

Youth Sing Praises To God

In parishes across the Diocese, young people are key to ensuring the choral tradition thrives.

Marcus Stacey is head chorister at St Mary the Virgin in Bishop's Cannings. Now 16, he asked to join the choir aged just 9, after a Christingle Service.



"It's a big commitment but the church and choir feel like a large family, friendly and supportive. Alan Stonell, our Choir Master, is always willing to give me time and support. My sister Jasmine and my Mum also sing with us. The Royal School of Church Music medal scheme encourages me to keep going and progress musically.

"Singing and going to church will always be a part of my life, wherever it takes me."

Marcus is also an altar server and now has the Bishop's permission to serve the chalice. He echoes St Augustine in saying that singing is like praying twice.

Another 16-year-old head chorister is Rachael Ibbetson, from St John the Baptist, Devizes, the youngest of four children who all grew up in the choir

"I remember sitting in on a practice when I was 7", she says, and thinking, 'I can't wait to be a part of this!' I love the feeling of unity in the choir. We are a really diverse group of people but once we have sheets of music in our hands, we mix and work in harmony as one.

"The presence of God is obvious! I was encouraged to go to confirmation classes, and to be an active Christian member of society - and I have made friends for life."

Bishop's Letter

The Right Revd Dr Edward Condry
Bishop of Ramsbury

There were ten of us at 8.00am Holy Communion one recent Sunday. The words of the service were taken from the Book of Common Prayer.

The sidesman handing out the books at the door was friendly and welcoming. We sat in the white-painted chancel to say our prayers. There was a great stillness.

There were memorials to former vicars on the wall, and in the floor. A stone knight lay with crossed legs in the side chapel. The stained glass had images of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

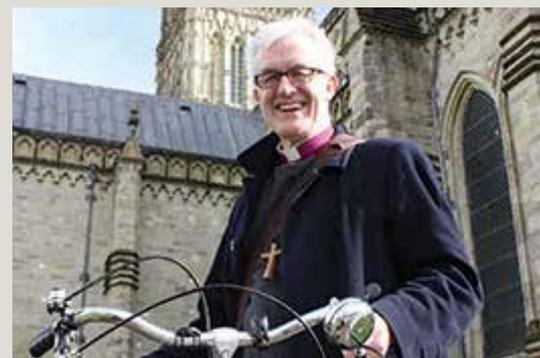
The weekly notice sheet spoke of a quiz to raise funds for the church in the Sudan. Prayers were asked for those in need, trouble and sickness, as well for a couple getting married, and for two babies to be baptized.

The ten of us worked slowly through the familiar words: "Almighty God, unto whom... We do not presume... Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee for feeding us..."

As we did so I reflected that this was remarkable. A faithful group of witnesses, willing to gather together

week by week to pray for those who weep and those who rejoice; a group of people willing to lift their gaze and think of others.

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A small Wiltshire village community connecting to the events of the world. A group of people willing to come because they believe that serving God and serving others is worth it.

The church exists for others. We offer worship for others, for God's world.

Those ten people are a powerful

Multiplied Joy - And Stress!

A mum from St Denys the Minster in Warminster has started a church club for parents of twins, triplets and other multiple siblings.

Amanda Williams is mum to 20-month-old twins Thomas and Joshua and 4-year-old Jessica. She says, "It is a support network because people don't understand what it is like to be a parent of multiples. It is always all hands on deck and can be very draining!"

"I thought it would be good to talk to other people who totally understand.



"We already have 34 families which gives people a chance to meet and share tips.

"It also gives the children a chance to play with other multiples, which they may not have often."

A Future For Young People

"Julie Plumley and her partner, James O'Brien, are the people you should interview. I just help out on the board."

Terence Rosslyn Smith's reply is typically modest. The parishioner of Holy Trinity, Bowerchalke is married to Kate, a priest. A conversion experience as a young man led Terence to work in lay church roles and consider ordination, before a career leading social enterprises.

"Unlike charities, social enterprises

make money in the open market, but reinvest profits in the community. I ran a programme in Birmingham which trained hundreds of young people."

On retiring to Wiltshire, his faith motivated him to keep working with disadvantaged people. Then he met Julie Plumley, a proud 'Dorset farm girl' and qualified social worker, who set up Rylands Farm near Sherborne.

"I was helping decide which projects should get funding from a government rural regeneration scheme. I was so impressed by Julie's presentation that I went to visit the site. Due to my background in social enterprise, Julie asked me to mentor her.

"It has been a privilege to help Rylands Farm expand. We now work with 100 local young people,

Restoration After Divorce

A Poole vicar has established a course for people dealing with separation and divorce.

The Revd Charlie Boyle, from All Saints in Branksome Park, is running the course, entitled *Restored Lives: Recovery from Divorce and Separation* this autumn. He ran the course at his previous church in Cornwall.

Charlie is happily married to Sarah, but has been through divorce. "It was a very low point", he says, "If only one person doesn't have to feel the same by coming to the course, it'll be worth it.

"It is all about giving hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Although run by the church, the course is open to people of any faith or none."



mostly aged 11-16, every week. All have truanting or behaviour problems. They come for three hours every week, helping to look after the animals or other farm tasks.

"Even in the roughest winters, they seem to love getting into gumboots and being outdoors in the wild weather.

"It is inspiring to see young people who had struggled to relate to others learn to be a part of a team. Some come to us labelled as 'failures' and go on to City & Guilds courses and careers in farming.

"We also work with older people, many with dementia. We are now looking to take on a second premises in Dorset, working with different groups."

