



Plymouth Street Pastors

- taking Love to the streets

What's it like to be a Street or Prayer Pastor? – like to know more? Take a look at our video <https://vimeo.com/371183632>

Newsletter February 2023

Awesome God!

We were asked to help a man lying on the ground, sobbing and repeating “*I just want to end it all*” I sat down beside him and asked what the matter was and through tears he told me his father had died the day before his 21st birthday and even though he was now 48, the pain had not gone and that he drank to numb that pain

I nodded in understanding though thinking “*What on earth do I say here?*” As I listened, the thought came to me to ask “*How old was your father when he died?*” – “47” came the reply. The penny dropped and I remembered that my father had also died at age 47, when I was 21 and on the day before my brother's 18th birthday. I told him this and felt a bridge had been built to this dear man

Remembering some of our training I suggested that while suicide might seem like the easy option; it wouldn't solve the problem; rather it would pass the problem on to someone else, maybe like his elderly mother who he'd mentioned that he looked after. Did he think his father would want him to do this? “No”

He had also told me that he was constantly in pain with his back, another reason why he wanted to end

it all; so I gently offered to pray for healing, which he gladly accepted. As I prayed, my words flowed into also speaking God's healing and peace into his heart. Wham! It was like a light had been turned on! He brightened up, smiled and now crying tears of joy and relief, told us that he'd lost his father but I had now been a father to him!

He asked why we do what we do and I was able to tell him that God had saved us so we go out to serve God, helping others for Him. He readily accepted the encouragements that he wasn't born to end it all but to live a full life and that it was no coincidence that we had walked past at that time. “*You've saved my life*” he said and hugged us in gratitude as we left

Thinking about it afterwards I was gobsmacked with the whole episode – for us to “happen” to meet this man whose father like mine had died at age 47, the day before his/my brother's birthday!. God cared so much for him that He arranged a “coincidental” meeting with just the right Street Pastor at just the right time!!! There's verse in the Bible that says “*...in all things God works for the good of those who love Him...*” - I wasn't even a Christian when my father died. Yet over 50 years later(!), our amazing God used even those sad and hard times for good for this poor man. What can I say but “*Praise You Lord!*”

Keyham 1 year on



12th August 2022 - one year after the terrible shootings in Keyham a Civic Ceremony was held in St Andrew's Minster. I was particularly struck by one of the prayers in the Order of Service, shown on the right.

For me, that's a prayer we could so easily pray for ourselves as we patrol and certainly one which, whilst not necessarily being worded as such, was I'm sure the prayer of our hearts when we patrolled in the Keyham area in the weeks after the shootings.

We were able to provide a small team to be present at the evening Vigil in North Down Park, to be there for local residents who came to pay their respects and light candles.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace; Where there is hatred; let us sow love;

Where there is injury; pardon; Where there is discord; union;

Where there is doubt; faith; Where there is darkness; light;

Where there is sadness; joy; For your mercy and your truth's sake

Award



In November 2022 we were honoured to receive a Chief Superintendent's Commendation for "outstanding work in the community". Six of our team are pictured here with Chief Superintendent Matt Longman and Sue Dann, Plymouth's Lord Mayor.

From Somerset to Plymouth - for the evening

While chatting with my husband about the variety of contacts and opportunities we had experienced the previous night, it occurred to me that, potentially the most eternally significant, was a quiet, 'unexciting' encounter.

We were approached by a smiling middle-aged man who wanted to thank us for being there. He seemed keen to chat and told me that he had been talking to a Muslim who had been arguing against the Bible. I asked if he read the Bible *'Yes- but not enough.'* Did he attend a church, *'Yes, a house-church- but not often enough.'* 'Hmm' I thought *'Does he need to learn something?'*

It became evident that this gentleman had driven from his home in Somerset to Plymouth for the evening with no fixed agenda and would drive back that night. *'This seems a lonely person'* I thought.

It seemed natural to ask, 'Is there anything you would like prayer for?' Checking that I meant for **himself** he seemed surprised at that - he thought and then said *'I would like to hear God more clearly.'* He accepted prayer, so I asked God for that, including St John's catchphrase 'To see Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly'.

And so we parted cheerfully. It was only much later that I wondered if his whole trip to Plymouth had been about that encounter with the Holy Spirit in the shape of Street Pastors - what a privilege!

A comedy & a tragedy (avoided)

A few weeks ago, we found a guy who appeared to be incredibly drunk, to the point where, while he was talking, it wasn't words. After some time of fruitlessly trying to sober him up we were in Stonehouse near the George Hostel and we were tempted to just leave him to sleep it off somewhere safe. However, as the Prayer Pastors prayed we "happened to decide" to try and ring someone to come and get him, found his phone, and went through the texts, trying to ring the people who had sent him messages, to see if they could come and get him

The first lady said "No dear, I'm disabled so I can't help" – did she know anyone who could? "No" so we went through the rest of the texts without success until we reached the last one which, although a different number, turned out to be the same disabled lady we'd rung in the first place. This time though she said "I'll come and get him in my mobility scooter" (!)

Picture the scene – she came down in her mobility scooter and said she'd put him on her lap and take him (still unconscious) to her house near The Hoe – fat chance, this was a heavy guy and the scooter was clearly not meant for more than one but the idea came to us that as the ground was more level, she might get him to Safebus (a parked bus staffed by Paramedics). So, with one Street Pastor either side of our "customer", who was falling from side to side and she perched high on his lap; we walked beside the scooter much to the great hilarity of everyone in the street

By the grace of God, we got him there and handed him over to the helpful Paramedics. After an hour or so we went back to check how he was and whilst we'd all assumed he was just very drunk; it turned out their tests had revealed he'd been taking heroin. Not only that but in order to snap him out of it, they'd given him 5 shots of Naloxone, designed with just one shot to wake people up out of the effects of drugs. He had woken up and gone back to sleep each time, which meant that he had taken a lot of heroin!

Discussing this with medically trained people afterwards, they've confirmed that had we not managed to get him to Safebus, he would have been dead within a few hours.

Thinking about it all and realising the humour and grace of God in providing our makeshift "wheelchair"; in turning our thoughts away from just leaving him as the Prayer Pastors prayed and implanting the idea of getting him to Safebus rather than helping his friend get him to her house – Thank you Lord! And if we hadn't been there....



New Street Pastors

We are delighted to welcome (pictured above, from left to right): Demola Akinbami, Alison & David Tute, John Ricardo, Graham Plumridge, Flora MacDonald, Pam Edwards, Carol Counter and (not in picture) Jeanette Eden to our ranks. Alison and David are in fact not new Street Pastors, having been part of our teams in our early days before going to Papua New Guinea as missionaries. I asked them how their first night back went:

Alison *It was great to be 'back in the saddle' after 12 years away and I was pleased that my older legs and feet still coped with the walking! Big surprises/changes were how the nightlife has moved from Union Street into town and the Barbican, and how much earlier in the night we were seeing people in need. It was encouraging to see initiatives such as the Safe Bus and Night Buses.*

David *It was great to feel like we were 'picking up where we left off' after our time overseas, but differences soon became apparent, for example better relationships with other agencies, particularly door staff and paramedics. There seems to be much greater appreciation of Street Pastors overall, which is testimony to 'God at work' through His people's service each Saturday night. And it is still as much fun as ever it was!*

Observers' Observations

From time to time our teams are accompanied by interested observers. We are grateful for the feedback below, received from two people who recently came out with us:

A night on the Town

I had the privilege of spending an evening on the streets of Plymouth with the Street Pastors. What

an interesting night that was and what a wonderful job the Street Pastors do.

Union Street at 12:30am is as busy as town the week before Christmas, if not busier! 100's of people all out to 'have a good time'. We walked around chatting to numerous people. One young lady who had had an argument with her boyfriend and was sitting down the bottom of some steps in the dark was advised to sit somewhere in plain view for safety. We later met her boyfriend, who was extremely cross – kicking everything in sight! Again, the team chatted with him, calmed him down and encouraged him to go and find his girlfriend and keep her safe.

We then had a call to say there was a distressed lady outside one of the night clubs and could we help? We rushed to the club to find a lady in her early twenties passed out on the floor outside the club. Debbie and Sian instantly sat down on the floor and put their arms around her and put a heat sheet over her. It was thought that her drink had been spiked. Strangely (scarily) enough, the friends she came into town with had abandoned her! Anyway we (with the help of the doorman) got her phone off her and managed to use her fingerprint to access it and rang various people, one being her mum who came and picked her up.

What an amazing job these wonderful guys and girls do. I saw the care and support that they gave with no judgement. Pure love. The amazing thing was that although I didn't see any miraculous signs or any wonderful answers to prayer (which, I understand are often witnessed) I saw God at work. God working in and through His people, caring, loving, helping, protecting people on the streets. Jesus was most definitely there doing what Jesus always does and using His people. Big, big, big thank you to all the Street Pastors for all the wonderful work that they do – but especially big thank you to Debbie, Andy and Sian who showed me God at work that evening.

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

Observers' Observations - Amazing job!

I had always known that SP's make a difference but to witness it first hand was such a privilege! I was incredibly impressed with the level of professionalism whilst out on the street, and I was equally impressed by the lively friendly banter amongst the team! What a real blessing they are to the streets of Plymouth. This is so much more than flipflops, space blankets and water! I was heartened by the amount of appreciation shown towards the SP's not only from those who were helped but by those we simply passed on the street, and from the police and security/door staff and encouraged by the mutual respect between all!

It was quite a diverse night....starting with a young submariner who was very drunkenly asleep and finishing the evening/morning with handing out much needed flipflops to very grateful young ladies and a whole lot in between! Like bumping into my son twice!! (He didn't need our assistance by the way <thank the Lord!>)

Two Godly interventions

We were hailed by a guy who announced he was helping a man on the ground. We went to help and found a young man sort of sitting up but with very odd slurred speech and clearly not well. He was responsive but his responses didn't make much sense and he was dribbling. He seemed to be worse than just very drunk. We took him to Safebus, and when we got there the paramedics thought he might have taken heroin. I felt that God had guided us to Cornwall Street, which was otherwise completely empty and is not on our usual route.



The second Godly intervention was when we met a young woman who was crying and had a bleeding hand. She was very distressed because she had lost

her friend whose phone was out of charge and she really didn't think we could help in any way.

The Prayer Pastors were on the case and we headed back to base. Much to our delight as we crossed the road back to base near the Pavillions, a woman on her own came across the road. She burst into tears when we called out "Are you A, D's looking for you?" She told us how she had gone to a different club after being shut out of the first one and she had ended up talking with a man, however she had become afraid when he offered to take her home so she left. She had by then missed her lift back to Cornwall and was upset because she wanted to get home to be with her young daughter for Mother's Day. Essentially we reunited the friends, where there was lots of tears

They were very grateful to us but I am not sure they heard us when we tried to explain it was God not us who worked such a miracle.

Have you always been a Christian?

We were stopped by a group of ladies. As we chatted to them, one of them mentioned that she wasn't used to wearing 3" high heels and her feet were killing her, so we offered her a pair of Flip Flops, well that opened the conversation up.....

They offered to pay for them, which we obviously turned down, but told them if they wanted to donate they could do so through our website. That started a new conversation, so what are Street Pastors? So we told them and the fact we are a Christian group, trying to make sure the streets of Plymouth are kept as safe as possible.

Next question "So you are all Christians then"?, "Yes"; "Have you always been Christians"? - This gave us a wonderful opportunity to share at which point in our lives God had become a reality and that our response was to commit our lives to Him and to follow Him and His plan for our lives.

We pray that they got home safely and that somehow our conversation with them will be part of their journey in coming to faith in Christ.

What do eyes show?

We were chatting to a man on the Barbican, who said to us "I can see kindness in your eyes" – we were able to tell him it was God in us who he was seeing and he said he wanted to find God. Would he like us to pray that for him? "Yes please" 😊

Some "thank you"s

Hi there, I was out last night on the Barbican and ended up in a bit of a pickle, away from my friends, not able to take care of myself. Thankfully you guys found me and looked after me until my partner came to pick me up. I just wanted to drop you a line to thank you from the bottom of my heart. Anything could have happened if you weren't there so I am truly grateful for what you did for me last night. Take care xx

"Hiya. I was out on Saturday night with some friends when we think I got spiked and was in a very bad way. I just wanted to say a massive thankyou to the Street Pastors who helped me and kept me safe. My memory is very blurry so unfortunately I have no idea of any names but I am so grateful for your help" – it turns out that the team had "walked" / carried this young lady back to her accommodation – what to us may seem the smallest kindness 😊

I would like to say a massive thank you to your street pastors last night. I went on my first night out in over 2 years and ended up pretty much passed out with no memory of my evening. Maybe my drink was spiked or someone was buying me strong drinks, I don't know? The Street Pastors looked after me later in the evening and stayed with me until my son and nephew picked me up. It has really frightened me but thanks to their care I got home safe. Thank you so much. K.

I had a conversation with a young lady outside Walkabout club. She approached me and said she just wanted to thank the Street Pastors as they were, along with the NHS, instrumental in saving her life. She would regularly go out on a weekend and get drunk, at which point the SP's would help her on many occasions calling an ambulance to take her to hospital. The medical team told her that she had already damaged her pancreas with the amount of alcohol she had been drinking and if she didn't stop she would probably die. She saw that as a wakeup call and four years ago she stopped drinking and praised SP's and medical staff for that turn round in her life and she just wanted to say thank you.

(with a £300 online gift) "Love the charitable energy & passion. Do a lot of charitable work myself & know the energy needed for it! Hopefully this goes a long way for the Plymouth community"

Sceptical side

I really should have learned by now to leave the 'sceptical side' of me at home on street pastoring nights. Last night, the pre-patrol training was on Mentoring - an excellent long list of the attributes of a good mentor. 'Great stuff, I thought, but not really relevant to encounters on the street - they are never long enough, or in-depth enough to be described as mentoring.'

We had only been out ten minutes when I noticed a woman standing alone outside Walkabout and looking wide-eyed, staring into the distance. 'She looks shocked', I thought'. Standing in front of her and asking if she was ok, it took a few seconds for her to focus, then she said, 'Street Pastor! Oh maybe you can help. I have to make a difficult decision.' Nodding encouragement and keeping eye contact I waited, praying for words of wisdom and spiritual insight. 'It's about people.' She said, then nodding to her right, indicated a slightly unkempt looking man standing about 30m away. After another pause, she said 'Or there is the one I love, that way', nodding vaguely down the street to the left.

I had a sense that she was at a T-junction with a clear and easy path to the right, maybe leading to shame and regret, and a vague and difficult path to the left leading back to the one she loves. I said, 'Think about tomorrow. In the cold light of day, which choice would you approve?' A fleeting look of pain later, we were still in eye contact and deep connection, hardly disturbed by the raucous group of young girls demanding flip-flops who came and went.

Sensing an ongoing "battle", I put a hand on her shoulder and said we would pray that she received the strength to make the right decision, whereupon she said 'I am going down here to find a quiet place to think'. Re-joining the team, I commented that, despite being less than five minutes and only involving a handful of sentences, it felt like a very significant conversation - but it wasn't until nearly the end of the evening that it struck me. That was mentoring!

God does have a sense of humour!

What is a "good night"? - Barbara's musings

In church on Sunday mornings, I'm often asked what my night was like, did I have a 'good' night? Someone said 'But what is a good night, busy, quiet, full of action, definitely dry?'

Having thought for a moment, for me, a 'good' night is one when, driving home I know I've been where our Father wanted me to be. It may be busy, full of incidents, requests for flipflops or prayers to our Prayer Pastors or a very quiet peaceful one. Seemingly nothing 'happening'. Yet within every evening of serving so much does happen, for we spread our Father's love throughout the city; gently caring and loving each person He puts before us.

We don't know what the future holds..

In the week preceding our patrol I'd been praying and a phrase "We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future" came to mind. I mentioned it to the teams before we went out especially as it was just after Russia's invasion of Ukraine as I knew we might be asked questions about this and its possible effects on the world

Sure enough we were later stopped by a guy walking home who firstly asked us "What's a Street Pastor". We explained and he then asked if that meant we were religious so we told him the team was comprised of Christians from 49 local churches.

He then wanted to know if we had been born as Christians and we were happy to tell him this wasn't possible as you have to be reborn according to Jesus' words in John's gospel (Chapter 3).

He was taking all this in and then asked us about the injustice of the Ukraine situation, how could it be allowed etc.? – he had a special interest as he had been to Kiev only 2 years previously and nodded in agreement when we pointed out that whilst God has given us all free will, it was often mis-used, resulting in man's inhumanity to man, such as in this situation

It also gave us the chance to say "We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future"

All in a night's work

We were "handed" a drunk lady who'd been trying to get into a club without paying. She immediately announced that she didn't need our help and that she was going to throw herself into the harbour to commit suicide, telling us to "---- off". As the Prayer Pastors prayed, her conversation changed to now tell us what nice people we were and we were able to walk her away from the water into Southside Street where she stopped talking about ending it and told us she needed an ambulance. We didn't think so but as we hadn't been able to get her address out of her; thought we might try and walk her to Safebus, realising this might well take a very long time.



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 Safer Streets, New Life Fellowship, Devon Community Foundation, Proceeds of Crime Fund, The A C Ballard Deceased Trust, Yealm Lodge, St Judes Mission Partners, The Uplands Trust, Pilgrim United Reformed Church, The Tyeth Trust, Wembury WI, Morice Baptist Church and Plymouth Octopus Project.

If you would like to donate, please visit our website – <https://streetpastors.org/locations/plymouth/donate/>

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

As we were about to start, she suddenly and for once with clarity, announced her address – it was on the Barbican and when we checked, we "happened to be" at the bottom of her street! Thank you Lord! It still took some coaxing and persuasion but we eventually saw her safely into her door. I sure wouldn't want to be doing this without prayer cover!

Diabetes

We were called to a young lad who was a known diabetic. He had been drinking and hadn't taken his insulin, so was semi-comatose.

The door staff were trying to help - he had a glucose meter, but no lancets. He also had 2 lots of insulin, but the door staff didn't know which one to use or how to take his blood sugar. Which team had they called? The one that includes K, who happens to be a trained nurse. K was easily able to improvise by using a needle to prick his finger and gave him the correct insulin. The team were also able to contact his father who drove in and took him to Hospital.....if we, in particular that team, hadn't been there.....?