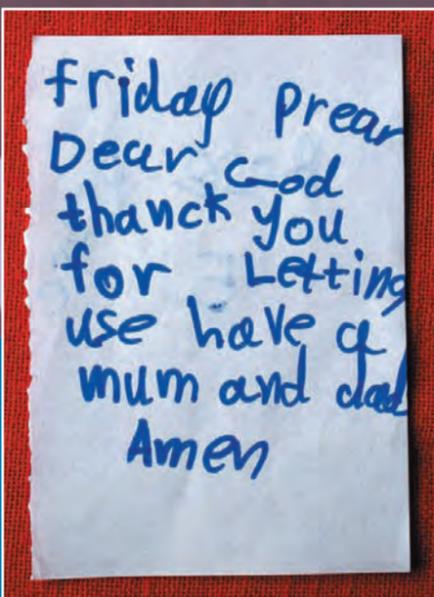


WIN

2 eco-friendly
lunch bags filled
with Fairtrade
goodies

*TV series
brings the
Bible to life*



**Thank you, God, for
your faith in me**



IN REVIEW: FILMS

G-Force

Certificate PG

WHO you gonna call? G-Force!

No, those ghosts hunters haven't returned from the 1980s, the world is now turning to a new breed (literally) of crime fighters to thwart the plans of sinister moguls and villains and various ne'er do wells. That's right, the guinea pigs are here to save us.

In this exciting 3-D fantasy family adventure, which combines live action and animation, a team of three crack guinea pigs aided by a mole, work to foil the plans of a sinister industrialist (played by compulsory Brit bad guy Bill Nighy) bent on world domination.

Obviously, these aren't just run-of-the-mill guinea pigs: they have all been trained and equipped as government agents by an innovative scientist (Zach Galifianakis). Each has special skills, ranging from explosives to karate, which they bring to bear while undertaking their deadly mission.

With voices supplied by Hollywood A-listers Sam Rockwell, Tracy Morgan and Penelope Cruz, with Nicholas Cage as the mole, this exuberant, at times spectacular, rodent romp is pure family fun. The crime-fighting team is aided by an enthusiastic but inept pet-store guinea pig (voiced by Jon Favreau), and act as an improvised family, sustained by co-operation, self-sacrifice and forgiveness.

These are positive lessons for all but the most impressionable viewers, who might be frightened by repeated scenes of peril – though with happy endings all round, there's nothing to get unduly concerned about.



FAITH ON FILM



Finding positive role models for children can be a difficult task in modern society – with many of those they look up to showing themselves to be leading less than ideal lives. Husband and wife team **David and Alison Dorricott** have changed this, however, with the creation of an exciting series of cartoons called *Friends and Heroes*. Set in first century AD and starring history's greatest hero, Jesus, it's a historical epic that has won plaudits round the globe. Emma Clancy reports.

Meet the heroes the whole family can applaud

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Make a Change



Reg. Charity 273434

OVER the past few decades, the values of our society have shifted and changed, one result is that today's children struggle to find appropriate, positive role models.

But this generation of children still needs to experience heroic deeds, selfless acts and positive behaviour and in the past much of this has come through our shared culture, often from our Judeo-Christian origins.

This need prompted David and Alison Dorricott to work with a group of highly creative and very experienced film and TV professionals, to produce *Friends and Heroes*, an animated TV series. "We wanted to provide children with genuinely admirable heroic role models by showing them stories from the Bible in a modern and relevant way – through TV," said David Dorricott. "By setting Bible stories in living contexts among the people who kept them alive children

not only see and hear the stories but also understand their meaning and how they can apply them in their own lives."

Based in a fascinating and turbulent period of history – the first century AD – *Friends and Heroes* is an animated adventure series which weaves both Old and New Testament stories into the programmes. It entertains, educates and

informs the viewers, introducing some of them to Bible heroes for the first time.

Friends and Heroes is the tale of two young people, Macky and Portia, whose idealism and friendship leads them across the ancient world. They travel from the fabled Egyptian port of Alexandria to the besieged city of Jerusalem and finally to the very heart of the Empire: Rome.



Our heroes: Cartoon creators Alison and David Dorricott with some of the stars from their series

As they fight for justice and their very survival against the might of the Roman Empire they become friends and then, in turn, heroes.

The fictional adventure stories are told in 2D animation and the Bible stories are all shown in superb computer-generated 3D animation which means that children can easily tell the difference between the two.

The show's heroes appeal strongly to today's children; they are attractive, inspirational, very real characters.

They are funny and brave and don't always get things right! They face similar issues and dilemmas to those faced by many youngsters today. Their experiences and the stories they tell help foster respect for, and kindness to, others as well as encouraging tolerance.

The creators of the series recognised that to fulfil their aim of introducing a new generation of children to the important stories of the Bible, their material had to be acceptable to the 'mainstream'



3D: *Friends and Heroes* is a clever mixture of traditional 2D animation for the scenes involving Macky and Portia, and 3D scenes from the Bible (left and above)



Our star: Superb 3D graphic render Jesus alive in the series

broadcasters, not just those broadcasting Christian material.

By working with an experienced BBC TV producer in the early days, they hoped that the BBC would choose to show the programmes when finished. Eventually, five years after the project started, the BBC did show *Friends and Heroes* Series One recognising that it was appropriate for all children, whatever their faith!

Although *Friends and Heroes* was intended as entertainment, aiming to involve children to the extent that they come back for more, it is so well researched and educational that the BBC showed it in their Schools TV programming. This allowed the show to reach children who otherwise wouldn't hear Bible stories anywhere else. This, in turn, led to the creation of Key Stage 2 (7-11 year olds) school lessons and pupil worksheets based on the programmes. The lessons are easy to use and all the information is provided, allowing even non-specialist teachers to deliver exciting and interactive RE lessons.

Hundreds of schools, including many Catholic schools, now use them as part of their RE teaching and the feedback is that

boys in particular, many of whom are often not highly engaged in RE, really get involved in *Friends and Heroes*.

Many churches now use the related Bible lessons in their children's ministry often through mid-week clubs and sessions. Each lesson is based on the Bible stories and themes of the *Friends and Heroes* episodes.

A further aim of David and Alison's was to create a programme which would be seen by children all over the world and that's why *Friends and Heroes* is currently being dubbed into ten strategic languages: Arabic; Chinese; French; German; Hindi; Korean; Portuguese; Russian and Spanish. Series One is being shown regularly in the USA and Canada and it also broadcasts in the Middle East, Korea, Guatemala, Taiwan and Italy!

Feedback on the impact the programme has had around the world is flowing in from children, their parents and educators, and the programme makers have picked up many international awards, too.

One grandparent said: "I love it, and want to give it to my grandchildren. It is hard to find Christian programmes on TV. Thank you very much – keep more coming."

All 39 episodes are now available on DVD but the team is still creating additional material.

"Our latest release is the *Bright Sparks Party Pack*, which gives churches and others enough material to run a very exciting party which is ideal for October 31 as a more Godly alternative to Halloween, but can be used on other occasions, too," said Alison.

"Starting with the showing of *Friends and Heroes* Episode 3, there are plenty of activities, games, quizzes and other dynamic, fun ideas in the pack. We even suggest the kind of food you might serve!"

You can learn more about *Friends and Heroes* from www.friendsandheroes.com.

Children will also love www.friendsandheroes.tv, which is their own special website with games, puzzles, colouring sheets and much more.

FAVOURITE HYMNS

by Derrick Hanson

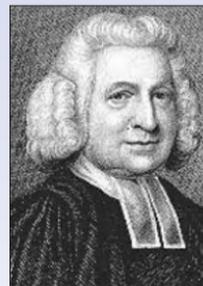
The twelve volumes in this series cover some of the many thousands of hymns written during the last 450 years. Their meaning and general background is explained, accompanied by biographical details of the authors and/or composers, relevant photographs and, where appropriate, the historical setting. Each book has its own complimentary CD of the hymn music included.

Favourite Hymns: More Favourite Hymns
Hymns for Christmas: The Hymns of Charles Wesley
Hymns for Special Occasions: Hymns of Our Time
Hymns of the Great Composers: Poetry in Hymns
Hymns and Prayers: Scripture in Hymns

Hymns of the Victorian Era: Hymns of the Twentieth Century



Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
still widely sung today - 'the father of English Hymnody'



Charles Wesley (1707-88)
the author of over 6,500 hymns; co-founder of Methodism



John H. Newman (1801-90)
academic, highly influential in his time; in later life appointed Cardinal



Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)
prolific hymn-writer and poet, and a man of our time

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