

An infectious love for Jesus

This weekend, the majority of churches around the world will be reading again the famous story of the call of the first disciples, to follow him and change their focus from catching fish to catching people.

It's a call that endures today. Christians believe that Jesus is alive and still calls men and women to follow him. And all who follow he makes part of the team. And part of the responsibility of that team is to reach out to others, to help others to meet Jesus for himself, catch the vision of who he is and how great is the Kingdom he came to build, and to come onboard themselves. It is all part of what our Diocesan Vision calls 'being witnesses'.

How appropriate that this reading should fall a few days after I learned of the death of one of the most inspiring 'fishers of men' that I've ever known.

His name was Michael Green and he was someone whose love of Jesus was absolutely infectious. Having come to know and love Jesus for himself, he gave the rest of his life to helping others come to know him for themselves. He truly believed that Jesus was the pearl of great price.

I met him when I was at vicar college in Oxford in the early 2000s. He was already well past retirement age, but still enthusiastically leading missions. Not just on those missions but wherever the Lord led him he really did 'fish' for Christ.

On his hospital bed he cleared away the water, get well cards, etc and replaced them with booklets he'd written with a sign saying ... 'If I'm not conscious, please take one.' He inspired me (as so many others over the years) by his example in sharing the good news, in passionate and straightforward preaching (based on deep reading, praying and understanding of the text), and in the way he would encourage each individual in our own gifts and callings.

We may not all be like Michael Green, let alone St Peter. But all who know Christ are called to be part of the team of fishermen casting out the nets far and wide, that all may hear and all may have the chance to respond in faith and love.