

GOD IN THE LIFE OF VAL DEWHURST

AS TOLD AT CAFÉ CHURCH,
FEBRUARY 2020



'Lord of all hopefulness' was one of the first hymns I sang with my grandparents. During the war my brother, mother and I (9 years old) went to stay with them in Exmouth. We helped to dig trenches along the beach and then the army came and put barriers up. After that we could only reach the beach through one tiny space. A sense of hopefulness just emanated from my grandparents. They were lovely Christians who treated their faith as a real gift and they taught my brother and I so much during the time we were with them.

I was married in 1954. I met Alan and three weeks later we were engaged! He had been in the merchant navy for six years during the war (torpedoed twice) and once the war was over, we all just wanted to get on with our lives. We settled in Longford, (near London airport) where we had two children and then, five years later, we moved to Hounslow where my husband was working.

In 1969 we moved to Swandane House in Denham village. There were lots of families with young children so there was always something going on! Plenty of socialising and outings including a singing group where I learnt a lot of the worship songs that I still enjoy. One winter a group of us worked to make a wonderful quilt that raised a lot of money when raffled at

the Denham Village Fayre.

I was a Churchwarden but the vicar challenged me to go deeper in my faith.

He came to see me one afternoon and said 'Val I want you to take over the Lifegroups', to which my response was that I thought 'maybe I'd better go to one first!' I discovered that a Lifegroup is a time when you meet with other people to study a particular passage in the Bible and you pray for each other and for things going on in the world.

People often prayed out loud at Lifegroup but I just couldn't and began to feel really anxious about this. So, I started to pray by myself at home, asking God to help me to be able to express how I felt and to pray for other people. Suddenly one evening at Lifegroup I found I could join in the prayers and everyone clapped! It was so easy to pray once I started to trust God to lead me. It is very special to be able to talk with God and express how you feel and to thank Him for what He has done for you. Since then, *prayer has played a massive role in my life.*

When I was 60 years old, I thought I should start something new - what I'd always wanted to do, which was helping people who had been bereaved. So, I wrote to Thames

Hospice, who took me on for two years' training and I then worked with them for nearly 20 years as a bereavement counsellor.

Life has not always been easy. Our fourth child, Claire (b.1964), was very sadly a 'cot death' and soon after this my mother was diagnosed with cancer. The '70s was a difficult time at work for my husband as he was unexpectedly left to run the family business after his father died suddenly. At that time the country was on a three-day working week and eventually the pressure was too much for him and he had a breakdown which took him a long time to recover from.

It is often only when we look back that we can start to see God's hand in some of the hardships we go through and maybe, some of the hidden blessings. When we ask 'what have I learnt', 'what is God trying to explain to me through this', 'why is this happening to me' remember, in order to learn, you have to experience and that nothing is wasted.

Val celebrates her 90th birthday on 13 August so we asked for her wisdom on the following:

Val's advice for those who feel they have nothing to offer

- everything you do is valuable – so grasp it with both hands!
- be flexible, don't let yourself get in a rut
- look for what you can do
- remember 90 is the new 70!

Val's advice for grandchildren

- be true to yourself
- it is alright to ask for advice and help
- don't 'hide your light under a bushel'
- if there is something you feel you can do, do it

*Lord of all hopefulness,
Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like,
No cares could destroy,
Be there at our waking,
And give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord,
At the break of the day.*

*Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled
At the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours,
And give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord,
At the noon of the day.*

*Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome,
Your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing,
And give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord,
At the eve of the day.*

*Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment,
Whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping,
And give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord,
At the end of the day.*

CCLI Song Nos. 2788717