstances. Over drinks recently, a lawyer asked me quietly about innocent suffering. How can a God of love and power allow it?

I said that there is no satisfying answer this side of heaven, but that there are hints and signposts in the celebrations of Christmas and Easter. By now we were moving through to dinner and there was little time to elaborate.

I mentioned that a lot depends on our view of God.

If we see him as sitting on the edge of the universe, peering down on us and twiddling his thumbs, then there is little hope of hints and signposts. But if we allow the heart of Christmas and Easter to shape our view of God, then things change perspective. He was intrigued.

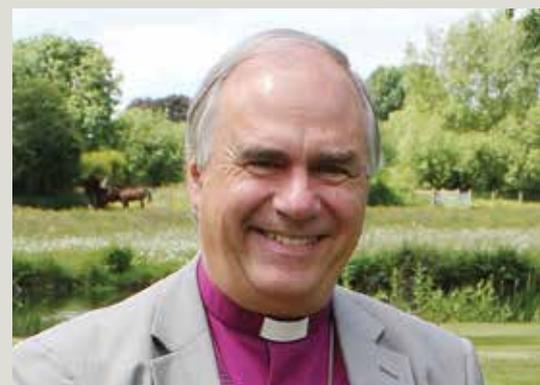
Over coffee, we continued. At Christmas, Christians believe that God became a vulnerable baby. He was nearly killed by Herod’s troops, but escaped to Egypt.

Our view of God should encompass God himself becoming vulnerable to

innocent suffering.

Some say: ‘If God made the world with all this suffering, then he should clear it up and pay for it.’ In reply,

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we may only point towards the cross: 'We believe that indeed is the heart of Good Friday.'

It is the linking of the messages of Christmas and Easter which opens up imaginations. Who was it who was born and died? One baby among many? One man among many?

A Toasty Warm Friary

The Franciscan Friary at Hilfield in West Dorset will be toasty warm this winter thanks to a new biomass boiler.

The cutting edge heating system is almost entirely Carbon Neutral. Even the fuel is sourced from local forests within a mile of the Friary. Volunteer labour and a local farmer's mechanical digger got the job done before winter.

The Revd Jonathan Herbert led the project, and said, "This isn't just about cheaper energy bills, but re-

If Jesus was - and indeed is - God as a real human being, then God himself has experienced innocent suffering. We discussed these ideas and agreed to meet again.

May God expand our imaginations this Advent and Christmastide.



connecting us with creation. It brings us a step closer to sustainable living, and makes us thankful for heat and hot water!"

The Friary is open to visitors and has an emphasis on the Franciscan values of care for creation, peace and justice, and respectful dialogue with other faiths.

A Tale of Faith and Farming

"Being a priest and being a farmer are good antidotes. Farming can be isolated, while priests work with people. After a difficult funeral or pastoral situation, however, the farm settles me."

Canon Gerald Osborne runs the family farm he grew up on, in Milton Lilbourne. He is also a priest in the Vale of Pewsey team and the Rural Dean of Pewsey. How did this unusual combination of vocations come about?

"I was always a churchgoer," says Gerald, "but it was only after I did an Alpha Course in the early '90s that my faith really got fired up."

"I couldn't give up the farm, but every time someone mentioned Ordained Local Ministry to me, something struck me inside. Then one day, our then Team Rector left an answering machine message asking to see me about vocation. I was finally priested in 2000."

Gerald's farm is organic, and he grows a mix of unusual arable crops like einkorn and emmerwheat with beef cattle and free range hens.

"Every farmer has a spirituality. One is close to the seasons, and the passage of birth and death. This gives one a sense of something beyond in the rhythm of life. Farming also connects me with many of Jesus' parables - I

A Hunger for Justice

A Wiltshire teenager organised an event where churchgoers asked an MP to put climate change on his agenda.

15 year-old Josh Perry set up the event at Middle Woodford Village Hall. 40 people attended the event in support of Christian Aid's *Hunger for Justice* campaign, which encourages churchgoers to lobby MPs on climate change.

Bishop Nicholas attended the event and said, "Young people have a tremendous sense of care for the environment. The Christian faith teaches us that the world is not ours to do with as we please, but God's for us to look after."

Josh added, "Mine is the generation that is going to have to live with climate change and deal with it. We need to get on with solving the problem."



know what it is to watch a seed growing and shooting."

These parables are prominent in Mark's Gospel. Gerald recently recited all 11,000 words of it from memory in St John the Baptist in Pewsey.

"I began to focus on Mark's Gospel after Bishop Nicholas preached on it at our Team Rector's induction a few years ago. I found myself memorising the first chapter, and it built from there.

"The hard work paid off when I saw how the audience engaged with the story. Listening to the whole Gospel in one sitting gave new life to familiar Bible stories."

