

Marcham Weekend, 31 May – 2 June 2019, at The Poplars

The sun shone as we arrived at The Poplars towards the end of our half term holiday. Laden with bedding, children and with bikes in tow, it was lovely to be greeted with a cup of tea and to see so many friendly faces. I checked the rota to see when our kitchen duties were and the itinerary for worship, workshops and most importantly swimming times. Right from the start there was a sense of excitement and anticipation about a weekend focussing on Jesus' words in John 10 that He had come to give us "life to the full"!

The Poplars is surrounded by beautiful countryside that is itself life-giving. It was such an inspirational and refreshing place to stay. It was also lovely to be able to use the cellar of the old farmhouse as a prayer space. Each station was amazing, with flowing silk rivers, somewhere to place prayers and pebbles, and reminders to pray for the world that God has made and asked us to look after.

We had a wonderful mix of ages on the weekend and had lots of fun and family time, in the swimming pool, games room and at the Saturday barbecue and nightly campfire, as well as around the meal tables eating delicious home-made food.

But the heartbeat of the weekend was the time that we spent in worship led by our own wonderful musicians and looking at the scriptures. Kevin was an engaging speaker. He took us not only into John 10, but also into Ezekiel's vision of dry bones coming to life again, as such a vivid picture of the life that God gives us through his Word and by His Spirit. He encouraged us to read the scriptures expectantly and to open the gates of our hearts and our church to the breath of the Spirit.

Someone had a vision of waves lapping again and again over the church, and we took every opportunity to receive what the Holy Spirit wanted to give us, often changing the plans we had for our sessions in response to what the Spirit was doing amongst us. On Sunday morning people shared testimonies and we prayed for one another, with the gently falling rain outside symbolic of the Spirit's gentle and yet strong work in our lives and in our church. The final communion service was beautiful and deeply moving.

What a weekend! I left with a sense that the Holy Spirit can come in big waves, but also as a gently drenching rain, or in the small, quiet, loving gestures of a child.

Joanna Blelloch