

As I write this I have just packed up the costumes from the production of Jesus Christ Superstar that took place in Minehead Methodist Church last week. As each day goes by there is more time to reflect on the extra ordinary journey that a cast of nearly sixty, a rock band of five, two directors and a production team have been on since last October. I realised by the Sunday morning after the last night that neither my fellow director, Hilary May, nor the talents of the cast and musicians or the creativity of the set builders, sound engineers, lighting technician and army of costume sewers were fully responsible for the response that the production got from so many people. I believed I had decided that the show would be a good way of reaching out to generations of people on the fringe of Church who have never heard the gospel of salvation through the death of Jesus. But I now know that from inception to final performance God was the true director of all that happened.

Our disparate cast of those with faith and those with none, those who were very seasoned performers and those who had never done any performing at all started out as a random group of people thrown together with little in the way of common beliefs, values and interests. But during the week of the performance, I believe we were literally soaked in the love of God through the presence of the Holy Spirit. For by the end we had become family. New and enduring friendships have been formed. People have learned to respect each other and be tolerant of each other's differences. They have learned to laugh and cry together and to care for each other's needs. Some of the cast had entered into their character so deeply that the space between acting and being had become blurred. Many of them were moved to the core by the experience of being present in some sense during the last week of Jesus' life. Some, who had never considered the Christian faith to have much relevance to their lives have been prompted to ask some deep questions about who Jesus really was and why he had to die.

Hilary and I have been inundated with letters and emails in appreciation from people who came to see the presentation. Some talk in purely aesthetic appreciation about the colour of the costumes, the power of the singing, the quality of the acting and the organisation required to move so many people around such a complex space. Others talk in very different terms about being deeply moved by what they experienced. One lady told me that the production had taken her back to her experience at Oberamgaw. As we gave away copies of Luke's gospel at the doors I was surprised at how few offers were turned down and how warmly we were thanked. I was teary eyed as so many people held my hands tightly and expressed the depth of the feelings the experience had engendered.

What do we take from all this? I think for me it demonstrates that it is important that as Christians we don't just mix with our own kind. We need to be part of our communities and socialise with people who don't believe because otherwise how can they come to find out about Jesus. We also need to find ways of telling the story of Christian belief. Christianity is not a dead religion that confines itself to strange things called church services. It is a living breathing faith which helps to shape and transform relationships, bring healing to those who feel broken and isolated. The Bible and its account of God's loving presence in the world and in the activity of the human race is largely unknown to probably two or three generations. We need to find ways of bringing its vast treasure of wisdom and knowledge of the Lord to new ears and eyes in a way that they can grasp.

Lynne Wooldridge