

## MARK ALLEN



We have been asking people to answer the question “Why am I a Christian?” Mark Allen responds as part of SpeakOut2016 with the Diocese of Truro.

“Why am I a Christian? Like many others I was brought up in a Christian family and was happy to accept the family’s apparent faith without much challenge. Then, in my early teens I was beginning to question it all and to find excuses to miss church on a Sunday morning (though that was not really an option at boarding school!). However, a couple of friends spent some time with me to explain the gospel to me properly. They showed me why I needed to make a personal commitment to Jesus and to accept the salvation he offered freely, once I had realised I really wasn’t good enough for God to accept on my own merits.

At that point it was really a decision of the mind, and I found it entirely logical (and still do!). My faith has remained firmly rooted in my head and helps me make sense of life, but as the years have gone by my awe at what God has done has grown. That has come in a variety of ways.

I’ve always loved wildlife and had an interest in science. I have increasingly marvelled at the variety, complexity and wonder of creation, not to mention the scale of the universe. I have enjoyed learning more about the natural world and it’s been satisfying to learn that it’s OK for a Christian to believe in the Big Bang and evolution (though I know some may disagree with that position). The more I’ve learnt from scripture (and I’m grateful to a number of teachers) the more I have marvelled too at God’s relationship with his people over many centuries and the way so many stories in the Bible point to Jesus. The two thoughts are poignantly brought together in these lines in Graham Kendrick’s thoughtful song, *The Servant King*; I always find this line especially moving: “Hands that flung stars into place, to cruel nails surrendered”.

I had a spell of serious ill-health almost ten years ago which causes you to examine your faith and the way you live. I think my faith stood the test and I try not to put things off for a hypothetical retirement; after all we can never be sure what we will face day by day. As the illness affected my lungs, it also prompted me to join a gospel choir I had felt too busy to make time for – until then! It gave me great pleasure; I don’t consider myself musical but it was very satisfying to be part of something that sounded so good and I always came home from rehearsals with my spirit lifted. It’s been important too that the words we sing are based in the gospel and scripture. I have been pleased to find a similar choir in Callington, which I joined last year.

All in all, it’s remarkable that God takes an interest in mankind at all and in me personally ... but he does. As Psalm 8 says (and is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews): “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”