

OXFORD STREET PASTORS

Listening, Caring, Helping



Christmas Special
Celebrating our Volunteers!



Freda's story



Freda (right) together with team mate Heather at the Personal Safety Day run by Oxford Brookes University this year.

Life as an Oxford Street Pastor; 'How Beautiful are the Feet.....'

It sounds foolish to voluntarily be out on the streets for long hours in the middle of some of the coldest nights of winter. It feels a little less foolish when I step out in my enormous Street Pastor jacket, with the rest of my team, and start to meet the many folk who make up the Oxford night scene. It always gives me a new and inspiring experience, if only fleetingly, of a very different city.

How did I get involved?

I knew about Oxford Street Pastors from others at my Church who had been involved from the start. When I stopped working at Oxford Brookes in 2015, after years working with students and young people, it was an ideal way to stay in contact, even if I was swapping a daytime for a weekend nightshift!

I have been a Street Pastor for a number of years now and I am constantly learning. I attended training for the role that I learnt a lot from, including mental health and drug awareness, and a fascinating glimpse behind the Oxford CCTV cameras at St. Aldates Police Station. I learnt from my amazing Team Leaders and co Street Pastors

From a range of local churches, all with their different skills and supportive qualities, and from the other people working through the late hours to ensure that everyone can have the safest and most enjoyable time possible and know how to get home. We are there with the taxi Marshalls, the night club staff, the police, and the kebab sellers. But most of all for me, are the people we meet on the streets who are willing to share their

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stories with us. Sometimes they have met us before and want to say 'hello', or ask for some flip flops for themselves or a friend struggling to walk home, or choose a lolly from our rucksacks, or ask for a hug or a selfie. Others are out to forget, often through alcohol, to forget really tough lives of stress and anxiety, or more serious trauma. Sometimes we cannot do much more than be alongside them and listen, or when appropriate offer to pray.

I have never forgotten an early training course which was then called 'Sharing the Good News'. Our trainer that evening asked us to look at and appreciate our feet, as we sang 'How Beautiful on the Mountain are the Feet of Those Who Bring Good News'. I have always tried to hide my short wide feet and yet now it is those same feet, in warm comfy shoes, which let me slowly walk, stand, or kneel down alongside someone who needs the help of our team that night. We are not out to evangelise and win converts, but as Street Pastors I believe we are there to share the acceptance and care of a loving and gracious God in practical ways.

Yes, missing a night's sleep can be tiring, though I've learnt to pace myself before and after my shift, but I have never regretted going on my first 'observer shift'. I had no idea how busy and alive the city centre becomes at weekends through until after the clubs close around 3:30am. You too can have this opportunity to experience for yourself what a Street Pastor shift can be like and whether it might become an eye opening part of your life.

Freda.

How can you find out more?

Please get in touch, there is no obligation and we are happy to talk, email, message or meet with you! streetpastorsoxford@gmail.com or 07910 758363.

1. You can chat to a current street pastor to find out what it is really like.
2. You can come out on a shift as an observer with no obligation at all.
3. Find out from our Coordinator what the training involves. Costs are covered by the organisation.
4. Talk to your minister / vicar and get a reference to go with your application form.

Once you decide to go ahead you can take part in training:

1. Completing the Roles and Responsibilities training day is the first step. Courses are run in the area every few months and this one is face to face.
2. Get into uniform and get going! Once you have done the training day then you will be able to go out on shift as a part of the team.
3. Other training modules can be completed when you have time. They include courses on mental health, alcohol and drugs and youth culture. We also learn about the local NightSafe partnership and our role in preventing violence against women and girls.
4. Once you have completed the courses you can be commissioned as a fully trained street pastor.

And finally.....We would be grateful for your prayers!

Please pray for our team as they undertake their weekend shifts, Christ's work in action
on the city streets.

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