

What will your life-choice be?



BY BISHOP JONATHAN, BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

I heard a wonderful story the other day, which inspires me. It begins in the mid-1970s. A high profile, privileged young man has a life-choice to make that will have consequences for many.

He has completed a short career in the Royal Navy. With Navy severance pay in his back pocket – in 1976 a sum of £7,400, by my calculation, worth nearly £70,000 today – the next chapter of his life stands open.

He has options in every direction. His future is bright. But in 1976 he is troubled by what he sees. Inner cities erupt into violence, unrest and riots: a fiery, convulsive outpouring, in part the release of deep-seated frustration at racial discrimination, deprivation and long-term unemployment.

A range of responses were visible: tabloid disgust at criminality, alongside academic and political responses, forged worlds away from poverty of opportunity or the trauma of violence.

But there were also responses that faced the chaos and remained involved for the long haul of social transformation: empathic responses which sought to listen, identify causes, and play a part in rebuilding the communities most affected. The response of the young man in our story, then HRH Prince Charles, was of this kind. He chose to use his Navy severance pay to start the Prince's Trust.

What a story can now be told! The Prince's Trust is the UK's leading youth charity, having supported over one million young people, created 125,000 entrepreneurs and given business support to 395,000 people.

It's a story of *faith*: in the gifts, infinite value and potential of each young person. It's a story of *hope*: as generations of young people have grown in confidence, developed skills and discovered new vision for their lives. It's a story of *love*: expressed in community, empowerment of others and characterised by service.

In Jesus' parable of the final judgment, the King of Kings will say to the righteous: "when you ministered to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned, you did it to me".

Will you join me in praying for HM the King, that he will always choose to follow the Way of his Master, discerning the humble, crucified and risen Christ in the presence of the little ones of this world, the least, the last and the lost?

And will you join me in giving thanks for the choice that brought the Prince's Trust into being, a young prince's life-choice which has brought hope to so many? And will you ask, with me, for God's grace to be hope-bringers wherever we find ourselves?

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