



Stirling Street Pastors

Annual Review 2017



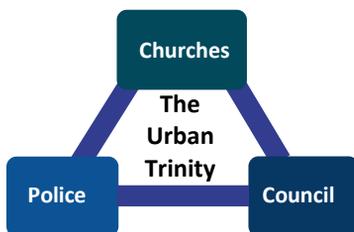
Caring, Listening and Helping

Introduction

2017 has been a year of great encouragement with 7 enthusiastic new volunteers joining us in May. Stirling Street Pastors was 8 years old in March 2017. During this time we have represented the Church on the streets of Stirling City centre between 10 pm and 4 am on Fridays and Saturdays, and other special occasions.

Our volunteers come from churches of many denominations in Stirling and the surrounding area. All our volunteers are trained to the standards required by the Ascension Trust, the umbrella organisation that licenses Street Pastor groups.

The Street Pastor initiative promotes the idea of “the Urban Trinity” – the Church taking its place alongside the local Council and the Police to care for the safety and welfare of the community, practically, emotionally and spiritually.



No longer are we regularly asked “*Who and what are you?*”. We are much more likely to be thanked, by people of all ages, who come up and tell us about an occasion when the Street Pastors have helped them, or someone they know, by listening or taking practical steps to sort out a problem. The fact we do not get paid causes much interest and often leads to a conversation about why we are willing to give of our time “caring, listening, and helping”.

“Why do you do this?”

“Because God loves us all and we want to share that love with you.”

What do Street Pastors do?

Many folks assume Street Pastors spend their time helping people who have had too much to drink. That is part of the help we offer – although the incidence of drunkenness is much lower now than in earlier years. We spend time with all sorts of people, listening to their stories and offering practical advice and encouragement. We remain alert to opportunities when, not only can we show God’s love for people in practical ways, but also speak of God’s love for all. We are convinced our approach of not preaching, but being alert to opportunities to share our faith from a basis of practical example, draws folk to us. The list of what we might do is long but includes:

- Praying with and for people we meet
- Chatting to people who are interested in what we do and what motivates us
- Taking hot drinks and, if available, food to rough sleepers
- Handing out warm clothes and sleeping bags donated by the public
- Discussing faith issues
- Handing out flip flops to ladies who have removed their footwear and are at risk of injury
- Picking up glasses and bottles, and clearing up broken glass
- Consulting with the police about people who cause us concern
- Helping to find emergency accommodation
- Arranging transport to a place of safety for folk who are vulnerable or at risk
- Chatting to tourists
- Responding to requests from Police and the Council’s CCTV service to assist or investigate possible problems
- Defusing potentially violent situations (when judged safe to do so)

2017 in Numbers

345 pairs of flip flops put on feet

143 vulnerable people supported

874 glass bottles removed from streets

81 nights out on patrol

304 hot drinks and water handed out

89 conversations about faith

Our Volunteers



This year we rejoiced when 7 new volunteers came forward to train as Street Pastors. All 7 completed the training and were commissioned by Rev Sandy Gunn, a Director of Ascension Trust (Scotland), at a service held in the FuBar night club in June. This was the largest number of new volunteers to join the team in Stirling in any one year since our launch in 2009. Our “class of 2017” have brought new energy and new ideas to our activities and we thank God for each one.

We also thank God for all our Street Pastors, 3 of whom have been pastoring since the launch in 2009. Their willingness to serve in all weathers and conditions, offering care and friendship to anyone we meet, is a credit to their churches and to their own faith and commitment to serving Christ.

A Street Pastor’s commitment is to do a patrol every 4 weeks and a refresher training session every 2–3 years. Some of our Street Pastors fulfil this commitment faithfully, others are able to do more, taking the place of other Street Pastors who are unable to come out at short notice. Some do talks, serve on the Board and help in many other ways.

*Shortly after becoming a Street Pastor I was ordained as an elder in my church. The two roles are not so very different. Both involve caring, listening and helping. Elders share pastoral responsibility for the members of the church and we visit members in their homes, talk to them and, more importantly, listen to them especially if they are troubled. We may not solve their problem but sometimes just talking it through can help to bring the problem into focus. We can pray with them if we feel this will bring comfort. My training and experience as a Street Pastor has helped me develop in my role as an elder - “Caring Listening and Helping” while serving our Lord. **B***

Prayer

Street Pastor teams offer to pray with and for people we meet on the streets. During breaks and at the end of patrols we remember people we have met in prayer. We write prayer cards and keep them so we can pray for people again and in particular during our quarterly prayer meetings.

Many of our Street Pastors have not led prayer before becoming a Street Pastor, but are moved to pray by the situations and people they meet on the street.

I had been nervous about praying out loud. One night I offered to pray with a young man. He was not a Christian but he closed his eyes. As I prayed I saw colour move across his face. When he opened his eyes he said something amazing had happened to him. I realised that by avoiding prayer I was denying people the opportunity to experience the Holy Spirit working in their lives. A

Often we do not know what has become of the folk we meet and in what way our prayers have been answered. But sometimes we do get further information and then, always, we can see how the Holy Spirit has been at work.

On one occasion we helped a young woman who was in a bad way. We supported her back to her flat, woke her flat mate and between us got her into her bed. She emailed us the following day (which is quite unusual):

"I want to thank and apologise to the three people that helped me last night. I dearly want to apologise for my behaviour. My flat mate has filled me in this morning on what happened. I'm quite embarrassed and disappointed in myself and unsure how I got in such a state. I'm not sure if my drink had been spiked or what happened because I've never been like that before. I'm endlessly thankful for your help in getting home safe. I really appreciate it so much. I'm well today, just recovering from the shame. Thanks again."

Our Street Pastors are asked to engage two people to be their Prayer Partners to support them and the group as a whole. We are so grateful for their wonderful support – sometimes coming in to Allan Park Church to pray with teams before they go out on patrol, sending text messages during our patrols, and encouraging and loving us, and the people we meet, through the night.

*I wanted to put my faith into action. Little did I realise how moving and humbling it would be to place a pair of flip flops on a girl's aching feet, or how fantastic it is to brush up broken glass in front of revellers or taxi drivers, who are witnessing a believer protecting the streets in the name of God. The personal and spiritual conversations are a real privilege. People only really see the uniform and the signage. It is not about the volunteer – it is about the Street Pastor organisation and all it stands for. **H***

Impact on Volunteers



*He was 17 but looked older and he looked so unhappy. At first he would not engage but after a while he said he wanted to go home to his aunt. Gradually we found out his "aunt" had been his foster mother when he was taken into care. We spoke to her on the phone. She told us of his very unhappy home life and agreed to let him come and stay with her overnight. Afterwards I remembered a member of my church talking about how she felt wrapped in love – the love of her church, her family and her God. I still think of that young man and pray he might know what it feels like to be wrapped in love. **A***

*The training has been invaluable as a new Street Pastor. It wasn't long before I had to put what I had learned into practice when I was talking to an ex-army man and he said how he was finding it difficult to cope. I would not normally have known how to help but I remembered what I had been taught and asked this man if he was feeling suicidal. He was and we were able to talk through some of his issues and the atrocities he had witnessed and been involved in. By the end of the conversation he had become quite emotional and was very thankful that somebody actually cared and was willing to listen to him. **R***



Growing in Faith

*I had said no when first asked to become a Team Leader. But it was clear another Team Leader was needed and so, after prayer, I said yes- but reluctantly. In spite of training I grew increasingly nervous before my first night leading a team. But when I left home that first night there was the most beautiful complete rainbow right opposite our front door. My anxieties vanished! It seemed to me that God put His rainbow there to say "I want you to do this! I will be with you! I will help you!" And all has been well. Each night I have led a team we have prayed for wisdom in any difficult situations that arise, and each night those prayers have been answered. My confidence is growing, not in my own ability to lead, but in my certainty that God will always go with us. He is the real Leader of our Team. **S***

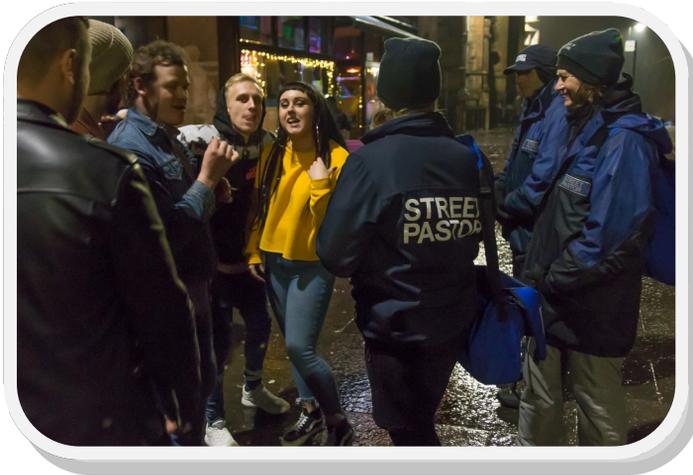


Comings and Goings

This year we have lost several of our Street Pastors as a result of graduations or job moves. We have been delighted that most have continued to serve as Street Pastors following their move – in Glasgow, Paisley, Perth, Edinburgh – and we welcomed one Street Pastor following her move to the area from Sheffield.

Our Coordinator, Murdo Murchison, left the post in August but remains with us as a volunteer. At the end of November we offered the post to Morag Buxel to take up appointment on 1 January 2018 (and at time of writing this review she is settling in with us).

There were several changes in our Board of Trustees. Our Treasurer, Alison Fyfe, stepped down but continues as a volunteer and Michael Yuille stepped forward and took over the reins as our new Treasurer.



“Even when we are tired we try to smile to let the spirit shine out of us, but there are so many fantastic people on the street of all ages it makes it easy to smile. There are lots of laughs, some nonsense, along with some very deep and at times sad conversations. On my last patrol two different youngsters sang hymns to me, a student from Kenya, and a local who sang in Latin. Someone, somewhere had sown good seeds. God willing – encountering the Street Pastors may reinvigorate faith.” H

2018 and Beyond

We look forward now to:

- Our new Coordinator, Morag Buxel, joining the team and providing us with leadership and administrative stability
- Training new volunteers for commissioning in May 2018
- Having sufficient volunteers and Team Leaders to field a Street Pastor team every Friday and Saturday night
- Working with the Council and Police to promote safety and well-being in the city centre
- Bringing the love and light of Christ to the streets of Stirling
- Drawing more churches and Christians into this mission
- Celebrating our 10th anniversary in March 2019



Volunteer Training



Other Blessings

We are very grateful to everyone who supports us financially.

Our regular income does not cover our monthly outgoings. We have been blessed, however, by some wonderful gifts including a generous bequest. As a result, at the end of the year, our bank balance is healthy and we know we will be able to meet our commitments for the coming year.

We have members of the team who are happy to give talks to organisations about our work and we appreciate the donations from the groups we meet with.

We also appreciate the support given by local businesses, whether financial or in kind.



Thanks to the Co-op for their donation of £1,636 from the Membership Reward Scheme



Thanks to the Rotary Club of Carse of Stirling for inviting one of our volunteers to address them and their donation of £250

We continue to pray for more church and individual donors who will commit to monthly giving by Standing Order to provide us with financial stability. (“Be One of the 100” is our vision of 100 people giving us £10 or more each month thereby covering our monthly expenses – more information is on our web site.)

Thanks to our Supporters

We have so many people and organisations who help and support us on the streets, including:

Our Church communities – who pray for us, encourage us and in many cases help to fund us.

The Police – who protect us and respond quickly when we need help or advice.

CCTV Operators - who guide us to people who may need our help, watch over us via cameras, talk to us via a radio link and stay on duty until we sign off at the end of each night.

Safe Base and the Taxi Marshalls - Council colleagues who work in good partnership with us on the weeks before Christmas.

Ground House Café – who donated food and soup on Friday nights, to be handed out to those in need, and who hosted our Information Night in November.

FuBar Night Club – who offer us shelter and hot drinks in bad weather and who hosted our Commissioning Service in June.

Staff on the door of pubs and clubs – who alert us about people in need and offer encouragement as we make our way around.

Allan Park South Church – who so generously host our patrols and provide us with storage space for our equipment.



"Thank you for the unrelenting support that you and the Street Pastor team have provided to me, my colleagues and the communities of Stirling. It has been both a privilege and pleasure to work with you, individually and collectively."

Stirling Area Police Commander Chief Inspector Lynn Ratcliffe at the time of her move to a new post.



Stirling Street Pastors

Caring, Listening, Helping

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The Street Pastor Prayer

Living God, we praise you for the vision that gave birth to Street Pastors and for every life that has been touched through this movement of your Spirit. We thank you for every Street Pastor and we pray for them as they share Your love with others:

Your protection and encouragement
Your wisdom and courage
And an ever deeper faith in and love for You.

We pray for those they meet week by week outside the pubs and clubs, on the streets and at the bus stops and taxi ranks.

May those who are lonely be warmed by Your presence; those who are bruised and hurting find healing in Your love; those ashamed and without hope be set free by Your forgiveness and grace.

Lord Jesus Christ You came to seek and to save the lost. You walk the streets night after night searching for those lost to your love. Thank you for the privilege of being your hands and feet, your eyes and your heart where we are.

Give us eyes that see as You see, hearts that love as You love and words that You can use to bring life and peace. And in it all, Lord God, give us thankfulness, generosity and joy in serving You, whom to serve is perfect freedom and whom to know is Life eternal.

Triune God of Grace, to You be honour, praise and glory, from everlasting to everlasting, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**