

Trowbridge Passion Play **THE NARROW ROAD**

7.30 pm **Friday, 8 April** Holy Trinity Church, Trowbridge

The Riding Lights Theatre Company who are based in York present a Passion Play each year in York Minster. This year they are bringing it to Trowbridge for a one night performance. It is described as a moving combination of powerful theatre, meditation and corporate worship.

Tickets cost £8 - telephone 01225 777921 or on the door

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**Sleep Out in support of the Homeless**

The **Alabaré Sleep Outs** are taking place overnight on Friday 4 March at a range of venues across the South West. The aim of the sleep outs is to raise awareness of the work that Alabaré does and to raise vital funds for a number of our projects.

The following sleep out events have been confirmed: Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury; St Thomas' Church, Salisbury; Porton Church, Porton; All Saints Church, Westbury; St Mary's Devizes.

Dig out your sleeping bag and come and join us – or if you can't make it please sponsor the event or please contact **Tony Richmond on 01722 322929**

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**Christian Aid Week this year is May 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>.**

The focus for 2011 is our Nicaraguan partner Soppexcca, which works with co-operatives of small-scale coffee farmers who want to transform their communities. Soppexcca provides employment opportunities, training, loans and coffee processing facilities as well as being able to increase the profits farmers make and enabling them to invest back into their communities.

Find inspirational resources for your church services, fundraising and much more online at <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/christianaidweek/index.aspx> and request more information or a speaker for your church by calling the local office in Thornbury – 01454 415923 - or emailing Wiltshire regional coordinator Anna Potts on [APotts@christian-aid.org](mailto:APotts@christian-aid.org).

Poverty – let's end it.

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**February**  
**2011**  
**Newsletter**

**Events to watch out for in 2011 -**

There are a few places left on the day retreat on

**Tuesday 29 March** - Ivy House Warminster - **Leader: Ann Lewin**

Another chance to have space and time to reflect and pray about our lives as Christians together – building our faith and sharing with others (Contribution of £10.00 includes coffee, tea and lunch – subsidised by WCT)

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And don't forget the Wiltshire Churches Together FORUM on

**Saturday 14 May** at Market Lavington Village Hall (9.30am – 3.30pm)

**'Making a Difference Together'**

Key Note Speakers:

**Bishop Graham Cray**

Archbishops Missioner and Leader of the Fresh Expressions Team

**Martin Cavender**

Director of ReSource

"Helping churches and leaders bring renewal for mission"

***Come to be inspired, excited and encouraged by what is happening and what can happen through the power of the Holy Spirit when Christians work together!***

Contact Liz or Kate for further details of these events

## The challenge to Christians to respond to the Big Society.

Everywhere we turn we seem to hear about the Government's plans for Big Society, and their "vision" to see power and decision making devolved to local communities. This comes along with enormous cuts in public spending threatening many aspects of society, and resulting in thousands of redundancies, cuts in benefits and serious concerns about education, defence and health.

Much of my work on behalf of Wiltshire Churches Together involves meeting with representatives of Wiltshire Council and the Voluntary Sector. I have attended several consultations and workshops about how we can all work together to try to meet the challenges ahead. One of the areas of greatest concern is provision for children and families, especially those with particular needs.

The Christian community has a long history of social provision. The Church of England was largely responsible for education, health provision and implementation of the law at local level until the State stepped in. Now the pendulum appears to be swinging back and faith communities are seeking ways in which they can work with others to respond to local needs.

We all know that many individual Christians and people of other faiths play a big role in providing compassionate and loving care to neighbours and friends, but more can be achieved if we really work together. Now is the time for Churches Together Groups to really examine their roles, to link up with other groups, and assess how they might help to meet local needs.

Many are already doing this. In Warminster the Food Bank has really taken off and is now looking to expand its services. In Westbury the churches are working on an initiative called Cross Point, providing a hub for advice and local services. In Trowbridge, Breakthrough offers support to the homeless, and the Street Pastor scheme responds to the needs of young people in the night time economy. In other areas there are Debt Counselling schemes, food voucher schemes, IT training and support for the elderly, and much more.

Wiltshire Council have recently introduced a rolling scheme called Good Neighbours, which provides a trained worker to liaise with voluntary groups and a link with those in need in rural communities. This is an ideal way for churches to explore the needs in their local communities. For more information contact Wiltshire Council: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk) and enter "Good Neighbours" in the search box.

Come and find out more and be inspired to put plans into action by attending the Wiltshire Churches Together Forum on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Details within this Newsletter.

**Kate Sax**

## Have You Tried This?

An important date in the calendar of the **Worton and Marston Family of Churches** is the Welcome to Newcomers' party held on a Friday evening at the end of January.

At an earlier committee meeting a list is made of houses which have new occupants and to whom a personal invitation will be delivered. Established villagers are invited to purchase tickets and to come and bring their own welcome. Representatives from organisations such as Brownies, Gardening club, Worton and Marston Link are welcome too.

Coming into the lighted hall from the darkness outside is very welcome. There will be someone to welcome you, to lead you to the wine or soft drinks and to make a few basic introductions. Long tables down the centre of the hall display appetising plates of good.

When it becomes obvious that most people are gathered, a formal welcome is given by one of the clergy. The food is then ready and the chat recommences to continue to another hour or so. *Janet Ruddick*

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### 'Kingdom before Tribe'

Churches Together in Salisbury recently co-hosted an event with Christians in Politics, a cross-party group set up to encourage Christians to engage the political sphere.

The aim was to encourage more Christians to join a political party, whichever one they feel most comfortable with, and to join the Christian group working with that party. For the three main parties, these are: Christian Socialist Movement, Conservative Christian Fellowship, Liberal Democrat Christian Forum.

The focus was on the need to work from the inside, rather than shout from the sidelines; to participate, not just to protest.

The speakers were Dr Michael DeLashmutt, Director of Studies at Sarum College; John Glen, MP for Salisbury; Zoe Dixon, Director of the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum; and Fay Howard, Labour Councillor in Swindon.

Mary Douglas, who helped organise the event, said, "This was a great evening. There was a really good atmosphere and the speakers provided a powerful demonstration of how Christians can engage in the political arena with integrity."

For information on Christian engagement in politics, and stimulating reading, go to [www.susa.info](http://www.susa.info).