



Taunton Street Pastors *...the Word on the street*

November 2016

Our team members meet people of all ages as they walk around in the community



Welcome to the fourth edition of

...the Word on the street, an occasional newssheet sent free to our supporters. We aim to share some of the exciting developments and inspirational stories that our Street Pastor teams are encountering in and around the Taunton area week by week.

The teams are grateful to the many church, civic and community groups that have contributed to the local Street Pastors' remarkable work. August 2016 was record-breaking month for the number of hours of service given by our amazing team of dedicated volunteers.

We are eager to recruit more volunteers to help us in each of the locations that we patrol. A new training programme will commence at North Street Church, Taunton, at 7 pm from Wednesday 11 January 2017 onwards. Just turn up or seek further information from our coordinator, Adrian Prior-Sankey, via

taunton@streetpastors.org.uk or 07773 038 622

Street Pastors making a difference...

'The work you and your team do is fantastic and interesting to hear about some of the new things you are involved in.'

John Rendell, Licensing Manager of Taunton Deane Borough and West Somerset Councils

Taunton's Street Pastors received a generous donation earlier this year when the remaining finances of the flood relief centre in Bridgwater were dispersed.

'I would like to convey our sincere thanks to your group of people for all the help they gave at the Flood Relief Centre at the time of the floods in 2014. I know that the kindness they showed to the flooded neighbours was appreciated not only by them but by the team running the centre as well. I hope this cheque will help in some small way to the invaluable work you do in the area and support the Pastors.'

Elaine, flood relief centre organiser



Did you know...?

In August 2016 Taunton's Street Pastors gave 461 hours of voluntary service compared to 237 hours in the same month in 2015 (2,765 hours of patrols were undertaken during the whole of 2015).

STREET PASTORS is an interdenominational Church response to urban problems; engaging with people on the streets and in night-time locations to care, listen and offer practical help.



Come and join us...

The only qualifications to be a Street Pastor are active church membership; a church leader's commendation; a satisfactory DBS clearance; training and being over 18 (there is no upper age limit!).

Why not come along and observe one of our patrols sometime?

We are also recruiting Prayer Pastors to support us in our prayer base for any length of time between 9.30 pm and 3.30 am on Saturdays

Contact our coordinator, Adrian Prior-Sankey, via taunton@streetpastors.org.uk or **07773 038 622** to book your visit

What they say...

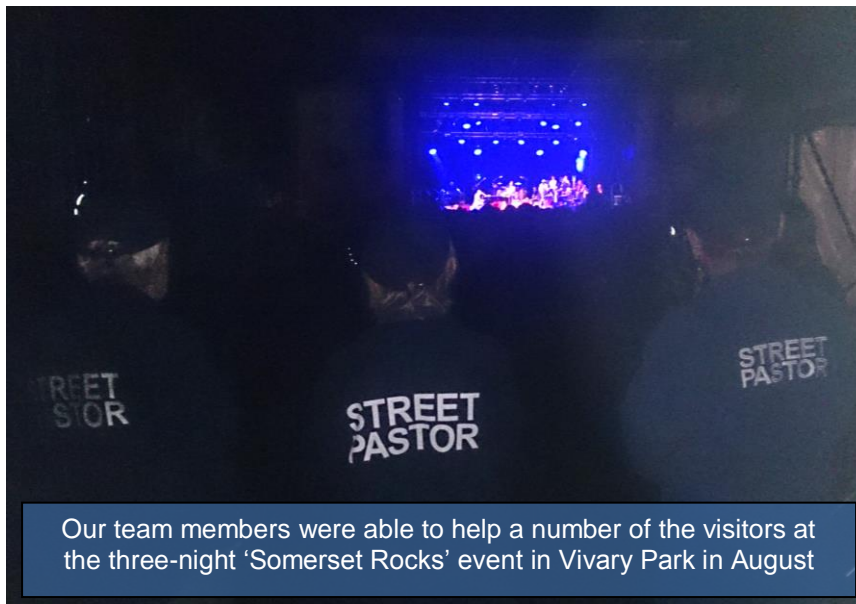
We had a scrap of paper left with us one Saturday simply saying

'For Street Pastors. Thank you for all you do! Seriously, we love you guys. Thanks again. Hope this makes your night better. Hannah'

An update sent to the local Council resulted in the following response...

'Please accept our congratulations on such a successful initiative and our sincere thanks to all concerned for all the work you do.'

Christine Gale
Community & Strategy Team
Taunton Deane Borough &
West Somerset Councils



Taunton's Street Pastors have attended Freshers' Fairs at Richard Huish and Bridgwater & Taunton Colleges as well as supporting a National Citizenship Scheme charity football match this summer.

They will be out and about during **ChristmasFest** in Castle Green on 1 December from 3 pm – 10 pm.

Taunton Street Pastors are honoured to be holders of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service ...



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The MBE for volunteer groups

What has a packet of crisps got to do with sharing God's love?

Our Coordinator, Adrian Prior-Sankey, explains...

Taunton's Street Pastors always begin their Saturday evening patrols with a short time of prayer and, rather than simply asking God to keep everyone safe and to hold off the rain and to guide our footsteps, etc., etc., we've started to pause and try to listen as well. In the few moments of quiet before we set off for our walk around the pubs and clubs after the carnival various team members sensed that they'd received images or perceived situations that we would encounter in the hours to come. There was nothing spooky or mystical but we simply wrote down the one or two words that described what we believed God to be saying to us. After all, if we really believe that we're sharing his love in practical ways, it makes sense to ask Him where and to whom we should go.



These words included a crisp packet, doorways, an ex-soldier, Goodlands Gardens and a man's name near the Brewhouse Theatre. Suitably inspired we set off with our blue rucksacks to sit for a while with a young woman whose hen night celebrations had ended abruptly when she became ill. Having warmed her up with a foil hoodie while she and her friends waited for their lift home, we continued on our way in search of a rough sleeper who we'd heard needed a pair of socks. We'd been told that he was sitting in a particular shop's doorway.

As we entered the town centre we saw a couple and a single chap sitting in the entrance of a Bank. I explained that we were looking for someone called Reg* as we had something to give him. As I spoke I became aware that at my feet, right in front of the trio, was a large foil bag but it looked as though it had an image of chipsticks or something other than crisps on the front.

Mindful of the first picture our team had earlier received from God, I explained to the young man that this was a significant sight for me and said we'd been expecting to find a bag of crisps. The chap identified himself as Ian and reached behind a pillar to reveal a bright red packet of Walker's Crisps. The Street Pastors were able to offer the pair of socks we'd found in our store and they were gratefully received, along with a real sense that God wanted to do something that would make Reg sit up and realise that he really is valued and cared for despite his tough circumstances.

Sharing the love of God isn't only about words from the Bible but also about signposting people like Reg to the street pastors' Safe Space cafe where he could get drinks and biscuits into the early hours of the morning and to a town centre church where he'd find a free lunch and a change of clothes on Sunday.

If Reg wanted to have help to take the first steps out of his homeless state he would find Good Samaritans willing to support him. Words might not have broken through the hardness that many people develop having experienced adversity, but a dramatic demonstration by God supernaturally, using something as simple as a crisp packet made Reg and all of us more alert to what He might want to offer beyond the practical help.

The often unspoken message from Street Pastors and other Christians, whether you are sitting in a palace or a shop doorway, is quite simply 'God loves you'. How you respond to that message is significant. Street Pastors don't preach, but if asked, each of our team members will be pleased to share something of their own experience of Jesus with you.

*name changed



"I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its security."
Pope Francis

Where and when to find us

Taunton's Street Pastors patrol regularly in the following locations. Why not come and join us?

- 2 - 4 pm Tuesday or Thursday afternoons in Halcon
- 6.30 - 8.30 pm Wednesday evenings in Priorswood
- 9.15 am – 12.45 pm First Saturday each month with Halcon's Litter Picking Team
- 10 pm – 3.30 am Saturday night/Sunday morning in Taunton town centre





Spotlight on a Street Pastor...

Name: Janet Gillett

Why did you choose to volunteer for this role?



I had known about street pastors from my friend who is a SP in Bridgwater and when unexpected space arose in my life for late nights out on a Saturday I decided to take a risk and train to be one. God has opened doors for me when they appear to be closed and this was another occurrence. Not only was it an opportunity to become part of the growing church outside my church but it was also a chance to get to know my local town and the culture that my son had enjoyed but I had never known much about apart from the after-effects!

Which parts of your role do you enjoy most and why?

I enjoy supporting and encouraging the team on their patrols and being out with fellow Christians. Being a team leader is often challenging as plans fall apart with changing situations, and being able to respond flexibly is something I enjoy. Mostly I enjoy being at Safe Space when there are people coming for support or a chat or to sit and have a hot drink. It is a privilege to be able to hear their stories and pray into the situations with confidence that these prayers are heard. Wearing the SP uniform also seems to give me permission to talk to people who I would not usually speak with. It is often remarkable how open some people are to sharing something that is troubling them, so this provides an opportunity for prayer - the foundation of our work.

What do you do when you are not street pastoring?

I am a Doctor and I specialise in palliative care which is about supporting people and their families when they are not going to get any better and are approaching the end of their life. I work with a large team of people and although many are not Christian the work we do is what Jesus would be doing. The first hospice was set up by a Christian lady, Cicely Saunders in the 60's and now palliative care and hospices are operating throughout the world.

What has most surprised you about being a street pastor?

Prayers on the street have been answered, situations have calmed and people have accepted prayer when I would never have expected it. Teams have been where there has been need and been able to make a difference. It's a lovely surprise when quite spontaneously people 'high five' in the street, recount their stories about being helped in the past by street pastors and when they ask 'why are you doing this' it's always good to be able to share faith freely.

I have been surprised by how safe I feel when out and at Safe Space and I don't believe this is from a position of ignorance but that it is God's protection.

What would you most like to see change in your town or city?

I would like to see no homeless people on the streets, and no cold and hungry people not knowing where they will sleep the night. I would like to see somewhere where they can go if only for one night.

What do you do if you are finding an incident or an individual difficult?

In a difficult situation I ask myself what would Jesus do or say and how would He respond. I often find myself not knowing what to say but sense that just being there at these times is enough. Being part of a team helps and together we pray, get prayer support from the prayer team at base and work together to find the best outcome.

Tell us one thing about you not related to street pastoring.

I play a saxophone (not very well) in a swing band and love it!

How has being a street pastor changed you?

I have so much more confidence talking with strangers and particularly those who are on the periphery of society. I have also found it easier to talk about Jesus with others and this includes at work, where on occasion this is still possible. Being a part of the church outside the church is exciting and meeting other Christians from other churches gives me hope that as we work together in Taunton we shall make Jesus better known.

What they say...

'Many thanks for your presence and assistance during the hours of night time economy in the town centre of Taunton.'

PC 4250 Andy Beake

'Making a real difference through East Taunton'

Sgt Andy Murphy QPM