

You Hurt Me!

'Is your finger better?' Emma turned away, hastily stuffing a large piece of buttery hot cross bun into her mouth. I was obviously still to blame for that finger. 'It's all forgotten now.' Her Mum spoke for her, with a look which said, 'Stupid! Why did you bring that up again?' The adults had finished their Good Friday afternoon meditation at the Cross and were now in the church hall with the children, sharing their hot cross buns and admiring the results of their activities. By long tradition the children came in the early afternoon to make their Good Friday crosses, Easter bunnies and greeting cards, while the older folk got down to more serious thoughts in church. I joined the children for an hour before the service. This year there were more activities than ever - decorated crosses - puzzles - Easter chicks popping their bright yellow heads out of decorated eggs - and a giant frieze depicting the events of Good Friday and Easter Day. It was a happy hour in which everyone had opportunity to get covered in paint and glue, and learn the story of Easter with their hands.

The gentle background buzz of happy children's voices was momentarily disturbed by a loud shriek from Emma. Next minute Emma's Mum dragged the child across to me. Mum's face was drained. Emma was screaming as only Emma could. I looked at the little hand pushed in front of me. 'She's put a staple in her finger.' Mum explained. Only Emma could do something like that. I held back the thought that Emma's school teacher would often have wished she could staple Emma to a table. Mum's anxious face said, 'Do something!' With only the thought of saving the situation as quickly as possible, I took the finger between two of mine and squeezed it hard to lift the staple enough to get a grip on it, and pulled. Emma shrieked even louder, more tears flowed and she and Mum went off to find a dressing, leaving me with a blood stained staple.

It was not long before Emma returned to the activities, but not to me. I was the ogre who had hurt her finger. For the rest of the day she would not speak and I was left feeling terribly to blame. But why? She had put the staple in, not me! Any hurt I caused had been to help her, and make her finger better. But how do you explain that to a five year old? How do you tell her that it hurt you more to have to squeeze her finger than having a staple punched into your own?

In one of those momentary glimpses into another world, I sensed how God must feel. We hurt ourselves. To heal us it may seem he hurts us. We blame him, not understanding the pain he feels. And he takes the blame. He goes on loving, just as he did for us all on a cross at Golgotha.