

THE TURN OUTWARD

The Venerable
Douglas Dettmer,
Archdeacon of Totnes



As we enter the 2020s, we can be certain that one issue will remain at the top of public consciousness across the world, and rightly so. The condition of our natural environment, now increasingly at risk due to climate change, affects all areas of life and is a matter of concern for us all.

Biblical faith has much to say about human responsibility for God's creation, and encouragingly the level of engagement by local churches with environmental stewardship continues to increase. Some readers of this magazine may plan to participate in the Big Green Event at Exeter Cathedral on February 22nd (with the Bishop of Salisbury as keynote speaker), an opportunity for reflection on these matters in the light of faith. See page 2 for further details.

Personal growth in one's commitment to the care of the earth, for the sake of all who live on it now and of future generations, is a good and necessary thing in itself. At the same time, like other kinds of growth in our lives by the grace of God, increased environmental awareness offers multiple benefits—in this case, spiritual and moral ones.

That is because engaging more deeply and personally with the care of the natural environment requires us to turn outwards from ourselves to what is outside and around us—to the created world, to our neighbours, ultimately to the mystery of God from whom all good gifts come.

The act of turning outward from ourselves, and building up our moral muscles is essential in our effort to be more like Jesus. Being more aware of the effect of our practical choices on the world around us keeps our vision focused on what is outside ourselves. It will also help us notice the needs of our neighbours more intently too—which is the first step in responding to them.

This month's issue of the magazine is full of information about opportunities for loving and serving others in the community around us. As we reflect on our environment and its care—as we must—we practise the outward turn of the mind's eye and the heart's concern, the shift of our focus onto that which is outside ourselves, and may well find our field of vision expanded in the process. If so, **our engagement with**

God's good and beautiful creation will be a blessing to us in more ways than one.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND DEVON

GOOD NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE OF EXETER | february 2020

Inside:



THE BIG GREEN EVENT

Where faith and the
environment meet

BE A GOVERNOR



Reverend Kevin
Chandra tells
us why being a
school governor
is so rewarding

THE PRAYER BEHIND THE PASTORS

Many of us will be familiar with the work of the Street Pastors who offer reassurance, safety and support to those on our streets between 10.30pm and 3am on a Friday and Saturday night. What is less well known is the crucial part played by Prayer Pastors in supporting the teams out on our streets.

Diane Hurst, Exeter Street Pastors Coordinator, said "Prayer is the bedrock of the Street Pastor movement, and we wouldn't deploy without Prayer Pastors. They are the powerhouse behind the scenes, bringing everything that happens on the street to God and expecting and getting His answer, in some cases immediately."

In Exeter there are a minimum of two Prayer Pastors who stay in the base at Unlimited CofE Church and support the teams on the street, praying into situations like violent fights or lost phones. The role is perfect for someone who would like to be involved but wouldn't feel



comfortable on the streets. Diane says many of the Prayer Pastors comment on how valuable the role is to them. She said "One lady told me, 'I am more blessed than I imagined by serving this ministry; my relationship with God deepens as I fellowship with others and witness God working in the lives of people on the streets of Exeter'."

The crucial role played by the Prayer Pastors means that, if there are not enough Prayer Pastors available, there will be fewer teams on the streets. Diane said "We don't deploy unless there are two Prayer Pastors at base, and therefore

sometimes that means that the Street Pastors need to stay in and pray. This can result in just one team going out rather than two teams." You don't have to be particularly gifted at praying to be a Prayer Pastor— you just need to be a committed Christian, over 18, take an active part in a local church, and be available to cover one prayer shift a month.

Street Pastors was pioneered in London in 2003 by Les Isaac. There are now over 300 teams in the UK including Exeter, Plymouth, Barnstaple, Bideford, Tiverton, Okehampton, Cullompton, Tavistock, Torquay, Ivybridge and Totnes.



Training for new recruits in Exeter starts on 24th February. If you are interested in getting involved in Exeter or anywhere else see: www.streetpastors.org

THE BIG GREEN EVENT

You are invited to a one-day festival of thought and action at Exeter Cathedral to join up faith and the environment. The aim is to inspire us all to make a difference on climate change and other crucial issues.

The keynote speaker will be Bishop Nick Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury who is the lead bishop for environmental affairs. Workshop contributors include Christian Aid, Tearfund and the University of Exeter.

Workshops will include science, theology, food, direct action, buildings & ecochurch, biodiversity, global perspective &



the Lent Book. There will also be a creative corner, seminars, panel discussion and more.

Tickets cost £8 to cover costs. Under 16s are free.

To book your tickets go to:
exeter.anglican.org/events/the-big-green-event/



Churches in Devon are being invited to take part in the Big Church Survey. It's a national survey to help churches find out more about their congregations and follows on from the recent Talking Jesus research. It will help churches to find out who is coming to church? What issues are important to them? What has their faith journey been? What help would they like to grow in their faith? How do they feel about sharing their faith with others etc?

Churches which took part in a pilot last year said it was very useful - for example a lot of respondents at one church said they had no experience of individual Bible study so the church started a very successful Bible Reading Group.

The survey takes 10 minutes to complete online or on paper. Churches have asked people to complete it as part of a church service or meeting.

There is loads more info here:

www.bigchurchsurvey.org

If you would like to take part please contact Chloe Axford in the Diocese Communications Department: chloe.axford@exeter.anglican.org or call 01392 294905 for more information



NEW LIFE FOR OLD CANDLES



The Recycled Candle Company in Exeter are urging people to donate their used Christmas candles. They will then remove the wax and melt it down to reuse as beautiful new candles. They accept all candles including tealights with metal sustainers, pillars and candles in glass containers. You will also get a discount off any purchases! Drop yours off in the shop at 16 Gandy Street or see therecycledcandlecompany.co.uk

SERVING WITH JOY: NEW NIGHT SHELTER

A new night shelter has opened at Abbotsbury CofE church in Newton Abbot. Churches and charities in the town are working together on the project, known as CROWNS. People who need a place to stay are served a hot three-course meal, given a bed for the night, breakfast and a packed lunch to take away. At the moment the shelter is just open on Friday nights but the hope is to start opening on Saturdays too. Organiser Rev'd Gareth Regan said: "It's part of our passion that people who use the shelter should be seen as human beings who we treat in the very best way we can, not just 'homeless people'"



KEVIN CHANDRA *Serving with joy...*

Reverend Kevin Chandra grew up in London before moving to Birmingham and then settling in Devon. He tells us how he came to faith, how he first became a school governor and how he sees it as a way to follow the example of Jesus.

How did you come to faith?

My parents were from the Caribbean and I was given the choice to follow Hindu or Christian faiths. The heroes of the Bible seemed more real and the person of Jesus just seemed so powerful and relevant. Hindus have better food though! I let go of faith in my teens. Church did not seem to understand who I was or what my life was like; it was old fashioned, white and felt judging. I then found some Christian students and with the help of an encouraging vicar and his inspiring wife, met God the Holy Spirit and my faith found a way to be alive again.

How did you become a school governor?

The first time was in Birmingham where I was a vicar. I was invited to join the Governing Body at the local school, as I had experience with youth and schools.

What is the most rewarding thing about the role?

What is most rewarding is seeing the children enjoying their school life. They learn in so many ways and our teachers and workers understand that. The respect that is shown, the courtesy, the fairness, the listening are all part of their learning. When we get it right, our policies and relationships with families and the community should all work together so that we can show that same respect, and fulfilment, for each child.

How is being a school governor a way of living out your faith?

Living out faith follows the example of Jesus. We can serve, show love and respect to our brothers and



sisters even if they happen to be children. Faith should also be relevant and we should be always ready to show that Christian faith is a powerful part of our lives that can help us (and them) to become better people and make our world a better place.

We can't imagine anyone nodding off in your sermons. How do you keep things exciting?

Presentation is important in church, why be boring when a clear voice and stimulating ideas can help folks engage and reflect, worship and lament.

You strike us as a very upbeat person. Have you had any experience where something hasn't gone so well, and how have you learnt from it?

Upbeat despite life not going so well. I try to be honest and life is usually (like sport) about the taking part not the winning. So I walk with people if I can, being honest and taking the wins but learning from the losses. Numerous things go wrong, often admin, sometimes misunderstood words. Sometimes my grand plans need to be considerably scaled back and I have to accept that. There are also plenty of occasions where I have made a mistake and have had to make the apologies. Saying sorry is humbling but is the example Jesus taught us- forgive us our sins as we forgive... (don't ask the wife though, she may give conflicting evidence!)

If you would like to find out more about our campaign to find 100 new volunteer governors for Devon CofE schools, and how you can play a part, go to: <https://exeter.anglican.org/schools/be-a-governor/>