

Called to be a Pebble?

As a Deacon I was accustomed to being invisible. I asked my vicar, "What's it like for you to have a deacon in the team? He thought a bit then said, "It's like having a pebble in my shoe." I wondered: 'Is this a compliment or a criticism?' Afraid of the answer, I didn't ask the question! I settled for accepting it as a 'spirit-gift', which I could unwrap some other time.



The next day, I had a pebble in my shoe. I was in a hurry, but the grit was sharp and forced me to stop. As I bent to unfasten my shoe, I saw an earthworm stranded on the paving, its skin beginning to dry. I picked it up and placed it on the soil. Without a word of thanks, it wriggled instinctively into the earth. I took off my shoe and shook out the offending stone...so tiny, I could barely see it. My spirit-gift was unwrapped.

25 years later at a MU Gathering in Belfast a bishop spoke about MU being a 'pebble' in the church's shoes ! ...an irritant when things are not as they should be.

If we are pebbles that make walkers stop...then we are enabling people to see what they would otherwise miss...their personal 'earthworm' - perhaps a casualty in life, an issue to be addressed, an opportunity to be a good neighbour.

If we are pebbles, we don't have to be very big to make our point sharply – we simply have to be at the right place at the right time. Ever wondered how a pebble gets into your shoe? Who puts it there? And why just then?

If we are pebbles, we are readily discarded as mere irritants. The secret of being an effective pebble is not to complain, but to shed light on an overlooked issue and be prepared to be a partner in resolving it.

As pebbles go, I don't profess to be a very effective one. I'm often too round and smooth and happy to nestle between the toes of those who carry me. Now and then, my sharp edges dig in, but I don't always see the result. But I am encouraged by the incisive qualities and achievements of many of the pebbles I have met in life.

Across the world there are godly pebbles working in situations of great need. Some of them are Mothers Union members, working within teams to challenge despair and bring hope. You may never hear of them but they are there: pebbles challenging injustice and abuse; setting up literacy projects; visiting prisons and hospitals...

So be prepared to be a godly pebble in someone's shoe – whether shy or sharp - and leave the rest up to God. And be thankful for the pebble in your own shoe!