

Be the change

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Acts 9:1-6 [7-20]

This is the astonishing story of Saul who, after an intense experience of Jesus, is completely and utterly changed, in an instant, from persecutor of Jesus' followers to someone whose firm vocation is to spread the word about Jesus.

But there are other people there, that day, on the Road to Damascus. We read that Saul's companions "stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one". We don't know who they are, although presumably, when they set out on their journey they, like Saul, had been committed to the persecution of Christians. Nor do we know whether they came to know Christ after their experience. What we do know is that they led Saul into Damascus, where he spent several days in what we can only imagine was a state of shock – sightless, unable to eat or drink.

Elsewhere in the city is a disciple named Ananias, who is visited by God in a vision. "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen," God says, and Ananias is immediately obedient to God's will.

Paul the apostle will travel tens of thousands of miles, write tens of thousands of words (somewhere between a quarter and half of the New Testament), in order to spread the good news of Christ. This isn't just about him, though, but also those who led him into Damascus, and Ananias, who also played their part.

There's a saying, often misattributed to Mahatma Gandhi – "Be the change you want to see in the world". How can you be the change today? 🌱



Lord God, strengthen us in our resolve to do your will. Show me where and how I can make a difference. Amen.

Book review

by Heather Cooke

Heather Cooke looks at *"The Canon Clement Mysteries"*, by Richard Coles.

Whether it's G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown or Ellis Peters and her Brother Cadfael, clerical sleuths have long proved popular with readers. A relative newcomer is the likeable Canon Clement, a creation of the multi-talented Revd Richard Coles. With titles including *Murder before Evensong*, *A Death in the Parish* and *Murder at the Monastery*, readers are left in no doubt of the church-related settings of the books.

These are murder mysteries, yet with a dash of church history and practice and a sprinkling of gentle humour. And dachshunds. Although published in this third decade of the twenty-first century, the books are set in the 1980s, before the ordination of women and while Prayer Book services still flourished. And in Daniel Clement's rural English parish, another lord (of the manor) still holds some sway. With excellent characterisation and plotting, in both senses, these books are an entertaining read for churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike. 🌱

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

My farming neighbours are two cousins who've been our wise guides since we arrived. They didn't agree with everything we do on our holding, laughing as much as grimacing at our ideas about hedges and tree pastures, but they've each given themselves wholeheartedly. This week the older man died. He never went to a doctor or hospital until he collapsed, taking just three months

to die. He lived all his life on the farm, speaking Welsh, looking as though he'd grown up out of the rocks and earth, a craggy man in holed clothes and worn-out wellies. In his younger days he'd been a boozier, a darts player and a fighter, but those things were left behind at the end. Finally he was grateful to be visited by his half-brothers, cousins and neighbours in hospital. We will bury him in the chapelyard up the lane in a few weeks' time.

Diolch, Jack! 🌱

“Seek a relationship when you pray, not answers. You won't always find answers, but you will always find Jesus.”

Mike Schmitz, (1974), American Roman Catholic priest, speaker, author and podcaster