

Light in the darkness of dementia

AN innovative light table that helps those with dementia will be launched at an Isle of Wight church.

The Tovertafel – which means ‘magic table’ in Dutch – is an interactive game of light animations, which can be projected onto any table. It can inspire physical and social activity in those who have dementia or learning disabilities.

Players can use their hands to play games – including bursting bubbles, catching fish or bouncing a beach ball – which are beamed onto the table from a projector mounted on the ceiling.

Islanders will get their first chance to see this product at a launch in St Mark’s Church, Wootton, on March 20.

Professionals who work in care homes, those living with dementia and their carers, those with learning difficulties and their

carers, and anyone else who is interested are invited to try the Tovertafel for themselves between 10am and 4pm on the day.

The company chief executive, John Ramsey, was inspired to focus on this area after his father was diagnosed with early onset dementia when he was 12. John cared for him for 10 years, but his final years were very difficult.

“I would go and see him and he would be there for two seconds and then he would be gone again,” he said. “Losing one’s dad like that never really leaves you. I think about him and what happened every single day.

“Tovertafel is such an amazing interactive activity that we are trying to reach as many people as possible.”

Tovertafel was developed by Dutchwoman Hester Le Riche during her PhD research, in collaboration with dementia care homes. It has also already been launched in three other countries.

The Tovertafel or ‘magic table’ helps those with dementia or learning difficulties to engage in physical and social activity



St Mark’s Church, Wootton was selected for the island launch because of its desire to promote living well with dementia. It’s part of the way in which the church is supporting the community, young and old, and renewing St Mark’s as a place of mission.

The priest-in-charge, Veronica Brown says, “The launch of Tovertafel at St Mark’s is very exciting. We want to build a hub

for exploring new ways to support those living with dementia and their carers.

“It is part of our mission to connect with people, to help our loved ones live well with dementia and to find ways working with God to engage with them and affirm their presence with us.

“We have been collaborating with Barbara Stephens, chief executive of Dementia Pathfinders

to raise awareness and to promote dementia-friendly churches by hosting Dementia Information sessions and Dementia Circle Dance.”

The launch of Tovertafel is being organised in partnership with the island branch of Dementia Pathfinders. There’s no need to book – just turn up. For more information, see www.tovertafel.co.uk.

Kids are life-changing

MY Facebook feed recently reminded me of the time, 12 years ago, when our daughter flew into the world – all nine pounds nine ounces of her – in a tearing hurry.

Sleep had already ended, some 20 months earlier, when our son was born, so her arrival wasn’t much more of a shock to the system.

A third one a few years later just confirmed that our lives had been utterly converted by becoming parents: everything, from the wrinkles round our eyes, to the supplies in our fridge, to the type of car we drive, has been transformed over the past 13 years. It doesn’t seem too strong to talk about it as a kind of conversion.

In Lent, we’re asked to think about the kind of conversion that comes from denying ourselves. We might give up chocolate or alcohol or meat, or try to redirect some of our money to charity.

We might try to spend more time in self-examination or silent contemplation. An even more searching kind of denial is about giving up our control over what we do and



the last word

by the Ven Joanne Grenfell
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who we think we are. This is called dispossession and it profoundly challenges our ownership of our time, energy, and resources.

I realise parenting has actually taught me much about dispossession. I am not now – if ever I was – an autonomous, self-possessed individual. Life has to be worked around our children’s needs and presence, and that has changed me.

My limitations, my selfishness, and my self-centredness have been exposed over the years as I have adapted to putting them first, at least most of the time. And as they have grown – into loving and sparky young people – I have also realised that I can’t own and control them, for

they are their own people, not my possessions. Both of these experiences, which involve a loss of control, are about dispossession.

The surprise is how joyful this feels. My dispossession isn’t always chosen, but it enlarges and enriches me, eliciting reserves of patience, energy, and love that I didn’t know existed before. I am sure God chooses many different ways to prise us away from our self-obsession to teach us how to love, and being dispossessed by the presence of our children is only one of them.

There is still much for me to learn and I hope that Lent will be a time of deeper reflection and willingness to give control of my life to God.

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