

The Source Coffee Shop

A vision began to grow over a period of 2 years of trying to develop a Coffee Shop with good quality coffee, a modern contemporary feel similar to Costa Starbucks or Pret-a-Manger so that people could feel comfortable about coming in for a coffee. We wanted to create a coffee bar with light lunches and a child friendly area so that parents could meet and chat. Also we wanted to create a meeting place where people could come from all stages of life and know they would receive a warm welcome. A meeting place to chat, build relationships and make new friends who will return again and again and pass the word onto other friends. But most of all our underlying motive was to find ways of getting to know the local community and make contact with it as they would not be walking into our churches but they would walk into a coffee shop.

2004 felt like the right time to pursue things, but finding the right building would be the key part. I was introduced to Paul Gilderslieve who at the time was considering restoring the stables on his farm, he was very interested in the project he wanted to use the farm for Gods work. We worked together on the design for the shop and by Aug 2006 **The Source Coffee shop** opened.

During those 2 years I did a lot of research, I spoke to Business Link to learn how to create a business plan and I talked to many business friends about how best to fund it. I wanted it to be run as a business so that it remained independent and cutting edge in order to bring in enough money to pay its way. It has been an advantage not being attached to any one particular church fellowship, but it has been important to have support from the Christian Community both locally and wider.

I am qualified as an Interior Designer so I knew how to fit out the shop, but I also worked at M&S for six months to understand retail and how their customer service ethos worked, as they are very much about putting the customer first. I also researched the local community, there seemed to be a great need for a meeting place which also welcomed children, so many of the coffee shops were not child friendly. People also wanted a place where they could connect with a friendly face perhaps the only one that day. It was a great advantage that through Kevin's role as vicar, he had made so many contacts particularly with families through schools, weddings and baptisms.

The fact that the coffee shop is located on a working country farm is a great attraction especially in the summer as there is an outdoor play area and also because people see it as a special trip, "lets meet at the Source for Coffee". The other thing that draws people back to us is, the high standard we maintain with our drink and food. Everything is freshly prepared on site and

we only use top quality Fairly Traded Coffee used by other high street brands, this also includes all our other drinks.

As we pay quite a high rent it is good to use the building as much as possible, so we encourage people to hire it for different things, we also have a Projector and electric pull down Screen for DVDs. So far we've had Alpha Courses, Marriage Enrichment, Marriage Preparation, Jazz Evenings, Adult and Children's Parties, Ladies Nights, Christmas Meals, Frock Exchanges, Dinner Parties, Lent Courses etc. In most cases we would provide the food and host the evenings.

The Source has always employed Staff paying a fair wage as it is very difficult to rely on volunteers and friends. They have to be trained on the coffee machine and have a Food Safety Level II certificate. But the most important thing is their personality and attitude, we have been very blessed with young friendly Staff who always put the customer first, not all have to be Christian but would have a sympathy for our ethos, 2 members of Staff have become Christians since working for us.

Although the community know that we are Christians and often see Kevin either meeting with people or working behind the counter, the idea is not to make people feel uncomfortable. We prayed right at the beginning that the Holy Spirit would touch every person who walks through the door, people often comment on how the place has a lovely feel to it. We want to be the first port of call for people to come and just relax, if they want to chat we are there to listen. During our short time of opening we have had opportunities to pray with people, talk about our faith and support a couple on IVF who lost 2 of their triplets during pregnancy.

As we have been trading for just over 2 years we feel that the time is right to begin a *Coffee Church*. We decided to meet at 4.30 on a Sunday (Starting Jan 2009) for an hour purely for people (not yet Christians) who feel comfortable walking into a coffee shop and would just like to know a little bit about Christianity and how it might be relevant for their lives. Each time we will just have a short talk (15mins) on topical issue, then discussion in small groups around tables where, there would be a Table Host who would encourage interaction and make sure no one is left out. During this time we will hand out printed information about other events that they might be interested in and the availability of prayer if they would like it. During the month there will be other events during the week such as; Women's Evenings with different relevant topics, Parenting Courses and Marriage Courses, Men's events which would probably include food and action!