

Shake After School Club

Jokes aside, we are very sad to lose Rachel Stewart and Viv Thornton who have put so much of their love, inspiration and effort into Shake. They will be missed but we are happy for them as Rachel is going into teacher training and Viv is continuing her role as overseer of the running and activities at the St Andrew's Centre, due to open in November. Also much missed will be the lovely Charlotte Seward who has started a new job, helping people with cerebral palsy.

We are delighted, however, to welcome the Hertford Team curate Ginni Green as one of the helpers as well as Tom (St Andrew's) and Martin (All Saints') who are already well known to the youngsters. Maria Henriksson-Bell, a relative newcomer (with Shake since autumn), has agreed to coordinate the

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT!!!

Shake After-School Club:

is held every Wednesday at 3.30pm in church and is the place for young people to hang-out and relax on their way home from school. It offers a variety of games, activities, drinks and snacks, some of which we charge for, but most of which are free.

running of and be the contact person for matters regarding Shake. They would all appreciate your prayers and general support as a new school year starts.

If you think of anything that might be of use to the kids at Shake or have ideas for crafts or activities, don't hesitate to contact Maria on mariahenrikssonbell@mac.com or 01992 509358.

The Book of Proverbs

Worth a deviation says Bill Church as he explores its pages.

There are different opinions about the Book of Proverbs. Some think it is a treasury of good advice and deep thinking; others think it is a junkyard not worth visiting. "A stitch in time saves nine and all that sort of nonsense" snorted a usually mild clergyman about it.

My view is nearer the treasury than the junkyard, but maybe even more like a lucky dip; you may pull out a real gem but you may find yourself with an embarrassingly awful plastic toy.

Did King Solomon write Proverbs? The answer is the same as to the question - did King David write the Psalms? - namely no, but maybe some.



Solomon writing Proverbs, by Gustave Doré. The actual authorship is disputed.

the figure of Wisdom. The book sets itself as advice from a parent to an adult child or inevitably, in the context of that society, from

a father to a son - more of that later. And Wisdom is to be the young man's guide, wisdom meaning all that we understand by that word - good sense, an understanding of the world, prudence, knowledge, but more than that, a personified agent of God himself, portrayed as female, as being present in human society and speaking to those who will listen. She is close to God and dear to God.

She was created by God before the world was made and was with him when the world was made.

The most interesting and valuable part of the book are the first nine chapters, which contain an introduction and which introduces

This is bold, and to dyed in the wool monolithic monotheists, startling. It is a gloss on the story of creation. Imagine the first

chapters of Genesis with the figure of Wisdom standing beside God as he ordered the heavens and brought forth life and formed mankind.

For Christians, it is easy to see in the figure of Wisdom a prefiguring of the Holy Spirit. The author of Proverbs may not have seen it that way, but it is certainly a very different, and much gentler, presentation of God than is found in much of the rest of the Old Testament.

After this wonderful start, the book then goes into the collection of sayings for which it is best known – a mine of quotations, though not including “a stitch in time”: “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways”; “a soft answer turneth away wrath”; “pride goes before a fall”; “as a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly”. And so on .

Of course, the book reflects its times. It reflects a society that was patriarchal, hence the advice being from father to son.

There are however, at least two passages which tell a more modern story. In the last chapter, there is the passage that begins “Who can find a virtuous wife? for her worth is far above rubies” (You will have heard this – and I hope wives hear it from their husbands) And then goes on to describe a wife who not only actively runs her household and raises her children but buys land, invests in a vineyard and manufactures cloth and garments and trades in them. A veritable dynamic modern businesswoman – no wonder her husband sings her praises, and he probably appreciates the income she earns.

And earlier in the book, this passage of advice from an old father to his married son: “Let your fountain, the wife of your youth be blessed. Rejoice in her. A lovely doe, a graceful gazelle, let her be your companion; you will at all times be bathed in her love and

her love will continually wrap you around. Wherever you turn, she will guide you; when you lie asleep, she will watch over you, and when you wake she will talk with you.” That speaks of the benefits that flow to a husband, but it works the other way round if you replace “lovely doe/graceful gazelle” with some more masculine imagery, and say “his love will continually....”

That sets an ideal of marriage based on love and companionship, very different from the dynastic or property-based ideas which you see so much in ancient literature including the Old Testament, and in Jane Austen’s novels and even up to today.

I do enjoy rooting about among the less well known or less esteemed books in the bible to find out what good things there are there, and often the search is rewarded. It is so with the book of Proverbs. Visit it. “Worth a deviation” as the Michelin guides used to say.