



## A HEART FOR THE YOUNG

Clare Cooke tells us why she is passionate about telling children about God

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## SAYING THANK YOU

The first Company of St Boniface medals will recognise local heroes

# LOOKING AT OUR WELCOME WITH FRESH EYES

Churches across Devon are being encouraged to improve the welcome they offer to visitors and tourists; showing that their churches are still alive, still relevant and that the Christian message is open to all.

A Welcome Guide has been devised by the Growing the Rural Church (GtRC) department, to equip churches with quick and easy ways to improve the welcome that they offer, whilst recognising that churches may have limited resources.

Katharine Otley, diocesan Communications and Engagement Officer, who created the guide, said that many of the ideas came from her previous role in the National Trust, as well as speaking to people who are daunted by church.

She said: "To ensure a great welcome we need to keep different types of visitors in mind. For those planning their visit beforehand, we should try and have information online. For those passing the church and considering going in, we must ensure that the language we use is warm and easy to understand.

"Once people are inside our churches we want them to feel comfortable and peaceful. By looking at our churches with fresh eyes and making small changes, I believe we can show the church as alive, relevant and warmly welcoming."



She added that her favourite part of the guide is a small subsection called 'Help people connect'. "I learnt when I worked for the National Trust that people are most interested in learning about other people. Showing someone's faith story is a powerful tool in showing that the Church is very much alive and that God is the answer that people are desperately searching for."

The guide is available for churches to loan and will soon be available to download from our website. Please contact Katharine Otley for more information: [katharine.otley@exeter.anglican.org](mailto:katharine.otley@exeter.anglican.org)

# CELEBRATING READERS



About 350 people attended the Reader celebration service in Exeter Cathedral which included the admission and licensing of new readers.

Those readers admitted and licensed were: Hillarie Griggs, Hilary Hyde, Caroline Poultney, David Richards and Elaine Vestey. Those licensed after a transfer

were: Deborah Maitland, Melanie Cleveland, Rebecca Colpus, Linda Dodwell, Deborah Bayliss, Peter Scott and Sam Upham.

They are pictured here with The Bishop of Plymouth, the Right Revd Nick McKinnel and the Archdeacon of Exeter, Canon Andrew Beane.

## RECOGNISING LOCAL HEROES

The first Company of St Boniface medals will be presented during a special service led by the Bishop of Exeter at the Cathedral on Saturday 9 November at 4pm.

The Company of St Boniface has been introduced by Bishop Robert to honour people who have made a substantial contribution to the life of the church in Devon. It also seeks to recognise people who have built up our overseas links. **Everyone is welcome to attend this celebration!**



## INTERFAITH FORUM 4 YOUTH

Young people are invited to the Devon Interfaith Forum 4 Youth.

The day of activities, workshops, visioning and planning for the future will take place at Lupton House on November 17 from 11am to 4pm.

It is free to attend with a free vegetarian buffet lunch.

Contact Marc at [interfaithyouthproject@gmail.com](mailto:interfaithyouthproject@gmail.com)



## A POSITIVE CHANGE

The Diocese of Exeter is piloting a new energy saving initiative. It is a great opportunity for action through Devon churches to reduce carbon emissions and save money at the same time.

The Energy Audit Scheme has been announced by Church House's environment team and Exeter joins the dioceses of Canterbury, Durham, Gloucester and Manchester in this highly subsidised trial.

The scheme is a comprehensive survey of churches and buildings quantifying current energy use, and recommending costed and prioritised opportunities to make savings.



Go to [www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/energy/energy-basket/audit](http://www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/energy/energy-basket/audit) for more information and to register.

**It's first come, first served, so register soon!**



Serving with joy...

# CLARE COOKE

Clare Cooke recently took up the post of Mission Advisor for Early Years (Under 5s) in the Diocese of Exeter.

Previously a teacher, she and her husband run a farm in North Devon where they live with their three young children. She tells the Magazine why she is so passionate about bringing The Gospel to the youngest people in society.

**Were you brought up in the Church of England or did you find faith at a later stage in life?**

I was brought up in Bishops Nympton where I regularly attended the Methodist Chapel. I was confirmed at 14. When I went to university my faith wavered but I am now really enjoying a renewal of my faith through my children who are now 7,6 and 4. Their natural spirituality, awe and wonder inspires me, as does their unquestioning faith.

**How important is it to you that children learn the Gospel at a very early age?**

I want to make church as exciting as possible for young children so they have strong foundations in their faith. It is a privilege to be able to ignite their early faith and set them up for life. I want them to know first-hand the love of God.

**Tell us about Budding Bishops.**

Budding Bishops runs for two hours on a Monday morning in Bishops Nympton Village Hall. It is a group that mums, dads and grandparents come to with their bumps, babies, toddlers and pre-school children. Each week we do a range of messy play around a Bible story theme, for example fishing in a paddling pool (Feeding of the 5000), looking for sheep in moon sand (The Lost Sheep), and squelching cooked pasta 'snakes' (Creation).



**What did you do before you began your role as Mission Advisor?**

I worked in a federation of three Primary schools in North Devon. One was a community school and two were church schools. Initially I was a Key Stage 2 teacher but then I became the Special Needs Coordinator and Deputy Headteacher.

**Living on a farm must have its moments of extreme joy, sadness and exhausting challenges. What are the best and worst parts of farm life?**

The best bits are watching the seasons come and go and seeing the beauty of God's creation at first hand. It is a real joy to bring new life into the world and then watch animals grow and develop.

The worst parts are the long hours and being outside in all the elements!

**What sustains you in your work as Mission Advisor?**

Seeing all the exciting children's work which is happening across the Diocese is truly sustaining. It is incredible all the hard work people are putting into building God's kingdom with the generations that have rarely come into contact with church before. We have a parent and toddler 'swimming and prayer' group near Sampford Peverell (which will hopefully lead to baptisms) and volunteers reaching out in Barnstaple to provide faith-based antenatal classes.

To get in touch with Clare, email:  
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# ADVENT IS A SEASON TOO PRECIOUS TO LOSE

The Very Revd  
Jonathan Greener



Christmas comes very early to Exeter Cathedral. This year on 16 November. At least that's the day that the Christmas Market opens. Barely is Remembrance Sunday over before we are immersed in Christmas Carols and festivities, which leaves us with a bit of a dilemma. You don't want to dampen people's Christmas spirits, but how to do justice to the season of Advent, when you're surrounded with trees and lights and Christmas tunes?

I'm a big fan of Advent. I came to realise how important the season is when I went to visit Fiona, my new-born God-daughter, in hospital, a long time ago. I remember saying to her parents: "I'm not quite sure how I'd cope with having my life turned upside down in this way." To which her mother responded: "Nor would we, if we hadn't had nine months to get used to the idea!" God in his providence gives us a period of preparation for the birth of a child, and a period of preparation for the birth of his Son. That's the season we call Advent.

Advent is a season of hope and expectation for the coming of Christ and the coming of God's kingdom.

So the Prophet Isaiah gets a lot of airtime in Advent, with his vision of a God who will come and save us: *"The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ... Waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert."*

If ever you visit the Holy Land, the wilderness is a vast, rocky landscape, barren and bereft of water. But Isaiah portrays a new world, where the burning sand shall become a pool, where sorrow and sighing flee away. Does Isaiah in fact paint a picture of a world beyond climate change? The transformation of our world is certainly our Advent hope and expectation, as we await God's coming kingdom.

Advent, then, fuels our imagination, builds hope, inspires action, and draws us closer to God. A season too precious to lose. At least our Sunday services at the cathedral allow us to switch off the lights on the tree, to enjoy again our Advent hymns and music, and to look forward.



There are loads of Advent and Christmas 2019 resources available for the Church of England #FollowtheStar campaign: <https://www.churchofengland.org/christmas>. Every church is encouraged to put up a star as a way of inviting people into church this Christmas.

