



Wantage and Grove STREET PASTORS

Quarterly News

OCT
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Paul Gander
Chair

It has been one year since I took on the role of Chair of the trustees and it has been a busy and exciting year. We were all starting to emerge from the pandemic a year ago and as a result some things have returned as they were before, our weekend patrols are back on the streets, but things are also different.

In response to that time through the pandemic we have launched our new project our 'Social Media Networker' focusing on the online space that people inhabit. It is exciting as we look to appoint someone for this role and we will no doubt all continue our journey of learning and responding to the world around us, which never stands still. I look forward to seeing what we have accomplished a year from now.

I also want to thank the tireless work of everyone involved in the running and serving of Wantage & Grove Street Pastors. We are so aware of how blessed we are with the range of people who are part of the charity and continue to help make it all happen. I look forward to seeing many of you at our Quiz and Curry evening later in November!

How we helped on the streets

You may be aware that there was an incident in Wantage town centre during September that made it into the local press. Our newly formed third-Saturday team was present in town and witnessed the events as they unfolded.

A man, who was spoiling for a fight, went off and brought back a kitchen knife. The move backfired on him as a group turned on him and chased him away, but they ended up attacking his associate instead. Credit goes to a member of the public, who stepped in to help the victim by putting himself between the victim and the assailants.

No-one was injured by the knife and our Street Pastors did exactly the right thing by staying at a safe distance, calling the police and helping people when it was safe to do so.

It is very disappointing and concerning to have had a knife on our streets at night and it was distressing for the Street Pastors to witness such a thing. Thankfully, these types of incidents are very rare in Wantage and Grove and certainly not what we normally encounter as we go out on patrol week by week. Occasionally things do get out of our control and as Street Pastors, all sorts of thoughts and emotions flood through us; they sometimes weigh heavy on our hearts and minds. Please do stop and pray for all our Street Pastors who so faithfully give up time, comfort, and sleep to care for people in our communities.

Wantage and Grove are very safe places to live, work and socialise, even at night. Unfortunately, there have been plenty of rumours and embellished stories going round that only serve to make things seem worse than they actually are. Please do continue to pray for Wantage and Grove, for our young people and for our ministry.



Online Networker Update

Following on from our AGM in July, we shared our vision to employ someone to help us develop our online presence as an Online Networker. We'd like to reach more people through social media platforms and apps to help support people in our local communities and grow our ministry.

The deadline for applications has passed and we are pleased to say that there has been some interest in the role. However, we are not able to say much more than that at the moment while we prepare to interview early to mid November. We will of course keep you updated on our progress with this exciting project. You can find more information in the July edition of Quarterly News, which you can find on our website.



Welcome to Delaney's Club

Friday 26 August saw the opening night of Delaney's Club in Wantage. The club has opened in the former Shush! premises (and the cinema before that) and has brought a fresh feel to the nightlife in Wantage.

But the club isn't just for party-goers and late-night dancers; they have lots of bands playing and have plans for bottomless brunches, afternoon teas and more!

Of course, with a slightly later finish time than other venues, some of our Street Pastor teams need to be available to care, listen and help until 3.30 am.

The club's opening was covered by the local press in which Delaney's spoke very kindly of our Street Pastors:

Delaney's
CLUB.
W A N T A G E

"We met the Street Pastors on the Saturday, who we are very lucky to have in Wantage. They are a group from the local church who hand out flip-flops, water, lollies and generally make sure everyone is safe and happy at the end of the night when leaving.

Our intent is to keep this good relationship with the street Pastors and coordinate a safe, happy nightlife experience for Wantage."

Welcome to Wantage Delaney's Club - we hope you're really successful.

Interview with Sheenagh Dernie



Sheenagh Dernie has served as a Street Pastor for twelve years but has hung up her cap for the last time this October to focus her energies as Musical Director for several local choirs. Before she heads off, we ask her a few questions:

What made you decide to be a Street Pastor? When Steve West stood up in SS Peter & Paul and gave out an invitation to anyone who wanted to be a Street Pastor, I thought 3 things in quick succession: 1) This sounds a bit out of my comfort zone! 2) Here is an opportunity to bear witness to my faith, and show God's love on the streets of Wantage, and 3) A Christian simply does not have the right to keep God's love to themselves. I spoke to Steve after the service, and started on my journey as a Street Pastor.

What will you miss? I'll miss getting to know Street Pastors from other churches - hearing their points of view, and sharing in their prayers, but most particularly I'll miss my team members, past and present, for whom I have a deep affection (not that I'll never see them again - I will, but not so regularly).

Tell us about one of the most memorable moments: I think my most abiding memory is of finding a relatively young lass face down in a play park, after her friends came to us for help. It was very late and they needed to go home. They'd bought her bread and milk to try and absorb some of the alcohol she'd consumed, but she was too 'out of it' to respond, never mind swallow anything. It was cold and raining. She had no coat and her clothes were soaked through. We discovered she was tachycardic, so we phoned for an ambulance - and stayed with her till it arrived. It may well have saved her life. If she'd stayed there all night, who knows what would have transpired? If she'd been my daughter, I'd have been so glad we were there to help her!

What advice would you give to someone thinking of becoming a street pastor? I'd say, Go for it! There may be nights when you think you didn't do anything useful, but there will certainly be times when you know it was well worth it. Furthermore, I'd say that you often discover a long time later, that what you did or said turned someone around. We've certainly had people come up and say that to us!

Thank you!

As well as thanking Sheenagh Dernie for her faithful service, we want to thank Sarah Goodall for nearly four years service as a Trustee, for her encouragement and support and invaluable help with our fundraising activities. Sarah has taken the decision to step down from the role but will be continuing in her role as Church Representative for Vale Elim Church and as a Prayer Support Volunteer with her husband Richard.

Wantage & Grove Street Pastors

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