



Wantage and Grove STREET PASTORS

Quarterly News

OCT
2021



Paul Gander
Chair

Hello! I am Paul Gander and together with my family (my wife Francesca and three children) I moved to Wantage in August to be Pastor and Community Development Lead for Wantage Community Church. As part of that role I will be the new Chair of the trustees for Wantage and Grove Street Pastors. I was approached in the spring to see if I would be interested in taking on the role of chair and after a time of prayer and seeking God, I felt it was right to put myself forward and fortunately the trustees all said yes! I have worked in the community for the last 18 years, first as a youth worker and more recently in my role at Kings Church where I led the community development work. As part of my youth work job I spent 13 years on the streets of Didcot doing detached youth work, which I found was a wonderful privilege to serve the young people of the town. This background therefore gave myself a real heart for the role of Street Pastors and what it does for Wantage and Grove. I hope and pray that I will be able to serve the charity and the town in this role over the coming months and years. When I am not working or with the family, I enjoy watching most sports or getting out and walking through the countryside.

I have heard so many great things about the street pastors and I look forward to hearing more stories of the great work God is doing through the street pastors.

How we helped on the streets

We achieved twelve patrols since our July edition of Quarterly News - five patrols in July, four in August and three in September. We were unable to patrol on three occasions. With no 'slack in the system', it is more difficult to fix problems when they arise. If we are unable to replace a Street Pastor who has had to drop out for some reason, then the patrol cannot go ahead.

We are pleased to report that we are no longer seeing large groups gathering in Wantage. There were a number of smaller aggressive situations that we were able to help calm down, including preventing two groups of people from aggravating each other.

At the end of one of our patrols we were standing outside a pub when a lady frantically rushed back to

the pub, hoping to get in and saying that she had lost her mobile phone. We offered to call her number and found that her phone was in her pocket all the time! The poor lady was very apologetic – and a little embarrassed!

Patrols in Grove have been quiet. We visit several locations including the skate park and kebab van, Savile Way shops, Millbrook Square, Old Mill Hall, The Bay Tree pub and The Bell pub.

In Wantage, as well as spending time in the Market Square, we also visit Betjeman Park, the Undercroft Car Park, Manor Park and from time to time the cemetery. Our earlier patrol visits Sweatbox and spends time with the staff and young people.

Now is the time!

Yes, that's right - now is the time! Now is the time to sign up for Street Pastor roles in Wantage & Grove Street Pastors! ...and there are plenty of options available to you because we're always looking to expand what we do:

Night time economy patrols - caring for people who are out at night on Friday and Saturday nights ('early' and late night patrols)

Daytime or afternoon patrols - caring for people who are in town in the daytime, especially children and young people who may be vulnerable or a target for 'county lines' criminals after school

Online patrols as "Screen Pastors" - caring for people who are online by providing a safe space for people to talk about their lives

Now is the time to apply for these roles because we will be hosting the all important *Roles & Responsibilities* training course in the new year. This 1-day course is mandatory for all Street Pastor roles and forms the basis for further training.

Contact us for more information about Street Pastor roles - email us at wantageandgrove@streetpastors.org.uk or call us on 07554 655 594.



2021 AGM

Our AGM was held on 5 October 2021. Members accepted the annual report and accounts for 2020/21. Trustees were re-elected and Paul Gander was elected as a trustee and appointed as our new Chair. Following the formal AGM, our Coordinator, Nigel Watt gave an update on patrols and operational issues. Pete Beckley asked the question, "As a Street Pastor I observe that there has been a noticeable decrease in opportunities to assist and interact with people on Saturday nights. Can WGSP make changes to remain relevant in our community?" This led to a very useful discussion about how people's behaviour has changed since lockdown with pubs closing earlier and the effect of currently not having a nightclub in town. Several ideas of how we can remain relevant were suggested, including support for daytime and online patrols. Other ideas were suggested including observing the night-time economy to see where problems lie, working with local schools in lesson provision and connecting with Be Space as they seek to provide prayer spaces in schools and in the community. Remaining relevant to the needs of Wantage and Grove will be key to our success.



Farewell PC Darren James



We are sorry to have to say 'farewell' to PC Darren James as he leaves the Wantage Neighbourhood Police Team to take up a post at the Thames Valley Police Control Room in Abingdon. Darren joined the team in Wantage nearly 23 years ago and has worked tirelessly, not only tackling and solving crime locally, but he has been dedicated to building relationships in the community and helping to keep people safe. Darren was awarded Community Officer of the Year in 2018 for his contribution to local policing - an award for which he was nominated by members of the public. Not only do we see Darren on the streets at night while we're patrolling, but also at the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) - a group whose purpose is to identify issues in the local community and to take action towards resolving problems wherever possible. We are very grateful for all the support we receive from the police and so we will certainly miss Darren. Well done on the new job Darren, and best wishes for the future from all of us at Wantage & Grove Street Pastors.

Michael Elliott reflects on 'Messages of Hope'

Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Romans Ch 5 v 2)

Friday 15th October saw the return of Sharon Tedford to Wantage Baptist Church to give a concert in support of Wantage and Grove Street Pastors. When attending a concert, one expects to be entertained by the musician and by the originality and quality of the songs performed. That certainly happened here. But even more valuable were the messages and biblical insights heard and experienced through the songs and also the stories used to introduce and link the music.



For me and, I believe, many other Christians some of the most important lessons we have learned through Covid-19 are about Hope. Hope was the main theme Sharon worked into her concert. Bible verses commending hope led into stories testifying about God's grace and faithfulness, which in turn led into inspiring worship songs. One such verse was Psalm 71:14, "But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more." Sharon even set us some 'homework' for after the concert, suggesting that we read and reflect on the whole Psalm. It tells of God's past faithfulness to us being a reason for our present hope.

As Street Pastors we deliver a message of hope to those we encounter. Perhaps just a hope that there will be a friendly ear to listen, or a hope that there will be someone to provide help when needed, or even a hope that there is someone to point to the availability of saving grace.

Thank you, Sharon, for your support of Street Pastors but especially for encouraging messages of Hope.

Wantage & Grove Street Pastors

Website: www.wantageandgrove.streetpastors.org.uk

Email: wantageandgrove@streetpastors.org.uk

Mobile: 07554 655 594

Facebook: facebook.com/wantageandgrovestreetpastors

Registered Charity: 1134429

Supported by grants from
Oxfordshire County Council
Police Property Act Fund
Wantage Town Council
Grove Parish Council
Swire Trust



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.