



Wantage and Grove STREET PASTORS

Quarterly News

JAN
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Coordinator

So much of what we do has changed in this last year - shops, schools, banks and not least of all, church. Many people and organisations have had to re-think what they do and how. We often think of faithfulness as a continuing with something despite all obstacles and difficulties - and yes, that is often what faithfulness looks like. But when we continue with something that is no longer needed or relevant, our faithfulness can turn in to stubbornness, rigidity and blinkered vision.

Street Pastors has always been about meeting the needs of people in our communities whom we have often found to be unwell, upset, lost, confused, alone, in danger - and in many other ways! But life has changed and the people we used to meet are mostly now at home - possibly in similar or maybe worse situations. Don't worry, although we are not currently patrolling during lockdown, we are not about to pack up and go home ourselves - as Christians we must be ready to re-think what we do in order to continue to be relevant to those we seek to help. We are not sure when we will make it back on to the streets at night, but for now we must look at ways of helping those in need and continuing

to recruit volunteers who can help us reach people, maybe in different ways and at different times. I am sure that things will continue to change in 2021, but in all this we know Him who does not change like shifting shadows, whose faithfulness reaches to the skies. Let's continue to seek Him in our daily lives to know how best to serve those in need. His compassions fail not... for great is His faithfulness! (Lamentations Ch 3 v 22-23)

Back where we belong - but not for long!

Since our October 2020 Quarterly News we patrolled 7 times in Wantage during the time when pubs were allowed to open to 11 pm. We were able to help one or two people and be a listening ear for several more, but we have not seen the numbers of people out and about that we are used to, and with such big changes to the night-time economy, there is a great deal less drunkenness on the streets - which is definitely a good thing, although, we're not quite sure what to do with that massive box of flip-flops in the cupboard! :- /

As the nation entered another 'Stay-at-home' lockdown on Boxing Day, the Trustees decided that continuing night-time patrols throughout January was of little benefit and so it was decided to suspend night-time patrols for the time being. It's not that there are not needy people out and about, it's just that their needs are very different and they're not generally out and about in the cold and in the dark except to do some shopping for the essentials.

With this in mind, we would be very happy to patrol in day time hours, given sufficient Street Pastors' availability and we are exploring the possibility of online patrols! What? Yes, online patrols! We certainly wouldn't be the first Street Pastor area to go online to meet people and to continue to care, to listen and to help wherever we can.

If daytime or online patrols are something that interests you, please do contact us for more information.

A prayer for our nation

God of hope,
in these times of change,
unite our nation
and guide our leaders with your wisdom.
Give us courage to overcome our fears,
and help us to build a future
in which all may prosper and share
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Neighbourhood Action Group - NAG



Wantage & Grove Street Pastors has been a member of the local Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) for many years. The NAG meets every 6 weeks and is made up of local and village residents, farmers, Councillors and representatives from organisations such as King Alfred's Academy, Sweatbox, Betjeman Park, Neighbourhood Watch, Chamber of Commerce, and the Neighbourhood Police Team, etc. The purpose of the NAG is to identify issues in the local community and to take action towards resolving problems wherever possible. The overall intention is to make our communities happier, safer places for all who live and/or work here.

If you are experiencing problems in your locality, do contact us (details below) and we can feed items in to the NAG on your behalf. For more information about the NAG, visit:

- the NAG website www.uknags.org.uk/view_group.php?nag=29 or
- the NAG Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/WantageWestNagNeighbourhoodActionGroup

Street Pastor Training Online

Several of our Street Pastors have dipped their toes into the wonderful world of online training, with courses such as Good News, Knowing Your Community and Listening Skills. The pilot scheme seems to be going well. Sessions are live and interactive using the Zoom app, which allows for people to break away into small discussion groups as well as allowing the trainer to display Powerpoint presentations and videos.



One of our Street Pastors said that despite some technical issues, "...it was good to encounter a geographically wider cohort of street pastors with a wider variety of experiences!"

Interview with Carol Pask



Straight from the police station into the church – that was the route for Carol Pask in the early days of Wantage & Grove Street Pastors. Carol would finish her shift at midnight from working behind the bar at the police social club, then join the prayer support team at the Base. Sadly, due to back pain, Carol has had to retire from Street Pastors but assures us she'll be back on prayer support when COVID allows. Carol is also one of the few street pastors across the country who has patrolled with the aid of crutches, and latterly a rollator through two hip replacement operations. Marj Lunn chats to Carol to gain an insight into her inspirational commitment:

What made you decide to be a Street Pastor? I started out as a prayer support volunteer because I wasn't sure about doing all the training but after a few years I went out as an observer and I thought I'd give it a go. I've really enjoyed it and I'll miss it.

What did you enjoy about being a Street Pastor? People are really pleased to see us. The young people are really chatty and sometimes the older people not so much, but they get to know us. I've enjoyed meeting other prayer support volunteers, some of whom have moved away and I still keep in touch with.

What will you miss? I'll miss chatting to people and I'll miss our team – we had such a laugh together. We even had nicknames for each other. If you know, you know!

Tell us about one of the most memorable moments. Oh, there are so many... I remember a family coming out of the pub one night and physically fighting in the middle of the street. Then a car came along and ran in to them because they wouldn't move out of the way. The police came and sorted it all out.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of becoming a street pastor? You've got to want to do it. It can be tiring but once you're chatting to people, the time passes. Also, the training was quite straight forward in the end and I managed it without too much trouble.



Wantage & Grove Street Pastors

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Street Pastors is an initiative of Ascension Trust, a Christian, inter-denominational organisation with a passion to empower individuals to work together within their local community and nation.