



Plymouth Street Pastors

- taking Love to the streets

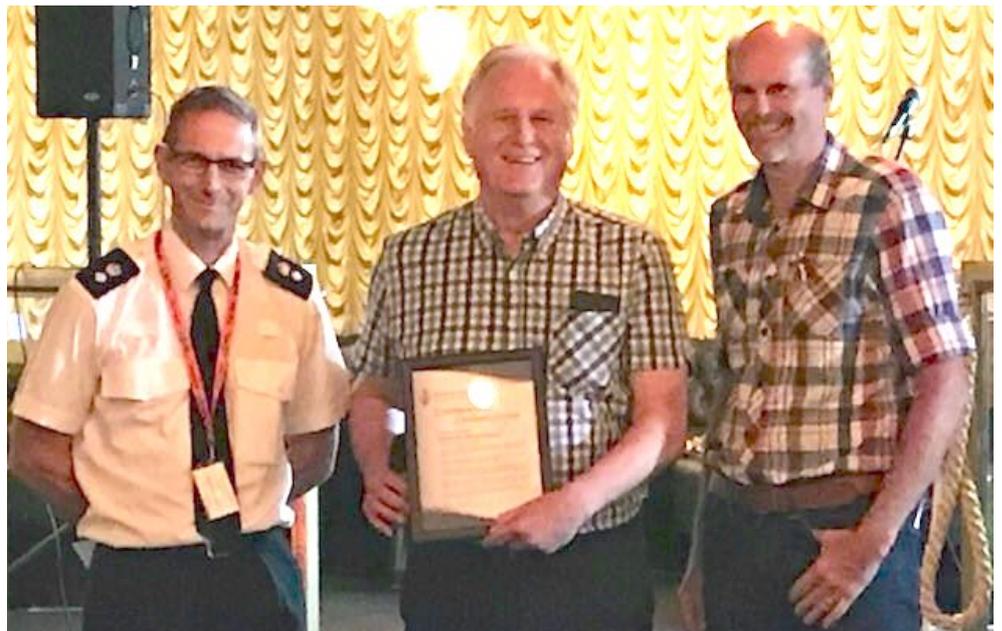
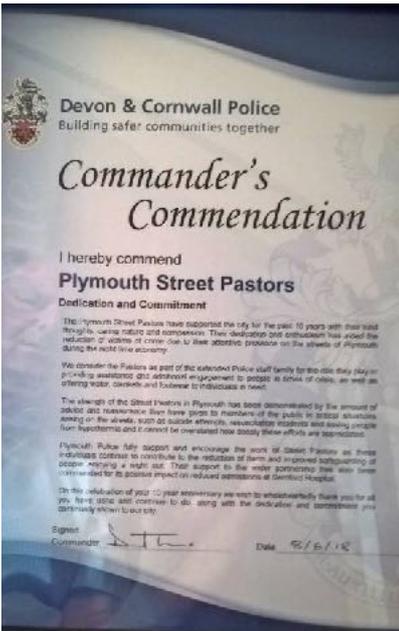
Newsletter April 2019



Happy Birthday - to us!

We were delighted to celebrate 10 years of patrols in Plymouth on the 23rd May last year, which we marked with a Thanksgiving Service, Barn Dance and buffet at Pryzm night club. A good night was had by all and we were especially privileged when Chief Inspector Dave Thorne presented us with a Commander's Commendation (*shown below left*), recognising and thanking us for our work in the city. Pictured (*below right*) are Dave Thorne, with Roy Beaumont and Chris Clewer.

As part of the evening we formally commissioned Peter Hadden as our new Deputy Co-ordinator, seen slightly left of centre in the photo (*above left*) with full Naval beard, tripping the light fantastic!



...and another award

In October we were also honoured to be presented with a Plymouth Community Award for our "Support in the community in an exemplary fashion" by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The photo (*right*) shows the Award Certificate and the Dartington Crystal award plinth with inset clock.



"Where are you God"?

We came across an older gentleman called James, who told us that his mum had died and that he had stood at her grave three weeks ago asking God "Where are you"?

He said that he was disappointed that God didn't answer, then he looked up and said "But I think he has now because he's sent you guys to talk to me". This really touched my heart and I believe God put us in the right place at the right time to meet him.

Welcome new Street Pastors!



In November we commissioned our newest 6 Street Pastors with In a service at Hope Baptist Church. Throwing their hats in the air and from left to right are Naomi Squires, Karen Grimshaw, Grace Henagulph, Shehany Warna, Kalum Warna and Ramy Daoud. We were particularly pleased to welcome Ramy from the Egyptian Coptic church as this now makes 48 local churches that our team has been recruited from over the years!

After their first nights on patrol I asked Kalum and Naomi what their first impressions had been

Kalum's account: *After all the training I finally had the opportunity to go out street pastoring. As we started patrolling I was overwhelmed by the public reception, how they respected and made an effort to greet us and encourage us.*

One of the first contacts we made was a homeless person who seemed to be very stressed, almost in tears and cold, one of my team sat next to him and comforted him while we got him some gloves and a space blanket, and gave him a listening ear and showed that we care. Instances like this with rough sleepers occurred all night, I was touched by how my fellow street pastors had made an effort to personally remember things about the people they've seen before and how a simple smile and a greeting lifts their spirits!

We helped a vulnerable young person when we had a radio call by a security guard at a local pub asking for our help. They suspected a girl's drink had been spiked. We managed to get her to a safe place away from potential danger, and the authorities took care of her. We also cared for a few people who seemed very drunk and alone.

As we were patrolling we picked up many bottles, glasses and cleaned up broken glass. The broken glass was in public walkways where someone could have got hurt badly if they stepped on it, especially if a girl had taken her heels off! This brings me on to

the next thing we were able to help with, girls who were walking barefoot as it was too painful to wear their heels, by giving them flip flops we can avoid injuries and save emergency services from having to deal with them too.

I loved the conversations with people we met as we were walking around, we met a whole range of people from students, teachers and those who served in the forces. A lot of people appreciated what we do but one that I really liked was when a guy who works at the CCTV office saw me on his way from getting pizza, and asked me "I see what you guys go through, and I know you're volunteers, why do you do it?". I felt well equipped to answer this question as we had discussed this in our training.

After my first night as a young street pastor I was so encouraged and the team I was with set an amazing example for me, making me wanting to do more! Street Pastoring is a perfect example of showing God's love through our actions and I want to thank and encourage all the other Street Pastors to keep on doing your best for the people that need our help and show them that they're loved and cared for.

Naomi writes: *My first night as a street pastor was not actually as jam-packed full of action as I thought it would be. Despite a fairly quiet night of picking up glass and talking to just a few street sleepers I really enjoyed it. I feel privileged to be able to meet people where they are at, and help. Very rarely do people you walk past during the day even speak to you, let alone trust you with their personal stories, so for the homeless and those in pain to open up to you is incredibly rewarding.*

Not only that but the opportunity to pray for them and speak God's love over their lives is just amazing. I feel a great sense of purpose in Street Pastoring and was amazed at the incredible reputation we have. In a world where Christians are seen to be judgemental, it is so good to be able to show non-Christians that God is loving and generous through caring for them on the streets.

The power of the Recovery Position

It had been the quietest night I can remember. We are the only team out for the 2 – 4 shift. We have an observer with us and I, perhaps rashly, pray that something will happen on this shift to give our observer an idea of how ‘everything works together for good’. At 3.40 a.m. everyone is calmly dispersing and I am in the process of telling the prayer pastors that we are coming in when I notice a young woman perched on a window ledge and being supported by a man. I tell the prayer pastors I’ll just check on this lady and get back to them...

The woman is being fed chips in curry sauce by a passer-by but keeps falling deeply asleep for short periods. It soon becomes apparent that she has taken prescribed sedatives- and probably alcohol too. The usual sobering-up routine isn’t working and, with the unquantifiable complication of medication, we call an ambulance. Aware that this could take some time and, with increasing difficulty in keeping the woman from falling off the ledge, the team ease her onto the pavement to put her in the recovery position.

And RECOVER she does - immediately! Presumably the cold concrete has something to do with it, but she leaps to her feet shouting ‘What is going on?’ She stands down her own ambulance - and as she runs across the Octagon we have to agree that she no longer needs one. We are a bit late in at 4.20am but our astonished observer has witnessed the ‘unexplained rapid recovery’ that had been mentioned in testimonies at the start of the night.

Who would have thought of this one?

It is awesome to think that we have the privilege of being involved with our God, who works so many awesome miracles on our streets week by week – but who would have thought of this one?

We had prayer request for young girl who had become separated from her sister (who lived in Plymouth but gone off with a boyfriend). The girl lived in a village near Liskeard and she didn’t know anyone else in the city. We prayed for the situation - a) for taxi who would go out that far and b) for the safety of this vulnerable girl; asking God for a solution

Astounding detail!

Over the years we've seen some amazing "co-incidences" arranged by our heavenly Father but I think this one has to be the best!:-

Two of our St Pastors, Pete and Tracey came across a young lady who asked for some bottled water, explaining that she had a specific heart condition. They gave her the water and asked what heart condition it was. She said it was a rare one that no-one else knew about apart from her and her doctor, called "POTS" (postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome).

Pete’s daughter has exactly that condition so they told her they were very familiar with it. The girl told them the name of her doctor who was known as the only POTS specialist in Devon, who was (of course) also the same doctor caring for Pete’s daughter – the lady was so relieved to talk to someone who knew about her condition. This was the first of the “coincidences”

They then noticed another young lady who was intoxicated and extremely apologetic. She explained after many tears that was training to become a nurse but had failed a recent maths examand it just so happens that Tracey is a nurse who had also struggled with maths!

She then discussed in great detail her other concerns, one being waiting for the results of a recent skin biopsy on her foot, which may be cancerous. – get this – Pete is a Podiatrist and Tracey a Dermatology nurse! They provided her with reassurance and the telephone number of the clinic to ring for advice and managed to contact her father who came and took her safely home

Astounded by the extent and detail of God’s love and care for these two ladies in putting the perfect two St Pastors together for them to meet and talk to that night – He is so amazing!

While the Street Pastors were supporting the girl and trying to contact her mum, a couple walked past and enquired about her, asking if she was ok.

*It transpired that **they lived in the same village and were happy to share a taxi home!** (don’t think I’ll bother trying to work out the chances of that one) – wow thank you Lord!!*

A heart-rending encounter

We were called by one of the door staff, concerned about a semi-drunk girl on the pavement. He said he knew her and wondered if she might be upset about a friend who had committed suicide.

One of our ladies sat down beside her and gently began to ask what was the matter. After a few "I'm all rights-s" the tears began. It was indeed about her friend who had said to her, "M. I'll see you next week for your birthday" and had then hanged herself the next day.

More tears came, which turned to deep deep sobs as our lady St Pastor hugged her and just let her cry it all out. She told us that ever since the incident, she had been drinking to numb the pain and bewilderment.

After a long time we were able to say to her that one thing we were sure of was that whatever had been in her friend's mind, we

were sure that she wouldn't want M. to spend the rest of her life crippled by it. She nodded and we further said that whilst it was natural to try and make sense of it all, she was never really going to and needed to leave it all behind. She understood and nodded again.

By now it was 4 o'clock and we phoned the Prayer Pastors to update them and asked them to pray that we could get her a taxi quickly. 30 seconds later a taxi stopped for us and she was safely inside, despite attempts from 3 others to claim the taxi first.

We ourselves were very touched by it all and asked our lovely Prayer Pastors to pray for us too before we went home

Comment: *To say that this was a reminder of why we do what we do would be an understatement. Thank you Lord for the privilege of being able to show some of your love to people in such practical ways.*

Some more "thank you"s...

Hi there

I just wanted to say thank you to the group that was working last night. I was in a bit of a mess, much to my embarrassment, but you guys really helped me out. I'm so sorry you had to deal with me in that state and you went above and beyond and I really appreciate your help. I may not remember much from last night but I just thought it was important to say thank you.

Best wishes S.

Hello

I wanted to extend my sincerest thanks to Pete (he said to call him the good looking one!) and his team who so compassionately helped my friend H. on Saturday night outside the Union Rooms. I know you will have seen it all and this is part of your voluntary role, but we really do appreciate it.

I promised Pete I would get in touch about your organisation possibly coming into our sixth form to give a talk.

Hi – could you please pass my thanks on to your team who helped me last night? I don't remember much but wanted to ring and say thank you as it's important to. I'm not sure what I would have done without your help.

HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE UK AND IRELAND

30 JANUARY, 2019

EASTLEIGH STREET PASTORS RECOGNISED WITH AN AWARD BY EASTLEIGH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

23 NOVEMBER, 2018

SUTTON STREET PASTORS WON THE AWARD FOR "KEEPING SUTTON SAFE" LAST NIGHT AT SUTTON COMMUNITY AWARDS

16 NOVEMBER, 2018

CORK STREET PASTORS SPECIAL AWARD RECIPIENT FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING INITIATIVES

20 JUNE, 2018

STREET PASTORS FOUNDER GETS HUMANITARIAN PRIZE

More than just numbers...



We are pleased to say we have now given away more than 8,500 pairs of flip flops, which is not only more than 17,000 happy feet, but has no doubt helped towards lessening the strain on our hard-pressed NHS staff as they would have protected people from foot injuries had they otherwise walked barefoot, potentially on broken glass.

We have also now removed a total of more than 73,000 bottles from the streets, we trust saving more injuries from them possibly otherwise being used as a weapon in a fight or getting broken causing injury.



“I don’t want to wake up tomorrow morning”

Our update training was on suicide prevention and I read the leaflet while waiting to go out on the streets.

During the second shift, our attention was directed to a lone young lady sitting on a window ledge. She was hunched over trying to make herself vomit. After using the provided tissue and taking some sips of water, she told me ‘I don’t want to wake up tomorrow morning’. This same phrase was repeated later in the conversation. “Hmm”, I thought, “...sounds as if I need to put the training into practice”.

Remembering what I had read, I concentrated on looking for a reason for her to go on living, while finding out her name, circumstances and current plans. She told me she worked in healthcare and this gave me a good opportunity to emphasise the importance of her role in society, even after she told me ‘If I wasn’t here no-one would miss me for more than a few days’.

Suddenly she seemed to find energy to act and called her friends, from whom she had become separated. They rapidly responded and I was able to help her guide them in. Their car pulled up shortly and the girl rushed across the road and got into the back seat. I just had time to say to the pleasant-looking girl in the passenger seat ‘S has just told me that she is feeling low - please keep an eye out for her.’ ‘Yes, we will’ she replied- and I felt confident that she would.

Earlier, we had heard from a security person of a woman jumping from one of the university buildings just the evening before.

I remain challenged to keep ears, heart and spirit alert to the deep distress so prevalent in this world. Praise God for timely words of wisdom.

Comment: *We are privileged to so often be in just the right place at just the right time. Thankyou Lord for allowing us to be part of showing some of your love and care*

Stinky feet.....and their effect on a Street Pastor

The other Saturday 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 the Biblical stories of Mary washing Jesus's feet, and 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 Barbara". Home and church family, with all the comforts, happiness and laughter 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 and deep effect on me.



“Hi – to the helpful person last night who helped my daughter K. Thank you so much, you do marvellous work. Please pass on our gratitude to the other team members“

(message received online)

Prayer overspill

I was at a memorial service in church today when the organ suddenly stopped working. The organist and the curate looked aghast and then looked at me to do something.

The plugs all looked fine and so I prayed... and the organ started working again! Just another bit of what I have learned as a Street Pastor. The curate asked after the service what I had done to make the organ work... I said I had just prayed. Isn't He just amazing?

Relationship far more important than theology

One of the foundational tenets of the Street Pastor ministry is that although we are allowed to answer any questions about our faith, we are not on the streets to argue with anyone. Rather, as St. Francis of Assisi said, we are there to "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words", as demonstrated by this testimony:

Our training at the start of last night's patrols was to encourage each other with testimonies from previous times.

At 10.20 pm the Barbican was very quiet but a chatty man with a hiker's rucksack and foreign accent wanted to know what we did. He countered our positivity with some rather negative views, asking us to tell him something about Jesus and the reason for His death. He then challenged us to tell him something positive and we were able to retell one of the testimonies we had just heard. On being asked, he told us that he came from Israel. I was grateful we had not dug a deep theological divide and we parted on very friendly terms.

We encountered this man three more times over the rest of the night - he seemed to turn up wherever we were patrolling. Each time a brief exchange occurred - friendlier each time. The last time he just wanted a few hugs.

Ordinary encounters / Too much love

The last time I was on duty I was reminded of the huge effect what we do has on some people – we were helping a girl who'd lost her bank card so couldn't get any cash for a taxi. Eventually she remembered her mother's phone number, so we rang her to confirm she did have a card and (thanks to our awesome Prayer Pastors' prayers) one of the taxi marshals found a taxi driver who was willing to take our girl home on the basis that he would then take mum to a cash point to get paid – that in itself is something of a miracle!

Anyway, while we were waiting with our "client" she began to thank us for our help, saying how unusual it was for anyone to be so helpful; then she said,

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 and Somerset Fire Service, Virginia House Settlement, Devon Community Crimebeat Fund, The A C Ballard deceased Will Trust, The Uplands Charitable Trust, Walter C. Parsons, Notre Dame School, Saltash Wesley Methodist Café Church, Stoke Climsland W.I., Eliza Tyeth Trust, Hooe Baptist Church, Ridgeway Methodist Ladies, The Proceeds of Crime Fund, Our Lady of Lourdes RC Church and St Mary's Mother's Union.

If you would like to donate, please visit our website – 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 for this arrangement, please see <https://www.raisewithsainsburys.com/?cid=26222>

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

I thanked God that we were primed with positive stories of grace. I occurred to me that these repeated brief encounters were probably the nearest thing he had to a friendship on his travels. What a privilege to have been able to show him the love of Christ in this small way. That will stay with him far more than any finely-argued theology.

"actually it's a bit too much!". I knew what she meant – she was finding the love of Jesus for her, being expressed through us, a bit overwhelming.

.....talking of which, I recently received this. *Could you please pass my thanks on to one of your ladies who helped my daughter on Saturday night who had drunk too much and was unwell. Unfortunately I didn't get the name of the lady but would like to convey my thanks for making sure she was looked after until I arrived. She is feeling much better today thank you*

– how easy it would be for us to put these two meetings and so many others down to "ordinary" encounters and forget the potential impact of God's love on the people we help 😊