



Wantage and Grove STREET PASTORS

Quarterly News

APR
2021



Michael Elliott
Street Pastor
& Trustee

As I write this it is just a few days since I went out on my first Street Pastor patrol for several months as restrictions begin to be lifted. It felt good to get out again and be a Christian presence in our town during the late evenings at the end of the week and we are praying that we will not have to suspend patrols again.

In conversations we have with the people we meet, two questions come up quite often. One of these is "Which church do we belong to?" It usually surprises people when we explain that we are all from different churches. Somehow, they seem to expect that different churches act independently and are even competing. It feels good to show the Church is united, especially remembering that Jesus told us, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn 13 v 35).

The other question we are often asked is why are we doing what we are doing and sometimes whether we are paid. Saying that the work is unpaid and that we are doing it because there are needs that need to be met, is something that both surprises and confuses people we encounter. From this, conversations can develop that challenge us to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that we have, doing it with gentleness and respect" (1Pe 3 v 15).

Our mission is to care, to listen and to help particularly those who are anxious or fearful. The love and unity of the Church and the hope we have in Christ are not only the reason we are there. They are also at the heart of the message we hope to bring.

Caring, Listening, Helping



Following another national lockdown imposed on Boxing Day, 2020 we suspended Street Pastor patrols and didn't patrol again until the end of March when we took to the streets, having received reports of young people out and about with slightly lighter and warmer evenings (the warm weather didn't last long).

We were back on the streets for the re-opening of pubs mid-April and we saw the Wantage night-life revive a little. People were pleased to see us and many thanked us for being there. Of course people were sitting outside as indoor seating was not allowed.

Having booked tables, and being seated with friends or family, the night-time culture is very different for now. Gladly we're not yet seeing as many drunk individuals as there is no such thing as a pub-crawl,

birthday celebrations are on a much smaller scale and stag and hen parties are all but gone - at least for a while. But there are still people for whom we can care, listen to and help. We have spent quite a bit of time chatting to people, charging mobile phones with our battery pack, clearing up litter and helping to calm aggressive situations and encourage groups to make their way home at the end of the night.

We are now scheduling regular patrols again, so a big thank you to everyone involved in getting patrols out. Thank you too to those who support our patrols through prayer. Our Street Pastors in particular are very grateful for the encouragement they receive through prayer support - thank you!

New for 2021 we have trialled two 'Online Patrols'. Although it's early days, this is something that could grow to be a valuable way that we, as the local church, can care for those in our community who need a friendly face and someone to talk to. We invited members of the public to join us in a Zoom room - "just you and two Street Pastors" for a chat. A bit like walking down the street, we would spend time with individuals for as long as they need while others wait or pass by. Although we can't give lollies and flip-flops, we can listen, pray and if necessary signpost people to other organisations that can help with specific needs, including community services and groups run by local churches. Is this something you can help us with - either in prayer or on screen as a "Screen Pastor"? If so, please do contact us for more information (see reverse) or check out our Chat Online page on our website: <https://bit.ly/wgsp-chat>



Goals for 2021/22

Each year our Management Committee sets goals to help focus our efforts and to ensure that we continue to serve our community well. We centre our goals around the key areas of delivering patrols, finances and relationships. Subject to ongoing Government guidance on COVID-19, our goals for 2021/22 are:

► Delivering Patrols:

- Reinstating helping, caring, listening to support our communities in a safe way within government guidelines for COVID-19
- Increase the number of Street Pastor and Prayer Support volunteers
- Hold Street Pastor Sundays (online if necessary) in each of the participating churches
- Pursue on-line patrols & daytime patrols

► Finance:

- Secure funding to cover our costs

► Relationships:

- Complete the transition of WGSP into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Recruit new Trustees, particularly Chair and Fundraising Lead

Opportunities to serve

The last year, although often difficult, has given many of us the opportunity to stop, reflect and evaluate what we were doing and why. It has given some of us the opportunity to make changes too. Wantage & Grove Street Pastors offers many wonderful opportunities to serve the Lord, the church and our local communities. If you're looking to start serving in a new way, how about one of the following opportunities:

- Train up as a night-time or daytime Street Pastor
- Train up as a 'Screen Pastor' to serve online
- Join us as a Prayer Support Volunteer either at home, at base or online
- Join as a Trustee
- Organise fundraising events for us

For more information on any of these roles, please do contact us (see below for contact details).

Richard & Sarah Goodall - Prayer Support Volunteers



Richard & Sarah joined as Prayer Support Volunteers nearly 7 years ago after they won a hamper at our Dickensian Evening stall. Having never really won anything before, they were so blessed and felt that it was an encouragement to get more involved with the work. Here we ask them, **why is the role of the Prayer Support Volunteer important to you?**

"We feel it's a great way to give something back to the community in which we live. As Prayer Support Volunteers, we support the Street Pastors who are out on the streets of Wantage and Grove at the base. We all pray together for their safety and wellbeing before the team go out, and we pray that the Street Pastors will have God-appointed conversations with those they meet. We also pray that they will be able to assist whomever they meet with a kind word, prayer, or help with practical needs like a bottle of water, flipflops or lollipops."

Street Pastors keep in touch by phone to update us with any specific or urgent prayer needs. Sometimes they encounter situations that go beyond their ability or resources and so prayer is a vital part of the ministry. At some point in the night the Street Pastors will come back to base to have a break, refreshments and a snack and to share any new information that needs prayer. One of the joys, is to meet Christians from other churches, sharing fellowship together as well as praying with them. Of course, this last year we have not been able to patrol so much and when we have, we have had to pray from home and keep in touch with the Street Pastors by phone. We are very much looking forward to being back at the base together."

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.