

The Eye of the Storm

Anthea Hope speaks of her life's work combining science and faith

Anthea Hope is married to a Church of England vicar and lives in Crofton, near Orpington in Kent.

Born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Anthea Hope is the daughter of a Chartered civil engineer and a nurse. She came to England to attend boarding school, completed A levels in the sciences and studied Biochemistry at the University of London before studying for a post graduate qualification in nutrition. She said, "I returned to Sierra Leone to complete an MA, but I studied for the Chartered Institute of Insurance exams instead – though I was always giving out nutritional advice where I worked!"

One of Anthea's uncles had suffered second degree burns in an accident. She said, "We took him to a Chinese acupuncturist and the healing was amazing. Then one of my mum's friends came back from the UK looking really well after a course of aromatherapy so I decided to return to the UK to study complementary therapies, reflexology and massage. I then studied under Robert Tisserand."

It wasn't long before Anthea was lecturing on Robert Tisserand's anatomy and physiology courses and she soon joined the Hale Clinic specialising in nutritional therapy, aromatherapy and reflexology. She said, "Prince Charles opened the Hale Clinic – this was at a time when Anita Roddick had opened The Body Shop and Margaret Thatcher was encouraging entrepreneurship. A friend who was travelling to South East Asia had a brainwave. There were problems with insect bites transmitting diseases and some of the insect repellents on the market



were quite severe incorporating high levels of DEET*. I was already selling my new product 'Vamoose' (which had no DEET) independently."

Environmentalist and author George Monbiot took Vamoose with him to Indonesia and Anthea extended the range to include 'Baby Vamoose.' The family business was thriving and the media attention brought international interest in the insect repellent. Anthea remained steadfast in her approach. She said, "We wanted to remain ethical; we were purists and wanted it to be a product that was good for people to use."

Now engaged to Bimbi, a marketing executive with Royal Dutch Shell who was considering ordination, Anthea said, "I had taught at Sunday school and was active in the church. My parents were Anglican church-goers but notional Christians. When my grandmother died, my mother found a personal relationship with God. We joined a Pentecostal church because we knew this was what we needed in our lives. I didn't know that Anglicanism had moved into a renewal. Bimbi is a great vicar, but at the time I thought I was marrying a Shell executive."

There was a moment when I thought, 'I can't marry a man who wears a dress to work!' We were actually married within a year of meeting."

Bimbi finally left Shell and completed his theology degree in two years. Anthea eventually agreed that Vamoose could be produced and sold under licence and by 1994 they were back in London with Tim who was born whilst Bimbi was at theological college.

She said, "It's funny, but some people think women deliver their brains with the placenta! We went to Lewisham for four years. I worked in a complementary health clinic and served as a non-executive director in an NHS community trust there to keep my brain busy. We relocated to Orpington when Tim was around five years old. Just before our move we were trying to return from France to the UK and there were no ferry crossings due to severe weather conditions. We had really been in the eye of the storm and had a terrible car accident in which Tim damaged his nose. We came home to Biggin Hill in a light aircraft courtesy of travel insurance and started our new year that way."

By the late 1990's, Anthea had opened up a number of small practices, specialising in aromatherapy, reflexology and nutritional counselling. She said, "By then, people were more aware of the foods they needed and had taken some ownership of their health, but the finer points eluded them."

In a country where obesity is described as an 'epidemic' Anthea is convinced people simply don't understand what they are putting in their bodies and the effects foods have. She said, "People need to reduce their sugar intake."

They say they feel jittery or have low energy, so they eat something sugary. Then they feel good. Insulin is released to mop up the sugar, so some energy is released and some of the sugar is stored as fat. Some people's systems over-compensate leaving the person feeling tired again.

It would be much better for people to eat complex carbohydrates like oats. The body breaks these down more slowly and this results in a more even distribution of glucose which the body can handle better."

Anthea's Christian faith is central to who she is and everything she does but some people may find that an interesting position given Anthea's science training. She said, "I see God at work in all of our lives. I have seen people healed and watched

their pain disappear and so I had a hunger to know more. Sometimes, people come to me in prayer and though I might think a dietary supplement would help them, I chose to lay down my knowledge and learning preferring to see the gift of God healing through me." Anthea's beloved sister died in 2015 but Anthea said,

"God is so good! Whatever happens to me in life, I don't ever doubt His goodness. Although the whole journey with my sister's illness and death was perplexing, I was not in despair. I trusted God."

It is a lie of the enemy that God does bad things to us. I choose to trust Him, I see His goodness and when I look for it, I find it. Things that happen may be inopportune, but I don't choose the timing. I work hard at prayer ministry and try to be encouraging. Trust comes from intimacy and identity."

Still interested in complementary medicine and nutrition, Anthea said, "My faith influences my practice. It's amazing how the Lord will direct my mind; he will just flag something up. The journey is not the same for everyone. We all move at different speeds. First, we need to show people the love of God. You also have to know that you can't meet everybody's needs, but understand it is all about the love of God in word and deed. Priorities are hard and the needs are great, but we must learn to just ask God."

*DEET (chemical name, N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) is the active ingredient in many insect repellent products.

