

kitchen table ministry

Encouraged by
soul clinics

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One night I had a dream. It was of a woman teaching other people (men, women and children) to bake cakes in a kitchen. There were lots of different cakes but she was actually making Eccles cakes. I was looking through the cupboards for ingredients and found a packet of VIOTA cake mix. "We don't want that", I said as I threw it away, "We want the real thing".

I knew that the woman who was teaching us was Wisdom from the Bible (Proverbs 9:1-6) to whom Jesus was compared (Matthew 11.19).

And it was obvious that she was making the church (eccles - ecclesia) But why throw away the VIOTA? I prayed and was told to think about what the victory of the iota would have meant. When the early church was debating the truth of Jesus they spent a long time talking about an iota, the letter 'i' in the Greek alphabet. Some wanted to say that Jesus was similar to God. Others wanted to say that he was actually God. The difference between the words they wanted to use was just one iota. Eventually those who wanted to call Jesus Christ God won the debate and there was no iota in the word they used to define him.

If there had been the 'victory of the iota', the Nicene creed which summarises the faith of the church would say 'Jesus is a bit like God'. As it is we say, 'He is the same as God'.

He is the real thing.

JESUS CHRIST IS FULLY GOD



Then I read a book.

'Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching in Industrial Britain' by Doreen Valiente tells the story of early Quaker and Methodist women who chose to do their praying, reading scriptures and teaching round kitchen tables rather than in church buildings.



And I had an idea.

Let's find people who are willing to go on a spiritual journey following the wisdom of Jesus.

We can share stories together, we can pray and be quiet together, we can read the scriptures together.

All that they must promise is that they will be prepared to make and eat cakes together.

Tough job.

But I managed to find some willing volunteers.

Then I had another dream. It was about another woman baking. This time it was Mary, the mother of Jesus and she was happily using a packet mix.

MARY BAKER mix.

I found out the story of Mary Baker cake mix. When it was first produced, it was not selling well. So they decided to give another, totally unnecessary instruction. Add an Egg. The sales rocketed. People felt that they were making a real cake and doing real baking!

God could sort things out by just making everything perfect and getting rid of anything that isn't. But that would not respect us, would not respect our humanness. So he chose to become a human being alongside us and work with us in creating a better world and better human beings. And he asked a human woman to work with him in starting that process of re-creation.

He asked Mary to add her egg.

And so when God came into the world, he came not in obvious divine power but as a human being. He humbly submitted himself to the process of becoming human, starting from the moment of conception.

So the church can also declare

JESUS CHRIST IS FULLY HUMAN



The first expression of our kitchen table ministry was a small group - just enough to meet round a kitchen table.

But we quickly realised that it would have to grow because we didn't want to become a clique.

So sometimes we meet round the table. Sometimes we hold Soul Cafes with other food as well as cakes. Spiritual food as well as the edible type where lots of people can come.

It's not about being a distinctive group. It's about being a vision of how the church can be made for today. The only thing which is really important is that you don't just serve cakes. You make them together.

We pray about what cakes to make so that the Spirit can show us what we need to teach and learn. We have several books of recipes for the church's year.

So there's no shortage of inspiration.

We would be delighted to come and share the vision with you or your group and would be thrilled if you found ways of adapting the vision for your situation.

The weekend we went to Glastonbury we took two cakes. Or at least, one cake and one bread.



The Trappist monastery of Assumption Abbey in Missouri is famous for making a ring cake, using fruit which has been marinated in rum for several years. Ours cannot claim such a pedigree but it does have rum and fruit in it.

For tomorrow's Eucharist on the Tor we are using a bagel, a ring shaped loaf. The word 'bagel' is a Hebrew word which is connected to the Gaelic word 'bogha' meaning a bow, a curve, a circle. The symbol of Soul Clinics is a Bogha Bride, a particular form of the Celtic cross which is associated with St Bridget of Kildare.

The ring shape O is one of the most important symbols of feminine power, an apt symbol for this weekend in which celebrate a repressed feminine restored to her rightful place of honour.

