

THE STORIES OF THE SHOES

BLACK SHOE “This shoe has walked the corridors of power: even in the House of Lords. Its wearer has found his Christian walk taking him through Indian slums, African villages, and quaint English villages as the carrier of Good News. The wearer is acquainted with suffering and ridicule, and yet the Christ he serves is always with him.”

CHILD’S SHOE “I bought these shoes far too early, I guess. We were full of anticipation and excitement. Long held dreams were now soon to be fulfilled in the birth of this new baby. When disaster struck and not only was the baby gone, but also any future hope of ever having a child, I felt my world was caving in. Where was God in all this? I had a chance to turn away or somehow try and allow God to walk us out of this valley towards ...? We simply do not know yet, but walk we will.”

BOOT “This boot has seen 25 years in the Territorial Army as a Chaplain. Serving at camps, walking through muddy fields, standing to attention at Remembrance Services. It travelled to Bosnia for three months, where the atrocities of humanity on the most vulnerable were seen and heard. Walking with Christ as a Padre does not mean being apart from the muck and pain of life, but standing where Christ does, right in the midst of it.”

SLIPPER “The years have rolled by, activity now limited. Once they would have called me a ‘stalwart’ of the church, now I simply sit and wait and, yes, pray. Some days, I hear a whisper of God’s Spirit saying that it’s these days of sitting and being with God that are the greatest gift I can bring to his world. I still pray that others will come to know Him as Lord and Saviour.”

FLIP FLOPS “It was what they used to call the Jungle in Calais that this shoe lived in for six months. It belonged to an Ethiopian Christian woman desperate for a new life in Europe. Her family travelled the tortuous miles only to live under blue plastic sheeting embedded in the French mud. The Christians in the camp built a church there in the mud and founded, among the rubbish, a Holy Space of peace. Shoes were always left at the door.”

THE SUMMER SHOE “This shoe is now on its way to a charity shop. Its owner has now died. She became a Christian during a personal crisis and dearly wanted others to know the love of God she had found in a simple time of waiting by a seashore. She gave up a job at the university and was ordained. Three years into her first parish, just as she was ready to take on other churches in mission, she fell ill to an untreatable illness and died within three months. Her last two months were spent making sure her funeral service gave out a clear message in all its aspects that there was one whose name was Jesus who could turn life around for you, and that no one was outside of the love of God.”

THE BALLET SHOE “This ballet shoe is unworn: a brand-new pair, still with its box. When you are a dancer and find yourself in a wheelchair, it takes courage to think that there is a future. During a church service, someone prays and you find against all the odds you can walk again and, yes, dance. It is not back to life as it was, but the entering into a new adventure. A round of national and international speaking engagements happen and the compulsion to simply share Jesus dances now around my soul.”