



## Newsletter September 2017

### Sobered up.....by beer!

The prayer pastors had a call saying that there was a young guy behaving quite aggressively towards his group of friends outside a pub on the Barbican, so we duly prayed that the situation would calm down and peace would abound. However, the words that came out of my mouth were asking God to *Douse the anger as if pouring water over it would extinguish the aggression*. As soon as we had finished the prayer, we had a call back saying one of his friends had thrown a pint of beer over him and he had calmed right down!

### Knuckle dusters no challenge to God!



It was the last shift of the evening and the Street Pastors were informed that there was a car driving around the car park at Oceana with men 'tooled up' with knuckle

dusters and studded belts. The doormen felt that the presence of the Street Pastors would calm the situation and one jokingly said *Can you pray that this place is cleared by 4 am?*

So the Street Pastors phoned in to base to request prayer for the situation and that the place be empty by 4 am. With perhaps a little self-interest (!) the Prayer Pastors said that they would pray that it would be clear by 3.50 am, so that the Street Pastors could get back to base and we could get away on time.

After 10 minutes of hard prayer (getting away on time always focuses the mind), the Prayer Pastors received a phone call from the Street Pastors saying that a fleet of taxis had arrived and ferried everyone away, and there was no sign of the men in the car.....the time? 3.50am!

### Prayer is vital!

The two incidents reported in the box on the left, and many others like them, underline the centrality and importance of God's often miraculous intervention, via prayer, to all that we do. This is summed up perhaps by a quote from one of our Prayer Pastors, *There have so many incidences where people have been too drunk to get a taxi, or there seem to be no taxis around and after prayer the taxi has immediately appeared, or the person suddenly sobers up - that cannot be attributed to 'luck' - and even more impressive are the times when the person has spent all their money on the night out and doesn't have any left for the taxi fare when a stranger walks by and hands over money saying 'you look like you need it more than me'.*

As if to further emphasise this, a recent quote from one of our Street Pastors says, *I wouldn't do this without prayer support. I know that prayer actually works now which I didn't fully realise until I became a Street Pastor and saw prayers answered in front of my eyes.*

### Trip from Chichester to Plymouth saved

We were asked by CCTV to go to the help of a drunk young lady in a bus shelter. When we got there, two young men were already there, claiming to be doctors and one using the girl's phone to contact friends/relatives. While we were giving the girl water and gradually sobering her up, the actions of the lads become more suspicious (more in terms of incompetence rather than malice) and we eventually convinced the lad with the girl's phone to give it to us. We were able to speak to her cousin and brother (who had been persuaded by the lad to set off from Chichester to Plymouth to help her!) and assure them that she was on the road to recovery. We then walked her back to accommodation, as she was by that time sufficiently watered and recovered to walk slowly with support. Her cousin and brother were very grateful.

### Get Involved?

Our next training course will start at the end of September. For further details on how to become a Street or Prayer Pastor, please check out the "Get Involved" page of our website

[www.plymouth.streetpastors.org.uk](http://www.plymouth.streetpastors.org.uk)

or ring Roy on 07790 013791 for further information or to arrange a night's observation.

## Thank you ...from Toyah Wilcox!



At Plymouth's recent Armed Forces Day, Toyah Wilcox was finishing her last song as one of our teams was picking up bottles nearby. After the obligatory photo (!) they got talking about the work of Street Pastors during which Toyah said *You do an amazing job, thank you so much*

### Accidental death averted?

On one wet night we found a bloke slumped, completely out of it, with just a T-shirt on his top and wet through. We took a long time to sober him up and we put a coat around him as he was already very cold. I think nobody would've noticed him otherwise. When I got home, I told my husband, who is a doctor, about it and he commented that people can easily die of Hypothermia in a situation like that. Thank you Lord for leading us to him and possibly saving his life!

### Always best to check.....

We spotted a young girl crying on a seat with a young man sat beside and comforting her. It would have been easy to assume they were a couple and not needing any help from us. I sat down on the other side of her and the young man said *She's lost her friend who has her phone and key*. The girl just kept on weeping, but did say that she would like to go home and said she could gain access if we got her there.

We offered to walk her there which she gladly accepted, at which point the young man disappeared. As we walked, she told us that she was being criticised on social media and that was the cause of her upset. It turns out the young man had been a stranger to her. I have no idea of his motives, but we may have scared away a predator, as well as giving comfort to her, a safe place to share some of her concerns and of course, safe transit home.

## Some more "thank you"s

*Hi - I went out last night and lost my phone and I know I was being cared by some Street Pastors as I was ridiculously drunk. I just want to express my sincere gratitude to whoever looked after me in my state, and I also want to apologise for being that drunk. Whoever looked after me were absolute angels so thank you so so so much*

On a recent patrol a young man crossed the road to talk to us, saying *You guys do a fantastic job - he explained that he had been on the streets for 5 years and said that, when you're on the streets and people ignore or maybe kick you for being there, you tend to wonder, What is the point of it all? Then he said But you guys come along and give us the time of day and respect us, and it makes you think that maybe there's light at the end of the tunnel after all, adding You don't know the value of what you do*. He then told us that he now has a flat and is doing well, and thanked us again.

*I will be eternally grateful as 4 years ago I was knocked unconscious on North Hill and left there. The Street Pastors suddenly appeared, put me in the recovery position and called an ambulance*

### ...and an apology

We often meet folk who are a bit drunk who greet us with *Hi, Street Pastors, you helped me when....*

Recently we were approached by one young lassie who said she had been helped some months previously. Yes it had to be with flip flops!! She had been drunk, very drunk; apparently she had got extremely cross and angry about 'our' God; that what we believed was all rubbish etc. She apologised to me for how she behaved, what she had said, how she had said it and how she treated me. She remembered that I wouldn't get cross with her, no matter how angry she got, or what she had said.

I told her it didn't matter because God so loved her and would always love her. She said *That's just what you said last time, I still don't get your God, but you know there must be something....* She gave me a big hug, evidently relieved that she had had an opportunity to apologise.

### **A God-directed moment**

The other night, we happened to pass a lassie who I greeted her with my usual *Hello, is everything ok with you?*

*Yes, thank you, I'm fine* was her cheery reply. We continued to walk in opposite directions but after about twenty paces, without thinking, I found myself turning around and going back to her. I stopped her and asked if she was really all right. She immediately burst into tears. She told us about a serious family situation. We walked with her for some while to give her the time to explain and we were able to ease her concerns and worries by listening to her (and praying via our wonderful prayer pastors). We talked about how her concerns could be reduced and she was able to release some of her fears, realising there was a solution,

that there was hope for her family's situation, which she had seen as hopeless.

We encouraged her to contact and meet a friend with whom she could feel safe, leaving her in a far happier state. So, not a particularly sensational incident. We happened to be in the right place to be there for her; Street Pastors are always doing that.... I was directed to turn without considering it in any way, without a thought. It was a truly God directed moment.

When talking about Street Pastors, I often say that we are simply the conduits that God uses to do His work. We are there to give God's protection and love to all He puts in our path. That was never more true than on that night. He made sure our path was the same as the girl, that we would walk beside her in the same direction. Thank you, Father.

### **Oil on troubled waters**

It was 0200 on a Sunday morning and we were returning to base for a break. As we passed a club, we saw a man with blood all over his face and T-shirt, sat on a pavement, being attended to by the staff and others; we stopped to offer help. He and his friends claimed he had been the victim of an unprovoked violent attack by a group of other lads, which was later substantiated by CCTV. The casualty had suffered repeated kicks to his ribs, has lost a tooth and was bleeding from a deep cut on his head. The staff were appreciative of us taking over, stemming the bleeding and helping the him to cope with his injuries; he also suffered with anxiety and had stomach health issues. We stayed with him until the Police and Ambulance came onto the scene.

The situation was one which could have easily escalated. Once the Club staff had seen the video footage, they realised at least one of the lads involved in the attack, was still on the premises and informed the Police. I am sure it was the prayer of the Prayer Pastors, and the Street Pastors offering God's loving, caring presence and peace into the situation, which encouraged the victim and his friends not to seek revenge on the attackers. Instead, they waited for the Police to arrive to deal with it, and as a second attacker emerged from the club, he was rapidly identified by the casualty and his friends before being immediately secured by the Police!

It was a long drawn out affair because of the delays in getting both police and ambulance there and it was poetic justice to see the second assailant walk straight into the hands of the police when he emerged from the club, presumably thinking that everything had been cleared up.

Thank you, Lord, for, once more, putting us in the right place at the right time and giving us the tools, the skills and the words to not only help others, but to stop an already nasty situation becoming much worse.

### **Two different worlds!**

The other Saturday in my village we had a wonderful concert and BBQ organised by the church family to say thank you to all.

Three hours later I was in the centre of the rubbish of Plymouth, kneeling beside a lady with the most horrendous feet. They really stank and I have a strong constitution!!

She had what used to be called "Trench Foot". Trying to bathe and dry them with only a bottle of water and some tissues, I was so reminded of biblical stories – Mary Magdalene washing Jesus's feet, Jesus doing the same for His disciples. But I was there doing it for real, to a lady crying, I can still hear her saying "They hurt me"

With all its comforts, happiness and laughter, my home village seemed another world, a million miles away. We don't usually discuss in detail much of what happens in the streets on a Saturday night but this one had a profound effect on me, a deep effect.

## **A tale of two addicts**

We often meet people on our patrols who may be addicted to alcohol or other substances. We are proud to say that among our ranks we have two ladies, Barbara and Sue, who are our “addicts” as, instead of patrolling once every four weeks, they volunteer to patrol with us every week! I asked them why:

**Barbara's** reply was: *Um, am I so addicted? I do serve each Saturday, so why? It is simply because I believe it is where God wants me to be. Nothing of course, to do with the toast and hot drinks provided with such love by our Prayer Pastors! He has given me the strength and the opportunity to be there, doing His work, serving and protecting the vulnerable. Each night I go out I am so near to God. I can feel His strength, His love working through me; I am simply the conduit He uses to help protect those in need. Nightly, I am astonished and humbled by the power of prayer; our Prayer Pastors cover us with the protection of prayer, even before we leave base.*

*We are there to serve, to help whoever is put in our path. In that service, I receive far more than I give. In those streets full of the nights' revelry, I feel and know the power of God's love, His gentleness and tenderness is so evident. We have all been asked how much we get paid for being Street IPastors. Most of my fellow Street Pastors answer “nothing, we are all volunteers”; if I am asked I say I receive an immense reward, but not as money.*

*So, each Saturday evening I put on my uniform, It is as though I am putting on God's armour. One day or should it be night (!) I may feel called to give my time and energies to something else. Then it will be time to hand in my cap and shirt, but I do pray that I won't feel that nudge for many years in the future. I value the love of the whole of our Street Pastor family from both the Street and Prayer Pastors. I give thanks that I know God is using me in such a practical and wonderful way.*

**And Sue's:** *My calling to be a Street Pastor, and it is a calling, originated through listening to talks by Street Pastors over a couple of years, and realising this was a way of reaching out to young people. I worship at a beautiful medieval church in rural Cornwall with a 9.30am service on Sundays – idyllic if you are 50+, but not hugely attractive to any teenager or young person who has been getting up for school/college/work throughout the week.*

*I think I know the catalyst that started my going on duty practically every weekend, although this*

*wasn't apparent to me for quite some time after the event and, I'm ashamed to say, it was a bit of a guilt trip really; or maybe God just giving me a nudge.....*

*Saturday 8th February 2014 was an extremely stormy evening. I had spent the day expecting to go on my monthly Plymouth duty – previously to this, I had committed myself to one Torpoint and one Plymouth duty a month. About 8pm, as the storm heightened, I started to panic, wondering if the Torpoint ferry and the Saltash Bridge might be closed during the night due to the weather, and I might get stranded. I phoned Roy, who understood, of course, and I didn't do a duty that night. Why I wasn't prepared to accept that God would keep me safe whatever I don't remember.*

*For a while, I didn't do the first weekend of a month, as I lead Family Worship on the Sunday, but somehow, I got into a pattern of Street Pastoring every weekend – and now I lead far more Services on other Sundays too. I can honestly say I've never felt I'd rather not go in on a Saturday night, quite the contrary, I can feel myself getting more and more ready, itching to get going. I just find the whole Street Pastor initiative such a fantastic form of ministry. People, whether they are youngsters, partygoers, rough sleepers, door staff, police or ambulance services, are so receptive to these groups of Christians ambling around the streets of our towns and cities - with their offers to help, care and listen; just being there for others. We know, just as Jesus would be.*

*And prayer – WOW!!! I have learnt so much about how God answers prayer; in His timing and in His way; and how He ensures that we are in the right place at the right time. It is a true privilege to work with such dedicated, gifted Prayer Pastors on every Section. They wrap all that is happening on the streets in prayer, ensuring that God's love and protection is enfolding all situations and all people, no matter what they have done.*

*And you learn so much about yourself; what you are capable of doing when God is behind your every action, thought and words. I can remember the boy who taught me, through the state he was in, the meaning of compassion - you could not last very long as a Street Pastor without being completely non-judgemental. In September, I start a new phase of my life - Ordination training in the Church of England; not something I ever anticipated would happen! I know being a Street Pastor has been a big part of my formation thus far. I feel very drawn towards those most vulnerable in society, those on the edge – a far cry from the 'nice lady who does children's work in a country church'!*



## Finances

We are very grateful for the generosity of SO many people and organisations, whether by single donations or ongoing support, and would like to acknowledge gratefully recent grants and gifts from Devon Community Foundation Crimebeat Fund, Mayflower Rotary Club, Best Bar None, Derriford URC, Stoke Methodist Church, Aveton Gifford WI, National Association of Retired Police Officers and Pennycross Methodist Church.

“Best Bar None” is an accreditation scheme run by the license trade and also works to promote safer nights out in Plymouth. They have been amongst our faithful supporters for some years. The picture above shows Roy with Jay McDonnell, who heads up the initiative in Plymouth

If you would like to donate, please visit our website – [www.plymouth.streetpastors.org.uk](http://www.plymouth.streetpastors.org.uk) - or if you would prefer to send us a gift via the post, cheques payable to “Plymouth Street Pastors” may be sent to our Treasurer: Mr. C James, 8 Hazel Close, Birdcage Farm, Plymouth PL6 6HL. In addition, we can now receive 4% of what you spend when you shop at Sainsburys. To register, please see

<https://www.raisewithsainsburys.com/?cid=26222>

Thank you again everyone – we simply couldn’t do it without your support!

## Gone to glory!

We are sorry to have lost one of our faithful Torpoint St. Pastors, Ben Pile, who died on 14th June, aged 84.

Ben was described at his funeral as “A big man in Torpoint”, not only because of his physical size, but also due to his having been involved in so many projects and ministries in the town. Ben was a faithful friend to so many people and will be greatly missed by all. However, whilst we mourn his loss alongside his family; we rejoice that he is now with the Lord and re-united with his wife Kathleen in heaven.

## The voice(s) in my head

I was reminded on Saturday of the importance of not listening to that voice that seems to speak every 4 weeks or so, and usually on a Saturday – you know; that voice which makes the smallest molehill of a problem into a mountain and / or reminds us how comfy the armchair is etc. etc.

Last Saturday around 9, I suddenly became very aware of how long the 7 or so hours that I was about to be out for would feel, especially at the end of rather a long day and “did I really have to go out”? (sound familiar?)

Once I got out, I never gave it a second thought of course and then our very first conversation was with a prostitute, who was only daring to speak to us as her pimp wasn’t around. She really wanted to get out of the lifestyle and asked us for help and we were able to give her some pointers. She gladly accepted our offer of prayer and began to cry as we did.

*(continued on page 6)*

Out on the streets I can share His love  
 Make some of the folk aware of God above  
 I can practically show in so many ways  
 How Jesus did things and still does today  
 With a smile on my face and His love in my heart  
 I listen and talk to those whom I meet  
 And give lollipops to whoever I greet  
 God leads my footsteps wherever the need  
 For he knows the people that I should ‘feed’.

So armed with his words and his shield of protection  
 I share that love amongst his creation  
 To follow in God’s footsteps and care for his people  
 I walk the streets of our town  
 Leaving behind the church walls and the steeple  
 God blesses the work of street pastors worldwide  
 Would YOU like to join me and be by my side?

There’s nothing quite like it out there on the ground  
 On the streets of our cities and also the towns  
 Come, follow those footsteps, share the unconditional love  
 Given so freely by our Lord above  
 Out in the open showing that love  
 Bringing some peace just like a dove  
 Proving to one and all, no judgement call, that God has a face  
 What wonderful grace.

*Written by Eve Hughes, a Street Pastor in Newbury*

*(continued from page 5)*

Later we gently washed the forehead and face of a female street sleeper who had been kicked there for refusing to take part in a drug deal. Later still all four of us knelt on the pavement to hug 2 street sleepers – the girl particularly revelled in hugging one of our ladies – I guess street sleepers don't get many hugs - and at their request praying with them. Such an honour!

And that's not to mention the amazing answered prayers of course – once while in for our break and overhearing a prayer request come in from another team, thinking “Wow, that sounds pretty impossible!” – I should have known better shouldn't I? – it took all of a minute for the answer to come! Then later phoning the Prayer Pastors with a pretty difficult situation we were involved with and yes you've guessed it – within a minute.....

Many other excellent conversations that night too.....or I could have stayed in..... 😊

### **Another life saved?**

*Roy writes: I have again been impacted by the enormous value of what we do by this report from Section C and in particular their care and faithfulness in staying with the situation, very possibly resulting in another life being saved:*

Our team had quite a challenging incident with a young woman called H, who had apparently suffered a blow to the head having slipped off a concrete ledge she was sitting on. Although one of her friends had initially called an ambulance, the four others were intent on getting her into a taxi and 'home'. They kept saying that she was a "drama

queen" and nothing had happened, but H was hysterical, holding her head and crying, reporting a bad headache and unable to breathe.

She swung from accepting help and being calmed by our presence to shouting to leave her alone. Her friends were behaving very unusually, as they kept shouting at us to leave them alone and they didn't seem to believe that she had hit her head. She got carried off on two occasions by her boyfriend, but both times ended up on the ground crying and telling them to leave her alone.

We followed at a distance and ultimately they tried to bundle her into a car, but she resisted and one of our team saw her “boyfriend” kicking her while she was on the ground. We called the police and when they arrived the four very voluble young men (who had also started throwing punches at each other) just melted away.

Having tried to cancel the ambulance because H wasn't staying in the same place or compliant, the ambulance service rang me back and wanted to talk to her. By this time she was calmly sitting in the back of a police car, so she spoke to them and then the paramedics strongly recommended that she be taken to a hospital for assessment. That is what the police then did, attempting to contact her parents on the way.

Thinking about it, I believe that they were all on drugs of some sort. This all took over an hour and a half. I wonder what might have happened if Street Pastors hadn't been around to help. It was certainly a challenging situation but by God's grace she ended up in a place of safety and receiving the medical attention she needed

### **A small thing perhaps.....but...**

We were on the Barbican around 3.30 am when we saw a young girl alone and apparently waiting for someone or something, so we went over to check if she was OK.

She was fine, quite sober and said she was waiting for a taxi which she had been promised would arrive by then, so we said we'd wait with her while she rang the taxi office again and until it arrived for her.

That was all good.....until a rather drunk young man came up and became very friendly with her and said he was on the way home too. In genuine kindness and innocence, though we have to say perhaps also naivety, she offered to drop him home on the way in her taxi when it came, saying that they might share the fare. As you may imagine, he

was **very** keen to take her up on that offer and we were quite concerned, realising that they each had their free will but aware of the potential dangers for her. We wanted to warn her but couldn't do so without him hearing.

So we turned on our secret weapon and phoned the Prayer Pastors – within a minute, the two of them separated far enough for me to write on my phone *We are concerned for you about the dangers of getting into a taxi with a stranger* and showed it to her without him seeing. The penny dropped and she stopped talking about giving him a lift. Meanwhile he began to say he wasn't quite sure whether he wanted to go home then (*now that's answered prayer!*) then her taxi came and she got into it alone. A small thing perhaps, but you never know!