

Wendy Bull  
Chatelaine of Christ Church

I met Wendy Bull one afternoon to talk about her life and her role as the wife of the vicar of Christ Church. For most of the time the conversation was quite ordinary but then she would say something that made me realise that although we were sitting together in my office we were also in different worlds. In her world there was God to whom she spoke everyday and who had plans for her. She was happy to be obedient to his perceived guidance and had complete confidence that he would look after her and her family.

To begin at the beginning. Wendy met her future husband at a Church Youth Group when she was 14. They married when she qualified as nurse and he was at Bible College. He had already been to Pakistan to test whether his calling was to take the Christian message abroad or to work at home.

Chris knew he wanted to be a minister of religion but was not set on any particular brand. He was offered a job in the Church of England as a Lay Assistant in Maidstone, Kent. Jenny (now 17 and taking her mum round to inspect universities) was born and Wendy gave up nursing. During two years of theological training in Nottingham Katie (now 16) was born. Corinne (now 14) was born when they moved to Worcester and Chris became Curate to nine rural parishes. The job in Flackwell Heath was advertised in the Church Times and between Christmas and New Year 1995 the family of five moved to their new "gorgeous house" next to Christ Church.

Wendy has calculated that she now spends an average of twenty hours a week on Christ Church matters – it used to be more. Some of the time is spent on administration and some on practical work. The idea for the Coffee Stop evolved from a discussion between her and Jane Edwards as they decorated the new church. Coffee Stop is open from 9am to 11.30 on school days and on Wednesdays in the holidays. It brings people together for social contact but it also provides a pool of volunteers who may stuff envelopes or provide a sympathetic ear. As a manager Wendy is an initiator and an enabler. Once it was set up she encouraged the people running the mornings to come up with their own passions and enthusiasm to make a varied programme of activity. Some of her time is spent, with her friend Sue, running a weekly club for local children, introducing them to the Christian faith.

She is also very involved in the spiritual side of the church. She has a Certificate from Moorlands Bible College and undertakes pastoral visits and leads prayer meetings. She runs Alpha courses and trains others to become leaders of the courses. She is currently organising a survey of the needs of the congregation and of the wider community. This will then be handed over to leadership team to work out how these needs can be met.

She is also one of a group of four people who run the Oxford Diocesan Renewal Fellowship which provides the clergy with a retreat and "a day to meet God". She assures me this is not as scary as it sounds.

Just for fun she plays badminton, is an active parent at Beaconsfield High School and is in the second year of a three year MA in "Missional Church Leadership" at the University of Wales.

I asked her what were the delights and disadvantages of being the wife of the Vicar of Flackwell Heath. The only disadvantage she could think of was that her husband's job is very much 24/365.

Among the delights are getting to know people and praying with them or for them. She loves the house she lives in and of course the greatest delight of being the vicar's wife is - being married to the vicar.

Tim Kendell